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Political Science 112C

On Fascism's Interpreted Novelty

Fascism, as a historical phenomenon, is a relatively new development in Modern Political Thought. *Only* two nations are widely accepted as having embodied Fascism: Italy (1922-1943) and Germany (1933-1945). There are certainly difficulties that accompany the study of these short-lived and disparate experiences, and this may explain why various conceptions are presented in the relevant academic literature. This paper will analyze those varying interpretations found in the writings of Pareto (21a), Schumpeter (21b), Hayek (21c), Benjamin (22a), and Adorno and Horkheimer, or A&H, (22b) to reveal three conceptions of Fascism: the necessary, *novel* creation (21a-b), the worse development into state-capitalism (22a-b), and the worse development akin to socialism (21c).

These conceptualizations, I will argue, stem from these theorists' conceptions of the utility (or detriment) of capitalism which I will invest a substantial portion of the paper making clear because they reveal the course of action deduced as necessary. To begin with, evidence from Benjamin and A&H will be presented to show that theorists who do not view the capitalist structure as positive *because of its alienation* stress that the inevitable conclusion of such alienation is socialist protest from which the emotional, spontaneous *fascist* counter-reaction and any succeeding phase by fascists to construct a centralized authority which alleviates alienation is illusory. In contrast, evidence presented from Pareto (with support from Schumpeter) will show that those who prioritize the utility of capitalism *despite its alienation* consider the emergence of fascism in two different stages: first, an emotional, anarchistic cultural reaction to alienation, and second, the creation of a centralized authority from determined leaders that direct the people's negative sentiments of liberal-democracies towards a positive sentiment of introducing a national-communion (within the existing property structure). The final conceptualization, from Hayek's work, finds itself in opposition to the previous conceptions by viewing capitalism's utility as not only superior, but that any claims of alienation are merely perceptually true as a consequence of indoctrination; the kind of indoctrination which motivates citizens to abandon a liberal-democratic, capitalist organization in favor of a self-destructive communitarian government, be it Fascist or Socialist.

Excluding Hayek, all the aforementioned theorists agree that alienation is present in the liberal-democratic, capitalist nation, the crucial component to understanding how 'fascism' is conceptualized. Benjamin and A&H argue that the problem of alienation is a consequence of capitalism by describing the present appearance of society in a Marxist-orientation: "Our taverns, metropolitan streets, offices, furnished rooms, railroad stations, and factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly." (22a, 13) This hopeless outlook exists beyond the workplace and extends into the social arena where people "call one [another] 'Bob' and 'Harry'" to accept the lack of a

“true kind of relationship” in favor of a “good fellowship that hides the awkward distance between them.” (22b, 20) Similarly, A&H introduce the significance of capitalism’s monopoly on culture and art, which further alienates man from society beyond that disguised relationship found in names, since entertainment “[occupies] men’s senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning.” (22b, 9) The significance of integrating the empirical analysis of labor conditions with the culture industry’s capacity to present itself to the consumers as a release from their labor is that it also reveals man’s alienation from himself; “the culture industry [molds] men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product,” (22b, 6) a repetition that stems from its own totalizing style which makes it so that the viewer, the critic, and the producer “uncritically enjoy the conventional.” (22a, 12) Art intended specifically for mass-consumption becomes a fixed, propagandic creation; no longer produced for its expression of truth of the state of being, it instead finds purpose in being popularly accepted so that all that is produced is that which is already designated to be popular. Without the possibility for exception, anomaly, or discrepancy in this style of popularity, or “generality,” art loses its ability to express suffering and identity, that which distinguishes an individual person, experience, or class from its relationship to generality (22b, 9). This is the capitalist superstructure, the “very ideology [and stereotype] which enslaves [the viewer and producer]” in labor and in leisure, “in body and in soul.” (22b, 10) By disguising the nature of reality through duplication of the very generality they expected to receive as entertainment, the people receive the product which omits the reminder of suffering they had just faced in their daily labor and prevents any challenge to the fictional, general identity the cultural industry prescribed to them. The consumers fail to ascribe blame, or even find blame, for the narrative that society produces because “the system” doesn’t “leave the customer alone... for a moment to allow him any suspicion that resistance is possible.” (22b, 16) The society Benjamin and A&H describe is totalizing: days occupied with labor in the factory and leisure occupied by an onslaught of entertainment the culture industry produces which omits both suffering and identity. This totality serves to alienate man not only from society, but also man from himself. The capitalist system, as presently described, prevents self-realization of the original conditions that necessitated their pursuit of uncritical leisure which cements their conception of the current state as undoubtedly *negative* and *necessitating revolution*. Pareto could be considered a sympathetic thinker with respect to this conclusion.

The question of how socialism, and its counterrevolution, fascism, can arise within the totalizing culture Benjamin and A&H describe reveals the nature to which capitalism’s contradictions are apparent to the public and serve as the focal points of socialist protest. Benjamin, for example, “[does] not deny that in some cases today’s films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the distribution of property.” (22a, 10). This contradiction is shown by the business interest to categorize people in predictable stereotypes to market to and thus categorize those socialists from whom they may profit by selling technology to the “gainfully employed” to “publish comments on work, grievances, documentary reports, or [other potentially revolutionary critiques that would have otherwise been inaccessible had it not

been for the business interest to profit from them].” (22a, 11) Hayek, as the supporter of capitalism free from state-correction, would fail to see the logical connection between capitalism’s incentives to sell the means of breaking capitalism’s manufactured illusion of a suffering-free generality and the means by which liberal capitalism enabled “children at the tenderest age” to be indoctrinated by anti-capitalist “political organizations.” (21c, 44) He would simply cast the blame for “liberalism’s death in Germany” to their advocacy for “democratic-socialism” without making the necessary critique that Pareto, and Schumpeter indirectly, does, which is to restructure the government to eradicate capitalism’s contradictions from which unrest arises. This ability for capitalism’s technological progress to enable class solidarity and the rise of socialist alignment is where it matches Pareto’s claim of how fascism emerges. Pareto agrees, going further, by stating that it was the introduction of Marxist organization within capitalism’s contradictions that revealed the ultimate failure of the government to maintain Order: protection of the people and their property (21a, 261-262).

What Pareto describes as a result of socialism’s failure to produce Order is what allows for the first conceptual stage of fascism to emerge: the “spontaneous,” “anarchistic” and “emotional” reaction from which the second stage, as Schumpeter would agree with, necessarily calls for centralized authority. Beginning with discussion of the first stage, Pareto’s, Benjamin’s and A&H’s views are indistinguishable. Capitalism, in order to be long lasting, has to be able to appropriate criticism of itself, but this results in institutionalizing indecisiveness and contradiction in economic investment, e.g. profiting from socialist films. The most notable distinction that Pareto makes is in agreeing that alienation and contradiction do exist, in contrast to Hayek’s dismissal of them as merely perceptual biases from indoctrination, but argues that its contradictions can be alleviated through political and social transformation without losing the economic utility of capitalism; this is the chief Fascist argument for counter-reaction. Attributing the arguments Pareto makes of Marx to the Marxist-orientation of Benjamin and A&H’s writings, Pareto states most problems attributed to capitalism are not necessarily a consequence of capitalism itself. An example he presents is the critique of the improper treatment of “women and children,” which he rebuts by noting that “primitive societies where the capitalist system does not exist or is only in its beginnings” treats them “even more badly,” (21a, 67) suggesting the cause can be found elsewhere, e.g. governmental and/or social structure. Pareto concedes that free-market competition, he calls “bourgeois socialism,” can be used to satisfy the “ruling class’s selfish interests” to the total disregard of the “permanent general interests of society” (21a, 68) but claims that the consequences of economic socialization, or “people’s socialism” and its necessary eradication of private property, will produce poorer investment, poorer savings, and distribute the costs of economic failures to everyone but the class which made the error (which he determines is significantly worse than letting capitalism’s interests guide the risks for which the costs from failure are only assigned to the risk-taker) (21a, 64). This is the critical point where Pareto, by stating that the economic system is not itself wholly the problem, makes the distinction that Karl Marx, and Hayek, failed to distinguish between capital and capitalist-employed investment.

Accordingly, Hayek can be considered as equally criticized in Pareto's critique of Marx, but instead of failing to understand the utility of "Simple Capital" like Marx, Hayek fails to consider the dangers which arise from "Appropriated Capital." Pareto defines "Appropriate Capital" as the capital employed and in possession of capitalists which, again, serves primarily to their (short-term) interests (again, emphasizing that they invest in socialist firms/organizations for profit). Instead, Pareto would aim to mitigate that contradictory investment, presumably, by authoritative taxation, to invest "into maximum economic welfare" (21a, 262) consistent with "the permanent general interests of society," socialism not one of them (21a, 68). Hayek would respond that the theoretical gain from allowing capitalist interests to dictate where investment or capital is employed would serve everyone's interests better, but this would be to suggest that those interests are taken in the long-term (which Schumpeter would contest) and would prevent immediate crisis (which Pareto would contest). Moreover, Pareto lays the fascist argument for opposing socialist revolution in a manner that Hayek would agree with, and that is fueled by the importance of "Simple Capital," or economic goods destined for the production of other goods, i.e. industry/technology inherent to markets (21a, 62). Pareto, Hayek, and Schumpeter would agree that since men will always follow their own self-interests, it is not obvious that the masses, through collective ownership of the land and industry, can ascertain what it is that constitutes their "self-interest" since this would no longer be a coherent, Marxist framework; *whose land is it they're interested in creating profit for?* And if the masses aren't deciding, given the inherent contradiction between motivation and economic structure, could a "government bureaucracy" really replace the people in policymaking and "employ" the appropriate amount of capital into the innovation necessary to promote further growth of 'simple capital?' He answers his own rhetorical question by saying that not only is there no evidence that savings or employment of capital would be superior in the absence of capitalism, (21a, 63) but there is substantial evidence that it is precisely this interest in the capitalist industries that stimulate further production (21a, 64). This fundamental appreciation of the capitalist-market economy and its interests results in an inevitable antipathy to the socialists who, as Pareto frames it, ignore intrinsic human nature like property ownership, or "man as he is," and instead view humans "as [Marx] wishes they would be." (21a, 66) That directed antipathy for the socialists and the 'Red Tyranny' in Italy would later need to be targeted at the political system that allowed them to organize; the second phase is to conquer central authority and abandon liberal-democracy to promote the existing property relations.

Schumpeter suggests that the arbitrary nature of liberal-democracy results in disillusionment which would suggest that beyond the aforementioned economic/social causes of fascism's emergence, the pull for centralization would naturally arise in the secondary phase to create the State. Schumpeter made clear that democracy produces its disillusionment when the collection of chaotic and contradicting wills are revealed to the public as neither producing positive nor decisive results, particularly on "qualitative issues" that concern war and culture (21b, 254-255). This would be descriptive of what Pareto describes as the spontaneous and anarchistic first phase of fascism, the intermediary between disillusionment and organization (21a, 70).

Schumpeter states that when faced with indecisive chaos, a "non-democratic agency might prove much more acceptable to [the people]" since the irritation for irreconcilable positions in a democratic context (or the anarchistic context that existed during the March on Rome) further divide the people (21b, 255). This centralization of authority would be considered the transaction to receive decisiveness and stability at the price of their cultural self-definition. Schumpeter, with Pareto, forward the technocratic conception of "determined and skillful leaders" (21a, 262) whose expertise is on those things that "directly concern [themselves and their] business dealings" whose "reality they have a full sense of," (21b, 258) "beyond short-term interests" (21b, 261). These expert leaders take negative sentiments, i.e. "*anti*-(pseudo)liberal, democratic, pacifist views", into a positive, *original* sentiment in favor of a "centralized authority" that corrects society from producing the alienation and contradictions of the former establishment whilst maintaining the capitalist property-structure (21a, 262-63). A&H describes this second phase of centralized authority as the rejection of the right of the people to change property relations, but the chance for Fascism to give the people an expression of national communion, the authentic social relationship (22b, 16). It is the replacement of the cultural "demand" the liberal-democracies imposed with their "art of generality" with "simple obedience" (22b, 12); "what does not endanger the Fascists is lawful, and what does is unlawful." (21a, 271) This secondary phase of centralized authority is created not only to remove the contradictions of capitalist profit-motives, but also to reject the alienation of man by *institutionalizing* his identity into the State. It is the "social renewal" which Pareto argues stems from this "religion of nationalism" (21a, 263). Pareto's characterization of Fascism, the most accurate relative to actual Fascist claims, is that no contradiction exists in the Fascist State's declaration of a renewed society, a national communion, and a property-structure invested in the maximum economic welfare of the people.

The counterargument to Pareto's positive outlook on a national community is most effectively presented by the Marxist-oriented art critics. Benjamin, A&H, and even Hayek to a certain degree, would not consider fascism as a *novel* creation, of perfecting some national community within a capitalist property-structure. They would not confirm that redefining communion with *absolute* alienation does anything but obscure the irreconcilable contradiction in language. This "novel" community of sovereign individuals strikingly mirrors the liberal-democratic culture industry, except it's worse because it actually makes illegal the introduction of "suffering," "identity," or "truth" from anomaly or differentiation from the legally-enforced culture-norms (22b, 9). Hayek would state that it cannot be an authentic individual identity without "freedom from necessity," that is freedom from compulsion (21c, 48). The problem that Benjamin and A&H have with the Fascists is not necessarily that they parody authentic individuality, but rather that they acknowledge the parody of authentic individuality as a result of maintaining the existing property relations, which is a problem. Given the aforementioned nature of business interests to categorize individuals into totalizing stereotypes from which products are created to reinforce themselves, the Fascist state maximizes business interests under the guise of efficiently reinvesting the profit by creating a single, totalizing

stereotype called the *Fascist*. To use A&H's framing, the Fascist claims the authentic 'Fascist' *as the style*, or the stereotype, because this is the most efficient demographic to market entertainment, information, products, services, or any other cultural propaganda to. Any possible dissimilarity is forcibly opposed because it challenges the existing property-relationship's profit maximization and *that* challenges the Fascist State which claims to protect *the individual*. The solution, vis-à-vis Socialism, would be to prevent alienation in the first place and this must be done by rejecting the capitalist property relations and rejecting any attempts to eradicate capitalism's contradictions within a capitalist structure (because state-capitalism only strengthens the business interests and gives it the power to physically compel, as opposed to socially compel, the stereotypes by which it advertises itself and its products to).

The final conceptualization by Hayek is to negate the previous two conceptions by neither accepting that capitalism's contradictions needed correcting nor the socialist's solution to reorganize property relations. This third view would find agreement with none of the aforementioned authors including Schumpeter who neither directly advocated for fascism or socialism but understood the benefits of monopoly in industry and technocratic political organization. Hayek comes off as confident in the cultural industry's formulaic image of a liberal-democracy: one free of suffering, one abundant in choices, and one with freedom to live; but, as described in length at how alienation emerges in the culture industry, this may be perceptually true for the popular, or "general" view, but it does not include the true *universal* expression of being which reveals the suffering, the lack of revolutionary options, and the "freedom [to allow] the stupid to starve." (22b, 9-12) (22a, 12). Ultimately, when considering which characterization of fascism is most accurate, the theorists who do not view the capitalist structure as positive *because of its alienation* produced, what I've argued, is the most verifiably documented sequence of events: culture industry's alienation, contradictions arise in profit motives, socialist protest emerges as a consequence of contradiction, fascist counterprotest to socialism, fascist conquest of central authority to remove contradictions that allowed socialism to arise, absolute alienation by stereotyping/parodying the individual *Fascist* for market/state efficiency. The Fascists would be best understood as not having created a *novel* structure, relative to capitalism, but rather that they embodied the ultimate conclusion of *state-capitalism*, which is evident by Pareto's apparent cognitive dissonance, where Pareto contradicts his own argument by naming liberal Switzerland and England (21a, 274), as other *valid(?) options* to prevent alienation.

Works Cited

*21a. Vilfredo Pareto, journalistic excerpts (1893, 1922, 1923)

21b. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942), ch. 21-22

21c. Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1945), condensed ed.

22a. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935)

22b. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (1944)

*These sources, per the format of the Modern Political Theory Course, are in relation to the assigned readings of the course. These are from topics 21 and 22 in UC Berkeley's Spring 2021: Modern Political Thought Course.