

Chapter 7, "Fascism," Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal**1. What is totalitarianism? How can both communism and fascism be described as totalitarian?**

Totalitarianism refers to “the attempt to take complete control of a society—not just its government but all of its social, cultural, and economic institutions—in order to fulfill an ideological vision of how society ought to be organized and life ought to be lived” (Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Political Ideologies...*, p. 191). In a totalitarian regime, government has a large role in the lives of its citizens, and in many conceptualizations of the dictators, the state encapsulates all interests. There is no separate being outside of the state.

Communism suggests that the government has a large role in central planning for the economy. It involves nationalization of all property, which it then doles back out to the individual workers of a society. In communism, the leadership actually is the privileged class with access to various types of resources—even though the ideology suggests that the bourgeois is lording it over the proletariat. As practiced, communism was set up within surveillance societies, and people had little to no privacy. They did not have freedom of speech to differ with the government. There were no real independent parties that could challenge the “dictatorship of the proletariat” as exemplified in the Communist Party that led. In such countries, the media is controlled by the government.

In Fascism, this conceptualizes a nation-state that is resplendently powerful and rising (a fatherland). Here, the state is the central element of its citizens’ lives. This ideology suggests that people are not all naturally equal and should not be treated in a democratic or egalitarian way. Rather, those who are more naturally gifted specimens should take leadership roles. Individuality should not truly exist. Rather, people should be fastened (*fasciare*) or bound to the state and together in unity. The individual’s behavioral responsibility to the state should be “Believe, obey, fight!” As an atomistic individual, they would not be able to achieve the glory of the state—which they saw as the main unit of measure / “organic conception of society.” This reactionary ideology to liberalism and socialism fought militantly against the idea of human equality and value. It is based on Friedrich Nietzsche’s ideas (in part), which were nihilistic and anti-religious and viewed people as emotional creatures (vs. the Enlightenment view of human rationality). Given human irrationality and emotionalism, governments should take a strong hand in deciding the country’s fate. The leaders should appeal to people with the accoutrements of power—like flags and uniforms and displays of pageantry and dramatic speeches (with the contents of the speeches much less important than the political theatre surrounding the speeches). They should usurp psychological insights about human nature—and build on their prejudices, passions, desires, emotions,

superstitions, and religious ideas. Per the video we watched in class about Benito Mussolini (1883 – 1945), he very much built his persona of being a healthy and hardworking man with his propaganda, and he worked hard on outside appearances and not truly building the reality (particularly in terms of the Italian military). To the Fascist, freedom and glory are achieved by building the nation and fighting individualism and egalitarianism and racial impurities (at least for some).

2. What “fascist”-type elements existed in Counter-Enlightenment thought?

The main Enlightenment assertions in the 1700s were some of the following ideas:

- Humanism – as a source and measure of value for every individual
- Rationalism—humans as rational and susceptible to reason
- Secularism—religion as a source of comfort
- Progressivism—the human story as progress
- Universalism—universal human nature despite differences of “race, culture, or religious creed” (Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Political Ideologies...*, p. 193).

In response to the Enlightenment ideas, the Counter-Enlightenment suggested that humans are fundamentally different and shaped by various features—whether race or gender. The human power of reasoning was too weak to be relied on. Rather, humans were prone to emotional tendencies. Many Counter-Enlightenment thinkers found Enlightenment thinking to be “fanciful, false, and politically dangerous” (Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Political Ideologies...*, p. 193).

The Fascist type elements in Counter-Enlightenment thought related to how people live and make decisions. The Fascist thinkers pushed for a powerful fatherland sort of country and leadership because of their sense that the masses desired this strong hand. They appealed to the emotional natures of people through pageantry and symbolism. They appealed to the superstitious and prejudicial parts of humanity by scapegoating others (Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Political Ideologies...*, p. 191).

3. What is “irrationalism,” and how did fascists use it?

In the 1800s, there were two main trends in intellectual currents: elitism and irrationalism. The first suggested that a classless society was not possible, and that there are *übermensches* or supermen. Irrationalism proposes the idea that emotion and desire affect people’s actions much more than Enlightenment believers would admit. People are seen to be at the subconscious control of various impulses about which they may not even be aware. In our Apr. 12 lecture in class, Dr. Johnson covered some thinking by various psychologists of the day who explored the human psyche. Sigmund Freud described the power of the libido in human identity and how sexual repression could lead to psychosis and hysteria. People would need to be professionally regressed in order to understand the factors in their childhoods that drive their thinking / feeling and behaviors as adults. B.F. Adler suggested that people’s underlying motivations are

to achieve a feeling of superiority over others. Early childhood experiences may result in feelings of inferiority, and so they assert themselves in order to get over these feelings. Carl Jung posited a collective unconscious as a species that could be passed on from one generation to the next. There are seminal archetypes of identities—through parenting, war, survival, hunger—and these are buried in the individual psyche at birth. These are embedded images and influential on people but difficult to be articulated. (Dr. Johnson mentioned that these may well be Platonic sorts of ideas.) There is the self. The “shadow” refers to animal instincts. Men have “anima” which is their feminine side and allows them to relate to women; women have an “animus” which is their masculine side and allows them to relate to men. People all have personas or their masks to the world. Some identities that are expressed as character types are hero figures, tricksters (like the devil), mothers, and other recurring figures. With the modern age focused on science and not on folklore / magic / religion, this human need may be met in modern mass movements or “mass mind” endeavors. Jung warned people of how such foundational needs may be met through political movements. Gustave Le Bon made observations about mass behavior and how people act differently when they are part of large groups than individually. For many, their courage is bolstered by being part of a large group: the more people there are, the more right you must be. In large groups, there are instigators or those who influence the group. The Fascists tapped this inherent need for symbolism by using flags, symbols, gestures, uniforms, speechifying, and other methods. (Dr. Johnson asked how so many could have fallen for dictators and their regimes—in what otherwise would have been ordinary people.)

So irrationalism refers to the unthinking / non-thinking and subconscious parts of human nature that drive them. This also refers to people’s emotions and need for superstitions. People have a need to believe. The Fascists tapped into this through pageantry, speech-making, uniforms, parades, uniforms, symbols, gestures, flags, and other accoutrement to support their power. When they activated movements, they activated people *en masse* because people would be willing to do more as a large group than as individuals. People were moved by myths, so they engaged in myth-making. They manipulated people emotionally. They strove to stir them with music and other engagements. (In light of today’s “predictive analytics,” it’s pretty concerning how predictable people can be.) Their military adventurism could be seen as a ploy for power (and was), but it was also a way to rally people around an intense and emotional cause.

4. How did Hitler and Mussolini deal differently with race?

Adolf Hitler venerated Aryans for their superiority and ability to create culture. He set up the common German *Volk* or people as a cultured and high-minded people. He saw others as inferior peoples, whose lesser-ness would allow them to be taken over. He scapegoated the Jewish people by suggesting that they were land-less and culture-less and non-creative parasites that lived off the lands and creativity of other peoples. He

suggested that their liberal ideas of overcoming human nature and living peaceably with others went against actual nature and showed their weakness as a people. He blamed the Jews for enervating Germany. He lumped them together with the communists.

In Hitler's *Mein Kampf* ("my struggle"), which he wrote while in prison in 1924, he described each race as having its own nature. Those of the Orient were crafty, cunning, and sly. Those Black Africans were stupid and slavish. Jews were greedy, scheming, selfish, and corrupting. The Aryans, however, were the master race, noble, creative, cultured, and naturally dominant. Hitler's was an ideology of Social Darwinism writ large, which explained for him a kind of race as destiny. Only an intense nationalism would save the German Aryans—and the Aryans were the only race worth living. For Hitler, freedom was the freedom of the nation or the *Volk*. (His ideas built on the race theorist work of Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau, Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Ludwig Woltmann.) Many of the thinkers pointed to racial purity and pure bloodlines as the highest form of humanity. In a sense, Hitler saw the different races as almost different species.

The dictator Hitler applied his ideas of gender also to the masses, whom he compared to women. He suggested that groups make decisions not by abstract reason but by an "indefinable emotional longing," and this longing for women and for the masses was to be dominated. People respond to force and power, in the way that people find commanders more appealing than weaklings, he suggested. People tend to love and identify with strength. He saw the ties between the masses and their leader as erotic and sadistic, per his leadership principle or *Fuhrerprinzip*.

In terms of the inferior peoples of the world, they were there to have their resources taken over to feed the fatherland's development. So, Germany invaded Poland and the Soviet Ukraine, in their aim to gather resources to show the predominance of Germans and to eliminate all enemies. Hitler let loose the "Final Solution" to the so-called Jewish problem, which resulted ultimately in the deaths of six million Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, and others.

Racial theory was at the core of Nazism (national socialism), with the following formula:

Fascism + Racism = Nazism (Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Political Ideologies...*, p. 206).

As a theory, Fascism and Nazism focused on national and ethnic identity, in a form of particularism.

The fact of Hitler's election into the leadership of Germany (as chancellor) showed the popular appeal of his ideas, in terms of the followership. He thought that Nazism—as social democracy—if combined with ruthless brutality, would overcome socialism. People tend to respond to dogma and force, Hitler suggested. Dr. Johnson said that in a time with few answers, a leader who suggested that he provided the answers and who

appealed to existing prejudices, could make great headway, the way Hitler did. His faux sense of history with the then-modern Germans linked to Aryans linked to the ancient Greeks is surprising in the sense that his storytelling could wreak so much disaster. And then again, where were the honest historians?

In class on Apr. 19, we saw some of the cartoons that were prevalent in German newspapers that show Jews as dominating the world economically. There were depictions of Jewish men trying to defile Aryan women (sexual competition). We heard of the forged document of the protocols of the wise men of Zion that alleged that the Jews wanted to take over the world. The message here was of severe “othering” which made the Final Solution operational in terms of dealing with these non-assimilable scheming beings. Those ideas also justified the killing and enslavement (as “helpers”) of the lesser peoples to feed the German fatherland.

The philosophies of Friedrich Nietzsche were used by the Fascists. Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) was a nationalist. He believed in the irrationalism of people. And he was an elitist. The influence of foreigners on Germany was seen as negative. Culture gives people life and meaning, and cosmopolitanism would draw away from that. Humans are naturally classist, and believing in egalitarianism and democracy would suppress the rising of the *Über mensch*. Nietzsche advocated elitist power. This thinker condemned democracy. Giving an equal share of power to all would overwhelm those who would naturally rule. At an extreme, democracy could emasculate the nation and hold it back from achieving great things. He was not for charity or religions—because he felt that the masses’ will to power would overwhelm the few. He also saw European culture as too rationalistic and emphasizing reason above the “veils of culture.” People need to be led by emotion. Between Apollonian and Dionysian thought, he preferred the Dionysian. He was a nihilist and saw no meaning to life and said famously that God is dead.

Like Hitler, Benito Mussolini started out as a Marxist. He had thought that class issues would be the main identity that people would go to if put under pressure, but he found that in WWI that they tended to fall back along class, race, and national lines. They did not coalesce around worldwide communism. Once he realized that nationalism was a stronger force, he went in that direction. Then he adopted Fascism as a more powerful ideology. At the core of his ideas were not about race per se but the supremacy of individuals with passion and who could use force.

Benito Mussolini and the Italian Fascists, on the other hand, did not focus so much on race. Per the course discussion on April 17, he was anti-liberal, not conservative, anti-socialist (as he saw socialism as effeminate and materialistic vs. spiritualistic). His Fascism focused on the spiritual fulfillment of men who lived not for themselves but for their nation, in a selfless and non-materialistic way. He saw it as a high calling when men subsumed themselves into the national cause and the “religious politics” of the Fascist regime. He suggests that people may recognize the Objective Will of the state in a kind of spiritual society. Maybe he thought ideas could save the people. While that

Italian Fascism made some sort of compact with the Italian Roman Catholic church, Fascism was all about war and conflict. The politics of Fascism promoted an ethic, not a theology. (I personally think that dictators don't mind large groups that can be cowed at a few pressure points—namely—at the level of the leaders. Large churches can be hugely compliant...) Anyway, Mussolini was good at creating staged sets and headline events but not so effective at rallying the economy or the military. He seemed to buy into what he saw as the human desire for wild action and the appeal to emotions. He fed the love of violence as well.

Mussolini saw war as a spiritual force that brought into full play people's will and intelligence. He did not see perpetual peace as possible (in contrast to the Kantian sense of hope). He saw war as the highest tension of all human capabilities. Finally, Italian Fascism controlled the economy into "corporations" or collections of economic sectors under state control. People were to stop making money for themselves but work for higher and collective nationalistic goals. Mussolini realized that people could capitulate quickly in the face of violence, such as the president Victor Emmanuel III when faced with the Fascist Blackshirts, when he capitulated to Mussolini's power and made him prime minister. Mussolini's sense that people were pushovers was accurate only to a degree. It did not work as a long-term strategy.

The Italian Fascists did not agree with the positivistic conceptualists of life of liberalism—which suggested that with the proper laws that people could live a better life through their government. They saw the push to institute laws as signs of weakness with weak peoples using laws to balance out power. In their critique of the Enlightenment view, they saw race as inherently more instructive about how people would live. They also saw the power of terror in driving power in the world. If history was a vast slaughter and acts of war, then sometimes, it must be necessary to be willing to die in order to feel human. Warfare was drama and a time when people were at their most human. The human competition to dominate per the Hegelian view was a core part of the Italian Fascist ideology. As Dr. Johnson said, Benito Mussolini portrayed himself as a "manly man" who bore the inherent challenge of pushing other men to also act in hyper-masculine ways. His sense was that outside of history, man is nothing. Mussolini was more of a doer and less of a thinker. He worked to concentrate power (conservatives would have been skeptical of deep concentrations of power). He encouraged his own cult of personality.

Anyway, racialized ideas in the 20th century did lead to other manifestations in other geographical zones—such as apartheid in S. Africa.

READINGS FROM IDEALS AND IDEOLOGIES: A READER

1. What did Joseph-Arthur De Gobineau (1816-1882) dislike about Enlightenment thought?

Enlightenment thought suggested that humans tend to be universally rationalistic. By contrast, De Gobineau suggests that there are huge racial differences between those of different races and that the white race is far superior to the “yellow” and “black” races. He describes history as being created by one family alone, that of the strong white race. (So De Gobineau is not only racist and elitist, but he does not see inherent rationality in people.)

2. What did Gobineau think was the way to get the optimal racial qualities?

This French diplomat looked at a race as a so-called “problem of history” and a partial reason for why societies rise and fall through history. He saw the mingling of different races as leading to societal downfalls. A nation degenerates and falls back from its highest point of achievement (civilization) when lesser races intermingle with higher ones. (De Gobineau, “Civilization and Race,” in 1915/1967, as quoted in Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Ideals and Ideologies*, p. 291). Based on physiological observations (and theories of physiognomy and intelligence), this writer suggests that the white races are at the top, the yellow in the middle, and the black at the bottom. Whites are deeply attached to life. They were characterized by “beauty, intelligence, and strength” (p. 293). Those who are yellow tend toward mediocrity and not dreaming; they do not tend towards invention but rather emulating others. Those who are black have a low intellect and tend to be prone to appetite and desires, overlaid with “instability and capriciousness of feeling.” Those of mixed race (with adulterated blood) result in dilution of the stronger races—even though there is some research (he says) that racial mixing can result in some stronger traits. De Gobineau seems to think that having races not mix is the optimal way to preserve quality.

3. Why does Alfredo Rocco dislike liberal, democratic and socialist ideologies? What do they all have in common, according to him?

Alfredo Rocco, in “The Political Theory of Fascism,” disliked some core assertions of liberal, democratic, and socialist ideologies: namely, the idea that there is inherent and equal value in human lives and a flatter (or even non-class) structure that would be socially ideal. For Rocco, he suggests that societies are not sum totals of atomistic individuals. Rather, the actual correct unit of actual action is the state, and people should then be subsumed in that state. Further, people are not all made equal. Their place in society should reflect their actual “natural intelligence,” based on Rocco’s ideas of elitism (Rocco, “The Political Theory of Fascism,” 1926, as cited in Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Ideals and Ideologies*, p. 307).

4. What is the ideal type of human being from Mussolini’s perspective, and what is the worst type?

Benito Mussolini apparently evolved from thinking that the fight between the social classes was the primary force of history and politics to one in which the nation has a

primary role. He described Fascism as a “religious conception” in which a human being sees his position in relation to “superior law”.

For Mussolini, the ideal type of human being is one who is a great patriot as the man of Fascism. He describes: “The man of Fascism is an individual who is nation and fatherland, which is a moral law, binding together individuals and the generations into a tradition and a mission, suppressing the instinct for a life enclosed within the brief round of pleasure in order to restore within duty a higher life free from the limits of time and space; a life in which the individual, through the denial of himself, through the sacrifice of his own private interests, through death itself, realizes that completely spiritual existence in which his value as a man lies” (Mussolini, 1939, “The Doctrine of Fascism,” as cited in Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Ideals and Ideologies*, p. 296). He describes a xenophobia which informs his work—in which foreigners enervate a state...and they must be fought to avoid the enslavement of the native peoples.

A worst type of individual then would be an individual who does not have relation to the State but fancies himself / herself individualistic. An individual who looks to a spiritual identity at the level of the self would be negative in Mussolini’s eyes, since he describes the state as the fulfillment of the spiritual identity of individuals. A man who does not allow his moral and intellectual life to be taken over by the state would be considered irrelevant to Fascism. A pacifist would not have a place in the militaristic Fascist and totalitarian view of the world that Mussolini both espoused and lived. A Pacifist would be cowardly. Anyone who professes liberalism would also be considered the worst type because they believe in the agnosticism of politics.

5. Explain what you think Mussolini means when he describes fascism as "a spiritualized conception" of man.

For Mussolini, he saw the state as the ultimate embodiment of the citizens’ ambitions and their realization of their spiritual needs. He describes a self-realization of individuals who recognize the superior law of the state and its ethics. Joining the state then “raises him to conscious membership of a spiritual society” (Mussolini, 1939, “The Doctrine of Fascism,” as cited in Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Ideals and Ideologies*, p. 297). He suggests a kind of transcendence and higher purpose for individuals who may be fulfilled with their citizenship in the state. This piece may be part of that conscious describing of a state to meet the subconscious needs of emotional and irrational and prejudicial peoples that was discussed behind the idea of “irrationalism” (as a Counter-Enlightenment concept that the Fascists subscribed to).

6. What is the result of “racial crossing” according to Hitler?

Adolf Hitler, in “Nation and Race” (from *Mein Kampf* or “My Struggle”), describes a journey of self-discovery in which he found his own way back to his own people. He describes the psyche of a populace as that of a woman who wanted to be dominated.

He observed the importance of terror, writing: “Terror at the place of employment, in the factory, in the meeting hall, and on the occasion of mass demonstrations will always be successful unless opposed by equal terror” (Hitler, 1943, “Nation and Race,” in Dagger & Ball, 2010, *Ideals and Ideologies*, p. 311). He suggests that it’s only natural for creatures to mate with their own kind, and any mating outside of that (by which he means mixed race) would be considered unnatural. He uses from-nature observations to justify the promotion of “racial purity, universally valid in Nature...” (p. 311) In an evolutionary argument, he suggests that Nature desires the mating of the strong with the strong to ensure stronger species. Racial crossing might ruin generations of higher breeding (p. 312). Specifically, racial crossing is seen as leading to two issues:

- a. “Lowering the level of the higher race;
- b. Physical and intellectual regression and hence the beginning of a slowly but surely progressing sickness” (p. 312).

He brings in a religious element saying that such racial crossing will be a “sin against the will of the eternal creator” (p. 312).

7. Explain what Hitler meant by referring to Jews by the derogatory term “parasites.” How would this appeal to the Germans?

Hitler criticizes the “modern pacifist” stance and the need to “overcome Nature” of some of the Jewish peoples of his day (p. 312). Such ideas are not only impossible, he suggests, but reflects the impoverishment of the Jewish peoples. “Certain ideas are even tied up with certain men,” he writes (p. 313). He suggests that the pacifistic-human idea will lead to “barbarism and chaos” (p. 313). Further, he sees the weakening of the strong Aryan blood as leading to the “blood poisoning” of racial mixing.

In Hitler’s conceptualization, he describes culture as high human achievement and ties cultures to certain races. “If we were to divide mankind into three groups, the founders of culture, the bearers of culture, the destroyers of culture, only the Aryan could be considered as the representative of the first group,” he writes (p. 314). Tapping history, he looks to how the Aryans colonized other peoples as examples of their superiority.

The Jews are seen as having their own separate culture. Their nature is one of “cunning,” according to Hitler. They are a peoples without their own land or own culture and therefore had lesser value (p. 318). He describes them as selfish and self-interested (p. 317). The parasitic reference suggests that a Jew is a “typical parasite, a sponger who like a noxious bacillus keeps spreading as soon as a favorable medium invites him. (Not all parasites destroy hosts. Rather, some have commensal relationships with their hosts.) And the effect of his existence is also like that of spongers wherever he appears, the host people dies out after a shorter or longer period,” he writes (p. 319). The propaganda of that age showed Jews as vampires. Hitler suggested that the Jews’ intelligence was stolen from their interactions with other peoples—who on their leaving

(expulsions)—took others' ideas with them like thieves (in Dr. Johnson's words). In the Apr. 19 class, Dr. Johnson showed the Jews as the "ultimate contradiction" or counter-narrative to the Nazi view. After all, the Jews hailed from an ancient civilization and were highly accomplished and strong and learned. Hitler even called them his "mightiest opponent." Hitler argued that excessive civilization and intelligence was bad. He cited their lack of passion and their irrationalism. He lauded Aryans ("the chosen race") as much greater in their willingness to put themselves into the lives of the community through self-sacrifice (vs. the Jews whom he depicted as self-interested and selfish, intelligent without spirit).

He uses many derogative descriptions: "If the Jews were alone in this world, they would stifle in filth and offal; they would try to get ahead of one another in hate-filled struggle and exterminate one another, in so far as the absolute absence of all sense of self-sacrifice, expressing itself in their cowardice, did not turn battle into comedy here too" (p. 318). He ascribes to Jews socialist ideas. He points to "blood poisoning" in terms of intermixing. He points to economic and political manipulations to try to take over the host state.

They were not directly contributing to the nation, and so they were weakening it. The German peoples, who were humiliated in WWII, are thought to have found vindication in Hitler's scapegoating ideas.