FASCISM AND POLITICAL THEORY

Critical perspectives on fascist ideology

DANIEL WOODLEY

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Fascism and Political Theory

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Daniel Woodley teaches politics at DLD College in London. He holds a PhD in political sociology from the University of Essex (2002), and is the author of numerous articles and several textbooks on ideology and political theory including, most recently, *Conservatism* (2005).

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Fascism and Political Theory

Critical perspectives on fascist ideology

Daniel Woodley

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To Wanda . . . I could not wish for another

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Preface

This study is intended as a critical introduction to the origins and development of fascist ideology, and will be of interest to students and researchers working in the fields of politics, history and historical sociology. The aim is to consolidate students' theoretical understanding, and to help students acquire the interdisciplinary skills necessary to understand the concrete social, economic and political conditions which generate and sustain fascism. The text also offers students a critical resource to challenge revisionist approaches in fascist studies. In too many standard texts, a programmatic or essentialist reading of fascist ideology as a 'secular religion' is taken for granted, while researchers remain preoccupied with the search for an elusive 'fascist minimum'. The emphasis on formal ideology in contemporary historiography has increased our awareness of the complexity and eclectic nature of fascist ideologies which challenge liberalism and social democracy; but many outstanding questions remain, including the relationship between fascism and modernism, the structural and ideological links between fascism and capitalism, the origins of fascist violence, and the link between fascism and masculinity.

The text begins with a critical overview of the debate on fascism, before turning to the core substantive themes in the discussion of fascism and political theory. Chapter 2 examines ideological positions in the debate on fascism, rationality and modernity, looking at the work of key fascist intellectuals. The aim is to locate fascism within the ideological spectrum by examining its philosophical sources and cultural dynamics, to demarcate fascism from liberalism, conservatism and socialism, and to assess the economic and cultural significance of fascist modernism. Chapter 3 examines the central problem of the relation between fascism and social structure, asking whether support for fascist movements is linked to class or whether fascism can be explained as a pathology of industrial modernity, while Chapter 4 examines the relationship between fascism and the state, focusing on the tension between ideological hegemony and political sovereignty, and the exceptional nature of 'totalitarian' rule. This theme is continued in the discussion of violence in Chapter 5: fascism is often associated with the glorification of 'creative violence' for its own sake, in contrast with expansionist nationalism,

although the similarities between fascist militarism and colonial subjugation suggest that fascism grew out of European civilization rather than in opposition to it. In Chapter 6, the emphasis turns to the political economy of fascism, which is analysed as a radical example of postliberal capitalism. The central feature of fascist political economy lies not simply in the turn towards economic nationalism, but in the corporatization of political power. This can be contrasted with non-totalitarian forms of postliberal capitalism, which share a common emphasis on protectionism and state regulation as solutions to the crisis of liberalism.

The question of nationalism is investigated in greater detail in Chapter 7 in an attempt to explain the importance of the nation form in fascist ideology. The origins of fascist nationalism are complex and in some respects contradictory, but it is clear that attempts to define fascism as the logical outcome of primordial attachments are unhelpful as they fail to grasp the point that nationalism functions by connecting identity and power under changing historical conditions: in an important sense, nationhood is the outcome of economic and demographic changes which create and reproduce identity through the rationalization of commonalities functional for the group in question. In this sense, fascism can be understood as a type of 'internal colonialism' in which human life itself becomes the concern of the state, a theme continued in Chapter 8 on the question of race, where attention is paid to the causal links between fascism, imperialism and 'scientific' racism. This is followed in Chapter 9 by a detailed analysis of the role of gender and sexuality in fascist ideology, focusing on the glorification of virility and reproductive power in the fascist race-nation, and the controversial issue of fascism and homosexuality.

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1 Fascism and political theory

Introduction

Approaching the dense literature on fascism for the first time, students of history and politics might be forgiven for wondering how it is possible for specialists to explain the phenomenon in such contradictory ways. Most striking, perhaps, is the difference between comparative-analytic studies of fascist ideologies which interpret fascism as a millenarian revolt against the degenerative impact of modernity, and political-economic studies which link fascism to the economic and social-structural crisis of capitalism. In recent years, the former approach has been in the ascendant, to the detriment of our understanding of the problem. Revisionist historians have created the impression of a 'new consensus' in fascist studies which is – on closer inspection – founded less on scholarly agreement than a conscious rejection of historical materialism as a valid methodological framework. Also striking are attempts to identify the continuity of 'unreason' in fascism and poststructuralism. In an effort to combat the 'philosophical anarchism' of modern social theory, intellectual historians such as Wolin (2004) suggest obliquely that because both fascists and poststructuralists question the premises of occidental rationalism and American cultural leadership, there is an equivalence between the right-wing assault on democracy in fascist and neoconservative ideology and the poststructuralist critique of the democratic basis of western culture. Not only do arguments of this kind ignore the obvious substantive distinction between radical right-wing and radical left-wing criticisms of liberalism in an attempt to implicate the 'soft totalitarianism' of the left as an amoral betrayal of Enlightenment universalism, but are oblivious to the real and present danger implicit in neoconservative, neofascist and right-wing fundamentalist attacks on emancipatory politics.

The following study can be read as a response to this retreat from critical social science, offering a challenge to culturalist readings of fascism as a 'secular religion'. Culturalist approaches claim to 'take fascism seriously', tracing the intellectual sources of fascist rebellion in European culture and society. The principal achievement of the so-called 'new consensus' has been to highlight the shared crisis of meaning experienced by communities

confronted by the onrush of modernity. For Griffin (1991), 'generic fascism' assumes different forms in different contexts, but is always concerned with one aim: the revitalization of a decadent liberal society undermined by the corrosive impact of materialism. This approach has been influential in recent years, stimulating research into the literary and cultural production of fascist intellectuals; but it has also led to an exclusive emphasis on ideology abstracted from material conditions, rendering opaque the social function of fascist populism in the organization of postliberal capitalism. Although the search for a 'fascist minimum' has enabled a more nuanced understanding of fascist movements and ideas, the definition of fascism as a 'totalitarian religion' suggests a programmatic reading of ideology as an autonomous system of beliefs detached from social practice. As students of ideology, the cultural and intellectual sources of political movements deserve our attention, and culturalist approaches shed light on aspects of fascism ignored by earlier historians. Yet ideological production can only be explained in relation to the objective social mechanisms which determine human consciousness, namely the material interests generated by social structures and the patterns of identities which arise through the lived experience of individuals (Wright 1997: 395). Fascism is no exception, and we cannot explain the complex determination of fascist ideology unless we acknowledge the production of hegemonic dispositions in capitalism which orient themselves towards their object, enabling individuals to rule out autonomously what may already have been ruled out for them in any case (Bourdieu 1991: 55). Fascism is an example of this type of subjectification: through a populist form of 'identitarian identification', fascism appeals to subjects not as individuals or 'class actors', but as 'the people', revalorizing the particular values of political society as universally valid.

Fascism presents a serious intellectual challenge: combining a syncretic (heterogeneous) mix of nationalism, militarism and regenerationist myth, it lacks a coherent theoretical core and is therefore difficult to categorize. This problem is exacerbated by the tension between elitism and populism, by the presence of anti-capitalist and anti-socialist themes, and by the tension between political and cultural nationalism in different fascist ideologies. From a political-theoretical perspective, however, the primary question is not whether fascism offers an 'alternative' to liberal modernity, but where exactly liberalism ends and fascism begins: to explain the phenomenon, it is not enough to point to anger or resentment within core fascist constituencies; rather, we need to address the 'deficiencies in liberalism which make fascism possible' (McCormick 1997: 14). Fascism also raises issues about ownership of the past and the possibility of value-free inquiry: can scholars adopt an ethically neutral stance when considering the causes and consequences of fascism as a political practice? This question is of particular importance in countries where fascism has been successful, but is relevant for anyone working through the past. Historians have increased our understanding of fascism through archival research, but while primary sources are an essential

part of scholarship, empirical studies often treat documentary evidence too literally or fail to apply historical understanding to a theoretical diagnosis of the present. Developments in Europe and the United States suggest that while fascism in its historic form is clearly unrepeatable, the structural conditions which facilitate fascism are not: the corporatization of political power, the growth of militarism and the triumph of right-wing populism present serious threats to the future of democracy in the West (Giroux 2006). By focusing on millenarianism, theorists of generic fascism are searching in the wrong place: the objective causes of fascism have less to do with regenerationist fantasies of 'rebirth' than with the failure of liberalism as the organizing principle of market economies. If we are to prevent the 'museumization' of fascism (Pizzo 1998), we need to explain the continuity between historical fascism and contemporary right-wing populism as a radicalization of postliberal politics based on the erosion of democratic participation and the emergence of a new politics of fear.

Fascism and historiography

After 1945 discussion of fascism centred on the immediate fascist past and the personal dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini. In an attempt to explain the sudden rise of fascism, historians emphasized the weakness of democratic traditions in Germany and Italy before 1914 and the negative impact of the First World War on the political culture of both countries. In the case of Italy, fascism was interpreted as a 'bolt from the blue', the outcome of unredeemed nationalist expectations, border nationalism and political upheaval. Building on the work of Croce (1929), De Felice examined the phenomenon from an apolitical perspective, eschewing a critical interpretive framework in favour of naïve empiricism. Historians sought to defend the integrity of liberal Italy, pointing to the emergence of a democratic culture before 1914, and it was not until the 1970s that discussion of Italy's recent past became polarized between supporters and opponents of De Felice's orthodoxy. In the case of Germany, Taylor (1945) famously identified a link between Nazism and the 'German mentality', while Bullock (1952) attempted to explain how 'Hitlerism' developed from a marginal antisemitic movement in Munich into a destructive racial-imperial project responsible for the catastrophe of the Second World War. Both studies generated heated debate about the collective responsibility of the Germans for the war and the peculiarity of German history – a debate subsequently fuelled by Fischer's (1967) study of German war aims. Yet the popular belief that the 'pathological' development of nationalism in Italy and Germany was linked to their status as 'belated nations' now seems unconvincing. Implicit in this argument is the reassuring but unsustainable view that the regressive nature of fascism lay *outside* the normal course of western political and cultural development – a view now rejected by most objective observers.

Discussion in the 1950s also centred on the idea of 'totalitarianism', a

Table 1.1 Theoretical approaches to fascism

Perspective	*Key writers*	*Mode of explanation*	*Social function*	*Ideological features*
Marxism	Pollock Vajda Poulantzas Laclau Lukács Ahmad	Structural crisis of capitalism; new form of Bonapartism; exceptional form of capitalist state; bourgeois reaction; destruction of reason; generalized tendency	Stabilization of bourgeois rule; state-capitalism; popular-democratic interpellation of the working class; suppression of labour movement	Petty-bourgeois reaction; postliberal capitalism; populist nationalism; anti-socialism; vitalism
Totalitarianism	Arendt Talmon Kornhauser Marcuse	Decline of the nation-state; decline of traditional authority; mass society; fascism as totalitarian modernity	Politicization of everyday life; totalitarian coordination of society; elimination of competing spheres of authority and consciousness; erosion of state–society distinction	Link between Nazism and Stalinism; bureaucratic collectivism; anti-individualism; anti-pluralism
Modernization theory	Lipset Sauer Turner Gregor	Extremism of the centre; crisis of modernization; fascism and communism as modernizing dictatorships	Reassertion of middle-class power; revolt of 'déclassés'; unintentional modernization; revolutionary mobilization	Anti-pluralism/populism; rejection of liberal modernity; collectivist nationalism
Generic fascism I	Nolte Weber Linz	Emphasis on 'fascist minimum'; utopian 'anti-movement'; comparative typological definition	Resistance to transcendence; revolutionary mass movement; orchestration of national unity/national mobilization	Reactionary anti-modernism; collectivist nationalism; anti-liberalism/anti-Semitism; anti-clericalism

Perspective	*Key writers*	*Mode of explanation*	*Social function*	*Ideological features*
Culturalist approaches	Mosse Sternhell Kershaw Diner	Specific cultural sources of fascism; fascism = national + socialism; Nazism manifests aspects of fascism; singularity of Nazism	National unity; mass mobilization; abolition of parliamentary democracy; war of annihilation	Anti-rationalism; integral nationalism; corporatism; anti-liberalism/anti-capitalism
Generic fascism II	Griffin Eatwell Payne Paxton	Fascism as populist ultra-nationalism; third-way ideology; comparability of fascist ideologies; complicity of conservative elites	Rebirth of the nation from period of decline/decadence; mass mobilization of society; suppression of parliamentary democracy	Liturgical style of politics; emphasis on national myths; continuities between fascist and neofascist ideology; exaltation of violence/masculinity
Critical theory poststructuralism	Adorno/Benjamin Hewitt Lacoue-Labarthe Agamben Neocleous	Antinomies of Enlightenment rationality; logical consequence of humanism; state of exception; regulation of capitalist modernity	Commodification of human life; death of the individual; social domination; biopolitics; exaltation of nature	Emphasis on myth; continuity between European colonial racism and fascist racism; sovereignty; reactionary modernism

category used to denote the maximal authoritarianism of an organized state aimed at controlling the inner and outer dimensions of human life. Totalitarianism also implies collective participation in the realization of long-term goals and the unquestioning subordination of citizens to the state. Early theorists of totalitarianism such as Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956), Talmon (1952) and Arendt (1951) emphasized the claim of an 'absolute will' to dominate human life – a kind of power for its own sake. Yet the concept is problematic, and its application in history and social science remains controversial. This stems more from disagreement over the function of the term than its exact meaning, particularly where fascism is equated uncritically with technocratic absolutism.

Four problems with this approach can be identified. First, while totalitarianism theorists stress the relevance of ideological indoctrination, a weakness in their approach lies in their amorphous definition of ideology. Not only does the substance of official ideology differ between 'totalitarian' states, but its function is distinct. In Italy, for example, the state exploited a succession of myths before settling on a vision of a 'New Rome', while National Socialism was based on a systematic mythologization of premodern race-war. Second, the concept of totalitarianism is a by-product of Cold War liberalism, a school of thought in American political science popular in the 1950s but now discredited. Right-wing intellectuals such as Brzezinski, Friedrich and Schapiro criticized the 'totalizing' nature of Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, fascism and Nazism, using the term 'totalitarianism' to legitimize a hypothetical *bipolarity* between the rational organization of western capitalism and irrational absolutist systems in the non-western world. Third, Marxists stress the methodological weakness of phenomenological approaches, which tend to offer superficial description rather than explanation: at best, evidence from comparative studies can be used to justify a form of convergence theory (where the basic economic difference between fascism and communism is overlooked); at worst, the concept of totalitarianism obscures the link between fascism and capitalism, introducing an anthropological bias from industrial society theory which presents the social manifestations of technology and labour that capitalism brings into being as ahistorical phenomena, beyond the capacity of humans to change. Finally, the concept of totalitarianism is self-contradictory: it is difficult to imagine a closed, self-contained social system based on absolute power/knowledge as there are elements in all systems whose identity can only be established by something which exists outside it (Newman 2005). The assumption of total control in totalitarianism theory ignores the essential plurality of human agency, based on the capacity of individuals (however limited) to disturb stable structures of power and create new beginnings.

A third phase in the discussion opened up with the publication of Nolte's study *Three Faces of Fascism*, in which fascism is presented in quasi-apologetic terms as a reaction to 'Asiatic barbarism'. Stressing the existence of a 'fascist epoch', Nolte suggested controversially (but reasonably enough)

that 'fascism would have found its place in the Europe of the postwar period even if Mussolini and Hitler had never lived' (1965: 6), a claim which won few adherents at the time. Although dismissive of neofascism (in contrast with liberalism and Marxism, fascism was of 'epochal' but not 'world-historical' importance), Nolte held that Nazism should be placed in its intellectual and historical context, namely the civil war in Europe in the early twentieth century. Nolte also stressed the importance of conservative forces in European culture since the early nineteenth century, which culminated in the violent reaction of reactionary forces against the levelling impact of modernity. This emphasis on reaction allowed Nolte to locate Nazism in a broader sociocultural/philosophical context, but exposed him to accusations of relativism for downplaying the unique barbarism of the Third Reich. He was criticized for using impenetrable 'metapolitical' language to explain fascism as 'resistance to transcendence', a cultural rebellion against the 'historical event of the break-up of a traditional lifeworld in the transition to modernity' (Habermas 1988: 222). Yet despite these and other criticisms – Kershaw notes that Nolte's phenomenological method 'seems to amount in practice to little more than taking the self-depiction of a phenomenon seriously' (1989: 27), there is no doubt that, alongside Linz (1976), he must be ranked as one of the most influential non-Marxist theorists of the postwar era.

In the 1970s historians began to focus more closely on the philosophical and cultural sources of fascist ideologies, the emphasis being on difference rather than similarity. For Mosse (1999), the origins of National Socialism can be traced back to *völkisch* nationalism, reflecting the difference between national development in western and central Europe. The unification of Germany was, he argues, a disappointment for Germans as the focus switched from identity to industrialization. This encouraged nationalists to emphasize the distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* – between a cultural nation based on organic unity and ethnic identity, and a political nation based on democracy and economic development. Mosse also emphasizes the revolutionary nature of fascism as a 'third way' ideology, combining elements of conservatism and socialism, although he acknowledges that this utopian vision was dependent on the emergence of 'fascist man' rather than a change in property relations. For Sternhell (1987, 1994), on the other hand, the emergence of fascism as a distinctive, anti-materialist revision of Marxism reflects the intellectual synthesis of nationalism and syndicalism among the revolutionary intelligentsia in France and Italy prior to 1914. French fascism, he argues, provides a fruitful case-study of fascist ideology precisely because the French movement (*Le Faisceau*) was unsuccessful, and thus uncorrupted by the pragmatism which affects radical movements in the transition to power. However, while both authors offer insightful perspectives on fascism as a utopian enterprise, both explain its appeal in purely idealist terms, neglecting the structural and ideological determinants of right-wing populism which generate and sustain fascist movements. The weakness of this approach lies not simply in an emphasis on intellectual and cultural sources

(which may be irrelevant to working class and petty bourgeois voters), but in a failure to examine the contradiction between the collectivist appeal and anti-democratic function of fascist ideology as *political myth*: political myths are not coherent systems of beliefs but methods of communication, commodified atemporal constructs which define a partial reality by suppressing autonomous identities and attachments. Presenting fascism as a coherent anti-bourgeois ideology obscures the way the fascist myth of unity and identity restructures subjective dispositions adequate to the reproduction of capitalist social relations.

A new consensus emerged in the 1990s with the publication of several groundbreaking studies, each drawing on particular aspects of the non-Marxist tradition. A key feature of this consensus has been an emphasis on the *nature* of fascism rather than its causes, employing detailed comparative descriptions of fascist ideology in a range of contexts. The most important representative of this approach is Griffin, whose aim is to 'identify a common core of fascist phenomena which can be treated as its definitional minimum, while allowing for the profound differences which exist between the Fascism which took power in Italy and all other movements subsequently associated with it' (1991: 13). In an effort to ensure the category fascism remains analytically plausible, he revises Nolte's fascist minimum, drawing on Freeden's (1996) distinction between the core and peripheral elements of ideologies. He also develops Mannheim's famous distinction between system ideologies and utopias, emphasizing the mobilizing potential of ideals 'lived out as truths' (ibid.: 15). The ineliminable component of fascism is, he suggests, 'palingenetic ultra-nationalism', a primordial fantasy of 'rebirth' which he identifies in a range of interwar and postwar ideologies.

Like Griffin, Payne (1996) employs a comparative-analytic method, yet restricts his analysis to the interwar era. Building on the work of Linz (1976), Payne offers a comprehensive if unwieldy typology of the political goals, ideological 'negations', and organizational style of fascism. The result is a conservative interpretation of fascism, which owes much to the work of Mosse, Gentile and De Felice, depicting fascism as the 'most extreme form' of modern European nationalism. However, while Payne defines fascism as a revolutionary mass movement, he stresses the need for caution in the use of descriptive typologies, and is careful to distinguish between fascist, radical right-wing and authoritarian-conservative movements. He also questions whether Iberian fascism should be compared directly with German and east European varieties, or whether it should be examined as a subcategory of authoritarian nationalism in its own right. Nevertheless, as Eatwell argues, one of the main weaknesses of Payne's approach is that it is not entirely clear 'whether it is necessary for all the main aspects of his threefold typology to be present for a movement or regime to be defined as fascist' (2007a: xxv). Some fascist movements and ideologies fit his extensive typology; others fall short.

A third representative of the new revisionism is Eatwell himself, who accepts Griffin's position but criticizes his definition of fascism as too broad.

It is important to examine Eatwell's arguments, as these will be relevant to the discussion in later chapters. Principally, Eatwell rejects the overreliance on nationalism as the core defining element of fascist ideology which, he argues, is more complex than Griffin's ideal type allows for. Instead, he links the conceptual approach (defining ideology) with a broader theoretical approach (defining the causes and functions of fascism) in a 'spectral-syncretic' approach based on four ideological themes: (i) the emphasis on natural history and social Darwinism, indicating a pessimistic acceptance of the human need to dominate and the capacity of rulers to resist the degeneration of state authority in the interests of maximizing the potential of the nation; (ii) the influence of geopolitics and the defence of European culture, suggesting that while fascism is nationalist in orientation, some forms of national socialism are pan-European and white supremacist; (iii) the importance of political economy in Italy and Germany, in which anti-capitalist, rural-ecologist and third-way tendencies were overshadowed by support for business; and (iv) the importance of charismatic leadership – a political value in itself, albeit one linked to the exceptional conditions and the manipulation of crisis by fascist leaders for instrumental ends (Eatwell 1992). From this perspective, he offers an alternative definition of fascism as 'an ideology that strives to forge rebirth based on a *holistic-national Third Way*, though in practice fascism has tended to stress style, especially action and the charismatic leader, more than detailed programme, and to engage in a Manichean demonization of its enemies' (Eatwell 1996: 313; cf. Eatwell 2007b). Although the friend–enemy distinction implied by Manichean demonization is hardly unique to fascism – consider, for example, the simple but effective vilification of 'evildoers' in American neoconservative political discourse (De Luca and Buell 2005), such rhetoric plays a fundamental role in codifying enmity.

Eatwell thus questions Griffin's fascist minimum, in particular its applicability to far right ideology. Fascism was, he argues, 'highly opportunistic, varying both between countries and through time even in the interwar era: how do we discern the "true" fascism which lay behind this protean flux?' (2004b: 2). Furthermore, he adds, a

> more fundamental difficulty stems from the fact that key themes could be understood in different ways even in the same country and at the same time. Thus 'rebirth', which is a philosophically banal concept, was encompassed both by conservatives who sought restoration and by radicals who sought a new order. Similarly, nationalism could be conceived by ideologists both in terms of the (re)creation of identity, and in terms of the economic interest of specific programmes'.
>
> (Ibid.)

To correct this confusion, he uses the term 'fascist matrix' to capture the ambivalence entailed in a conservative perception of the limitations of human nature and a radical perception of the need to overcome such limitations

through the evolution of 'fascist man'. This allows him to extend the category 'generic fascism' to include interwar and postwar fascism, acknowledging the recent political modernization of the far right:

> The matrix becomes even more important as we turn to the contemporary era, because modern fascism can involve notable mutations. Griffin's emphasis on its 'groupuscular' contemporary form is right in the sense that small, ideologically driven groups can sew wider mayhem, for example by influencing violent recidivist youths through white power music. But arguably the most dangerous forms of contemporary fascism are those which have adopted more conservative forms of synthesis and which no longer preach forms of radical rebirth for the masses (though they still focus on the need for a new elite). These operate both within and around more important groupings, such as the French National Front and the British National Party, which has recently 'modernised' its image and sought to break with an overt fascist past in favour of a more subtle blend of radicalism and populism . . ..
>
> (Ibid.)

Finally Eatwell argues that Griffin has drifted too close to Gentile's depiction of fascism as a political religion, suggesting a confusion of aestheticization and sacralization. While studies devoted to the obsessive commemorative style of Italian fascism or the pseudo-paganist ritual of Nazism reveal important facts about the substance of fascist ideology, the real importance of such studies is to reveal the social function of fascist aestheticism in the institutionalization of popular memory (Berezin 1997).

It is clear that efforts to develop a non-Marxist theory of generic fascism have yielded mixed results. The 'consensus' among Anglophone historians is not shared by Italian and German academics who, as Griffin (2003, 2006) concedes, remain sceptical towards theories of generic fascism. As we will see in Chapter 7, even if nationalism is a common feature of fascist, neofascist and far right ideologies, this does not mean we can reduce fascism to a simple typology.

Criticisms of typological approaches

Using a comparative-analytic approach, Griffin tries to avoid essentialist reasoning by acknowledging that the 'experimental nature of any definition of fascism [is] a vital premise to the spirit of openness which must prevail in fascist studies for them to progress without the dogmatism and small-mindedness which have often been displayed in the past' (Griffin 2003: 101). There is little doubt that such openness is often lacking, and while Griffin does not debate the methodological issues surrounding Weber's ideal types, or the broader issues associated with Weber's concept of rationality, he is aware that typological definitions are only valid if they can be operationalized in

empirical research. The weakness of his approach lies not in his attempt to develop a 'tentative' conceptual framework, but in the self-imposed limitations of his typology which lead him to reduce fascism to the impossibly minimal idea of 'populist ultra-nationalism' in order to fit historical fascism and modern right-wing populism into his model. Although he has since adjusted his typology – fascism is now defined as a 'revolutionary species of political modernism' aimed at overcoming the decadence of liberalism (2007: 181), this leads him to forget the political economy of fascism, its concealment of class, and its geopolitical ambitions. By attempting to fit such a wide range of ideologies into a generalization statement, Griffin risks emptying the category of explanatory meaning. As Osborne argues, 'fascism is no *merely* political form – one among a series of political alternatives to be listed in the catalogues of comparative politics as competing forms of organization or rule – but a manifestation of deep-rooted historical, or even metaphysical tendencies or possibilities of the age' (1995: 161).

Griffin's approach is based on Weber's concept of the ideal type, a heuristic tool which allows sociologists to compare a range of empirical examples against an artificial ideal case, such as 'rationality', 'bureaucracy' or 'capitalism'. Burger argues that this method of concept formation is achieved by 'selecting those component elements of concrete phenomena which each of them has in common with many – and ultimately all – other empirical phenomena.' However, while general concepts such as 'bureaucracy' or 'conflict' 'refer to many phenomena, their contents do not contain elements which all these phenomena have *strictly* in common. Rather, some definitional characteristics are present in different degrees in different instances' (1987: 116). Such concepts also embody cultural values, and their use in historical and social research reflects a concern with cultural meaning in historical and social science: individuals act in given ways because they are attempting to realize specific cultural values, either through their own agency or mobilization by external forces. Weber was confronted by the fact that such ideas or values may be more or less present in the minds of actors such that in a range of cases the 'resulting concrete actions and their meanings are different' (ibid.). According to Burger, Weber conceived of ideal types as a means to resolve this problem for his methodological theory, though there is a gulf between his prescriptive comments on the use of ideal types in his methodological writings (1904) and his use of typological definitions and classifications in *Economy and Society* (1922). Weber's use of ideal types also raises the problem of perspectivism (cultural relativism), for in constructing typologies based on western rationalism, neo-Weberian sociology 'implicitly relies on the rich store of commonsense ideas about motivation and reasons for action which the sociologist shares with the rest of the culture' (Turner 1986: 191). In this sense, the status of 'rationality' as an ideal type is problematic, as it highlights an implicit tension between formal (means-oriented) rationality as a technical procedure, and substantive (ends-governed) rationality driven by cultural values. There is a risk that the a priori association of rationality

with capitalist modernity is a socially constructed ideal with its roots in western culture, based on a normative preference for uniformity, efficiency, impersonality, and consistency (Brubaker 1984: 23).

Ideal types are defined by abstraction and one-sided exaggeration of conceptually essential elements. Typologies are popular because they allow social scientists to avoid anthropological 'thick description', and to test hypotheses based on the presence or absence of conceptually essential elements. As artificial construct, ideal types assert from the outset a fully developed but simplified limiting-case which says little about the qualitative character or evolution of the phenomenon in question. Unlike historical materialism, which reveals the unfolding structure of exchange through a logical deduction of its basic categories and forms – as Postone argues, the historical logic of Marxian categories such as 'value' and 'capital' is '*retrospectively apparent* rather than *immanently necessary*' (1993: 129), Weber attributes identical meaning to diverse cases in order to create an internally consistent type. This can be seen in his imputation of 'capitalist' rationality to the early Calvinist sects in *The Protestant Work Ethic* (1905), even though the capitalist mode of production was barely in its infancy.

The limitation of ideal types is that they risk becoming 'consciously constructed idealizations to which nothing corresponds' (Turner 1986: 200), reducing the empirical value of hypotheses based on a generalization statement. Weber himself concedes this point in his discussion of the heuristic value of the ideal type 'handicraft society':

> If the ideal type were 'correctly' constructed and the actual course of events *did not* correspond to that predicted by the ideal type, the hypothesis that medieval society was *not* in certain respects a *strictly* 'handicraft' type of society would be proved. And if the ideal type were constructed in a heuristically 'ideal' way . . . it will guide the investigation into a path leading to a more precise understanding of the non-handicraft components of medieval society in their peculiar characteristics and their historical significance. *If* it leads to this result, it fulfils its logical purpose, even though in doing so, it demonstrates its divergence from reality.
>
> (Weber 1904: 103–4; cited in Nowak 1980: 47–8)

Developing Weber's self-criticism, Nowak suggests that statements which refer to ideal types are not *synthetic* but 'analytic', and cannot be tested in empirical research. In general, he argues, 'ideal-typical statements do not correspond to the actual phenomenon', although by highlighting discrepancies they can be very 'helpful in establishing the degree of deviation between the appropriate ideal type defined by it and the actual phenomenon under investigation' (1980: 48). Rather than proceed with a typology designed to fit all available incidences of a given phenomenon, Nowak insists that a better approach is to question the validity of empirical experience based on appearance and the plausibility of the initial idealization statement itself.

In contrast with Weberian sociology, historical materialism separates the essence of phenomena from their appearance. As Nowak argues, the idealization method does not eliminate non-essential conditions for social phenomena. Rather, it creates a hierarchy of conditions, from primary to secondary; idealization proceeds by stripping the object of investigation to its core elements before returning secondary elements in a process of concretization. 'The idealizational law,' he notes,

> given a definite image of the essential structure of the determined magnitude, is an idealizational statement which neglects all the factors claimed, truly or not, to be secondary. Such a statement refers then to (what is considered to be) the way in which the principal factors influence the given magnitude, i.e. to (what is considered to be) the regularity.
>
> (Ibid.: 13)

Unlike ideal types, which allow two or more non-identical phenomena to approximate to the same typology (despite deviating qualitatively from the original statement), idealization prohibits vagueness and approximation by strictly defining primary and secondary levels of explanation. Although there are superficial parallels between ideal types and idealization statements, the difference lies in their mode of explanation: the ideal type is a form of generalization; idealization is not. These methods diverge in the way they reconstruct necessary connections between phenomena.

In contrast with Weber, therefore, Marx argues that capitalism becomes fully developed only once labour power itself becomes a commodity, and where the commodity form exerts a totalizing impact on economic and cultural reproduction. Marx refuses to assume in the form of fact what actually has be deduced: the commodity form and value form only reach a mature level of development in advanced capitalist societies, hence to transpose these forms onto precapitalist or transitional societies is to introduce categories which have no objective basis separate from capitalism (Postone 1993: 129). 'Capitalism' – as an ideal type – does not exist; it is an emergent historical formation based on abstract labour which functions as a social mediation in lieu of traditionally *overt* social relations between producers (ibid.: 151). Because labour in capitalism mediates itself, 'it constitutes a social structure that replaces systems of social relations and accords its social character to itself' (ibid.: 154). With the commodification of labour, precapitalist forms of exchange and status ascription are superseded by the pure economic rationality of the market. Integral to this process is the erosion of alternatives to direct labour time expenditure, and the rise of abstract labour as a historically determinate social form.

Towards a critical theory of fascism

What are the implications of this critique for an analysis of fascism? There is a tendency in modernization theory and 'new consensus' approaches to

exclude the material determination of fascist ideology, reflecting the discomfort felt by historians towards the partisan approach of Marxism, which so fatally underestimated fascism in the 1920s. Yet few critical theorists adhere to Stalinist orthodoxy, and while class remains a primary category in Marxist sociology, modern theorists have abandoned class reductionism for a more sophisticated account of fascism as a *political commodity*, a form of ideological production in postliberal capitalism based on the aestheticization of politics and the mobilization of emotion. In what follows, I will attempt to outline a critical approach to fascism, focusing on the production of fascist ideology rather than eliminate 'non-essential' conditions in order to satisfy a typological generalization. Following Koepnick (1999b), Postone (1993) and Haug (1983), my aim is to resituate fascism in a critique of liberalism, examining the relationship between the commodity form and ideological production, tantalizingly revealed in Benjamin's critique of fascism. Although Benjamin's analysis is fragmentary and theoretically incomplete, he pointed the way towards a theory of aesthetic politics based on the impact of the commodity as a structured social practice which conditions the way individuals perceive reality in capitalist society.

To explain fascist ideology we must consider the possibility that antirationalism is not simply a cultural reaction to the 'disenchantment' of bourgeois society but its primary condition: as a response to the ideological impasse of liberalism, fascism embodies the very transgressive, decadent qualities it claims to overcome (Hewitt 1993). Fascism reflects an epochal shift from liberal politics as deliberation on ultimate values (rights, justice, democracy, etc.) towards mass politics as the production of dispositions (militarism, antisemitism, anti-feminism, etc.) in accordance with the changing social and material basis of industrial society. Fascism also coincides with the increasing unification of culture and politics in modernity, leading to the deautonomization and debasement of modernism and the aesthetic reorganization of subjectivity in politics. Although theorists like Lacoue-Labarthe (1990) historicize fascism by refuting the 'logocentric' distinction between culture and politics in western history, for Benjamin the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of culture in fascism mark a new threshold in mass culture where autonomous art is reproduced and recycled using new technological forms 'through the circuits of a state controlled culture industry' (Koepnick 1999b: 17).

Although some social theorists question the capacity of labour to determine social forms (Habermas 1972; Offe 1984), Marx defined emancipation as a historically contingent process in which intersubjectivity and consciousness are universalized through productive activity itself. The organization and legitimation of social relations in commodity-determined class societies are distinct from those in societies based on traditional forms of integration because they are not mediated by external values but by abstract labour itself: labour in capitalist society is both a productive activity and socially mediating activity. The category 'commodity', argues Postone, 'refers not only to

a product but also to the most fundamental structuring social form in capitalist society, a form constituted by a historically determinate mode of social practice' (1993: 44). The difference between commodity-determined and non-commodity-determined societies is that in the former labour objectifies itself not only in material products, but in the objectified social relations which constitute a 'totality' – the impersonal, abstract social sphere which imposes itself over and against the individuals who comprise it (although this process of objectification is normally concealed by the false appearance of labour as a transhistorical, 'natural' necessity rather than historically determinate form). To explain the occurrence of historical and contemporary fascism, we need to understand how it is generated and sustained in the commodity form, that is, through a utopian yet deceptive projection of homogeneity and standardization which, as Adorno (1970) observed, bears a close resemblance to the mass production of identity in commodity-determined societies. As Harootunian notes:

> it is precisely this relationship to the commodity form that is missing in most accounts of fascism and that offers a plausible explanation for its capacity to return punctually, as well as its own suppression of history for the mystery of myth and origin (like the nation form itself) and its predilection for repetition.
>
> (2006: 27)

Unlike conservatism – a precapitalist ideology rooted in romantic nationalism and imperialism – fascism is structurally and logically entailed in the political evolution of capitalist modernity, although authoritarian-populist movements have also appeared in peripheral modernizing societies characterized by uneven economic development (Giner 1982). In contrast with nineteenth-century capitalism, where exploitation and division of labour were legitimated on the basis of formal equality and egoistic competition (the 'utility maximizer' of classical political economy), postliberal capitalism entails new forms of ideological justification based on the bureaucratization and societalization of economic life. These structural tendencies increase the pressure for collective solutions to political integration, resulting in a panoply of new ideologies aimed at addressing atomization. Unlike socialism, however, the rhetoric of unity and identity in fascism appeals to individuals not as agents but as a mythic collective: despite embracing elements of populist socialism, fascism *conceals* the objectification of labour necessary for the rationalization of commodity production in an aesthetic idealization of labour ('beauty of labour', 'work makes freedom', etc.), where emancipation is reduced to a simulation of class collaboration and the production of useful citizens for the national work community.

Understood in this way, fascism constitutes a political mythology, a model of behaviour linked to the 'fetish' (illusory) character of the commodity in its monopolistic form as it produces consciousness, disorganizing autonomous

subjectivity through a prescriptive codification of collective identity. This disorganization is contingent not simply on subordination to fascist hierarchy but on the production of anxiety and the suppression of autonomous agency typical of capitalism. In a famous passage from *Capital*, Marx describes the fetishization of commodities in the moment of abstract exchange, which he contrasts with the tendency of religious societies to attach meaning to things in an irrationally devoted manner:

> It is only by being exchanged that products of labour acquire, as values, one uniform social status, distinct from their varied forms of existence as objects of utility. . . . The equalization of the most different kinds of labour can be the result only of an abstraction from their inequalities, or of reducing them to a common denominator, *viz.* expenditure of human labour-power or human labour in the abstract.
>
> (Marx 1867: 77–78)

As Postone comments, the fetish character of commodities arises from the illusion that value inheres in the commodity itself rather than the social labour required to produce it. The appearance of the commodity, he suggests, conditions

> conceptions of value and value-creating labor. That is, the commodity seems not to *be* a value, a social mediation, but rather a use value that *has* exchange value. It is no longer apparent that value is a particular form of wealth, an objectified social mediation.
>
> (1993: 169)

By fetishizing the exchange value of the commodity (i.e. its apparently natural 'added value' in the marketplace in addition to its use value as an object) rather than recognizing the nature of value as a historically contingent social mediation, the objective conditions of social domination in capitalism are obscured. This misperception of reality not only reduces human transactions to an unreal abstract exchange of equivalents, but disorganizes subjects through the disruption and suppression of human immediacy and natural sensuousness in a society mystified by 'spectacle'. As Debord observes, the 'spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life' (1994: 29).

In his critique of commodity aesthetics, Haug also develops Marx's insight, linking the commodification of human consciousness and the production of anxiety to the 'valorization standpoint' of capital, which, he argues,

> pursues its claim to absolute domination in an ambivalent relationship to the sensuality of the human being. Insofar as this being puts up resistance to the domination of capital, human independence is destroyed by it; and

> insofar as the domination of capital is mediated by moments of sensual and instinctual life, these elements are persistently made to look dependent and incongruous. The individuals whom capital conditions to be either its functionaries, capitalists themselves, or its wage labourers, share, at least formally, a common instinctual fate in spite of their radical differences: *their sensual immediacy must be disrupted and rendered absolutely controllable*.
>
> (Haug 1983: 47; italics added)

In a commercial sense, the fetish character of commodities is revealed in the recycling of novelty through built-in obsolescence, aesthetic innovation (the continual alteration of texture and appearance) and the perception of limitless choice: critical individuality and human immediacy are disorganized, rendered calculable through the illusion of autonomous development and improvement, as commodities replace one another 'like changes in the weather' (ibid.: 42). As Haug notes, however, this simulation or spectacle looks different to capitalists themselves, for whom redesign is a key element of 'product aging', the aim of which is to make existing forms (and identification with these forms) appear redundant through the production of anxiety. For capitalists, this is an essential moment in the valorization of capital

> which it is their business to produce amid anxiety and high risk. They require that the social 'necessity' – for such is the use value of their commodities – be sanctioned again and again to achieve the determining aim of the valorization standpoint.
>
> (Ibid.)

In effect, the continuous revalorization of commodities in the market is based not on their utility or 'added value' (or in political terms, their integrative potential/moral force) but on their capacity to arrest consciousness by disrupting spontaneous social development, ruling out alternative *unmediated* modes of interaction and exchange.

This argument has important implications for the ideological production of fascism, a populist ideology which seeks, through a mythology of unity and identity, to project a 'common instinctual fate' (uniform social status) between bourgeois and proletarianized groups, eliding the reality of social distinction in differentiated class societies. Although directed against commodification as a source of abstraction and egalitarianism, fascism must *itself* be understood as a political commodity: fascism is not simply a subjectively generated, reactive strategy – a desperate attempt by atomized individuals to overcome the disenchantment and inauthenticity of modernity – but an aesthetic innovation which transcends existing patterns of differentiation and political subjectification to disrupt established narratives of history and progress. Its timely appearance and reappearance is rooted less in the subjective ecstasy of 'rebirth' or the myth of 'regeneration' (although these are

relevant aesthetic categories) than in the aestheticization of depoliticized politics and the fetishization of communal identities which conceal the true nature of the commodity as a structured social practice, bridging the gap between the specificity of the nation-state (as the nexus linking culture and power) and the rationalization of circuits of capital. Far from being simply a reaction against decadence or the decline of authentic culture, fascism employs the most modern technical means to project a myth of identity and struggle to create a 'postauratic' perception (a perception detached from immediate sensuous experience) of unity and power decoupled from the emancipatory promise of enlightenment.

In this way, commodity abstraction and romantic anti-capitalism intersect: fascism is a form of ideological valorization, resolving conflict at a symbolic level by 'disciplining sense perception':

> aesthetic politics does not simply mean to address a shrewd stylization of political action – a seductive organization of public signs, meanings and iconographies. Instead, what aesthetic politics does is to colonize the structures of modern experience, to engage popular sentiments, and to discipline sense perception with the ambition of integrating society and mobilizing the masses for future warfare. The fascist spectacle massages minds and emotions in such a way that modern postauratic perception loses its progressive thrust and succumbs to the signifiers of vitalistic power. Fascist aesthetics, in the concept's original meaning, is anaesthetic – it assaults perception, neutralizes the senses, and denies the private body as an autonomous site of corporeal pleasure.
>
> (Koepnick 1999b: 4)

In fascist political practice, argues Koepnick, the state moves centre-stage but traditional political dialogue and rhetoric are replaced by an affective model of communication based on ritualized displays of public loyalty and private consumption, extending the structural integration of state and corporate power in postliberal capitalist society in a combination of public spectacle, social respectability and domesticated contentment which Benjamin recognized in the 1930s as 'fascism's peculiar and combined answer to the dialectics of modern culture' (ibid.: 211).

Having reduced the object of our analysis to its determining element (the commodity), we can now begin to return secondary elements through a process of concretization and contextualization, examining the production and mobilization of relevant categories, forms and icons in fascist discourse which generate and sustain social perceptions of authority, power, violence and identity. As Falasca-Zamponi notes, fascist commodity aesthetics is a 'world of display', a visual repertoire of spectacular imagery designed to overcome resistance to the fascistization of bourgeois culture. 'Spectacular politics was certainly not a fascist invention,' she argues; but the 'political essence of the commodity form as a system of representation was captured by

Mussolini in his revisitation and reinvention of a style of rule' (1997: 145). Although as individual elements the social forms and categories of fascism have little significance in their own right (as Laclau (1977) notes, the unifying principle of discourse is not the aggregation of themes borrowed from various sources, but the identity of subjects as they are constituted through the discourse in question), from its images of racial purity and physical perfection to its neoclassicism and *kitsch*, the products of fascist culture can be seen as affective representations announcing the diversion and curtailment of debate (Koepnick 1999b; cf. Falasca-Zamponi 1997; Berezin 1997). This phenomenon may seem disquietingly familiar given that spectacle is a logical extension of the commodity in late capitalism. Yet the singular force of fascist commodity aesthetics cannot be ignored: as an example of political modernism, fascism appears ahead of its time, an early illustration of the catastrophic consequences entailed in the militarization of the public sphere and the regulation of private pleasure as techniques for determining which kinds of knowledge and identity may be realized within a limited range of social relations.

Conclusion

In what follows, we will examine the structural determination of fascist ideology from a thematic perspective, focusing on the concrete social, economic and political conditions which generate and sustain fascism. The text can be read as a critical dialogue between liberalism, Marxism and post-structuralism, linking debates in historical sociology, philosophical anthropology and political theory. By examining fascism as a structural possibility at a particular stage of capitalist modernization, the aim is not to reject cultural and philosophical narratives of fascism – as Blum argues, to understand a phenomenon we need to analyse its 'idiosyncrasies as well as its genealogies and filiations' (1996: 26) – but to highlight the inadequacies of conventional approaches which either reduce ideology to intellectual history or redefine fascism as a 'political religion'. The concept of generic fascism as a revolutionary form of ultra-nationalism hardly exhausts its potential object. Revisionist historians are right to 'take fascist ideology seriously', but place too much explanatory weight on the programmatic function of ideology to the exclusion of mediating factors in the political organization of commodity-determined societies. The 'active ingredient' in fascism is not nationalism *per se* – nationalism is, first and foremost, an organizing principle, according to which the boundaries of the nation and state should coincide (Gellner 1983) – but the projection of unity and identity as mythic responses to capitalist modernization. While it is tempting to posit a reductive account of fascism based on a syncretic synthesis of cultural and philosophical values, as Elazar argues, instead 'of assuming that Fascism was a mature phenomenon at the time of its emergence and that it merely reflected the nature of its origins or the character of its social base, we must try to

explain how it actually became fascism' (2001: 26). The weakness of much contemporary scholarship lies in the assumption that generic fascism exists in its own right, as if the philosophical ideas and cultural values articulated in fascist ideologies existed independently of objective conditions. Fascism is not a consistent doctrine but a form of mobilization which develops *to a certain extent* from philosophical and cultural sources, but which is more closely bound up with the acquisition of power, the ruthless use of force, and the expansion of its support base (Breuer 2005; Reichardt 2002; Renton 1999). It is for this reason a compulsive rather than purely moribund political force oriented towards the re-enchantment of collective identities through an unprecedented mythic simulation of unity and power.

2 Fascism, rationality and modernity

Introduction

'Fascism,' argues Hewitt,

> eludes classification. It disorients political analysis in the confusion of left and right, refuses to point the way forward by conflating progress and reaction. Fascism was and is a scandal, both historically and theoretically. No wonder, then, that political theory must reach beyond itself to characterize the phenomenon.
>
> (Hewitt 1993: 68)

On the one hand, there are links between fascism and conservatism, which share themes such as defence of private property and anti-feminism. On the other hand, there are links between fascism and modernism based on the deautonomization of cultural production and the aestheticization of power as a 'celebration of the creative potential of human beings' (Berghaus 1996: 21). To make sense of this synthesis of modernism and counter-enlightenment, we need to explain how the 'disruptive temporality of the new' in fascist ideology becomes entwined with a historicist retreat into identity: fascism connects a mythical past with an idealized future through the revalorization of archaic, patriotic and identitarian themes by fixing and preserving an artificial value for ideological commodities through state intervention.

To make sense of this phenomenon, we need to examine the tension between *formal* rationality (the concern with technical means adapted to given ends) and *substantive* rationality (the qualification of formal rationality in accordance with prior considerations such as equality, justice, or aesthetic value). Fascism appeals to a cross-class constituency by claiming to address the tension between formal and substantive rationality through a critique of rationalization and the realignment of modernity with predominantly right-wing values. However, while fascism challenges the Enlightenment project of reason, in its historical form it failed to reverse what Gramsci termed the 'equation of the political with the rational' in liberalism (Wallerstein 1997). That is, it failed to resolve the tension between the formal rationality

of capitalism based on production for the sake of production, and the substantive goal of political integration based on the incorporation of *unequal* subjects into a calculus of power relations. Despite efforts to combat the utilitarianism and abstraction of liberal modernity by lending mass culture an aura of communal endeavour and by celebrating the violence implicit in man's domination of nature, as a form of political modernism fascism does not signify a 'civilizational break' with the dominant social paradigm of modernity. Conversely, while some historians have interpreted historical fascism as a modernizing force (Schoenbaum 1967; Dahrendorf 1965; Gregor 1976; Gentile 2003; Mosse 1999; Zitelmann 1991; Griffin 2007), when examined in terms of *la longue durée*, the evidence suggests that modernization in Italy and Germany was consistent with secular patterns in Europe in the interwar period (Cohen 1988; Mommsen 1991a; Schildt 1994; Bosworth 1998; Zöllitsch 1997; Frei 1993). Some innovative experiments in social engineering were introduced in the fields of mass culture and political communication; but the idea that fascism created a 'push towards modernization' is an exaggeration. As Alber (1989) argues, fundamental change only took place *after* 1945.

Theorists have explained the relationship between fascism and modernity in several ways (Table 2.1). For some, the key variable is economic crisis; for others it is cultural rebellion. Here we will be concerned primarily with two features of modernity: rationalization and autonomy. Fascism testifies not only to the 'barbarism of reason' – to the violence implicit in mankind's domination of nature (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972) – but to a political possibility in the organization of modernity, which produces both progressive and regressive forces. To dismiss fascism as a 'regressive' doctrine is to misunderstand that an irrational vision can be pursued both rationally and methodically:

> Those who claim that fascism is anti-modern rest their argument on the fact that fascism is not progressive, where 'progressive' implies a commitment to a humane and even socialist future; clearly fascism is not progressive in this sense. But 'modernity' generates opposing forces, forces of reaction as well as progress: we need to take account of the dialectic of modernity as we do the dialectic of Enlightenment. The reactionary forces generated by modernity use the trappings of modernity *without subscribing to the Enlightenment idea of progress and the desire for a rational society*.
>
> (Neocleous 1997: 70–71; italics added)

To make sense of fascism, our first task must be to examine the rationality of industrial capitalism as a structuring feature of modernity – a system of social reproduction based on private accumulation and collective division of labour. Capitalist modernity refers to the historical-social formation that emerged in Europe in the eighteenth century, which has since developed into

Table 2.1 Ideological positions on fascism, rationality and modernity

	Rational or irrational?	*Continuity with industrial civilization?*	*Modern or anti-modern?*
Philosophical anthropology			
Gehlen/Freyer/Nolte	Cultural pessimism	Continuity	Resistance to the levelling effect of modernity
Totalitarianism			
Arendt Kornhauser	Accumulation of power is defined as rational in itself	Totalitarian reorganization of industrial society	Consequence of modernity
Modernization theory			
Parsons/Turner/Lipset Dahrendorf	Irrational anti-liberal ideology	Pathological development of industrial society	Quintessentially modern ideology
Generic fascism			
Sternhell Gentile/Griffin/Antliff	Irrationalism/ vitalism	Continuity of industrial–technical development	Revolutionary movement embracing modernism
Marxism			
Lukács Benjamin	Destruction of reason/ irrational subjectivism	Direction of industrial means towards barbaric ends	Vitalist anti-modernism; aestheticization of politics
Frankfurt School			
Adorno/Horkheimer Marcuse	Destructive potential of Enlightenment	Social domination is inherent in technical civilization	Logical culmination of human domination of nature
Critical theory			
Herf/Neocleous Osborne/Koepnick	Rational means applied to irrational ends	Contradictory potential of capitalist modernization	Reactionary modernism
Postmodernism			
Hewitt Lacoue-Labarthe	Destructive consequence of humanism	Domination is inherent in western civilization	Radicalization of modernity metaphysics as aesthetics

a complex geosystem based on global circuits of capital and international division of labour. Our primary concern here is not the relationship between capitalism and fascism as such (see Chapter 6), but rather to situate fascism in relation to the anthropocentric utilitarianism and limitless instrumentality of humanity engaged in the production of a durable world of things (*homo faber*), which Arendt (1958a) distinguished from humanity engaged in labour to satisfy the essential material conditions of reproduction (*animal laborans*). Although this categorial distinction is rejected in historical materialism (Marx argues that intellectual and manual labour derive their meaning from the relations in which they are embedded – that an authentic praxis must be concerned with overcoming the determinate character of the commodity form as a structuring force), it is essential to explain the archaic and modern dimensions of fascism as a postliberal model of industrial organization based on a misconceived attempt to transcend abstraction: by privileging a 'positive' dimension of capitalism (based on concrete labour/historical time) over a 'negative' dimension (based on abstract labour and abstract time), fascism extends a critique of materialism in vitalist and romantic anti-capitalist thought which misrepresents concrete-historical production as a non-capitalist moment (Postone 1986).

Our second task is to examine the impact of vitalism and romantic anti-capitalism on fascist thought. It is important here to distinguish between thinkers like Nietzsche (who unconsciously articulated something resembling fascism), and figures like Maurras (who consciously anticipated fascism). Sternhell (1986) stresses the syndicalist sources of fascist ideology in Italy and France; but fascism in its *developed* form is an ideology of the right, which Ignazi defines as a notional ideal space where 'reference [is] made to tradition and roots, the ideal of order, of harmony, and of hierarchy, the transposition on the sociopolitical context of natural and social inequalities, the need for affiliation, and the nostalgic search for a natural community' (2003: 12). These themes reappear in fascist ideology, but despite a 'family resemblance' between fascism and conservatism, fascism is a *modern* ideology adapted to mass democracy: unlike conservatism – which calls for a suppression of politics – fascism develops *outside* parliamentary politics (Linz 1976), offering a militant response to the failure of economic liberalism.

Our third task is to examine the synthesis of modernism and counter-enlightenment in fascist thought. The link between modernism and fascism lies in the attempt to 'break free' from the moral and political constraints of traditional society: fascism is less a departure from the trajectory of modernity than a consequence of rational means divorced from ethically valid norms. However, it makes little sense to blame thinkers like Nietzsche, whose aristocratic radicalism, 'with its questioning of all dogmas and established values, was hardly the basis on which fascist, Nazi or other totalitarian regimes consolidated their support' (Golomb and Wistrich 2002: 14). Links with anti-rationalism exist, but simplistic interpretations of fascism as a 'revolt against reason' fail to explain its development as an aestheticized reaction to

the characteristic nihilism of bourgeois society itself – a confused and violent response to the view (expressed most forcefully by Weber himself) that there are no beliefs for which we can find ultimate grounds of legitimation. As Krauss (2003: 35) argues, the antagonistic logic of bourgeois capitalism provides a nihilistic 'cultural medium' (*Nährboden*) in which militaristic ideologies like fascism flourish by exacerbating three destructive dynamics of modern class societies, namely: (a) the degeneration of interpersonal relations; (b) the cultivation of aggression and demoralization of socially motivated action; and (c) the susceptibility of individuals to social Darwinist and racist values. By reducing interaction to an exchange of equivalents, capitalism reifies human relations as an exchange of commodities based on abstract value rather than cultural value/utility. It is precisely this nihilism which aristocratic radicals like Nietzsche identified in their call for a 'revaluation' of values, but while Nietzsche is often identified as the 'spiritual godfather' of fascism (Nolte 1965), his celebration of the positive power of self-overcoming through a creative sublimation of instinct has little to do with the fascist apotheosis of race-war and subjugation (Golomb 2002; cf. Ansell-Pearson 1994).

The dominant social paradigm of modernity

Social anthropologists suggest that the idea of progress 'has come to permeate ordinary thought and be built into its assumptions and language'. Modern life has, argues Gellner,

> come to be lived *on an upward slope*. The nature of things has a bias towards improvement: improvement is both anticipated and required. This is sometimes an explicit doctrine, but generally a tacit assumption, the recognition of a manifest truth.
>
> (1964: 3–4)

Gellner rightly identifies modernity with *continuous* progress, but in what sense can we describe modernity as 'rational'? This question is possibly unresolvable, for the ultimate logic of any system lies in its own self-perpetuation – regardless of appeals to ultimate values. As Brubaker remarks,

> the formal rationality of the modern social order is a matter of fact; whether or not this social order is substantively rational, in contrast, depends on one's point of view – i.e. on the ends, values and beliefs one takes as a standard of rationality.
>
> (1984: 37)

If our criteria of rationality are scientific progress, extension of choice and individualization, then modernity is rational; but if our criteria are psychological health and emotional development, we might agree with Fromm that

to fashion the material basis of modern civilization, 'man had to create circumstances that crippled him and prevented his growth in other respects, particularly affectively' (1973: 350).

The problem of rationality underlies the contradictory nature of industrialism, for while modernity entails a continual expansion of freedom, equality, solidarity and autonomy (Domingues 2006), it also promotes human objectification and technological rationality, which Heidegger defined as the 'total mobilization of the world by humans who are themselves mobilized in the process' (Feenberg 2005: 21). To explain the formal rationality of modernity, we need to consider the sociological implications of two organizing principles of industrialism: the logic of material accumulation and division of labour, which have their roots in the eighteenth century. On the one hand, as Richard Badham argues, the

> violent disruption of society created by the French Revolution was as a direct consequence of Enlightenment appeals to individual reason and quest for the democratic organization of society. . . . [I]ndustrial society was seen as a solution to the resulting chaos, in direct opposition to Enlightenment metaphysics and egalitarianism.
>
> (1986: 20)

On the other hand, collective organization became necessary to absorb the energies of a growing population while preserving an economic structure destabilized by its own excessive productivity. To make sense of fascism we need to ascertain how far it deviates from this civilizational model.

The Enlightenment bequeathed two opposing concepts of progress, one based on critical self-reflection and rational intuition, the other on empiricism and scientific method. At the heart of rationalism is a Cartesian refusal to accept an ordered picture of the world as given: the philosopher, insisted Descartes, must 'systematically free himself from the accumulated presuppositions of the past and the preconceived opinions he has acquired from his parents and teachers' (Cottingham 1984: 36). It is not enough, however, to doubt received or official opinion; the seeker of truth must also doubt the evidence of his or her own senses and rely instead on logical deduction to ascertain the truth-value of given statements about the world: we can know certain statements to be true or false without deriving this knowledge from sensory experience, even if we are often obliged to rely on our senses to acquire the concepts entailed in given propositions. Empiricism, on the other hand, offers a different theory of knowledge: although humans possess advanced cognitive equipment, the mind can be compared to a *tabula rasa*, waiting to be imprinted with information obtained through sense perception. Although rationalists insist that we have a moral imperative to question authority – as Wolff argues, 'only because man has the capacity to reason about his choices can he be said to stand under a continuing obligation to take responsibility for them' (1970: 42) – rationalism in politics is more

usually concerned with renewal: pulling down an edifice to rebuild society from first principles, irrespective of custom or tradition (Oakeshott 1962). Empiricism, on the other hand, implies a naturalistic perspective on history and society, linking the optimism of eighteenth-century rationalism with the nineteenth-century evolutionary thought based on a need to adapt to and develop existing social and economic processes.

Both theories have, however, been criticized for their implicit authoritarianism: rationalism because it is employed by revolutionary elites who claim access to superior knowledge of the 'true' interests of the people; empiricism because it defines reason itself as a function of technique, resulting in the 'subordination of society to the requirements of a purely technical good, which will, ultimately, only serve the interests of a technocratic elite or act as a legitimating cover for minority privilege' (Badham 1986: 14–15). The French utopian socialist Saint-Simon argued that elites inevitably govern; but he also envisaged a technocratic utopia in which traditional politics – as debate over ultimate values – would eventually be replaced by an administration of experts, based on the adjustment of goals to technical means. One of the core assumptions of industrial society theory is the view that progress is dependent on the functional adaptation of society to industrialism. While nineteenth-century positivists supported the rationalist faith in progress, modern industrial societies are more closely defined by the authoritarian logic of empiricism, managed by a class of specialized knowledge-producers in the service of authority. As specialists have replaced legislators as the architects of modernity, Europe has been transformed by economic and technical systems which reduce the complexity and risks of perpetual change. This has given rise to a humanized 'second nature' of artificial structures superimposed onto the primary natural environment which provide human life with continuity and purpose.

The idea of 'second nature' appears in different ways in anthropological and Marxian theories of society. Gehlen (1983), for example, argues that industrialism follows three stages: (i) the use of tool production to augment the cognitive input of workers; (ii) the creation of machinery to increase productivity; and (iii) the replacement of cognitive control through automation and computerization. Following Weber, he suggests that as dependence on technology and control over nature increase, objective 'generalized' interests (those which are universally valid) predominate as political concerns – for example, as demands for welfare or mass consumption. This process accelerates the rationalization of 'administered collectivist-type' societies based on objectified needs, which in turn promote appropriate ideological dispositions among subjects. 'When these processes have become established,' he argues,

> it will then be likely that the individual will *feel* only such needs as have a chance of collective fulfilment or which are guaranteed by law and are thus for the common good. In this way the individual will be collectivized

> from within and absorbed into large organizational states. The individual will only give out such fragments of desire, so to speak, as the large group will accept, as can be thrown into the common pot.
>
> (Gehlen 1983: 213)

What Frankfurt social theorists viewed as the objectification of human activity based on identity and repetition is rendered by Gehlen as the spiritual adaptation of subjective dispositions to the objectifying logic of collective life in industrial society, with an emphasis on the *limited range of subjectivity* in rationalized work communities.[1]

The interaction between society and nature is characterized by greater ambivalence in the critique of political economy. In *Capital*, Marx argued that 'instruments of labour not only supply a standard of the degree of development to which human labour has attained, but they are also indicators of the social conditions under which that labour is carried on' (1867: 175–76). From this perspective the cultural and technical forms which mediate society and nature are historically contingent: nature produces man as a conscious, active being who confronts nature as an active force. Marx understood this interaction in a naturalistic sense as 'metabolic exchange', as a result of which 'nature is humanized while men are naturalized' (Schmidt 1971: 78). With the institutionalization of economic rationality and the transformation of labour *itself* into a commodity, a new form of labour-intensive production emerges in response to demand for commodities. This change in productive forces leads to a transformation in the nature of fabrication as a human activity: detached from the skills of traditional artisans, and separated from the domestic context of the *oikos*, labour acquires a dual character reflecting the specificity of the commodity form as a structured social practice.

Marx has of course been criticized for classifying both necessary labour and creative human action under the rubric 'productive labour', which critics argue obscures the specific quality of work as a uniquely human activity. As Arendt argues, overwhelmed by the productivity of industrialism, thinkers like Adam Smith and Marx

> had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborens* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was need to eliminate labor and necessity altogether.
>
> (1958a: 87)

Yet while human life without necessary labour would be inauthentic and inane – the obligation of work is understood as a positive condition of freedom – the consequence of abundant labour has not been emancipation but the colonization of popular culture by capital. Arendt tries to resolve this paradox, suggesting that industrialism leads to a confusion of means and ends: the purpose of action, once achieved,

> ceases to be an end and loses its capacity to guide and justify the choice of means, to organize and produce them. It [becomes] an object among objects, that is, it [is] added to the huge arsenal of the given from which *homo faber* selects freely his means to pursue his ends.
>
> (Ibid.: 155)

But this merely restates Weber's assertion that human goals are vulnerable to instrumentalization, obscuring the fact that 'emancipation' is contingent on a critical praxis oriented towards a qualitative change in social relations. In privileging the anthropological consequences of economic rationalization, Arendt overlooks Marx's point that social labour (the total social labour of collective-type societies) is transformed not just by technology but by the concrete forms of capital which mediate interaction. As a self-valorizing value, capital obscures the origin of abstract labour in self-contained units: social labour is based not on the aggregate expenditure of labour power of individual producers, but on a reconstitution of individual labours in the form of value.

What do these conceptions of industrialism entail for a critical theory of fascism? The first point to note is that while rationalization in capitalism occurs objectively and impersonally (its formal rationality is its *telos*), and while state socialism locates reason in a new class of 'administrators of historical necessity' whose self-appointed role is to manage rationalization in the absence of a developed national bourgeoisie (Konrád and Szelényi 1979), fascism offers a purely 'episodic' vision of progress based on a mythic foundational moment, signalling the disruption/cancellation of historical possibilities implicit in the revolutionary struggle for collective emancipation. The fascist myth of sovereign power, national autarky and perpetual struggle constitutes an *anti*-praxis, an alienated political value detached from a critical conception of its own purpose which ultimately displaces and annihilates the communicative value of collective political action: fascist myth offers neither emancipation nor renewal, only the final subjugation of critical rationality and reflexive subjectivity beneath a specious vision of collective destiny which quickly exhausts its own very limited revolutionary potential.[2]

Second, while capitalism and state socialism are consistent with the productivist logic of 'ever-further development' and the meritocratic ethos of industrialism (Damus 1986), fascism is defined by a commitment to revalorize archaic values (racial identity, virility, patriarchy, etc.) in a modern setting – values which clearly contradict the universalizing rationality and equalizing force of industrialism. While efforts to revalorize substantive values legitimate fascism in power, they simultaneously frustrate the formal-rational character of modernity, undermining the capacity of the state to manage expectations and promote economic and cultural development. Although 'modernist' in orientation, fascism contradicts the true function of industrialization, namely to engender a 'mobile and culturally homogenous society, which consequently has egalitarian expectations and aspirations'

(Gellner 1983: 73). In this sense, fascism embraces the modernizing potential of industrialism embodied in economic growth and development, yet negates the progressive force of enlightenment's project of reason through the substitution of autonomous subjectivity and democratic freedom with an aestheticized myth of struggle, where progress is linked not to egalitarian expectations but to the simulation of communal identities and uniform social status. This tension between modernity and anachronism is exemplified by the modernization of the fascist economy in Germany (automation, division of labour, etc.) and the reluctance of the Nazi state to allow women a role outside the domestic sphere.[3] On the one hand, rationalization implies adaptation to the Fordist model of industrial-societal development; on the other hand, the refusal to sanction female labour equality suggests an inherent conservatism towards the participation of women in public life. Passerini (1987: 133) notes a similar example in the cultivation of a fascist work ethic in Italy, which allowed the regime to emphasize diligence and hard work while excluding its emancipatory aspects and ignoring the deterioration of working conditions in the factories of Turin.

Griffin (2007) details the modernizing aspirations of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, which promoted organized leisure, visual culture and ritual participation in an attempt to transcend social distinction. Yet his characterization of fascism as a 'millenarian revolt' against abstraction fails to connect the rationalization of space/time (the disenchantment of the world, in Weberian terminology) as characteristic features of capitalism to the historically contingent determination of value in the calculation of socially necessary labour in commodity-determined societies. While subjective estrangement may be a relevant category for explaining action, the equation of alienation and anomie is theoretically problematic: alienation in capitalism refers not to (inter)subjective anomie but to the apparent independence of objective phenomena created by individuals in response to human needs, where social forms assume a 'self-dynamic quality' no longer controllable by society (Lenk 1972, cited in Frisby 1992: 15). As Postone observes, the social forms of capitalism mean that individuals 'create their own history – in the sense of an ongoing, directional process of social transformation. Because of the alienated character of these forms, however, the history they constitute is beyond their control' (1993: 295). Anthropological approaches locate alienation in the subjective crisis of meaning created by rapid economic change, leading to increased support for fascist parties which claim to defend small producers and other marginalized groups against the encroaching power of capital and organized labour. But this exclusive identification of alienation with subjective loss of meaning ignores the *objective* source of alienation in the commodity form as a structured social practice which – like fascism – is contingent on the coercive rationalization and instrumentalization of labour as a prior condition for the postliberal reorganization of capitalism, negating the possibility of *unmediated* labour oriented towards its own autonomous

object. Labour itself is not instrumental action, but becomes instrumental as a social mediation, that is, as a means for acquiring the products produced by others. In adapting a liberal-capitalist economy based on 'production for the sake of production/mass consumption' to a postliberal-capitalist economy based on 'production for war/reduced consumption', fascism denounces the moment of exchange in capitalism in favour of 'concrete social relations', yet remains dependent on abstract labour in an attempt to increase accumulation and discipline labour, using economic compulsion, work brigades,[4] and violence to suppress dissent in working class communities (Schmiechen-Ackermann 1998).

The irrationalism implicit in fascist myth lies less in the fantasy of rebirth than in its failure to comprehend the origins of abstraction in the universalizing time of capital, which exists independently of, yet constitutes, the lived chronological time of historical events. Unlike time in pre-industrial communities, which is dependent on fluctuating measures of duration, time in commodity-determined societies exerts an abstract form of compulsion: labour time expenditure becomes a temporal norm which is objective of human agency, yet determines human action and consciousness.[5] Drawing on vitalist, organicist and anti-rationalist themes, fascism misdiagnoses abstraction as a pathology of industrial civilization which can be rendered subordinate to the will of the people under appropriate conditions. In this sense, fascism represents a directionless (but not purposeless) rebellion against abstraction: rejecting the quantitative abstraction of secular time – the 'empty flow of time' understood as an abstract temporal constant – fascist ideologists emphasize the qualitative, seamless progression of time and experience lived at a physical rather than cognitive level, lending an imaginary aura of destiny and fatefulness to the mundane progress of history.

Philosophical anti-rationalism and the conservative revolution

Anti-rationalism begins with the assumption that *will* is more fundamental than conscious thought in human life and nature in general. This view is connected with Schopenhauer, who emphasized the importance of will in the determination of knowing and being. Developing Kant's idealist distinction between a phenomenal (empirically verifiable) realm of appearance and a noumenal (unknowable) realm of things-in-themselves, Schopenhauer argued that insofar as the world is an object in the mind of a subject it is really an *idea*. Will, on the other hand, cannot be an object of knowledge and is thus objectively unknowable. Because the world does not exist independently of our willing it, freedom can only be achieved by recognizing the mediating function of will in human becoming. In this sense, Schopenhauer gave expression to the notion that there is an unintelligible dimension to life – a preconscious, determining force beyond rational scrutiny – an idea which influenced Nietzsche's concept of 'will to power' and Freud's distinction between ego

and unconscious. As Schopenhauer argued, knowledge is simply 'objectified will' (1844 [i]: 176). Pure thought is possible, but is ultimately conditional on the satisfaction of will, for only

> where intellect exceeds the measure needed for living does knowledge become more or less an end in itself. It is consequently a quite abnormal event if in some man intellect deserts its natural vocation – that of serving the will by perceiving mere relations between things – in order to occupy itself purely objectively.
>
> (1851: 127)

Anti-rationalism is also present in the work of the vitalist thinker, Henri Bergson, who challenged positivism arguing that intellect alone cannot access the 'creative evolution' that is life: as soon as we try to grasp something intellectually, we enter the realm of 'discontinuous time'; to experience real freedom, to *experience* the life-force which flows through existence, we must forego intentionality and 'thrust intelligence outside itself by an act of will' (Burwick and Douglass 1992: 6). He also held that knowing is experienced in a physical rather than cognitive sense: 'While intelligence treats everything mechanically,' he wrote,

> instinct proceeds, so to speak, organically. If the consciousness that slumbers within should awake, if it were wound up into knowledge instead of being wound up into action, if we could ask and it could reply, it would give up to us the most intimate secrets of life.
>
> (Bergson 1911: 174)

Bergson's biological vitalism goes beyond classificatory schemes to keep pace with the *non-static* reality of life which resists the systematic ordering of modernity. At the centre of Bergson's critique is the biologistic idea that organic life cannot be explained in material terms: within organisms, forces are active which do not exist in inanimate nature. Nature proceeds in ways that cannot be reduced to physical laws, a theory later rejected by Otto Neurath and Rudolf Carnap, who argued that Bergson's thesis amounts to the assertion that some fields of reality are not subject to a uniform logical structure.

It is in the work of Nietzsche, however, that anti-rationalism reaches its fullest expression. Like Schopenhauer and Bergson, he was concerned with the life-force which compels us to act and know. Unlike Schopenhauer and Bergson, however, he was overwhelmed by the constraints on human agency in Judeo-Christian culture, which he saw as a 'morality of the pejorative type'. Using the concept 'will to power', he believed that moralities are determined by 'type-facts', conditioned by an eternally recurring life-force 'beyond good and evil'. Attempts to refute this constitute a denial of the principle of life itself:

> To talk of right and wrong *as such* is senseless; *in themselves*, injury, violation, exploitation, destruction can of course be nothing 'wrong', in so far as life operates *essentially* – that is, in terms of its basic functions – through injury, violence, exploitation, and destruction, and cannot be conceived in any other way. One is forced to admit something even more disturbing: that, from the highest biological point of view, legal conditions may be nothing more than *exceptional states of emergency*, partial restrictions which the will to life in its quest for power provisionally imposes on itself in order to serve its overall goal: the creation of larger units of power. A state of law conceived as sovereign and general, not as a means in the struggle between power-complexes, but as a means *against* struggle itself, in the manner of Dühring's communist cliché according to which each will must recognise every other will as equal, would be a principle hostile to life, would represent the destruction and dissolution of man, an attack on the future of man, a sign of exhaustion, a secret path towards nothingness.
>
> (1887: 56–57)

If naturalistic readings of Nietzsche are problematic – Golomb notes that 'Nietzsche's long list of predicates of persons endowed with positive power includes no biological values' (2002: 26) – the political relevance of his critique lies in its defence of radical voluntarism, in the attempt to negate the 'empty becoming' of human destiny. The tone of anti-rationalism suggests inescapability and fatalism: humans are driven by unaccountable drives, and historic ideals such as equality and solidarity are easily depicted as transitory and absurd. Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche emphasized the instrumentality of will: intellect disguises a will to dominate which governs the object of knowledge and its use, and 'higher' individuals must accept that beneath moral justification lies a striving to prevail. Philosophically, this argument leads from nihilism to relativism; but in a political sense, it legitimizes elitism, subjectivism and unaccountability. As Lukács argues, anti-rationalism in this form seeks to liberate

> through ethics all men's bad, antisocial and antihuman instincts, giving them a moral sanction and proclaiming them to be, if not always, commandments, then at least the prescribed 'fate' of 'man', i.e. the bourgeois citizen and bourgeois intellectual of the imperialist age.
>
> (1954: 209–10)

The impact of anti-rationalism on fascism is mediated in the work of reactionary thinkers like Paul de Lagarde, who rejected the Enlightenment and French Revolution, Charles Maurras, who denounced socialism as a threat to the survival of France, Vilfredo Pareto, who proclaimed the importance of hierarchy and natural selection as alternatives to egalitarianism, and Oswald Spengler, who predicted the 'exhaustion' of rationalism and materialism as

redundant ideologies of the Enlightenment. Influenced by romanticism, Lagarde (1873; 1876) criticized the legacy of the political and industrial revolutions of the eighteenth century. As his biographer notes, for Lagarde,

> nothing denotes romanticism less unequivocally than its irrationalism, the pursuit of knowledge not over concrete highways of pure reason or controlled observation, but through the wilderness of impression, sentience, emotion, through the half-aesthetic, half-contemplative dallying with the moment or the particular.
>
> (Lougee 1962: 118)

Yet romanticism also has political implications, containing 'material for a more dynamic conservatism which would not seek the perpetuation of any particular set of institutions but the conservation and ever fresh re-expression of the life and spirit of the people.' Radical conservatism can tolerate nothing that 'might stand in the way of life and spirit, whether it be an outmoded institution from a remote past or an arbitrary action of a popular assembly' (ibid.: 124). For Lagarde, mankind should accept the truth of the *organic* ideal, namely that as 'mutually dependent integrations', communities are simply organisms within which individuals retain their identity as part of the whole (ibid.: 124–25). These ideas find further expression in the work of fascist thinkers like Alfred Rosenberg (1930) and Walther Darré (1934, 1935), who both cite Lagarde in their respective analyses of racial identity and the myth of blood.

Similar themes are prominent in the work of Maurras, a monarchist who challenged the doctrines of democracy and equality as inappropriate for a vital and dynamic nation. As the intellectual force behind Action Française, Maurras inspired a generation of French 'literary fascists' (Carroll 1994: 73), and was at the forefront of the radical right in France, a nation traumatized by defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and memories of the Paris Commune. Maurras's contempt for democracy was absolute:

> In the first place, healthy societies and well-constituted states do not put up their crowns for auction or contest; and, secondly, in the tremendous diversity of tasks and talents opportunities for conciliation, barter and compromise abound. . . . Watchwords like 'to the worthiest man', when extended to cover the whole of civil life, merely spread strife and misery. In the end the whole population of competitors is infused with the spirit of a frantic emulation that secretes bitter envy and jealousy. The health of the body politic is endangered, and the general standards of life and conduct begin gradually to disintegrate: even in the most gifted races democracy ends up as mediocracy.
>
> (Maurras 1937: 285)

France, he insisted, was in decline because the Enlightenment and its thinkers were driven by an ethos of freedom in contrast with the 'healthy'

organic ideology of German conservatism. Unlike Ernest Renan, who emphasized the civic and emotional ties that bind nations, Maurras believed that:

> Prussia had been victorious because it had remained in the *ancien regime*; *ancien regime* means the preservation of virility, the virility of people is founded in its blood. . . . France, on the other hand, had got rid of its aristocracy in the revolution, thereby committing suicide in a very real sense.
>
> (Nolte 1965: 43–44)[6]

Although Maurras's elitism clashed with the syndicalism of left-wing fascists – as Sternhell (1986: 139) argues, there is a marked ambivalence in French fascism towards the possibility of equality, for Maurras the imperative of democracy had to be balanced against the natural inequality of a 'superior class' or 'aristocracy': there is no such thing as 'proletarian culture', he stressed, for the masses can hardly acquire the skills to govern themselves.

In Italy, reactionary opposition to democracy and egalitarianism is manifest in the work of Pareto, who was the first sociologist to use the term 'elitism' (Scott 1996: 139). Like Roberto Michels and Gaetano Mosca, he recognized that all societies are governed by elites who constitute the 'chosen' element of population whose 'inherited standards and values and position ought to be protected and who should have a greater influence on public affairs than others' (Hayek 1960: 347). Insofar as democracy is possible, it is a legitimation device: a minority of individuals from the educated class with superior personal qualities monopolize power, but it is their psychological characteristics which make them suitable for the role. Although competing elites succeed one another in a process of circulation (meritocracy would not function without recruiting 'new blood'), elites maintain positions of command because the masses, lacking true sovereignty, have neither the will nor ability to govern themselves. Workers might protest at their inferior status, and might even form organizations to oppose it; but these too will be dominated by a 'labour aristocracy' which will eventually be co-opted into the existing framework of political society (Michels 1911).

The impact of anti-rationalism and elitism on the development of fascism can be seen most clearly in the conservative revolution in Germany, which transformed vitalism into a dangerous form of subjectivist myth targeting liberalism, socialism and democracy. As Lukács argues, anti-rationalists 'now went over to an open attack upon the scientific spirit in general, upon the competence of reason adequately to treat of important human questions' (1954: 462).[7] Whereas vitalists had previously questioned the soullessness of modernity, radical right-wing thinkers now sought a return to the 'invigorating' effects of barbarism as a means to resolve the contradictions of modernity. In seeking to reconcile nationalism and collectivism in a postliberal state ideology, they exploited the rich inheritance of philosophical anti-rationalism to provide a theoretical justification for romantic anti-capitalism.

At the heart of the conservative-revolutionary problematic is the 'Faustian' nature of industrial civilization as an age of 'limitless striving and aspiration', which Spengler linked to the racial and cultural inheritance of northern Europe. The Faustian inventor and discoverer is, he argues, a 'unique type':

> The primitive force of his will, the brilliance of his visions, the steely energy of his practical ponderings, must appear queer and incomprehensible to anyone at the standpoint of another culture, but for us they are in the blood. Our whole culture has a discoverer's soul. To *dis*-cover that which is not seen, to draw it into the light-world of the inner eye so as to master it – that was its stubborn passion from the first days on.
>
> (Spengler 1926: 410–11)

Yet despite this 'brilliance', Spengler believed that the rationalist spirit based on free exchange of ideas and commodities had led to the exhaustion of culture, especially in England where rationalism and materialism had reached their most developed forms. Historically, rationalism had been moderated by the aristocracy, but had now escaped its original context to become a legitimating ideology in which the limitless power of industry and technology are exploited for competitive gain rather than national grandeur. Under capitalism, Faustian man has become the 'slave of his creation. The machine has forcibly increased his numbers and changed his habits in a direction from which there is no return.' This has led to a tragic situation where the 'peasant, the hand-worker, even the merchant, appear suddenly as inessential in comparison with three great figures that the machine has bred and trained up in the cause of its development: the entrepreneur, the engineer and the factory-worker' (ibid.: 412).

In their attempts to lend form and integrity to the abstraction of industrial culture, right-wing intellectuals emphasize the importance of the intangible quality of existence untainted by the invalidating complexity of modernity. Despite the reactionary nature of their critique, however, a key feature of conservative-revolutionary ideology is its acceptance of technology as a means for realizing transformation (Herf 1984). Although reactionary intellectuals are contemptuous of modernity, as ideologues of the right they are prepared to abandon their ambivalence towards industrialism to embrace a depoliticized vision of modernity linked to a postdemocratic vision of productivity and class collaboration. And, although romantic anti-capitalism demonstrates an ignorance of the objective determination of abstract labour as a social mediation based on the structuring effect of the commodity form, technology is seen as essential to overcome the contradictions thrown up by industrial civilization through a final reconciliation of productive activity and nature.

The precise distinction between prefascist and fascist ideology in Germany remains problematic, however. While fascists argued that there 'could be no

going back to the traditional cocoon of the *ancien regime*' (Wolin 2004: 3), as Woods comments, 'the idea that the Conservative Revolution operated on a higher intellectual level is misleading. For beneath the surface current of political distance runs a more profound current of basic philosophical agreement between the Conservative Revolution and National Socialism' (1996: 113). This continuity stems not just from a mutual need to find meaning in struggle and war, nor from a belief in economic/military power adapted to imperial goals, but in the way thinkers like Spengler and Jünger made fascism respectable by sanctioning the assault on democratic legitimation as the organizing principle of political modernity (ibid.: 114). Furthermore, as Peukert notes, it was 'precisely the profuse trappings of antiquated traditionalism or reactionary utopianism in Nazi ideology that served to make more acceptable in practical, social terms the modern technologies and structures they disguised' (1987: 181).

Yet a one-sided identification of fascism with reactionary modernism is implausible, for it fails to explain the radicalism of fascism. The weakness of Herf's interpretation lies in a failure to identify the modernist temporality of its simultaneous advocacy of forward- and backward-looking ideas. As Osborne argues, fascism should be understood as a 'reactionary avant-garde', which restores archaic forms but which is not itself archaic (1995: 166). Although radical conservatives advocate reactionary goals, he argues, the

> problem with Herf's more restricted definition (the conjunction of backward-looking politics with an affirmation of technology) is that its modernism is identified with technology, rather than with the temporal structure of the combination itself. The latter consequently appears as the paradoxical product of a mere aggregate of contradictory tendencies, rather than a novel, complex, but integral form of modernism in its own right.
>
> (Ibid.: 163–64)

Fascism is defined by reaction, but contains radical themes which testify to its *futurity*, to an anti-Marxist assault on bourgeois nihilism. As an 'invention created afresh for the era of mass politics', fascism seeks to 'appeal mainly to the emotions by the use of ritual, carefully staged ceremonies, and intensely charged rhetoric. The role programs and doctrine play in it is . . . fundamentally unlike the role they play in conservatism, liberalism and socialism' (Paxton 2004: 16). Indeed, it could be argued that the *novelty* of fascism as a political commodity is the reason for its rapid rise and disappearance: by stimulating demand for the new through the simultaneous manipulation of anxiety and promise of release from the effects of anxiety, fascism expresses the crisis of modernity in its modernist form – a theatrical simulation of politics which reveals the ideological limits of the bourgeois public sphere (Hewitt 1993: 17).

The fascist synthesis: modernism and counter-enlightenment

Recent scholarship connects fascism with a primordial modernist attempt to break free from spatio-temporal abstraction, implying an *acceleration* of modernity in the search for a new intensity of experience. Echoing Berman (1989), Gentile defines political modernism as 'ideologies that arose in connection with modernization, ideologies that seek to render human beings capable of mastering the process of modernization in order not to be overwhelmed by the "vortex of modernity" . . . ' (2003: 44). This idea has been extended by Griffin, who identifies fascism with 'programmatic modernism', an idealistic yet self-deluding vision which appeals to those 'who feel thrown by history into the maelstrom of modernity and who experience the full force of the anomy [*sic*] generated by its liminoid condition' (2007: 113).[8] Although Griffin concedes that 'some forms of modernism seem concerned with reviving tradition or conveying a sense of cultural decay', the emphasis is, he insists, 'futural and optimistic' (ibid.: 117).

Yet while an affinity exists between fascism and the avant-garde, and while there are common themes in fascism and modernism – symbolized by the development in Italy of futurist political action theatre and the participation of futurists themselves in the *Fasci di Combattimento* (Berghaus 1996) – the revolutionary character of fascist modernism seems less certain: by defining fascism as a primordial response to a generalized subjective disposition towards despair, and by presenting fascism in anthropological terms as yet one more apocalyptic revolt of the dispossessed at the threshold of an uncertain age, revisionists exaggerate the enactive dimension of fascism as a purgative utopia promising 'an alternative, healthy modernity' (Griffin 2007: 117).

The reason for the misidentification of fascism and revolution lies in the reduction of modernism to a programmatic vision of modernity. What emerges from revisionist analyses is not political modernism as such, but an uncritical reading of fascism as an ideology of modernization, which historians present at face value without considering the repression of subjectivity and moral sensibility required of individuals under fascist rule and the empty, ritualistic performance of gestures consistent with official state ideology (Falasca-Zamponi 1997). As a ruptural force within modernity, modernism is characterized not simply by a totalizing ideology or cultural engineering, but by a deepening of substantive rationality based on autonomous subjectivity and pluralism. What distinguishes modern*ism* as a radical development within modernity is neither the disruption of established narratives of reason and identity, nor the rationalization of life-conduct and institutional practices, but a qualitative deepening of substantive rationality and cognitive differentiation based on post-foundationalist reason, leading to a decentring of subjectivity and agency typical of late modernity: it is only in a truly reflexive modernity – under a 'modernist plurality of gods and demons' – that a 'sufficient differentiation of subjectivity can take the form of discursively redeemable validity claims' (Lash 1987: 367). Subjective reflexivity, integrity

and interiority are possible only where the universal subject of modernity (as the determinate outcome of the *Enlightenment* as an objective rationalizing imperative) is qualified by the singular subject of modernity (as the determining outcome of *enlightenment* through a process of individuation), although there remains a necessary tension between individuality as something unique to subjects and individuality as the capacity of subjects to acquire critical rationality (Santoro 2003).

As an example of political modernism, fascism disrupts familiar narratives of modernity as universal progress towards enlightenment, leading to a radicalization of instrumental reason. As a rebellion of the right, however, it is devoid of that substantive rationality which results from a deepening of the emancipatory side of enlightenment's project of reason. Instead, the appeal of fascism reflects an ambivalence in modernism between realism and romanticism: the crisis of modernism hints at a 'breakdown in the framing assumptions of Western civilization so far as they rest on the traditional conception of individuality, on the anthropocentric notion of the rational control and supremacy of man over reality' (Blum 1996: 3–4). With the decline of realism, the

> positivistic (scientizing, rationalizing, democratizing) view of historical progress gradually gives way to a fascination with irrational and unconscious forces, and the notion of modernity increasingly becomes associated with a sense of hopelessness, alienation and impotence, with a pessimistic view of man's relationship to society.
>
> (Ibid.: 4)

It is important to note here the ambivalence of fascism as a simultaneous expression of and reaction to modernity. Given the syncretic nature of fascism, which Antliff defines as a 'movement full of internal contradictions, with an unstable "base" composed of individuals and constituencies who endorsed fascism for a variety of reasons, and whose allegiance to the cause may have been transitory' (2002: 165), it is unsurprising that fascism appeals to bohemian intellectuals who view the bourgeois culture from which they themselves emerge as 'vulgar, hidebound, moralistic and spiritually narrow' (Williams 1989: 54). Despite collaboration between the modernist intelligentsia and the new regime in Italy, the love affair between fascism and the avant-garde was short-lived, while in Germany the Nazi state denounced modernism in 1934 as 'degenerate art', closing down innovative modernist institutions such as the Bauhaus (Berghaus 1996; Barron 1991). Although fascist cultural producers developed new technologies for the cinema and other 'industrial arts' (Betts 2002: 552), the revisionist conflation of modernism and totalitarian art overlooks the sentimentality, empty dynamism and banality of fascist culture, obscuring its racist and exploitative subtext while reducing modernism to state-sponsored cultural experimentalism. Whatever the formative role of modernist aesthetics in the determination of

fascist politics, fascism employs the 'instruments of twentieth-century culture, yet only in order to foil the democratic power of the popular and eliminate whatever is subversive about the avant-garde' (Koepnick 1999b: 4).

The peculiar character of fascist modernism exemplifies the 'Great Divide' between 'high' culture and 'low' culture which opened up in the twentieth century, reflecting the elitist critique of commodity-determined society within the avant-garde, the refusal of ruling elites to sanction an alteration of capitalist property relations, and the emergence of the culture industry in Europe and the United States as an organized form of populist self-deception/desensitization to compensate for the blocking of reform (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972). The debased cultural product of this political repression was kitsch, which Calinescu defines as the 'direct result of an important ethical mutation for which the peculiar time consciousness of the middle classes has been responsible . . . ' (1977: 248). Against simplistic readings of fascism as *low* culture, however, it is important to see the product of fascist modernism as an ambivalent commodity, reflecting existing social divisions based on the exclusion of the masses from autonomous *high* culture. Fascist modernism reflects a contradiction between elitism and philistinism in capitalist society: on the one hand, (early) fascist ideology projects a 'numinous' style of thinking based on an aestheticized concern with the sublime and contempt for the individual pursuit of happiness (Falsca-Zamponi 1997: 120). This style of thinking centres on the problem of the individual, the future of technology, and the search for authenticity and historicality. On the other hand, by appealing to a set of simpler codes, fascists engage with irrational themes to develop a postliberal ideology of struggle in which the critical force of rationalism and emancipatory potential of democracy are replaced by a vitalist 'will to power', eroding subjectivity as a condition for the ethical reconstitution of modernity. Contrasted with the originality and nuanced complexity of the avant-garde, the depoliticized mediocrity of fascist cultural production (monumentalism, ritualism, etc.) becomes central to its appeal, a visual testimony to the struggle for bourgeois respectability and rejection of rationalism and materialism within fascist literary circles.

The fascist mission to liberate society from rationalism and Marxism finds expression in the work of a number of European thinkers, whose concern with the sublime and heroic dimensions of struggle indicates the political impact of the avant-garde and the crisis of modernist culture in the twentieth century. Examining the work of Ernesto Giménez Caballero, we can view fascist modernism in its most aestheticized form. Disillusioned by the failure of the Spanish garrison in Morocco, Giménez Caballero evolved into a 'European' intellectual motivated by the dream that conservative Spain might one day be modernized under non-democratic auspices. But this flirtation with cosmopolitanism did not last: unconvinced by Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, he sensed that something more fundamental was required to address the malaise of Spanish politics – a fascist agenda organized around the ideal of *Hispanidad* (eternal Catholic-Spanish essence). To

this end, he stressed the utility of war as a source of revitalization, arguing that the 'individual who is disposed to serve this national movement must accept the unavoidable and stoic watchword: "that life is combat". [Individuals] should relinquish all pacifist and sentimental poison. Peace is only the result of struggle' (Giménez Caballero's cited in Foard 1989: 191). Linking political inequality and imperialism, Giménez Caballero reveals the social function of fascism:

> There has only been one means in the world to overcome the eternal rancour of classes: and it is, to transfer this struggle to another plane. To transfer it from the national plane to the international. A nation's poor and rich can only come to agreement when they both decide to attack other peoples or lands where there may exist riches and powers for all the attackers. The sentiment of social equality that begins all class struggles is only overcome by carrying this equality in attacking other countries which are not equal to us. It is the expansion of a nation's rich and poor, against other lands, which is what constitutes the intimate motivation of imperialism.
>
> (Ibid.: 196)

Spain in its existing political-cultural form, he argued, lacks 'poetic sensitivity'; like Italy, Iberia required a new counter-Reformation to emancipate the Latin peoples from the cultural hegemony of Protestant Europe. Despite a distaste for 'northern European' hegemony, however, the real source of his resentment lay in the fact that everything

> is moving toward democracy, toward that which is mechanistic; that everything conspires against that which is provincial, against the *pueblo*, that the city devours the fruit trees, the field, man and beast, the primitive things of life like a cancer. That everything is mechanized, dehumanized, rationalized, comfortable and the like. That living and dying are becoming less important things; things without uniqueness, urban formulas, mediocre, grey, Americanized things.[9]
>
> (Ibid.: 165).

A similar theme of anti-Americanism is present in the writings of Italian intellectuals like Soffici, who argued that mercantilism and Americanism were like an 'aesthetic plague', which had already contaminated the Protestant countries of Europe, and which would eventually also conquer Mediterranean civilization (Adamson 1995: 562).

As a symbol of the 'sentiment of equality', Giménez Caballero viewed republican democracy as a political analogue to capitalist modernization – as something '*alien to the soul* of Iberian culture' (Foard 1989: 165). This betrays a classic Nietzschean theme, namely that destiny is not democratic: humans cannot choose their future from a catalogue of equally valid alternatives;

choice is culturally determined, although the means clearly exist in industrial societies for cultural elites to *project* a vision of modernity. Yet the paradoxical modernity of fascism is also visible in Giménez Caballero's views on the social potential of the cinema, the impact of which 'he hoped would be as great as the impact of the printing press once had been, unseating the learned minority from their seats of power as their monopoly upon acquired knowledge was broken by the masses'. Eventually, argues Foard,

> the 'new cathedrals' of the masses, the movie theatres, would replace the ancient individualism fostered by books. . . . the artist, by employing the cinema instead of the printed word, could communicate with the masses and not just the 'illustrious and university-trained minority'.
>
> (1989: 105)

Giménez Caballero thus typifies the ambivalence of those right-wing intellectuals who view modernity as a possible solution to itself: the masses must be disciplined through a mediated representation of reality to counter the disintegrative force of modernization. This problematization of modern civilization (*Gesellschaft*) can be seen with greater clarity in the work of Heidegger, whose critique of 'inauthenticity' influenced both existentialism and critical theory (Feenberg 2005), but whose 'naïve' enthusiasm for Nazism and betrayal of 'un-German' colleagues placed a question mark over his moral character (Ott 1994; Steiner 2000).[10] Herf suggests that 'Heidegger repeated the anti-modernist message but offered no political alternative' (1984: 111), but this does not fully capture the source of Heidegger's reactionary brand of political romanticism. Osborne, on the other hand, argues that:

> Heidegger's politics of the 1930s were those of a 'heroico-tragic' national-revolutionism of the Right, for which his philosophy provided both the inspiration and the interpretive frame. All that was needed for their union was for the Nazis to recognise this philosophy as the truth of their project and Heidegger himself as their spiritual-intellectual leader. Heidegger appears to have clung on to this hope, despite its relatively swift disappointment by the Nazi establishment, for some considerable time.[11]
>
> (1995: 167; cf. Fritsche 1999; Wolin 2004)

Osborne detects a link between Heidegger's metaphysics and fascism based on a dual concern with 'authentic historicality' and 'organic unity':

> What the two have in common is a quite particular (reactionary) articulation or inflection of the temporality of modernity. Fascism is a reactionary political modernism; Heidegger's existentialism is a reactionary philosophical modernism – in the literal sense of 'reaction' as a movement towards the reversal of an existing tendency or state of affairs.
>
> (Ibid.: 166)

A comparison between Heidegger's political romanticism and Comte's positivist humanism illustrates the problematic relationship between fascism and rationality. As Scharff argues, both Heidegger and Comte understood the universalizing logic of technologized science as the culmination of the western intellectual tradition: we can only appreciate the significance of this 'culminating event by becoming aware of the historically determinate character (i.e. historicity) of all thinking' (2003: 265). What separates these thinkers, however, is their different assessments of the futurity of technology, which for Comte presupposes an irreversible commitment to scientific reason. In Comte's positivist humanism, theology gives way to metaphysics which is itself constrained by a commitment to 'pure liberated' reason: metaphysics glorifies rationalism, but is 'useless' for the realization of concrete goals. Positive science thus forms the basis for the final stage of human development, based on a 'global technology that effectuates a control over material nature and a means of "social reorganization" that will bring into being the harmonious condition humanity has desired since its earliest experiences of cosmic disruption' (ibid.: 268). Although Sartre (1948: 55) warned that Comte's 'cult of humanity' could itself evolve into a type of fascism (a 'facile humanism' turned in on itself), the implication of Comtean positivism is that human futurity is contingent on technological progress. For Comte there is no reason to think beyond this: technology is conceived as a means for the fulfilment of new human needs – for *overcoming* metaphysics without relinquishing a humanist faith in progress. For Heidegger, on the other hand, there is a refusal to accept the facticity of humanism and the apparent irreversibility of the human condition. His concern lies with the ontological dimension of technology, that is, with understanding how being is revealed in technological orders (Feenberg 2004: 69; cf. Desmond 1996). In his refutation of Enlightenment universalism, Heidegger castigates technological rationality as a logic of 'enframing': rather than accept the neutrality of scientific technical progress, mankind must realize metaphysics through technology itself. This points towards a radical anti-humanism predicated on a rejection of the anthropocentric belief in limitless progress:

> when we consider the essence of technology we experience enframing as a destining of revealing. In this way we are already sojourning within the free space of destining, that in no way confines us to a stultified compulsion to push on blindly with technology. . . . [M]an, precisely as the one so threatened, exalts himself and postures as lord of the earth. In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only in so far as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself. . . . *In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e. his essence*.
>
> (Heidegger 1954: 27)

It is not Heidegger's questioning of the potential self-domination of mankind which alarms his opponents, however, but his anti-political refusal of democratic emancipation and his subjectivist (mis)diagnosis of alienation as 'loss of essence', and his call for 'anticipatory resoluteness' in the face of inauthenticity and ahistoricality (Heidegger 1927: 434). These themes recur continuously (in less subtle forms) in fascist cultural production, where the material abstraction of modernity is (mis)understood as a threat to the vitality of the race-nation as the essential source of authenticity and historicality.

One of Heidegger's sternest critics was Adorno, who (unlike Marcuse) rejected the 'jargon of authenticity' in existentialism as a dangerous mystification. For Adorno, fascism represents the death of subjectivity, resulting in an inability to distinguish reality from illusion. At stake here is the distortion of subjectivity through a philosophy of inwardness and the mystification of the actual conditions of social domination and the possibility of their overcoming through reason. Heidegger's egregious error was to provide *linguistic* legitimation for the 'denominational demands' of ideologists whose concern was to demarcate 'concrete essence' from the abstraction of reason: 'Fascism was not simply a conspiracy – although it was that – but it was something that came to life in the course of powerful social development. Language provide[d] it with a refuge. Within this refuge smouldering evil expresses itself as though it were a salvation' (Adorno 1964: 5). Lukács also criticizes Heidegger as an ideologist of 'bourgeois quietism', but unlike Adorno he identifies fascism with the radicalization of bourgeois subjectivity rather than the death of autonomous individuality as such (Hewitt 2004). Locating his philosophy in the irrationalist tradition of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Lukács argues that Heidegger's subjectivism suggests a 'retreat from social dealings', a 'withdrawal from the bourgeois idea of progress [and] from the democratic revolution' (1954: 503). Although Dallmayr (1991) defends Heidegger's critique of Enlightenment universalism as a depersonalized logic of domination which accentuates alienation, the 'revolutionary character of Heidegger's nationalism derived from its radical difference from existing institutional forms, rather than any penchant for change *per se*. Quite the reverse, in fact: like other reactionary modernists, politically, Heidegger was a modernist only under historical duress' (Osborne 1995: 174). As Steiner (2000) argues, what results from Heidegger's critique of modernity is not 'revolution' but a right-wing defence of the familiar as a 'realm of historically ingrained assumptions' and 'class biases' that ground everyday experience, ruling out an alteration of social relations.

A still more complex picture of fascist modernism can be identified in the work of F. T. Marinetti, the leading figure in Italian futurism who allied himself with fascism until the collapse of the Salò Republic. Originally published in France in 1909, the first *Futurist Manifesto* was a declaration of war against the utilitarian 'cowardice' and 'opportunism' of conventional morality: 'Beauty', argued Marinetti, 'exists only in struggle. There is no

masterpiece that has not an aggressive character' (1909). With its emphasis on patriarchy and misogyny, futurism is best understood as a reactionary form of aesthetic modernism, a radical reaction within *and* against modernity. Blum examines the complex themes in the futurist 'fiction of power', drawing attention to their affinity with fascism. Futurism was, she argues,

> programmatically attuned to modernity and sought to bridge the gap between irrationalist currents of thought – in particular Nietzschean anarchist irrationalism and Sorelian theories of the function of myth and violence in modern society – and what appears to be a positivistic faith in progress. While rejecting the notion of a historical evolution informed by logic, along with the optimistic scientism and belief in political emancipation characteristic of positivism, Futurism forcefully conveyed a bright vision of man's future, based on technological advances. Calling for the radical liquidation of tradition and celebrating visionary intuition, vitality, dynamism, violence and virility, the movement responded to the challenge of the modern age by constructing a fiction of the individual's power vis-à-vis the world – a modern myth for reimposing symbolic control on a world without absolutes, in which power seemed to have become the only measure of the self and the subjective imagination the only measure of reality.
>
> (Blum 1996: 17)

Here we can identify a number of familiar themes: the quest for heroic being, the celebration of vital force (*élan vital*), the problematization of the rational subject of modernity, the fascination with mechanical power and technology, and – most strikingly – the desire to transcend material abstraction by overcoming the tension between anti-rationalism and a positivist belief in evolution.

Futurism forces us to rethink existing readings of fascism as the 'aestheticization of politics' because figures like Marinetti offer a critique of modernity which transcends traditional notions of the 'rational' and 'irrational' in human life. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Benjamin's concept of aestheticization offers an insight into the nature of fascist spectacle and the commodification of cultural production in the fascist state, even if, as Adorno (1935) argued, Benjamin's images lack mediation by failing to ground the ideological process of aestheticization dialectically (Osborne 1995: 150). This point is reiterated by Hewitt, who notes that 'any application of Benjamin's model without continued interreference to social and economic determinants must itself fall prey to a form of aestheticization' (1993: 3; cf. Antliff 2007). To accommodate Marinetti within a broader definition of aestheticization, he adds, we must

> read the Futurists' aesthetic of struggle not as a false reconciliation of specific social antagonisms, but, on the contrary, as the compensatory

> generation, within the aesthetic realm, of a semblance of struggle. If, within an increasingly reified and rationalized social and political sphere, revolutionary action is no longer possible, then art, which once had to assert a false unity in the face of social contradiction, is expected to create a realm of rebellion (although, of course, the one form of conflict Futurism never seriously invokes is class conflict).
>
> (Ibid.: 135)

Hewitt notes further that the 'structure of ideological legitimation is such that the organization of a social order around a cohering value must go hand in hand with the occultation of the process of production of that value' (ibid.) However, like Lacoue-Labarthe (1990) – who sees fascism as the culmination of a humanist tradition which has always depended on a fictive separation of art and politics – he wonders whether fascist aestheticism 'marks a radical departure in the self-understanding of bourgeois political discourse (and the function of aesthetics in it), or whether Marinetti is in fact working with ideological material consonant with that discursive tradition' (ibid.: 138).

As Morrison notes, the

> best indication for the change from revolution to war as the guiding figure of futurism can be found in the changed concept of the avant-garde, which both Marinetti and Mussolini took from the socialist and bohemian traditions of the nineteenth century and remilitarized.
>
> (1996: 80)

On closer examination, Marinetti's fantasy of power reveals the false dichotomization in fascism between use value and exchange value in an attempt to demarcate a realm of 'concrete' utility and authenticity uncontaminated by the abstract exchange of equivalents and the egalitarian, levelling impact of commercial transaction. It is this which leads Marinetti and other reactionary modernists to reject bourgeois society for its failure to realize a 'healthy' virility of modernity. Gentile suggests that the 'machine and technology were fundamental components of modern civilization which fascism could not consider rejecting without giving up its ambitions for power' (1993: 19), and an important feature of Marinetti's manifestos is the myth of total power based on a fusion of man/machine. Blum also argues that futurism celebrates the 'symbiosis between the beautiful, all-powerful machine and a multiplied, metallized superman invulnerable to love, nostalgia and death' (Blum 1996: 127). Unlike Heidegger, who mourned that the 'triumph of value-neutral technical means over goal-oriented thinking is the necessary consequence of our modern condition' (Feenberg 2005: 15), and that technology reveals the specific character of domination, we can identify in Marinetti's ideological representation of the machine an attempt to transcend the traditional distinction between human subjectivity and mechanical functionality – a futural

fantasy of power and war which shatters the constraints of bourgeois civilization and resists 'weakening human qualities' such as sensibility, sensuality and scepticism (Blum 1996: 44).

Koepnick suggests that 'Marinetti believed war to be beautiful because it provides continuous stimuli for inner experiences.' However, he adds,

> these experiences emerge from a force field that blurs the boundaries of machinery and the soldier's body. Although war constitutes an arena of unprecedented control over inner and outer nature through technology, it is spectacular insofar as it ultimately extinguishes human identity, culminating in what Marinetti terms the metallization of the body, the transformation of the human body into machinery itself. War intoxicates because it bursts the traditional limits of the self and liberates individuals, through technology, from the alleged cage of bourgeois identity.
>
> (Koepnick 1999b: 96)

For Hewitt, on the other hand, the futurist fantasy of the machine is a 'struggle without protagonists . . . the central organizing metaphor for Marinetti's social vision.' He considers the image of the machine a mechanical metaphor for the structure of antagonism in capitalism which offers a 'symbolic resolution of specific social tensions', but only by generating further antagonisms which are turned against nature, creating a paradoxical state of 'reified harmony and ontologized violence' (1993: 142–43). The machine represents the power and efficiency of a community characterized by organic unity rather than redundant individuality, but with an emphasis on 'superhuman precision' and control; the 'human element, specifically the workers' experience, is either absent from the technological scenario depicted in the manifestos or reduced to a dehumanized material instrument and decorative accessory for the aestheticized technological creation' (Blum 1996: 51; 127). In this way Marinetti's work reveals an 'existential and sociopolitical pessimism', representing human experience as an

> inferno of unruly instinctual and inevitable social oppression, ruled by a contradictory and esoteric ideological domain . . .. The apocalyptic description of working conditions in the entrails of the future city – realm of spiritual freedom but only for the privileged intellectual elite – is an emotion-laden critique of industrial civilization.
>
> (Ibid.)

This leaves the impression of a world without hope, of the impossibility of emancipation. Caught in the fetid embrace of the fascist state, futurism descended into banal aesthetic escapism, yielding a polemical and exaggerated glorification of struggle and war.

Conclusion

Drawing together the strands of the argument, it is clear that fascism offers a false reconciliation of the cultural contradictions arising from capitalist modernization. But it is more than this: fascism seeks to transcend material abstraction by overcoming the tension between anti-rationalism and a positivist faith in evolutionary development. There is a manifest unease with capitalism in the writings of fascist intellectuals who oppose commodification as the reduction of all value to exchange values, but in a philosophical sense, fascism radicalizes a demand for self-sufficiency in industrial civilization based on what Di Stefano terms the 'modern masculine desire for a self-generation and a species-generation that can be self-consciously willed, created, and controlled' (1991: 51). Fascism attempts to bring into being a counter-revolutionary temporality distinct from both the 'hegemonic temporality of the self-revolutionizing process of capitalist production' (homogenization of time and the social imposition of a single standard of time) and the 'revolutionary temporality of the oppositional practice of social transformation in the name of the new, post-capitalist (traditionally, socialist) economic form' (Osborne 1995: 165). Yet, while Marxism is concerned with the evolution of capital's categories and the logic determining the relationship between these categories in successive historical-social formations (Harootunian 2007: 57), fascism is a conservative-revolutionary response within liberalism to the ruptural discontinuity of capitalism. The radical voluntarism of fascism is not simply a manifestation of some Nietzschean 'will to power', but an attempt to reconcile a social Darwinist commitment to competitive struggle with a managed form of capitalism in which the full potential of nature could be harnessed for the realization of autarkic goals.

3 Fascism and social structure

Introduction

At the centre of sociological debates on fascism is the question of class: to what extent is fascism linked to social-structural modernization, and to what extent is fascist ideology linked to the material interests of specific socioeconomic groups? At the heart of this debate is the class identity and political evolution of the bourgeoisie in capitalist society: is fascism, as traditional Marxist and functionalist theorists maintain, a militant mass organization of the middle class? Or, is fascism a new type of activist politics – a 'catch-all' anti-movement which appeals to a cross-section of voters perplexed by the 'onrush of modernity' and disillusioned by parliamentary politics? To progress beyond simple class reductionism (the assumption of an unmediated relation between class and ideology), our task is to explain the link between stratification and power in the political sociology of fascism. At least part of the explanation for the appeal of fascism is that intermediate strata seek to assert their relative sociopolitical power by supporting radical-populist 'outsider' parties who promise to defend social order and re-establish the authority of the state. Where a misalignment exists between groups and existing channels of representation; where established authorities fail to deal with unrest; and where employers fail to control organized labour through economic compulsion alone, fascist parties employ violence to impose extra-parliamentary rule in an uneasy alliance with elites. This raises three issues, namely: the crisis of bourgeois hegemony in the transition to postliberal capitalism, the tension between capitalist and petty bourgeois interests, and the crisis of socialist ideology.

Sociological theories of fascism can be classified into several categories, beginning with an earlier generation of functionalists who linked the rise of totalitarianism to economic modernization, social differentiation and secularization (Table 3.1). Like Arendt, Parsons (1942a) argued that fascism is conditioned by 'fundamental and generalized aspects' of western society, such as the breakdown of traditional authority. Using Durkheim's concept of anomie, he explained the absence of integration within stable institutional patterns as a key determinant of support for fascism, and although

Table 3.1 Sociological perspectives on fascism

	Social-structural origins of fascism	*Ideological orientation of fascism*
Functionalist sociology		
Parsons	• insecure intermediate strata	• disaffection towards modernity
Kornhauser	• socially isolated individuals	• anti-pluralism/submission to elite rule
Lipset	• extremism of the centre	• lower-middle-class radicalism
Modernization theory		
Moore	• influence of preindustrial elites	• authoritarian capitalism from above
Dahrendorf	• rural and urban petty bourgeoisie	• modernizing dictatorship
Linz	• radical populist mobilization	• anti-movement/political late-comer
Cultural history		
Mosse	• insecure middle-class voters	• populist anti-capitalism
Gentile	• mass popular social base	• totalitarian modernization
Paxton/Weber	• rural/urban petty bourgeois reaction	• anti-liberalism/anti-capitalism
Marxism		
Trotsky	• capitalist manipulation	• imperialism
Thalheimer/Vajda	• Bonapartism	• indirect form of bourgeois rule
Bauer	• autonomous regime	• corporatism
Neo-Marxism		
Gramsci	• mass organization of the bourgeoisie	• national-populist mobilization
Poulantzas	• crisis in the ruling power-bloc	• preservation of capitalist hegemony
Laclau	• Jacobinism/crisis of working-class ideology	• political hegemony of monopoly capital
Rational choice theory		
Brustein	• middle-class opportunism	• xenophobic ultra-nationalism
Wellhofer	• middle-class opportunism	• populist anti-socialism
Norris	• populist/catch-all mobilization	• xenophobic ultra-nationalism
Historical sociology		
Mann	• no clear socioeconomic profile	• paramilitarist nationalism
Maier	• alliance of bourgeois forces	• defence of middle-class social power
Luebbert	• rural/urban petit bourgeois reaction	• anti-socialism/anti-democracy

unconvinced by the causal link between capitalism and fascism, he recognized that fascism *became* a means for vested interests to defend their property against demands for distribution. According to Parsons rationalization causes anomie, based on a 'negative orientation to primary aspects of modern civilization' (1942b: 211). Anomie reflects the contradictory influence of anti-capitalist and conservative ideology among intermediate strata, although the 'principal sources of anomie have', he insists,

> often been derived from situational factors such as technological change, mobility and ethnic assimilation with relatively little direct relation to rationalized ideological patterns. . . . [I]nsecurity has tended to be structured in terms of a felt threat to the traditionalized values. The typical reaction has been of an overdetermined 'fundamentalist' type. Aggression has turned towards symbols of the rationalizing and emancipated areas which are felt to be 'subversive' of these values.
>
> (Ibid.: 214–15)

As we saw in the previous chapter, however, there are difficulties with the 'pathology of modernity' thesis, and Parsons' analysis reflects the teleological bias of normative functionalism with its stress on adaptation to pattern variables based on the economic and cultural experience of the United States. Recognition of this methodological limitation has undermined the explanatory force of modernization theory as one of the achievements of functionalist sociology: studies which present fascism as an aberration 'imply that its roots could not be traced in all that had come before it, and that it did not leave seeds for future fascisms' (Spackman 1996: 4).

A link between fascism and middle-class radicalism has also been noted by Kornhauser (1959) and Lipset (1960), who each stress the parallel between fascism and communism as rival forms of totalitarianism. For Kornhauser, fascism is a response to the erosion of intermediate ties which might otherwise bolster authority relations. He notes that a 'high rate of mass behaviour may be expected when both elites and non-elites lack social insulation; that is, when elites are susceptible to direct intervention by non-elites, and when non-elites are available for direct mobilization by elites' (1959: 43). Ideally, liberal democracy allows popular access to elites, but citizens should normally exercise restraint in their participation – for example, where interest groups consult with decision makers in the formulation of public policy. Although mass mobilization renders elites vulnerable to public opinion, and renders intermediate strata vulnerable to activists opposed to limited democracy, pluralism can survive where equilibrium is maintained.

For Lipset, equilibrium is dependent on the capacity of the state to introduce timely reform. He suggests that support for fascism is an indicator of the conservatism of the middle classes, whose declining prosperity and power encouraged disaffected voters to abandon a commitment to limited democ-

racy in favour of radical-populists capable of articulating the 'stratification strains of the middle class in a mature industrial order':

> While liberalism attempts to cope with the problems by legitimate social changes and 'reforms' . . . , fascism and populism propose to solve the problems by taking over the state and running it in a way which will restore the old middle classes' economic security and high standing in society, and at the same time reduce the power and status of big capital and big labor.
>
> (1960: 137)

Unlike working-class extremism, *middle-class* extremism is a feature of advanced societies, though Lipset connects this class extremism not to class struggle but to the fragmentation of intermediate strata in the transition to modernity.

Kornhauser's and Lipset's arguments represent an advance on earlier theories of totalitarianism by reasserting the importance of class. Yet they still place too much explanatory weight on the erosion of solidaristic ties and intermediate associations. Mass democracies are characterized by atomization and disorientation, but neither anomie nor the survival of 'preindustrial traditions' can explain why respectable middle class voters turn towards radical-populist parties (cf. Eley 1983). By positing pluralist consensus as an indicator of 'healthy' development, functionalists tend to presume what it is they are trying to explain. Social atomization is less a cause of radicalism than a consequence of the disorientation experienced by most individuals in modernizing societies. Mass society theory is rooted in a conservative critique of mass culture which tends to conflate atomization and (pathological) individualism. This error is repeated more recently in communitarian theories of declining social capital which explain anomic withdrawal in hyper-individualized societies like the United States by focusing on the absence of strong intermediate associations (Thomson 2005).

The weakness of early class-theoretical approaches, on the other hand – one which has significantly reduced the appeal of Marxism among mainstream historians and social scientists – lies in its failure to distinguish adequately between democratic and non-democratic forms of capitalism. The Comintern's denunciation of 'social fascism' as the 'dominant method of bourgeois rule' in countries with strong socialist parties is a case in point: all capitalist regimes, both progressive and reactionary, were seen as forms of fascist imperialism, while social democracy was interpreted as a temporary means for stabilizing capitalism in the 'third period' of economic crisis and revolutionary upheaval in the late 1920s. Yet by failing to understand fascism as a 'militant mass movement of the petty bourgeoisie', the Comintern view 'represented the surrender of a level of understanding of fascism that had already been attained within the PCI [Communist Party of Italy]' (Beetham 1980: 17–18). Beetham stresses the plurality of Marxist approaches in the

1920s – a fact glossed over in liberal historiography which casually equates Marxism and Stalinism. Capitalists did not 'create' fascism; the alliance – where it proved durable at all – was the outcome of specific circumstances, and might have assumed very different forms. This is not to deny the conspiratorial role of elites in the dissolution of parliamentary rule; it is, however, to note the weakness of approaches which falsely assume an identity of interests between capitalism and fascism.

Another weakness of class analysis is the tendency to present fascism as an autonomous expression of petty bourgeois interests, as if this class were, in *and* for itself, a coherent social force, immune to hegemonic claims emanating from the primary classes of capitalist society. This suggests a misreading of ideology, the purpose of which is to resolve/conceal contradictions arising from structured relations of inequality by creating a basis for collective action linking the dominant ideological aggregations of groups which make up the spectrum of political opinion into a unified formation. Traditional analyses also fail to explain why groups identify with political values which contradict their real interests. Such values may develop endogenously from within groups (for example, working class acceptance of institutionalized racism which allows rulers to exploit divisions between native and migrant workers); or they may be determined indirectly (for example, where big business legitimizes monopolies by reducing prices, which in turn harm low-paid workers and small business). Fascism is an example of this phenomenon, an ideology which claims to advance the universal interests of 'the people' through an assertion of sovereignty and identity, but which simultaneously encodes the *particular* interests of economic groups. Universal political values may exist, but they 'become possible only through an abstraction from [their] location in power that will always be falsifying and territorializing' (Butler 1998: 38).

A new approach is thus required to explain the links between capitalist modernization, social stratification and the crisis of representation in industrial democracies without losing sight of the distinction between historical fascism and the contemporary far right. Radical-populist movements emerge under specific conditions, either as (progressive) civil competitors which facilitate a transfer of power, or as (reactionary) competitors which frustrate functional adaptation to modernization. From a functionalist perspective the emergence of new social movements is typically linked to significant moments of transition, such as industrialization, revolution or war (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). In the case of historical fascism, this reorganization of forces was only possible because the political class had lost its capacity to rule using traditional mechanisms, enabling fascists to 'break a log-jam in national politics by a solution that excluded socialists' (Paxton 2004: 117). Although fascism was not a revolutionary movement (no attempt was made to alter capitalist property relations), we still have to explain the mobilization fascism achieved, its affinity with anti-capitalist traditions, and its capacity to engender acceptance of economic dependence among the working class (Passerini 1987).

Social stratification and political power

Political sociologists are concerned with the relationship between social stratification and political power, and focus on three main issues: (i) the extent to which class is explained primarily by the relation of individuals to the means of production; (ii) the extent to which political power is determined by control of economic resources; and (iii) the extent to which ideology reflects the interests of classes. Debate on these questions has traditionally been dominated by a critical exchange between functionalists and Marxists, who disagree about the relevance of economic factors for explaining political power. A further debate exists between Marxists and Weberians, who agree about the causal primacy of economic factors in class formation, but disagree about the relevance of exploitation as the primary source of conflict in capitalism. More recently, the relevance of economic factors has been challenged by feminists, who highlight gender inequality, and postmodernists, who pronounce the 'death of class' and the rise of identity politics as a democratizing factor facilitating cultural exchange between groups (Pakulski and Waters 1996; Nash 2000). However, although this cultural turn offers new and interesting perspectives, social class remains an essential category for analysing stratification (Goldthorpe and Marshall 1992). Waters is right to note that stratification is fluid, and that occupational mobility is determined by 'hierarchies of authority and responsibility established in state agencies and corporations' (1997: 30); but as Crompton and Scott (2005: 191) argue, an 'emphasis on identity and difference should not be allowed to downgrade one of the major preoccupations of class analysis, which is the study of structured social inequality'.

In Marxism, the middle class is defined as the petty bourgeoisie, an intermediate stratum between the primary classes of capitalism: property owners (the 'bourgeoisie') and propertyless workers who sell their labour in return for wages (the 'proletariat'). The petty bourgeoisie is in turn divided into small property owners, autonomous producers and clerical workers, groups which expanded in importance in the nineteenth century, but which rarely developed into a unified, *national* class due to the persistence of regional particularisms and uneven development. Although small property owners and producers have fallen into decline with the rise of corporate capitalism, clerical workers and middle managers have expanded to meet the needs of state and corporate bureaucracies: this 'service class' lacks the historic identity of the two primary classes of capitalism yet fulfils essential administrative and managerial functions without which capitalism could not function.

In contrast with the traditional petty bourgeoisie, managers, technicians and supervisors have greater incentives to align politically with capitalists, making certain types of class alliance more likely. However, although the service class exerts a level of control over resources which approximates to the traditional power of ownership, it is far from clear whether this substitutive role and *de facto* alignment towards capital allows us to identify this

intermediate stratum as 'bourgeois'. Individuals who acquire equity as managers in corporate firms may be considered a subgroup of the bourgeoisie (despite the fact that they are simultaneously owners of capital and employees whose labour power is functionally subsumed by the capital relation). But does this class location apply equally to supervisors and managers whose only resources are expertise and operational command? Wright (1985) agrees that intermediate strata occupy a specific functional role between the primary classes of capitalism, but insists that the *actual* significance of their delegated authority as a factor in determining control over resources is weaker than is often assumed. Although new intermediate strata perform non-manual, unproductive work in return for salaries based on exchange of equivalents (they are not exploited in the same sense as workers exposed to labour intensification), their activity is nonetheless subsumed by capital, as the 'wage relation and the direct intervention of capital tends to seize hold of the service sector as a whole' (Poulantzas 1975: 215).

Scott emphasizes the conceptual problems in Wright's use of the term 'organizational assets' as a means for conveying the contradictory resources of intermediate employees in capitalist enterprises – a term which cannot easily be applied when discussing state employees (1996: 184). Yet Wright has developed a neo-Marxist model of class more sensitive to subjective motivations and ideological factors which no longer assumes a direct causal connection between social location and class consciousness. For Wright, the process of class formation does not mean

> organized social forces within a class structure have any inherent tendency to develop toward revolutionary organization around 'fundamental' class interests. 'Class formation' is a descriptive category which encompasses a wide range of possible variations. For any given class or group of class locations one can speak of 'strong' or 'weak' class formations, unitary or fragmented class locations; revolutionary, counter-revolutionary or reformist class formations.
>
> (1997: 380)

He also emphasises the similarities between Marx and Weber, arguing that 'in many ways Weber is in his most Marxian voice when he talks about class' (ibid.: 30). Both Marxian and Weberian approaches are relational, both 'identify the concept of class with the relationship between people and economically relevant assets and resources,' and both understand class as decisive for the determination of material and ideological interests. The difference lies in the Marxian focus on exploitation, and the Weberian emphasis on life-chances: 'Both "exploitation" and "life-chances",' he contends,

> identify inequalities in access to resources of various sorts. Thus both of these concepts point to conflicts of interest over the *distribution* of assets

> themselves. What exploitation adds to this is a claim that conflicts of interest between classes are generated not simply by what people *have*, but also by what people *do* with what they have. The concept of exploitation, therefore, points our attention to conflicts within production, not simply conflicts within the market.
>
> (Ibid.: 33)

Yet the Marxian model has greater explanatory power because (a) it emphasizes the link between production and exchange, (b) it recognizes the antagonistic interdependence between capital and labour, and (c) it can be applied to market and non-market societies (ibid.: 35).

As Figure 3.1 demonstrates, Wright prioritizes property ownership in his model of class structure, but also emphasizes occupation, level of expertise and authority. This model can be employed to represent typical class formations, as depicted in Figures 3.2 and 3.3. The strength of the model is that it provides an insight into the origins of structured inequality *within* the labour process while also recognizing that class formation and class consciousness are determined not simply by economic relations but by the *totality* of political and ideological relations which govern the concrete actions of individuals in capitalism: although class situations are causal factors in determining life-chances based on ownership of property, actual classes are produced, as Weberian sociologists insist, within concrete systems of stratification.

Class formation should be understood as 'an effect of the totality of struggles in which multiple historical actors attempt to organize the same people as class members, as members of collectivities defined in other terms, sometimes simply as members of "the society"' (Przeworski 1985: 71). This is

Owners	*Employees*		
Capitalists	Expert managers	Skilled managers	Non-skilled managers
Small employers	Expert supervisors	Skilled supervisors	Non-skilled supervisors
Petty bourgeois	Experts	Skilled workers	Non-skilled workers

Figure 3.1 Wright's model of class structure (1997: 25; 398)

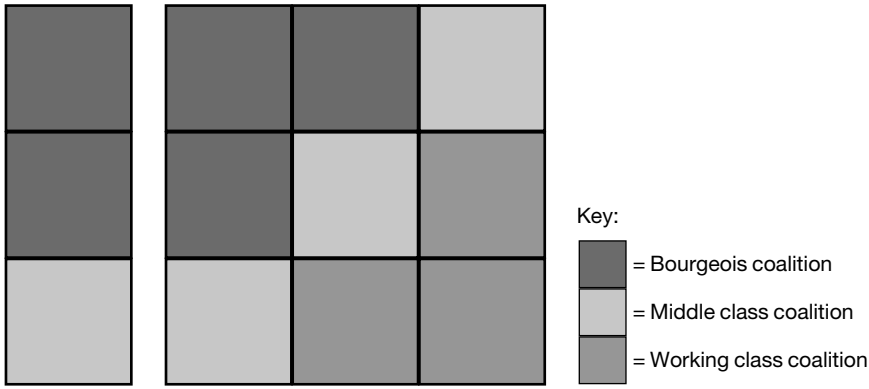

Figure 3.2 Class formation with intermediary middle-class buffer (Wright 1997: 398)

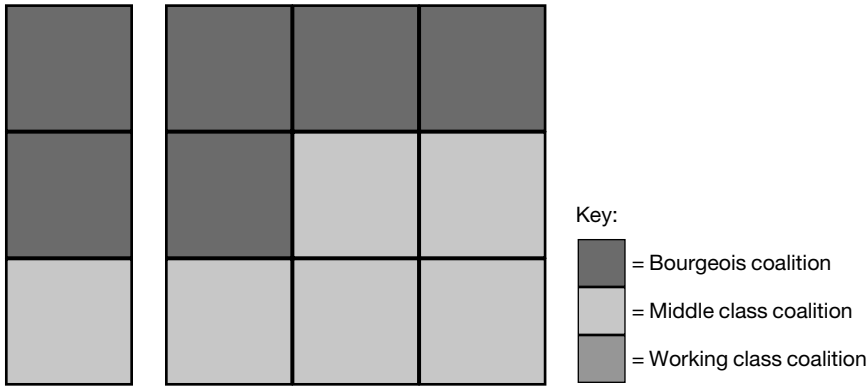

Figure 3.3 Class formation based on integration of working class into middle class bloc (Wright: 1997: 398)

particularly relevant for populist formations where intermediate strata combine elements of their *own* ideological discourse with the discourse of one or other of the main classes in capitalism: the ideological orientation of the middle class is determined less by direct exploitation than by their relation to the two primary classes in capitalism. The distinction between the new and traditional petty bourgeoisie means that what unifies intermediate groups is not a common experience of class struggle but mutual susceptibility to *popular-democratic* interpellations generated in the conflict between capital and labour. As Laclau argues, since the

> democratic struggle is always dominated by the class struggle, the popular-democratic ideology of the middle sectors is insufficient to organize its own discourse and can only exist within the ideological discourse

> of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. The struggle for the articulation of popular-democratic ideology in class-ideological discourses is the basic ideological struggle in capitalist social formations.
>
> (1977: 114)

Given the permeability of class boundaries, and the limits of bourgeois/working class interpellations, intermediate strata are the natural arena of popular-democratic struggle, and hence the key political constituency in capitalist societies. To explain the appeal of fascism, however, we need to understand how right-wing populism extends its support outside the independent middle class to integrate working class and plebeian groups in a non-class-specific interpellation based on a myth of unity and communal identity.

The class basis of fascism in the interwar period

Explaining the class basis of fascism is a difficult task, and some sociologists simplify the problem by denying there is one. Mann, for example, dismisses both functionalist theories of middle-class radicalism and Marxist theories of Bonapartism, arguing that there is a 'gaping hole between ideology and social basis' (2004: 23). For Mann, like Griffin, fascism is a type of 'nation-statism' rather than a radicalization of liberalism. Although class is a relevant variable in his analysis, he is concerned primarily with the subjective values that motivate fascists rather than their objective location or the class character of extra-parliamentary rule, noting that it is unsurprising that many fascist leaders were middle class given the prevalence of educated individuals in politics. Mann differentiates between authoritarianism and fascism, which he contrasts with liberal democracy in Britain and France and social democracy in Scandinavia, although he downplays the relevance of class struggle for the collapse of democracy in eastern and southern Europe, noting that apart from Italy working class parties were 'not threatening enough to provoke a rightist backlash . . . ' (2004: 60). An alternative explanation is that authoritarian social forces targeted the left *because* it was weak, but he discounts this as self-defeating given the dangers involved in mobilizing paramilitaries against trade unionists. A final possibility might be that authoritarian forces exaggerated the threat from the left due to an irrational fear of Bolshevism (ibid.: 62–63). But, again, Mann is unconvinced that the threat of disorder was sufficient to provoke a full-scale assault on democracy. Instead he presents a new checklist approach, linking fascism to the growth of 'core nationalist' constituencies, based on individuals politicized by war, economic insecurity, and the spectre of political conflict.

Mann's study is an important contribution to the literature, particularly his historical-sociological emphasis on the 'long-term military and geopolitical causes of the division of Europe into constitutional and absolutist regimes that parallel the economic causes identified by Barrington Moore' (ibid.: 65). He identifies the changing nature of warfare itself and the impact of militarization

on state/civil society relations. Yet by his own admission, fascism was victorious in 1922 in Italy (which was only mildly affected by the war), but was unsuccessful in Germany until the early 1930s, fifteen years after the First World War. The reasons for the failure of democracy in Italy, Spain and Germany are also different to the reasons for authoritarianism in Poland, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria, economically undeveloped countries with weak or non-existent parliamentary traditions and a narrow urban middle class. This highlights a methodological problem which bedevils attempts to develop a covering law applying equally to all the examples in comparative studies, regardless of the actual balance of social forces in each case.

As we saw in Chapter 1, heuristic devices such as 'populist ultra-nationalism' or 'paramilitary nation-statism' tend to reduce complex phenomena to abstract ideal types, allowing two or more non-identical cases to approximate to the same typology despite deviating qualitatively from the original statement. This makes it difficult to establish a hierarchy of conditions upon which to base an explanation. In attempting to explain the success or failure of fascism between the wars, Linz (1976) is surely right to emphasize the variability of fascist movements which in no two cases pursued identical aims. He is also correct to argue that the opportunity for fascism ultimately lay in the existence or absence of democracy itself: unlike in Poland, Serbia, Greece or Bulgaria, where authoritarian conservatives retained control, fascist parties 'could only grow in the context of a liberal, democratic society committed to and recognizing their right to proselytise, regimes which until the middle thirties found it difficult to restrict the fascists' activities' (Linz 1980: 155). Countries like Britain and France which tolerated fascist parties in the 1920s, and in some cases co-opted fascists in the struggle against radical trade unions (Maguire 2005), restricted their activities in the 1930s realizing the danger paramilitary organizations posed to state security.

Unlike Nolte (1965) or Maier (1975), who concentrate on the conspiratorial activities of elites in the 1920s, Mann emphasizes the impact of the war at the micro-level on the psychological dispositions of individuals. This strategy has traditionally been employed by historians who link the experience of violence and defeat in the 1914–18 war to the formation of anti-democratic dispositions, or who view demobilized soldiers as ideal candidates for paramilitary activism. This is particularly the case in Weimar Germany where, as Benjamin (1930) observed, the civil war which erupted on the streets of Hamburg, Berlin and Munich in 1919 was an opportunity for paramilitaries to translate their experience of the front into a political crusade. Yet the effectiveness of extra-parliamentary mobilization did not depend on disgruntled war veterans and right-wing putschists at the margins of society alone, even if the individuals concerned were, as Mann insists, 'pushed towards extremism by postwar unemployment and economic deprivation' (Mann 2004: 69). Writing in the 1930s, Tasca argued that fascist movements draw support from a very broad constituency of intermediate groups *caught between* the two primary social classes of capitalism:

> This body has been referred to as the 'middle classes'; but it must be emphasized that they were not the middle classes of the classical period of capitalism, absorbed after each crisis into the machinery of increased production and into a new proletariat. The postwar middle classes no longer had even the chance of joining the proletariat; the depression barred both their rise into the *bourgeoisie* and their descent into the proletariat. This petty and middle *bourgeoisie*, which found itself everywhere excluded, formed the backbone of fascism in Italy and everywhere else. But the expression 'middle class' must be given a wider meaning, to include the son of a family waiting for a job or for his inheritance to *déclassés* of all kinds, temporary or permanent, from the half-pay officer to the *lumpenproletarier*, from the strike-breaker to the jobless intellectual. It includes workers who are more conscious of being ex-servicemen or unemployed than of their class, from which they break away in spirit to join the ranks of its enemies.
>
> (1938: 284–85)

Although fragmented, intermediate strata were increasingly conscious of the erosion of traditional social and political authority by the left, whose open challenge to the state in Italy in 1919–20 could be countered only by a reorganization of bourgeois forces behind a populist mass movement of the right. This reflects not simply the declining power of the old petty bourgeoisie but also the need for differentiated intermediate strata (both the traditional petty bourgeoisie and the new middle class whose expected social mobility was constrained by the economic downturn) to express their social identity against the rising political power of organized labour.

From this perspective, a more general crisis of hegemony in the ruling power-bloc was required to transform micro-level discontent into full-scale opposition towards the institutional framework of the state, resulting in a radicalization of once conformist middle class voters whose mass support for the NSDAP in Germany in 1932 shifted the balance of forces in the state away from democracy. As Brustein (1996) argues, the focus on anomic withdrawal political irrationalism fails to explain the *self-interested* motives of respectable middle class supporters of Nazism. He examines support for the NSDAP from a rational choice perspective, as a basic choice between voting or not voting for a party based on political preference and economic interests (joining the party is seen as an additional indicator of rational self-interest based on the anticipation of future rewards). This approach has also been used by Wellhofer (2005), who questions the view that fascism is successful where *associative ties* are weak, noting that it was equally popular among integrated groups in Italian society: fascism's '"anti" character, its newness, and experimentation made it attractive to a variety of groups, consequently, its sources of support shifted across time' (ibid: 22).[1]

Adapting Wright's model of class formation, it is possible to see fascism as an alliance of forces centred on small property owners and unproductive

workers, whose class horizon is disrupted by status-quo anti-capitalism. In spite of the declining objective location of the lower-middle class in the 1920s, petty bourgeois radicalism became an effective force *in alliance with* economic and military elites anxious to address a crisis of hegemony in the state. As Gramsci argues, a crisis of hegemony occurs

> either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois [*sic*] intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution.
>
> (1971: 210)

Where a hegemonic class is in decline, but revolutionary forces are too weak to take its place, a situation arises where the power-bloc must either use repression or re-establish its leadership based on the generation of consent among associate groups – even where such an alliance conceals an underlying contradiction of interests. The rise of fascism as a radical movement centred on intermediate strata must be explained in relational terms and not as an autonomous force: many petty bourgeois voters were opposed to the increasing concentration of capital created by industrial rationalization and the institutional trade-off between industry and labour, yet alliance with conservative forces offered the only opportunity to neutralize the threat from the left.

What Mann defines as a process of delegitimation fuelled by a crisis of contestation in the traditional forum of parliamentary competition is understood by Gramsci as a crisis of hegemony within the power-bloc fuelled by the failure of established parties to manage the contradictory ideological orientation of intermediate strata: 'At a certain point in their historical lives,' he argues,

> social classes become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties in that particular organizational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. When such crises occur the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic 'men of destiny'.
>
> (Gramsci 1971: 210)

However, crises of representation reflect not just the changing values of voters, nor the widening of the franchise, nor the vulnerability of the mass towards elite manipulation. Certainly, all of these have contributed to the

decline of rational political discourse since the nineteenth century, as Kornhauser and Mann note; but crises of representation also indicate changing patterns of stratification, which present a 'sustained challenge' to power-holders. As Tilly (1978) argues, whereas establishment parties formed inside parliament represent 'legitimate' interests, parties formed outside parliament tend to be open mass movements. Like the philosophical societies of eighteenth-century France, fascist movements belong in the latter category, as militant organizations adapted to competitive democracy but committed to its extinction through the substitution of pluralism by *la démocratie dirigée*. Seeking to transcend class, fascists argue that democracy is only viable where it is based on a unified collectivity organized by a corporatist state with the capacity to overcome conflict between rival social forces.

Luebbert (1991) notes that there were a number of possible outcomes in Europe after 1918: where, as in Britain, the left was weak, liberalism could survive in the form of a centre-right alliance incorporating conservative elites, which reduced the possibility of a break with liberal economic orthodoxy;[2] where, as in Scandinavia, an alliance between workers and small agricultural producers was possible, then social democracy survived, preserving a pluralist state without liberal economic orthodoxy; finally, where both socialist and conservative forces were undermined by an alliance of urban and rural petty bourgeois interests, then fascism, as in Italy, was possible. This model suggests that fascism is more likely to succeed where a radical but socially conservative alliance is created unifying town and country behind an anti-socialist, anti-liberal agenda. While Mann links the assault on democracy to a conflict between liberal and authoritarian forces within 'dual states' – resulting in a 'revolt by one-half of the state against the other, each mobilizing core constituencies of support' (2004: 77) – for Gramsci the source of this rupture is a crisis in the power-bloc, which can no longer maintain 'the organization of permanent consent' necessary to sustain its moral leadership.[3] As Fontana notes, for Gramsci the crisis of the modern state takes place when ruling groups are shorn of their

> spiritual prestige and power so that their rule is reduced to maintaining their 'economic-corporate' interests, which, in turn reveals the narrow, particularist character of the state. . . . Such a political state of affairs, where the sequence of factors and the interaction of the opposing forces are contingent and unpredictable, is precisely what defines a revolutionary situation.
>
> (2004: 190)

Mann and Gramsci agree, however, that a challenge to the existing order inevitably results in an increasing legitimation of military force as a means for managing conflict; and while force alone is inadequate to sustain civil order, violence – both coercive and symbolic – is synonymous with fascist political practice.

Marxist theorists can be classified into supporters and critics of the 'Bonapartism' thesis developed by Marx to characterize the dictatorship of Louis Napoleon following the *coup d'état* of 1851 in France. According to Marx (1852: 44), the 1848 Revolution allowed the bourgeoisie a temporary victory, but failed to resolve the impasse between legislative and executive power. Bonaparte's attempt to establish executive supremacy was supported by Legitimists in the landowning class and Orléanists in the financial aristocracy, a royalist coalition presented as the 'party of order'. These groups could unite socially but not politically, as each represented opposing interests; by abdicating direct rule to Bonaparte, however, they were able to preserve their power without the façade of parliamentary rule until the collapse of the Second Empire in 1870–71.

Marx's model was adapted to explain the rise of fascism in the 1920s, first in Italy, then in Germany. Thalheimer for example, applied the model to explain Mussolini's rise between 1919 and 1922. Drawing an analogy between Bonaparte and Mussolini, he argued that fascism preserves bourgeois rule in periods of instability. Though careful not to equate fascism and Bonapartism, he argued that both are based on the indirect 'dominance of the bourgeoisie and of property owners in general over the working class and all the other strata which are exploited by capital' (1930: 189). The two differ less in their historical form than in the 'differences which stem from changes in the general character of capitalism. Napoleon III still operated in the era of free capitalist competition. . . . [Fascism] has been imperialist in the modern sense of the word from the outset' (ibid.: 193).

This thesis was adjusted by Gramsci, who observed the appearance of fascism before his incarceration. In 1921, he identified the contradiction between social and political power in Italy, noting that the country's existing

> parties are rooted essentially in the various stratifications of the lower and middle bourgeoisie – a class which, even though it still has a numerical importance and a democratic importance, no longer has as essential role in production . . . These people, who are currently in command politically, are not and never will be in charge economically. They cannot bring unity: they are condemned to tear each other apart, plot against one another, mistrust one another. They speak but do not put their words into practice; they command and no one obeys them; they impose their commands and finish up destroying to avenge themselves on a reality that refuses to obey them.
>
> (1921: 217–18)

The main consequence of this, he argued, was to create the *possibility* for a modern form of Caeserism – a category rejected by Thalheimer as inapplicable to conditions in the 1920s. Yet Gramsci did not apply the Caesarist analogy of military dictatorship uncritically. As Fontana argues, for Gramsci 'the supremacy of the political moment is much more obvious and decisive.

In the twentieth century, military power and the mere exercise of coercion are not sufficient to sustain a durable and stable form of Caeserism' (2004: 189). Economic and cultural change inevitably mean that the military element of Caesarism becomes less significant as rulers place greater weight on 'economic-trade-union and party-political coalitions' (ibid.). For this reason, as a 'war of position', modern Caesarism is more likely to take the form of a well-ordered police state (such as France under De Gaulle) than totalitarianism. As a means for balancing opposing forces in civil society, the model is less immediately applicable to fascism, which is dependent on a 'mass ideological party which can stand as a figure for the new collectivity at the same time that it serves as the vehicle for the seizure of power' (Jameson 1979: 15–16).

A more recent theorist of Bonapartism is Vajda, who notes that the influence of the bourgeoisie is a continuous feature of capitalist society, but that the bourgeoisie does not rule under fascism. Fascism is not a 'new' state, but an extra-parliamentary regime adequate to the stabilization of capitalism: the bourgeoisie relinquishes power to an autonomous executive, but the social content of the regime remains determined by the economic ruling class. *Eighteenth Brumaire* is, he argues,

> a fertile point of departure (quite independently of whether or not it proves that fascism meets all the basic characteristics of Bonapartism), because it drew attention to something which Marxism as received by both social democracy and Stalinism denies. This is the fact that it is possible (and was actually the case at points in history before fascism) for a political system to exist in which political rule is not exercised by the fundamental class in the given social formation, i.e. not by the class which possesses the decisive means of production.
>
> (1976: 96)

Importantly for Vajda, class location does not necessarily determine an individual's relation to the state: in an earlier age such roles may have coincided, but capitalists now require full disposition over capital *only* to ensure their independence and freedom of action: active participation in the state is not necessary where a class of administrators and experts can fulfil routine functions. This was not always the case, he notes, for as 'long as the rule of another class prevented the bourgeoisie from freely asserting its own egoistic material interests, it was of course forced to appear as an independent political force' (ibid.: 97). Confronted by socialism, the ruling groups were forced into a political compromise, leading to the transfer of power to an ideological mass movement under a leadership *opposed to* capitalism yet willing to defend private property in an extra-parliamentary regime based on small business, the lower intelligentsia, the officer class, the bureaucracy and the middle peasantry.

Yet there are good reasons to question the thesis of indirect rule as it

underestimates the radical nature of historical fascism as a distinct form of post-parliamentary rule which – particularly in Germany – transcended the parameters of earlier dictatorships. For both Thalheimer and Vajda, fascism represents the culmination of the transition away from a 'ruling class situation', where one class imposes its hegemony through established institutions, via a series of 'truce situations', where a tense balance of power exists between social forces, towards a 'revolutionary situation', where subordinate groups challenge the hegemony of the power-bloc provoking an unprecedented assault by paramilitary organizations. This point was made by Gramsci in his evaluation of the transition from Giolitti and Bonomi to Mussolini; it was also noted by Trotsky (1940), who described the transitional governments in Germany following the collapse of the grand coalition as 'Bonapartist', but who doubted whether the terrorism of the Nazi state between 1933 and 1934 could be placed in the same category. Fascism entails not simply the suppression of politics, for it can *only* succeed by integrating elements of the working class into the new order. Without this hegemonic articulation, the myth of class collaboration is impossible to sustain.[4]

More recent studies emphasize both the relative autonomy of fascism from its mass base and the ruling class. Poulantzas argues that fascism becomes possible where no single force within the power-bloc can assert its hegemony over other fractions, leading to a *struggle to determine the nature of structural transformation itself*. Fascism is not a 'deviant' form of bourgeois rule: to define fascism as an aberrant feature of bourgeois society is to legitimize the otherwise 'normal' functioning of capitalism, a functionalist assumption worthy of Parsons (1974: 57). Poulantzas also rejects Thalheimer's thesis of a Bonapartist formation preserving the balance between two stable but unequal classes, and Gramsci's theory of Caesarism, where the bourgeoisie has 'lost', but the working class lacks the power to prevail. In his view, fascism succeeded in Germany and Italy precisely because the working class *had already been* defeated: capitalists enjoyed economic dominance before 1918 but lacked political hegemony due to the challenge from organized labour: 'Where bourgeois parties agreed to support governments with fascist participation,' he argues, 'they did so only with the stated object (which they acted upon) of subduing the fascists after using them against the masses' (ibid.: 73). The originality of this argument lies in its stress on internal contradictions within the power-bloc – between capitalist and agrarian interests on the one hand, and monopolistic and autonomous producers on the other. Fascism prevailed not because an identity of interests existed between fascists and capitalists, but because fascists offered a means for mobilizing intermediate strata and neutralizing contradictions between fractions of capital based on an alliance between the capitalist elite and elements of the petty bourgeoisie, which (temporarily) increased the latter's influence in the state as party members assumed positions of command in the fascist hierarchy.

Yet Poulantzas himself fails to develop an adequate analysis of the condensation of forces that determine the ideological crisis leading to

fascism. As Laclau argues, while Poulantzas examines the complexity of the crisis in detail, 'this complexity is presented on a merely descriptive level, by a simple adding together of the constituent elements, without it became translated into a ruptural unity: that is to say, the process of its condensation' (1977: 93). The reason for this lies in his definition of ideology as an amalgam of constituent discourses, each corresponding to the specific interests of different classes and social groups. This definition undermines the unity of fascism at the level of popular discourse, leading to an artificial reduction of ideology to its class-constitutive components – an arbitrary process which 'not only fails to theoretically construct its object but, on the contrary, presupposes empirical knowledge of it' (ibid.: 97). To emphasize the point Laclau cites the example of militarism, an ideological position which is neither 'imperialist' nor 'feudal' in its determination, just as antisemitism is not confined to one class (ibid.: 98). In Poulantzas' model,

> not only is the concrete – the unity of the ideology in question – not theoretically constructed, but the syncretic intuition of that unity, at the level of the raw material of knowledge, forms the only basis for judging the clear connotations of the isolated elements. From this derives the basic inadequacy of his study of fascism.
>
> (Ibid.: 99)

Poulantzas summarizes the complexity of ideological forces, but the 'unity in which these complexities are resolved is presupposed and not explained. That is to say, the *condensation of contradictions comprising the crisis cannot be fully understood*' (ibid.: 99–100).

While it is essential to consider fascism in relation to class struggle, its ideological development is more complex, as class is structured by the totality of economic, political and ideological relations in society which exercise an autonomous, retroactive influence on class formation (Przeworski 1985: 66–67). Beyond the immediate economic struggle in the field of production, 'class struggle has also tended to be applied to another kind of antagonism: to that where the struggle between classes becomes intelligible if the overall political and ideological relations of domination characterizing a determinate social formation are brought to bear' (Laclau 1977: 105). There are thus two levels of contradiction to consider: first, economic struggle based on contradictions in the mode of production (the interpellation of subjects as members of a 'class'); second, popular-democratic struggle (the interpellation of subjects as members of 'the people'):

> Class struggle at the ideological level consists, to a great extent, in the attempt to articulate popular-democratic interpellations in the ideological discourses of antagonistic classes. *The popular-democratic interpellation not only has no precise class content, but it is the domain of ideological class struggle par excellence*. Every class struggles at the ideological level

> *simultaneously* as class and as the people, or rather, tries to give coherence to its ideological discourse by presenting its class objectives as the consummation of popular objectives.
>
> (Ibid.: 108–09)

Class struggle is determined by antagonistic contradictions arising within modes of production; but classes are – as Scott notes – 'the actual strata that are formed within concrete systems of stratification' (1996: 29), and are thus constituted by other cultural variables. Class consciousness is, in effect, *over-determined* by non-class interpellations, which combine in the production of subjects and the articulation and disarticulation of different forms of discourse. On the one hand, ideology is determined by antagonistic contradictions that cannot be resolved without one side being negated (i.e. the struggle between capital and labour), while on the other hand ideology is determined by non-antagonistic contradictions derived from the interaction between socioeconomic groups (e.g. between corporate and independent producers). The former antagonism testifies to the existence of *class struggle*, while the latter indicates *social conflict*.

For Laclau, then, what constitutes the unifying principle of an ideological discourse is the identity of the interpellated subject constituted through that discourse: the individual elements of a discourse have no significance in their own right until they are condensed and combined through interpellative structures which transmit and convey ideological elements. Here he employs the Althusserian concept of ideology as 'lived experience', where individuals, as 'bearers of structures, *are transformed by ideology into subjects*, that is, where subjects live the relation with their real conditions of existence as if they themselves were the autonomous principle determining that relation' (Laclau 1977: 100). The unifying principle in ideological production is the subject of power interpellated through a discourse: unity does not imply logical consistency, only interaction and compatibility between the interpellations which constitute that discourse. Under class hegemony, economic relations are reproduced through routine channels, displacing antagonistic contradictions between capital and labour; under conditions of crisis, however, logical consistency becomes irrelevant, as subjects' faith in the automaticity of ideological patterns is eroded. Like Jameson (1979), Laclau concludes that fascism opens up a new populist space to challenge the existing ideological legitimation of the capitalist state:

> As the function of all ideology is to constitute individuals as subjects, this ideological crisis is necessarily translated into an 'identity crisis' of the social agents. Each one of the sectors in struggle will try and constitute a new ideological unity using a system of narration as a vehicle which disarticulates the ideological discourses of the opposing forces. What is important for the present problem is that one of the possible ways of resolving the crisis for the new hegemonic class or fraction is to deny all

> interpellations but one, develop all the logical implications of this one interpellation and transform it into a critique of the existing system, and at the same time into a principle of reconstruction of the entire ideological domain.
>
> (Ibid.: 103)

From this perspective, the social function of fascism is to redirect popular discontent towards non-class-specific goals (autarkic collectivism, nationalism, antisemitism, etc.), by introducing popular-democratic ingredients derived from plebeian and bourgeois sources in order to mobilize intermediate strata and separate the political expression of labour movement from its class objectives.

How does Laclau reconcile his approach with traditional theories of class formation and class consciousness? The answer becomes clear if we recall Wright's argument that class formation is a 'descriptive category which encompasses a wide range of possible variations' (1997: 380). Using Laclau's Althusserian terminology, this means that the overdetermination of non-class interpellations 'consists in the integration of those interpellations into a class ideology. Since ideology is a practice producing subjects, this integration is the interpellation of a subject in whom partial interpellations are condensed' (1977: 109). The populist appeal of fascism for lower-middle class and working class voters can only be explained at the ideological level by examining *non*-class-specific interpellations which are ultimately determined by class struggle, but which also articulate discourses without a class-specific content. Whereas Poulantzas ignores the condensation of popular-democratic interpellations arising from the location of the working class as a constituent element of the 'people' rather than a class, Laclau recognizes that the *autonomous domain* of popular-democratic struggle is itself crucial for the determination of ideology. This does not mean we should abandon class analysis and shift the emphasis towards cultural factors; it does, however, mean acknowledging that the crisis in the 1920s which led to increasing support for fascism across a broad spectrum of voters was based on a popular-democratic interpellation of the people as a 'social mass' rather than a 'class-for-itself'.

As Figure 3.4 indicates, one means of representing the sociology of fascism is to emphasize the ideological integration of bourgeois, petty bourgeois and working class voters within national-populist formations, highlighting the permeability of class boundaries, the complexity of popular-democratic interpellations, and the residual resistance of proletarian strata to fascism. This pattern is particularly relevant in the case of German and Italian fascism, but it can also be applied (with relevant adjustments) to right-wing populist movements which promote non-class-specific alliances between middle class and working class voters in modern democracies.

The relative weakness of fascism elsewhere in Europe is consistent with this model: given the economic backwardness of Spain, Portugal and Greece,

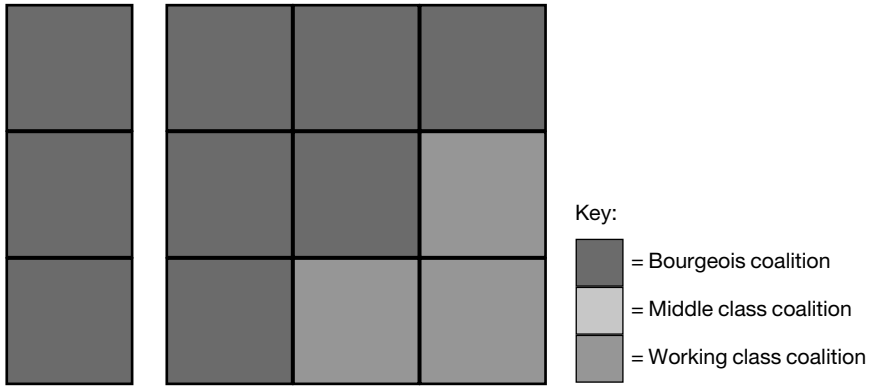

Figure 3.4 Class formation based on pure ideological polarization (Wright 1997: 398)

where traditional oligarchical interests remained dominant, fascism remained a dependent force. In southern Europe, argues Giner,

> the form of reactionary despotism that may be defined as 'fascist' or that adopted various forms of 'fascist corporatism' was essentially a mode of class domination brought about by a right-wing political coalition. Regimes which followed its pattern invariably claimed to represent everyone's interests – hence their frequent resort to populistic [*sic*] nationalism for the control of the collective means of emotional production – but were from the start entrusted with the preservation of the interests of the reactionary coalition. Usually they paved the way for further capital accumulation in accordance with the wishes of the ruling classes, though this aspect of the situation soon ran into difficulties when confronted by other, equally important, imperatives.
>
> (1982: 186)

This sociological insight highlights the methodological weakness of cultural theories of fascism, namely the absence of focus on the structural and ideological links between fascism and society: the subordination of secondary fascist movements to local elites points not only to the immaturity of capitalist relations in these countries (including southern Italy), but to the preponderance of traditional elites in the state bureaucracy and military hierarchy who blocked fascist movements until it became politically expedient to form tactical alliances. Parties like the Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania, for example, although popular among urban and rural petty bourgeoisie and elements of the non-organized working class, were heavily youth-oriented movements with links to the nationalist intelligentsia (Barbu 1980: 380; Ioanid 1990: 70). Although dependent on German support, as Ioanid

notes, the 'legionary movement would not have gained ground had it used and channelled the real causes for discontent in part of the population' (1990: 65). A similar tendency can be seen in Hungary, where the fascist Arrow Cross drew support among the urban lower-middle class (state employees, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals, etc.), as well as artisans, poor agricultural workers and other *Lumpen* elements (Nagy-Talavera 1970: 180–81). Across eastern Europe fascism appealed more to urbanized elements and the rural poor than the middle peasantry with independent means, who continued throughout the 1930s to support traditional agrarian and religious parties rather than fascists or ultra-nationalists.[5] As we shall see in Chapter 4, outside the core countries of fascism, fascist parties were forced into asymmetric alliances with conservatives and monarchists who denied fascist leaders sovereignty in the state. Fascism in eastern Europe was successful to the extent that it managed to translate formal ideological elements into local contexts. It was only in Italy and Germany (and Spain before 1936) that fascism coincided with a crisis of hegemony in the ruling power-bloc, creating an opportunity – whether or not this opportunity was consciously sought – for elites to abandon constitutional rule and confront the left.

Fascism and the contemporary far right

How relevant is this model of fascism for evaluating the social-structural basis of the far right today? If contemporary far right parties are ideologically distinct from fascism, do they nevertheless share a similar sociological profile? And, can we link the resurgence of right-wing populist movements like the *Front Nationale* (FN), the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) and the British National Party (BNP) to broader patterns of social-structural change? The argument proposed here is that contemporary far right parties fulfil a specific function in politics, namely to reassert the 'irreconcilability of the political' against an increasingly prevalent 'post-political' consensus in late capitalism. A democracy deficit has arisen in the postindustrial societies based on the perception that formal participation in the democratic process is futile: 'In several countries,' argues Mouffe, 'this democratic deficit has contributed to the development of right-wing populist parties claiming to represent the people and to defend its rights, which have been confiscated by the political elites' (2005a: 53). As a reaction against the pragmatism of liberal governmental reason, the function of right-wing populism is to mobilize bias through a new 'politics of enmity', to diffuse social antagonism through neonationalist/xenophobic rhetoric, and – intentionally or otherwise – to redirect dissent into safe forms of patriotic protest.

Eatwell (2000; 2004a) examines the resurgence of right-wing activism since the 1990s, and cautions against lazy comparisons between fascism and the far right. He suggests that while the far right connects with familiar fascist themes such as identity and race, neofascist and right-wing populist parties represent a far more isolated constituency than interwar fascism. Ignazi goes

one step further, arguing that the modern far right is no longer 'fascist' in any meaningful sense: fascism, he writes, is an 'early twentieth century ideology. In an age of postindustrialism and postmodernity, fascism no longer fulfils the role of the "mythical reference", even at the extreme Right' (2003: 19; cf. Minkenberg 2000). Organized neofascism is a marginal phenomenon which failed to establish a permanent presence in the democratic systems of western Europe after 1945, and neofascist parties have remained a peripheral force in Italy, West Germany, Britain, Austria and Scandinavia, restricted to ex-fascists and neo-Nazis whose commitment to a discredited ideology and lack of mass support has hindered their progress beyond the margins of politics. In Italy, the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) achieved limited success before repackaging itself as the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) in 1995, while in West Germany the *Nationaldemokratische Partei* (NPD) failed to achieve representation in the Bundestag even during the crisis years of the late 1960s (Ignazi 1996; Behrend 1996; Williams 2006). Neo-Nazi movements thrive at the margins of the democratic process by rearticulating an archaic 'master-race' ideology, according to which white Europeans are threatened by the numerical superiority of non-European immigrants and must therefore defend their racial-cultural heritage (Hewitt 2005); but this emphasis on racial hatred has led white supremacists into a cul-de-sac of futile violence, ensuring their more or less permanent exclusion from mainstream debate (Bennett 1995; Prowe 2004; Ryan 2004; Levitas 2002).

Populism functions as an *internal periphery* within the framework of modern politics. Following Worsley (1969) and Hayward (1996), Arditi argues that the 'continuing decline of mass parties and the ability of elite-oriented organizations to mobilize the public open up a space for the new politics of social movements and challenger parties' (2007: 43). He rejects the idea that populism is *synonymous* with politics as the result of conceptual inflation; but neither is populist mobilization a passing symptom of uneven modernization, as functionalists hold. Rather, it is best understood as a 'shadow' – a structural possibility 'embedded in the very practice of democracy' (ibid.: 50). As Laclau argues, populism locates an 'abstract social feature underlying all social grievances' (2005: 95). It is not a type of movement, but a 'political logic' involving a 'variable articulation of equivalence and difference' which functions by identifying the limits of heterogeneity which constitute the 'unity of the people' (ibid.: 117–18). The specificity of right-wing populism and its marginal location along the internal periphery of politics can be explained by its use of exclusionist rhetoric which exploits the *ressentiment* of disadvantaged groups and intermediate strata dissatisfied with the mainstream consensus and the pragmatic style of modern political governance. This definition raises parallels with historical fascism: both fascism and right-wing populism contest the legitimacy of liberal parliamentarism as the principal model of political organization in capitalist societies; and both rely on new forms of political activism to mobilize supporters. Although most far right parties try to cultivate respectability rather than

notoriety, both fascists and right-wing populists reject the mediation of politics by impersonal elites and the competitive exchange of resources typical of pluralism. There is a strong element of 'revivalism' in right-wing populism evidenced by demands for personalized leadership and opposition to 'disenchanted pragmatism' (Canovan 1999). This is an increasingly common phenomenon in Europe, Latin America and the United States, where authoritarian messages resonate well with traditional working class and lower-middle class voters disillusioned with 'politics-as-usual'.

From this perspective, far right populism appeals to voters frustrated by the absence of alternatives in an age of consensus politics, offering new forms of populism based on *non*-class-specific interpellations. Historical fascism presented a 'sustained challenge' to parliamentarism by confronting and augmenting the existing order, neutralizing in the process the threat from socialism: the political production of fascism can be seen as a 'populism of the dominant class', which – given the failure of socialism to align the working class struggle with a popular-democratic ideology appealing to intermediate strata – displaced antagonism by reducing class divisions to simple stratification. Anti-establishment populism, on the other hand, resists political pragmatism by offering alternative channels of representation in competition with established parties. Right-wing populists seek to identify and articulate 'the people' through the democratic system by placing limits on who can and cannot be included in this category:

> Once the identity of the people – or rather, its multiple possible identities – is envisaged on the mode of a political articulation, it is important to stress that if it is to be a real *political* articulation, not merely the acknowledgment of empirical differences, such an identity of the people must be seen as the result of the political process of hegemonic articulation. Democratic politics does not consist in the moment when a fully constituted people exercises its rule. The moment of rule is indissociable from the very struggle about the definition of the people, about the constitution of its identity.
>
> (Mouffe 1999: 51)

By articulating a *democratic* ideology of the 'people', radical populists claim to offer disenfranchized groups access to the political process, but without placing actual power in their hands. This was the function of 'parliamentary' socialism in the early twentieth century, which constructed alliances between working class and progressive liberal voters, but which led inevitably to a split between the political and industrial wings of the labour movement and the replacement of democratic socialism by social democracy.

But what happens where socialism is an exhausted or discredited force, as is clearly the case in Europe since 1989? Laclau suggests that the rise of the far right in France indicates a transformation of the political landscape following the demise of state socialism as an alternative model of industrial

organization. Given the 'collapse of communism and the formation of a centre establishment in which the socialist establishment were not very different from the Gaullists,' he argues,

> the division between Left and Right became increasingly blurred. The need, however, for a radical vote of protest remained and, as left-wing signifiers had abandoned the camp of social division, this camp was occupied with signifiers of the Right. The ontological need to express social division was stronger than its ontic attachment to a left-wing discourse which, anyway, did not attempt to build it up any longer. This was translated into a considerable movement of former communist voters to the National Front.
>
> (2005: 88)

To this we can also add the specific problems experienced by postsocialist states in eastern Europe since 1990, which experienced a more rapid and painful transition to global capitalism, leading vulnerable sections of the community to seek refuge in oversimplified populist and chauvinist solutions to the problems caused by economic dislocation. The popularity of right-wing populism testifies not only to the persistence of racial ignorance and cultural exclusion in Europe (exemplified by the secularist hostility towards all expressions of Islamic identity in France), but to the appeal of authoritarian alternatives to the technocratic elitism of the establishment. The origins of this authoritarian populism lie in a convergence between the demands of employers (labour discipline, capital accumulation, reduced corporate taxation), and the demands of lower-middle class strata (social order, identity, etc.) (Hall and Jacques 1983). In this sense, the real distinction between the New Right in Britain and *la Nouvelle Droite* in France lies less in their respective positions on globalization than in the hegemonic articulation of market libertarianism within British conservatism as a corollary to neotraditionalism – an ideological development which has only recently found expression in France under Nicolas Sarkozy.[6]

Although the New Right can in some respects be understood as a bridge between the two currents (Minkenberg 2000: 179), as Herzinger (2000) notes, a *cordon sanitaire* separates parties of the far right from traditional right-wing parties who are reluctant to break with the 'unwritten consensus' in the western democracies and negotiate with extremists. An exception to this can occur where parties of the far right adopt a moderate stance towards market libertarianism and therefore acquire greater political respectability:

> Only if they choose economic free market appeals that are combined with authoritarian and ethnocentric and even racist messages will they attract a broad audience. Parties that feature only racist and authoritarian positions but fail to highlight and embrace their commitment to free markets appeal to only modest sections of the blue-collar and lower

> white-collar electorate, primarily younger voters who have not been encapsuled by the organized working-class movement.
>
> (Kitschelt 1995: viii)

This trend is exemplified by the willingness of the FN in France in the 1980s to adapt to economic liberalism, and the decision by centrist conservatives to invite the Austrian FPÖ into the ruling coalition after the party moderated its rhetoric and gained an unprecedented 26.9 per cent of the votes in the 1999 general election.[7] This landmark electoral breakthrough provides an excellent example of the demographic profile of voters (Table 3.2) attracted by the populist mixture of neoliberal economic ideology and authoritarian social policy (Betz 2001).

What can we deduce from this breakdown? First, the largest source of support for the FPÖ was among the working class voters, who flocked to the party in the 1990s and allowed the leadership to claim a broader electoral base. This shift away from the Social Democrats (SPÖ) reflects growing uncertainty among working class voters towards the social market consensus and the perceived threat posed by competition with and immigration from eastern Europe. Kitschelt (1995) argues that negative economic experience of the labour market is also a primary factor in determining hostility among workers towards out-groups. In a sophisticated analysis of electoral support for the far right in Europe, however, Lubbers notes that, although exceptions exist,

> the overall picture shows that unemployed people, lowly [*sic*] educated people, manual workers and lower white-collar workers are more likely to vote for the extreme right. . . . The over-representation of the unemployed is, however, not explained in terms of an unfavourable attitude towards out-groups. As perceptions of deprivation turn out to affect an unfavourable out-group attitude, the unemployed are *indirectly* more unfavourable towards out-groups, and this affects their voting behaviour accordingly.
>
> (2001: 230; italics added)

But the data in Table 3.2 also reveal increasing levels of support from intermediate strata (civil servants, white-collar workers and self-employed/professionals), demonstrating its growing acceptance and popularity among lower-middle class voters impressed by the reorientation of the FPÖ under Haider, who neutralized radical elements by imposing greater centralized control, by espousing a specifically Austrian rather than Pan-German nationalism, and by combining the party's traditional market libertarianism with a new authoritarian, solidaristic rhetoric designed to appeal to male voters (Ignazi 2003: 113; Herzinger 2000: 134; cf. Plasser and Ulram 2000).[8] The FPÖ also benefited from increasing popular frustration with consensus politics and the patronage system, attracting protest votes from individuals

Table 3.2 Breakdown of the FPÖ vote 1986–99

Social category	*1986*	*1990*	*1994*	*1995*	*1999*
Men	12	20	28	27	32
Women	7	12	17	16	21
Men in employment	13	20	28	30	33
Women in employment	7	13	17	20	22
Under 30	12	18	25	29	35
30–44	11	15	22	24	29
45–59	6	15	22	10	21
60+	8	16	22	15	23
Farmers	5	9	15	18	10
Self-employed/professional	15	21	30	28	33
Civil service/public sector	9	14	14	17	20
White-collar workers	13	16	22	22	22
Blue-collar workers	10	21	29	34	47
Pensioners	8	16	24	16	24
Students	9	8	18	15	23

Source: GfK Austria Exit Polls.

without any strong party affiliation – a trend which has increased since 1999 despite a split within the FPÖ, and despite the loss of Haider as a charismatic leader unifying a disparate electoral constituency.[9] This demonstrates that where political space exists along the internal periphery of the political system it is possible for the far right to make significant gains, and the establishment of a solid constituency across the class divide in Austria, France, Denmark and elsewhere is evidence that the far right has the capacity, under specific economic and political conditions, to create a durable – if potentially unstable – right-wing voter coalition (Minkenberg 2000: 184).

The co-optation of authoritarian-populist concerns into mainstream politics in the last two decades has moderated support for the far right, who are forced to offer more radical alternatives to neoliberalism by campaigning against immigration and transnational integration (Lubbers 2001). Yet while right-wing populists have failed to challenge the political influence of corporate elites, whose particular interests are more easily universalized at the ideological level than the distributionist or humanitarian concerns of socialists and liberals, Butterwegge (1998) suggests that a potential mutuality of interests exists between neoliberalism and the far right based on three factors, namely: (i) the patriotic defence of national identity and cultural homogeneity by centrist governments confronted by economic migration; (ii) the delegitimation of universal welfare and progressive taxation as detrimental to the survival of the traditional family; and (iii) the appeal of economic-chauvinist ideologies based on the strength of national economies (*Standortnationalismus*). In defence of globalizing capital, neoliberalism has

created and sustained its own antithesis in the form of a 'neonationalist right', whose willingness to vocalize antagonism and dissatisfaction has given them greater influence over the direction of the political agenda (Hervik 2006).

Conclusion

Fascism emerges as a militant mass movement of the lower-middle class which challenges the institutional trade-off between the capitalist class and organized labour and attempts to restore the declining status and authority of autonomous intermediate strata. In a basic sense, the social function of fascism is to create a unity of social forces incorporating propertied interests, lower-middle class voters and plebeian elements opposed to socialism, though as Tasca reminds us, although fascism is a predominantly middle class movement, the 'social significance of a movement is not entirely decided by its make up' (1938: 287). The real significance of fascism lies in its appeal to 'those members of the middle class who either have or think they have no independent economic standing, and are thus easily "liquidated" or absorbed into a new political framework provided by fascism' (ibid.: 288). Far right populism, on the other hand, is a more specific response to the post-political consensus exacerbated by the disappearance of democratic socialism and communism as viable alternatives to neoliberalism. This has created a political void which has been exploited by right-wing populists who champion popular sovereignty and national identity against the prevailing ideology of the global market, multiculturalism and economic migration.

4 Fascism, sovereignty and the state

Introduction

The nature and development of the state is a central question in political theory, but with several exceptions (Fraenkel 1941; Neumann 1942; Poulantzas 1974; Kirchheimer 1941), few scholars have examined the implications of fascism for state theory. Conventional analyses focus on charismatic leadership and mass activism (Eatwell 2006; O'Sullivan 1983), depicting fascism as a new type of dictatorship which reversed the limited nature of liberal-democratic politics. Building on Rousseau's concept of the general will, this 'total state' is contrasted with the liberal state in western Europe and the United States, where pluralism has traditionally been more entrenched, and where the continuity of the state as an autonomous, impersonal and sovereign political order has prevented the successful rise of extra-parliamentary movements aimed at creating a new state with 'vastly greater power but without the properly political power to remain independent of both the regime and the "people"' (McGovern 2007: 160). Yet while an intuitive distinction can be drawn between bourgeois democracy and fascist Jacobinism, as we have seen there is no 'permanent essence' to liberalism that we can positively identify: imposing an impermeable barrier between liberalism and fascism makes it more difficult to determine whether the political organization of fascism constitutes an exceptional suspension of democratic norms (revealing the constitutional limits of bourgeois political society whose hegemony is predicated on the universalizing power of the legal-rational state), or a departure from the existing constitutional framework of liberalism (revealing the historical limits of the liberal state as a system of government). Schmitt's (1921) famous distinction between 'commissarial dictatorship' and 'sovereign dictatorship' captures the difference between traditional law-preserving violence and sovereign law-creating violence, but brings us no closer to understanding 'the forces that determine the transition from the first to the second . . . ' (Agamben 2005: 8). On the contrary, argues Agamben, 'such theories remain prisoner in the vicious circle in which the emergency measures they seek to justify in the name of defending the democratic constitution are the same ones that lead to its ruin' (ibid.). In this sense,

the idea that the rule of law can be legitimately suspended to 'defend democracy against itself' obscures the extent to which a state of exception can become the norm in non-totalitarian states by integrating questions of security into the existing juridical framework of liberal politics.

In this chapter, we will be concerned with three questions. First, we need to explain the transition from authoritarian liberalism to fascism, pausing to consider the theoretical value of Schmitt's concept of sovereignty as 'constituent power', a force or will which exists prior to and grounds a political order (in contrast with *constituted* power as the institutionalized power of existing authorities). The term 'authoritarian liberalism' is used to refer to the departure from liberal constitutionalism in the early twentieth century, not just in central and southern Europe, but in Britain, France and the United States. It signifies the emergence of a powerful executive state presiding over a weak legislature, and the normalization of emergency powers to manage industrial unrest and reproduce an environment of 'liberal security' (Neocleous 2006). In the interwar period, western countries witnessed a retreat from liberalism, but as a political possibility fascism was constrained by the relative resilience of existing channels of representation and mediation in bourgeois political society. This applies also in relation to Spain, where despite bitter hostility towards the Republic, the *Falange Española* under José Antonio Primo de Rivera failed to achieve representation in 1936 – which Payne (1999) attributes to the large anti-leftist vote for the hegemonic *Confederación Española de Derechas Autonómas* (CEDA) and the popularity of the monarchists.

Second, we need to assess the reality of fascist rule, and the extent to which fascists in power have been able to implement their goals through the state. Whereas De Felice (1977) distinguishes between the 'movement' and 'regime' phase of fascism, Gentile (1996) differentiates between 'authoritarian' fascism and 'totalitarian' fascism as two qualitatively distinct tendencies within the party-state: the former was committed to the defence of order (the revolution is 'complete'); the latter was committed to Jacobin radicalization (the revolution is never 'complete'). This perspective is consistent with Arendt's (1958b) view that totalitarianism is only possible where authority *no longer exists* (although Arendt does not classify Italian fascism as totalitarian in contrast with Stalinism and Nazism, even though the term was first used in Italy). Giovanni Gentile (1925) claimed that the purpose of fascism is to heal the 'traumatic' cleavage between state and citizen in capitalist society, and as an ideological spokesman for the Italian regime until 1944, expressed the desire of many Italians for the state to assume a more active and autonomous role in the organization of society – to apply the concentrated authority of the 'ethical' state to promote positive freedom in what Buci-Glucksmann (1980: 296) terms a 'deformation of Hegelian philosophical idealism'. Yet the idea of a 'total state' based on the abolition of competing criteria of rationality misrepresents the reality of fascism. On the one hand, it exaggerates the neo-absolutist nature of fascism based on the absorption of civil society into the state; on the other hand, it ignores the unfixed, fragmentary nature of the

fascist party-state as a political structure. Although fascism increases the *power* of the state over private individuals, it leads not to a reconstitution of *authority* (in the sense of providing new grounds for political obligation), but to a reconstitution of sovereign power in a 'dual state' which preserves the partial integrity of existing legal structures, and the strategic-relational ties between military, political and economic interests, while broadening the prerogative powers of competing fascist leaders.

Third, we need to assess the 'auratic' dimension of fascist political practice, or what is sometimes referred to as the 'politics of spectacle' (Falasca-Zamponi 1997; Koepnick 1999b; Berezin 1997). As McCormick notes, in fascism myth assumes the form of a 'strategically employed technology' manufactured and produced on an industrial scale (1997: 92), and the production of emotion in fascist communication, the emphasis on charismatic rulership and the theatricality of fascist ritual all represent a break with liberal and aristocratic politics. Yet the shift from liberal elitism to a politics of mass emotion does not – as Gentile claims – signify the 'sacralization of politics'. Whatever the power of its originating creed, fascism is articulated at the level of practice, allowing power to be transmitted through the performative re-enactment of collective identities in paramilitary formations, workplace groups, youth battalions and consumer/leisure organizations. Despite its anti-democratic nature, some observers have drawn parallels between the emotionalization of politics under fascism and the postmodern politics of spectacle in late capitalist society, in which powerful methods of communication and control are employed to synthesize an experience of collectivity that integrates subjects through the reproduction of shared forms of identity and meaning. Fascism attempts to ground a new sovereign order, not through a revolution in the framework of society but through a revolution in the *experience* of this framework (Haug 1980: 74).

Theorizing the state

A tension exists in contemporary political theory between normative interpretations of the state as a separate realm of sovereign decision making which exists outside and above civil society, and neo-Marxist theories which stress the complex determination of the state as the semi-autonomous political organization of capitalist society, the field of coercive and educational power through which influential forces within political society achieve hegemony (Gramsci 1971; Poulantzas 1973; Althusser 1970). A further tension exists between political-sociological approaches which attribute a level of continuity and autonomy to the state (Skocpol 1979, 1985; Mann 1983), and post-structuralist/post-Marxist theories which stress the contingency of social processes and the impossibility of the 'state' as a discrete or absolute phenomenon (Laclau and Mouffe 2001; Jessop 1990). Before proceeding with our analysis, we need to consider briefly the implications of this debate for an understanding of the historic opportunities and structural constraints

imposed on fascist leaders by their economic and political environment, and the inherent limits of fascism as a 'totalizing project'.

Emphasizing equilibrium, pluralists view the state as an impartial 'referee', balancing competing interests through a process of compromise and trade-off. They downplay the unique function of the state in facilitating outcomes, and reject the Hobbesian idea of sovereignty as 'supreme power' as a misrepresentation of political reality. Although appealing conceptually, however, Marxist critics note that pluralism offers a normative rather than descriptive theory which fails to explain the structural and ideological determination of the state as the concrete institutional framework of political society:

> the central premises of this position – the existence of multiple power centres, diverse and fragmented interests, the marked propensity of one group to offset the power of another, a 'transcendent' consensus which binds state and society, the state as judge and arbitrator between factions – cannot in the end shed light on, or explain, a world in which there may be systematic imbalances in the distribution of power, influence and resources.
>
> (Held 2006: 165; cf. Lukes 2005)

By challenging pluralism, Marxists reject the idea of politics as a 'trade-off' between interests: either the state is an instrument of class rule, with greater or lesser autonomy, or it is a device for regulating and managing the political economy of capitalism. Although structural Marxists cannot fully evade the accusation of economic functionalism – as McLennan (1985: 94) argues, the idea of 'relative autonomy' still implies that the state works *on behalf* of a capitalist class – most contemporary Marxist theorists agree that not *all* political processes are driven by the functional requirements of the economy. As Jessop notes, neo-Marxists have introduced a level of complexity into the debate, for 'once one moves away from the institutional logic of capital accumulation and its material embodiment in the dominance of the value-form, the Marxist classics provide little guidance on the distinctive organizational principles involved in different parts of society' (1990: 79).

In opposition to Marxism, state-theoretical approaches stress the operational autonomy of the state. Revisiting Weber's historical sociology, Skocpol (1979; 1985) and Mann (1983) reposition the state at the centre of their respective analyses. By 'bringing the state back in', they account for the long-term development of the political system of society by connecting this historical continuity with the specific interests of state actors. This realist approach has been influential among elite theorists, for obvious reasons, but while state-centred approaches identify the strategic and geopolitical interests of state actors and the self-expanding logic of the state as a regulatory institution with unique interventionist powers, the emphasis on the autonomous agency of state elites obscures the changing relationship between state and society over time:

> whilst governments come and go, the state, as an institutional ensemble, persists as it evolves over time. . . . at any given point in time, the strategic context within which governments find themselves is in turn a reflection of the strategic capacities and competences of the institutions of the state and the constraints and opportunities these impose. To understand the capacity for governmental autonomy is, then, to assess the extent of the institutional, structural and strategic legacy inherited from the past.
>
> (Hay and Lister 2006: 12)

In an effort to move beyond economic reductionism, Skocpol seems to arrive at the opposing conclusion that state actors are autonomous from the dominant economic class, which suggests that the state and civil society are disconnected spheres (Levine 1987: 100). This approach is methodologically flawed as it repeats the reductionist fallacy of orthodox Marxism in a new form: 'if one posits the need to choose between the state and society as the independent variable in social analysis,' argues Jessop, 'one implies that both exist as independent entities which are fully constituted, internally coherent and mutually exclusive and that one always unilaterally determines the other' (1990: 286).

Moving away from conventional state theory, poststructuralists suggest that given the discursive nature of the political, the fixity and bounded nature of the state must be placed in question because no absolute hegemonic centre can be identified. Poststructuralists radicalize structuralist reason by taking structuralism to its logical conclusion: 'to avoid the charges of essentialism and foundationalism that were levelled at structuralism,' argues Newman, '*the unity, consistency and stability of the structure itself must be questioned*' (2005: 5). Cybernetic accounts which introduce a rigid distinction between what is internal or external to a system are problematic because, as Gödel argued, there is 'no closed, complete or self-contained system or structure, because there will always be elements within this system whose identity can only be established by something outside it' (ibid.: 6). Gödel revolutionized mathematics by pointing out that there is no formal system in which every mathematical truth is provable, effectively ending attempts to justify mathematics using formal systems. This emphasis on uncertainty has been replicated by poststructuralists in the humanities and social sciences, undermining rationalist attempts to establish fixed rules of thought and language and casting doubt on the reliability of theoretical concepts and analytical categories. Newman insists that the importance of the poststructuralist argument is 'not that the state does not exist, but rather that theories of the state often serve to disguise the much more troubling realization that power has *already* permeated social relations and identities' (ibid.: 43). There is, he insists, no 'uncontaminated' point of departure external to power from which we can observe the state: subjects are not autonomous from power as subjectivity itself is 'embroiled' in the relations of power and knowledge which constitute

social life. For this reason, we must question theories of the 'state' as a unified or rational actor, or definitions of the political which ignore the foundations of the state in the social: the state as such is a terrain upon which multiple, self-limiting discursive strategies compete for hegemony.

Contemporary debates between critical theorists and poststructuralists are complex and convoluted, but a possible resolution lies in recognizing that fixity and boundedness are possible under specific conditions. Post-Marxists, argues Jessop, 'do not rule out the possibility of partial, provisional "totalizing" projects. A social formation can become a totality in so far as hegemonic discourse can establish clear frontiers by constructing a chain of equivalences . . .' (1990: 292). But even where a 'chain of equivalences' succeeds in creating the appearance of fixity and boundedness by identifying the limits of inclusion, identity is *only* possible through rearticulation and renegotiation: just as society can be seen as a fragmented entity, so the state can be seen as a 'tendential realization of partial projects', a site of competing articulations rather than a privileged site of conflict in the traditional sense. Although Jessop questions the deconstructionist reasoning implicit in poststructuralism (according to which all truth is pragmatic), he correctly notes that discourse analysis and strategic-relational analysis are equally anti-foundationalist and anti-essentialist. In this sense, the unity of a formation cannot be derived from a 'single essential principle (a "cause without cause", i.e. an apodictic foundation); it results from an emergent, provisional, unstable and non-necessary correspondence among different social elements' (1990: 298).

The importance of this insight becomes clear when we examine the struggle of fascist parties to capture the state in competition/alliance with influential forces in bourgeois society. In Chapter 3, we examined the political-sociological determinants of fascism, noting how petty bourgeois radicalism became an effective force in alliance with economic and military elites anxious to avert a crisis of hegemony in the state. To explain the challenge posed by fascism to the legal authority and functional autonomy of the constitutional state, we need to investigate further the problematic status of sovereign power as the capacity of rulers to determine a permanent exception which grounds a new legal and political order. What is at stake here is the complex dialectical relation between hegemony and sovereignty – that is, between the *established* moral and intellectual leadership of bourgeois political society and the radical agency of a militant (Jacobin) party which claims to act in the name of the people as a sovereign constituent force, but which in the absence of popular consent resolves the crisis of hegemony through unlimited force.

Although 'politically overdetermined readings' exaggerate the affinity between Schmitt and Gramsci who stand at 'opposite extremes of the modern philosophical tradition' (Thomas 2009: 35), there are parallels between Schmitt's doctrine of sovereignty and Gramsci's concept of hegemony (Kalyvas 2000; Mouffe 1999; 2005b). While the ideological differences

between these thinkers are profound, a critical juxtaposition of Gramsci and Schmitt can shed light on the question at hand, namely: is the progression from constitutional to unconstitutional dictatorship instituted by fascism a revolutionary act – an exercise in hegemonic sovereignty based on the collective will – or is the distinction between legitimate and sovereign dictatorship really one of degree, a partial restoration of order based on the unstable 'charismatic hegemony' of the personal ruler?

From authoritarian liberalism to fascism

In liberal political theory, 'legitimacy' is grounded in the notion of constitutional rule: government is formally subject to the rule of law, which is based on a set of binding norms that constrain the sovereign. Critics of liberalism typically reject the liberal ideal of a rational 'nomocracy' based on the sovereignty of law, pointing instead to the importance of the sovereign 'political' moment based on the creative and democratic form-giving power of the people. One such critic was Schmitt, who argued that law is always contingent on sovereign will: all law is '"situational law". The sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its totality. . . . Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or rule, but as the monopoly to decide' (1922: 13). For Schmitt, a constitution can 'only rest on concrete sovereign will and not on an abstract norm. A unified and indivisible existential dimension, external to the constitution, grounded the constituted powers of the state and could not be assimilated by or coordinated with them' (ibid.: 120). The evolution of sovereignty reveals the extra-juridical moment of constituent force (law-creating violence), as a result of which politics yields to a new configuration of power relations. Sovereignty, concluded Schmitt, is the discretionary power to declare the exception, either to suspend constitutional norms, or to found a political order without reference to previous legal or institutional limits.

Kalyvas suggests that Schmitt's reference to the exception is not meant to legitimize illegality, but reflects rather the foundational force of sovereign constituent power which cannot be 'constrained by any antecedent rule since there is not yet such a new rule. If the constituent will was determined by the previous order or if it derived its legitimacy from it, it would not have been a constituent power but a constituted power' (2000: 351). For Kalyvas, this conception of sovereignty mirrors Gramsci's concept of hegemony as the 'instauration of a new political reality,' the 'politics of the self-institution of the social' (ibid.: 354). Although normally seem as a class project – based on the moral leadership of a historic class organized through the state – hegemony, like sovereignty, 'functions as the source of legitimacy for a political order that did not have it in the moment of its creation' (ibid.: 357). The modern prince cannot achieve hegemony solely through force because 'modern civil society has formed a quasi-independent sphere where consent and persuasion have become a necessity that cannot be neglected' (ibid.: 360).

Despite their obvious differences, Schmitt and Gramsci reveal the contradictory nature of sovereign power from opposing standpoints. For Schmitt, the modern prince is understood as a 'transposition of the Cartesian God to the political world' (Cristi 1998: 112). Schmitt offers an essentially decisionist perspective, based on the view that only an absolute leader (a monarch or elected head of state invested with prerogative powers) can act as an authentic sovereign and produce order from chaos. On this view, laws are 'based on a decision concerning the interest of the state and the state's foremost interest is that a decision be made' (ibid.: 113), while the task of administering the will of the sovereign leader falls to the executive branch of the state which includes the police and judiciary. Gramsci, on the other hand, while acknowledging the primary organizational function of the state as the 'real abstraction or hypostatization that subordinates and organizes civil society' (Thomas 2009: 31), connects the idea of hegemonic sovereignty to the political party: the modern prince

> cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognised and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form.
>
> (Gramsci 1971: 129)

As organs of representation, political parties historically come in two forms: those 'constituted by men of culture, who have the function of providing leadership of a cultural and general ideological nature for a great movement of interrelated parties', and those 'constituted this time not by an elite but by masses – who as such have no other political function than a generic loyalty, of a military kind, to a visible or invisible centre' (ibid.: 149–50).

The challenge to bourgeois political society posed by radical movements in the 1920s highlights the tension between competing definitions of hegemonic sovereignty. On the one hand, we can identify the (defensive) hegemonic framework of bourgeois political society which, as Thomas argues,

> posits itself as a speculative comprehension of a civil society that is constituted in its particularity precisely by political society's claim to be an instance of organizing universality. Stated in Schmittian terms, it is the institutional realization of the claims of 'the political' to dominate and to organize 'politics'; in Gramsci's terms, it is the speculative translation of the bourgeois class's project.
>
> (2009: 31)

On the other hand, we can identify the (offensive) hegemonic sovereignty of militant movements (fascists, communists, etc.) who claim to function as representatives of the formless constituent will of the people as a 'determining potentiality' rather than a 'determined actuality' (Kalyvas 2000: 363).

Whereas Gramsci was concerned primarily with the hegemonic strategy of the left – connecting popular sovereignty and moral leadership – in view of his intense suspicion of democracy and support for the sovereign against forces of 'chaos' in the state, Schmitt is identified with the defensive hegemonic sovereignty of the constitutional framework of authoritarian liberalism. Although he eventually endorsed the legal nihilism of fascism, Schmitt stands as the most articulate theorist of authoritarian liberalism based on his defence of the free economy and strong state (Cristi 1998), and his support for constitutional dictatorship to defend the Weimar state against internal enemies. Thus while Kalyvas is right to highlight the support for popular sovereignty in his earlier theory of constituent power, Schmitt ultimately came to believe that the correct function of the sovereign is to 'defend democracy against itself' – to 'form' the political identity and will of the people rather than respond to the multitude. Sceptical of the 'chaotic heterogeneity' of civil society as it intrudes upon the decisional autonomy of the state, his support for a protective state represents a conservative revision of Hegel's vision of the 'ethical' state whose practical function is to administer the will of the sovereign, but through which the particular elements of civil society acquire the sphere of their universal character.[1] Gramsci, on the other hand, recognized the inherent weakness of bourgeois state projects based on the suppression of internal divisions. In reality, he argued, only that

> group that poses the end of the State and its own end as the target to be achieved can create an ethical State – i.e. one which tends to put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled, etc., and to create a technically and morally unitary social organism.
>
> (1971: 259)

It is precisely this quality of *popular* sovereignty which fascism failed to achieve by reverting to an unstable form of charismatic hegemony divorced from the sovereign democratic will of the people.

Schmitt believed in the 1920s that politics had drifted from any sense of responsible, detached authority, and his response to the crisis of parliamentarism was to insist on a 'friend–enemy distinction', a device for rulers to distinguish and neutralize groups hostile to authoritarian liberalism. The sovereign, he argued (1932), must possess *ius belli* – the discretionary right to declare a 'just war'. Where this becomes necessary, 'temporary' extra-juridical norms acquire a new force and *de facto* decisions may enter the realm of law in the form of executive decrees. As Neocleous observes, the elasticity of the term 'emergency' means that

> to criticize the use of emergency powers in terms of a suspension of the law . . . is to make the mistake of counterpoising normality and emergency, law and violence. In separating 'normal' from 'emergency', with the latter deemed 'exceptional', this approach parrots the conventional

> wisdom that posits normalcy and emergency as two discrete and separable phenomena. This essentially liberal paradigm assumes that there is such a thing as 'normal' order governed by rules, and that the emergency constitutes an 'exception' to this normality.
>
> (2006: 206)

This is one reason for the continuing interest in Schmitt, who was perhaps the first to note that states of exception cannot take a purely juridical form, yet can be established in law, facilitating a momentary reconciliation between decisional autonomy and legal-rational domination. While an earlier generation of jurists argued that a *de facto* state of exception could only exist coincidentally outside positive law (i.e. emergency powers such as Article 48 of the Weimar constitution reveal a logic of necessity that transcends the legal-rational constitution of society and thus cannot be integrated into the juridical framework of the state), it is clear that the state of exception is an 'integral part of positive law *because the necessity that grounds it acts as an autonomous source of law*' (Agamben 2005: 23; italics added). Agamben resolves this dichotomy by rejecting the inside/outside metaphor based on a rigid distinction between political sovereignty and legal-rational authority:

> In truth, the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other. The suspension of the norm does not mean its abolition, and the zone of anomie that it establishes is not (or at least claims not to be) unrelated to the juridical order.
>
> (Ibid.)

Political necessity, in effect, creates its *own* justification within the logic of the existing state, for necessity (derived from the immediate exigencies of a political situation) is not subject to law and hence justifies transgression of juridical norms. The 'specific contribution of Schmitt's theory,' concludes Agamben, 'is precisely to have made such an articulation between state of exception and juridical order possible. It is a paradoxical articulation, for what must be inscribed within the law is something that is essentially exterior to it . . . ' (ibid.: 33). What is at stake here is not the collapse of liberal politics as such, but – as in the United States after September 2001 – the false and unsustainable distinction in liberal theory between 'normal' and 'exceptional' government revealed in the *legal normalization* of emergency rule. Although fascism leads from 'legitimate' dictatorship to despotism, there is, as McCormick notes, a

> fluidity between liberalism, with its apparently insurmountable categorical contradictions, on the one hand, and the phenomenon of fascism,

> on the other, which may not be an altogether distinct alternative to liberalism, but which itself appears to be a product of, and solution to, liberalism's theoretical-practical impasses.
>
> (1997: 13–14)[2]

Yet the weakness of Schmitt's theory of sovereignty lies in its metaphysical premises: constituent power is presented as an indeterminate force independent of the historical-sociological development of the state, whose form it supposedly predates and outlives. Despite its 'gritty realism', argues Thomas, Schmitt's 'concept of the political in reality participates in one of the most venerable illusions of the Western metaphysical tradition: namely, the dogmatic assertion of a moment that provides the essence for the contingent events that are determined by it' (2009: 27). If sovereignty is a formless, 'disembodied' force waiting to be realized, how can we explain political change in concrete-historical terms? More precisely, who or what is the source of the decision in favour of given outcomes? Schmitt correctly notes that it is authority rather than truth which is the real basis of law (*auctoritas non veritas facit legem*), but his metaphysical analysis conceals the fact that the political always finds its ground in the social: if the sovereign authority of a legally constituted order can be challenged by parties opposed to the established order, this suggests that the executive state, in and of itself, is not sovereign. Furthermore, it suggests that those established forces which co-opt or support militant movements like fascism must logically possess levels of power either equivalent to or greater than the executive state, supporting the assertion that capitalists are not 'responsible' for fascism directly, but retain an anterior capacity to determine the form of the bourgeois state by co-opting/supporting militant groups able to reconcile at an ideological level the contradictions within the power-bloc.

Schmitt's neo-Hobbesian constitutional theory also reveals a deeper weakness in the western doctrine of sovereignty itself, which is ultimately based on the force of myth: the legitimacy of political change derives less from a contract between rulers and ruled than from the capacity of foundational myths to render contingency eternal and universal (Barthes, cited in Beaulac 2004: 38). As a constituent force, sovereignty cannot be defined in a final, conclusive way because language cannot transcend itself: the singular quality of myth is to create the impression of certainty and orthodoxy, thus concealing fissures and contradictions in social life while reconnecting dispersed or unstable concentrations of power in a new symbolic unity. The mythical sign invested with symbolic meaning does not describe reality in any accurate sense, but transforms it in consciousness. As Foucault notes, the myth of sovereignty is connected to the historical legitimation of monarchy, which persisted even as the juridical edifice of sovereign right 'escaped from royal control': 'To say that the problem of sovereignty is the central problem of right in Western societies,' he argues,

> means that the essential function of the technique and discourse of right is to dissolve the element of domination in power and to replace that domination, which has to be reduced or masked, to two things: the legitimate rights of the sovereign, on the one hand, and the legal obligation to obey on the other.
>
> (1976: 26)

The myth of sovereignty as a single edifice of rightful authority disguises the *actual* emergence of 'polymorphous techniques of subjugation' in a proliferation of disciplinary agencies and apparatuses of domination.[3]

In contrast with neo-Hobbesian thinkers, some philosophers argue that to search for an ultimate source of sovereignty in the classical sense is to fall into the trap of explaining sovereignty hierarchically, where the highest authority must logically be more powerful than the second highest, the second highest greater than the third, and so forth. There are reasons to question the idea of a hierarchy of authorities within states, each one more powerful than the next, as all societies contain competing sources of power, the most powerful of which are usually articulated through political society in a broader sense. In postcommunist Russia, for example, it was extremely difficult to identify which of the oligarchs around Yeltsin was the 'most' powerful, and although it is intuitively possible to rank the most powerful institutions within a state, Morris (1998) suggests there are no reliable means for ascertaining in political-sociological terms who has ultimate power. He also doubts whether an absolute sovereign is necessary for the maintenance of order in the first place. The point is: the *state* cannot be distinguished from *political society* in its broader sense, which Durkheim (1986) argued is 'polycellular' in form, 'composed of "secondary" groups the existence of which makes politics both necessary and possible' (Steinberger 2004: 22). Like Marx, Durkheim emphasized the structural-anatomical links between political society and the state: the state is an organ of political society concerned with 'ultimate decision', comprised of 'individuals to whom the authoritative power of society has been specifically entrusted' (ibid.: 23). But entrusted by whom? According to Steinberger, 'Durkheim assigns action, execution and external achievement to the government, understood not as the state but as an instrument for putting into practice the results of the state's thinking' (ibid.). In this sense, a state is not the same thing as a government: the state is, as Gramsci argued, 'hegemony protected by the armour of coercion' (1971: 263); government, on the other hand, is a temporary grouping of mandated individuals invested with executive power, whose authority is determined by their structural and ideological links to secondary groups in political society, and whose decisional autonomy is contingent on successful regulation of the economic system and promotion of cultural development.[4]

The contested nature of power in Europe after 1918 provides a fascinating opportunity to assess the function of hegemonic sovereignty under conditions of extreme systemic crisis. The unstable political situation – which

facilitated a temporary socialist challenge to the existing order that failed to establish the conditions for its own stabilization – revealed the weakness of industrialists whose own political impotence was derived from their inability to create an environment conducive to the successful modernization of the economy. In the early 1920s, business leaders responded to socialism by supporting extra-parliamentary forms of organization such as corporatism, syndicalism and fascism to restructure and reorganize industry (Maier 1975), rather than rely on the traditional model of 'political transformism'. In this sense, as Gramsci argued, fascism constitutes more than just a 'passive revolution' – based on the co-optation of oppositional forces (Buci-Glucksmann 1980: 323). Although untested and unpredictable, fascism offers a means for conservative and liberal forces in political society to reorganize outside the state. This (reluctant) co-optation of fascist movements by political society suggests that interpretations of fascism as a 'social revolution' are misleading: fascist movements may appear 'sovereign' at the moment of maximum confrontation (as in Italy in 1921–22, or Germany in 1932–33), but can only acquire power in a 'war of position' (that is, as an offensive strategy) with the material and ideological support of secondary forces in bourgeois political society. As Kallis argues:

> No 'fascist' movement or party seized power autonomously, either through parliamentary devices or a *putsch*. In this sense, there was a crucial common denominator in all the dictatorial regimes that were instituted in the 1920s and 1930s in Europe: they resulted from a conscious decision of elite sectors to strengthen their executive powers and legitimize the adoption of more aggressive strategies for the suppression of internal foes.
>
> (2003: 233)

This moment of transition can be theorized as the 'fascistization of authoritarian rule', a new threshold in the 'authoritarian transformation of the political system masterminded by certain sectors of disunited elites in interwar countries' (ibid.: 233–34). From this perspective, fascism in its original Italian form can be understood as a strategy of political reorganization which was adopted once it had become clear that the liberal state could no longer guarantee the security of capital accumulation by means of economic compulsion alone. As Payne (1999: 86–87) argues, similar fears of chaos and threats to property in Spain motivated industrialists to fund ultra-nationalist and fascist leaders to represent their interests against republican forces, although the attempt to graft the Italian model onto a Spanish context ultimately proved problematic. Only in Germany did the conditions of possibility ultimately exist for a qualitatively new state potentially unlimited in its parameters, radically exceeding the authoritarian ambitions of established forces in bourgeois political society.

The political constitution of fascism

Arendt argues that totalitarianism symbolizes the point at which traditional authority is replaced by the 'total elimination of spontaneity itself, that is, of the most general and most elementary manifestation of human freedom, at which only totalitarian regimes aim by means of their various methods of conditioning' (1958b: 96). From a rhetorical perspective, this depiction is characteristically revealing, and typifies the approach of progressive liberal thinkers in the postwar era. Yet as Kershaw warns, rather than use the

> concept of totalitarianism in a static sense . . . , it seems more useful to see it as a dynamic, but transitional, phase in certain modern authoritarian systems of rule. 'Totalitarianism' can give way either to complete collapse or to systematization. But it is not itself a 'system'; nor is it compatible with the stabilization of a political system.
>
> (1994: 32)

The constitutional foundation of fascism in Italy and Germany – in both cases legitimized retrospectively through enabling legislation – reveals the historical limits of the liberal state as a system of government. Yet while historians routinely identify fascism with 'dictatorship', a more complex picture emerges based on the uneasy symbiosis of arbitrary force and juridically sanctioned practices. As Agamben argues,

> neither Hitler nor Mussolini can technically be defined as dictators. Mussolini was the head of the government, legally invested with this office by the king, just as Hitler was chancellor of the Reich, named by the legitimate president of the Reich. As is well known, what characterized both the Fascist and Nazi regimes is that they allowed the existing constitution (the Albertine Statute and the Weimar Constitution, respectively) to subsist, and – according to a paradigm that has been acutely defined as a 'dual state' – they placed beside the legal constitution a second structure, often not legally formalized, that could exist alongside the other because of the state of exception. From a juridical standpoint, the term *dictatorship* is entirely unsuitable for describing such regimes, just as, moreover, the clean opposition of democracy and dictatorship is misleading for any analysis of the governmental paradigms dominant today.
>
> (2005: 48)

From this perspective, it is essential to rethink the relationship between the fascist party and the capitalist state in the transition from authoritarian liberalism to permanent emergency.

Radical political movements typically manifest a fundamentalist core and a realist leadership: the former are concerned with ideology and intellectual

inspiration, the latter with the faceless structures of bureaucratic power and formal organization. In the later 'regime phase' of fascism (De Felice 1977), it is the latter which achieves domination within the fascist state, as the mass movement recedes into the background and assumes a subsidiary role. As Roberts argues, fascist radicals assumed that in

> expanding the reach of the state, Fascist totalitarianism would afford, as liberalism did not, the scope for the masses to participate more meaningfully as appropriate, congruent with individual capacities. And sharing in expanded collective responsibility, would make possible a deeper mode of self-realization than had liberalism, with its bifurcation of public and private and delimited state. In this sense, mass potential was bound up with the ethical capacity that pertained to free human beings, who were neither automatons nor subject to materialistic, mechanical limits based on class or race.
>
> (2006: 298)

This image of the postliberal state as facilitator, empowering the nation by overcoming the dichotomy between individual self-realization and collective solidarity betrays more than a degree of political romanticism, for in contrast with the radicalism of the party in its 'movement stage', the fascist party-state quickly assumed a middle class profile, as ambitious sons of the bourgeoisie swelled its ranks. This trend is clear in the case of Italy, where the possibility of state employment created a 'rush of allegiance, often self-interested allegiance, from below' (Bosworth 2005: 228); in Germany, where the Hitler government offered career-minded individuals employment opportunities in the state apparatus – not just in administration but also in the field of scientific and cultural production (Aly and Heim 1991); and in Spain, where patronage of the *Falange Española* by the military junta created new opportunities for ambitious zealots to take advantage of the defeat of the left to scramble for positions in the apparatus (although this came at a high price for the movement, which was absorbed into the *Movimiento* under Franco). As Preston comments, the

> Falange [did] not [conquer] the state as a result of its own efforts but [rode] to power on the back of the military uprising. It . . . lost any autonomous dynamism when, after the unification, it allowed itself to provide the bureaucratic structure of the new Francoist state.
>
> (1995: 113)

Predictably, he adds, the state 'became the arena for place-seeking, the ever flexible rhetoric of its leaders merely a means for currying favour and gaining promotion. The goal of the national-syndicalist revolution was quietly dropped in the quest for safe billets of state functionaries' (ibid.). At the level of human relations, fascism encouraged ambition and corruption,

implicating previously law-abiding individuals in the intimidation and criminality of the regime (Aly 2005).

Fascism was intended to increase the effectiveness of the state in the management of economic and social processes, but resulted instead in the erosion of an older distinction between state and civil society, a fragmentation of government into multiple competing agencies, and a decline of the old state bureaucracy as a site of unified, autonomous decision making. Although founded in principle on the concentrated authority of the state, fascism in Germany devolved decision-making authority to co-opted elites, creating a dynamic towards polycracy. By undermining routinized administration, fascism led to infighting, short-termism, organizational chaos, and policy radicalization, encouraging leaders to embark on adventurist policies and periodic campaigns to mobilize their support base. As Broszat argues, National Socialism created a tendency towards expedience which 'disrupted any rational overall organization of government and reinforced the particularist egocentricity of the respective departmental values and ideologies' (1981: 358). In this environment, law effectively lost its universal regulatory function, degenerating into a system of contradictory decrees articulating the interests of power-elites who attempted to manipulate the apparatus to defeat rivals or to win favour with the leader. To this extent, at least, the rivalry between fascist oligarchs confirms one of the primary theoretical arguments of competitive elitism, namely that political outcomes are – to a large extent – determined by the balance of power between elites for influence in the state.

Contrary to popular belief, then, the idea of a *total* state is misleading: under fascism the authority and unity of the state were complicated by the emergence of overlapping and competing agencies, and lacked the organizational coherence of the bureaucratic-collectivist system in the USSR. Although Cold War liberals defined fascism as a form of totalitarianism, reflecting the pathological development of bureaucratic domination in post-democratic societies, as Marcuse notes, if 'there [was] anything totalitarian about National Socialism, it [was] certainly not the state' (1942: 73). Although the *aspiration* to achieve 'total control' was important, the fascist elite in Germany still remained vulnerable to the hegemonic articulation of secondary groups, creating what Marcuse terms a 'threefold sovereignty of industry, party and army which [divided] up among themselves the former monopoly of coercive power' (ibid.: 76). In the months after Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor,

> the National Socialist leadership did everything in its power to ward off conflicts, above all those arising out of the violent activities of the SA, through a seemingly workable delimitation and consolidation of the relationship between party and state. Rigid control of the party from above and support of the civil servant's faith in status and order – these were the foundations of the solution offered by the new order of 1933–34 under the slogan 'unity of party and state', once the 'troublesome' parliaments

> and political pluralism had been wiped out. The solution was based on Hitler's ideological dictum: 'The party has not become the state. All power rests with the Reich government'.
>
> (Bracher 1971: 289–90)

To achieve stability and respectability, the leadership reigned in Jacobin elements, and as Goebbels himself acknowledged, '"Hitler stopped our revolution at precisely the right moment"' (cited in Bracher 1971: 290). This remark reveals what Bracher terms the 'fictitious character of the "unity of party and state", a slogan which was meant to resolve the tension between the sovereignty claims of the NSDAP and an indispensable state apparatus, between National Socialist ideology and traditional governmental practices' (ibid.: 290), but which equally reveals the anxiety felt by the Nazi leadership over the need to consolidate power.

In Italy, self-styled radicals such as Roberto Farinacci assumed the role of a praetorian vanguard, eager to implement a totalitarian programme and counter the influence of liberal and conservative elements in the state. But such individuals were constrained by Mussolini himself whose primary concern was to balance the competing interests of party and state, allowing the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (PNF) only a 'choreographic role' under Achille Starace (Roberts 2006: 277). As Gentile notes, despite Farinacci's aspiration to develop the party as a 'political army', Mussolini was 'consistent in denying it any sort of parity whatsoever with the government. Being almost completely without "sense of the party", Mussolini opposed in any way he could any attempt to affirm the autonomy and supremacy of the PNF' (2003: 96–97). Exaltation of the state became official Fascist doctrine, exemplified by the neo-Hegelianism of Giovanni Gentile, who – in a speech delivered by Mussolini in 1924 – insisted that '"without the bureaucracy we would have had absolute chaos. It has represented the continuity of the nation's administrative and political life amid the eternal and rotating instability of governments"' (cited in Neumann 1942: 76). Confronted with this logic of continuity, the PNF became the 'foremost casualty' of stabilization (Bosworth 1998: 115). This point is reiterated by Williamson, who notes that the

> regime may have removed the pressures from the electorate, political parties (including the mass of the Fascist party) and numerous groups, notably trade unions, but it had still to deal with powerful interests including the army, the Church, big business and landowners, officials of the party and the civil administration.
>
> (1985: 95)

Although stabilization did not prevent the radicalization of Italian foreign policy in the 1930s and the introduction of antisemitic racial legislation, the evidence suggests that Arendt's (1951) exclusion of Italian fascism from her

category of totalitarianism may indeed be accurate. Mussolini's regime erred on the side of caution in its dealings with the industrial leaders and the Vatican, and failed to generate sufficient momentum to transform Italian society. Roberts concludes that resistance came from four sources: the regime's compromise with traditional elites preserved the influence of employers (who conspired, for example, to have Guiseppe Bottai sacked in 1932); the conservative character of the fascist corporations; the competing goals of leaders, who had different views about what corporatism should entail; and conflict between leftist and rightist factions over the question of property ownership (2006: 318–19). By the mid-1930s, he argues, 'Fascist participation became more formal and mechanical, sometimes even ridiculous, reflecting the declining vitality not just of the party but of the whole regime. . . . Italians had grown tired of the rituals, the militaresque formalism, the petty party presence everywhere' (ibid.: 325). The ossification of fascist rule in Italy in the early 1930s points to the structural limits placed on the political sovereignty of the regime, and the evidence suggests that despite his enthusiasm for grandiose acts of 'political creation', Mussolini was an amoral individual who sought to preserve his own overall power at the expense of achieving consistent or coherent ideological goals. This was reflected in a quasi-mythic idealization of Mussolini's leadership qualities (*Mussolinismo*) at the expense of the mass party, which 'expressed fascism's identity the way Mussolini conceived of it. . . . [O]nly if he rebutted internal competition could his leadership go unchallenged' (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 56).

A similar – if less spectacular – process of consolidation characterized Franco's Spain after the civil war, as the military regime unified the various parties of the right into the monolithic *Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las JONS* modelled on the PNF, within which the Falange played a subordinate but important role under the leadership of José Luis de Arrese. As far as Franco was concerned, the purpose of the Falange was to 'incorporate the "great neutral mass of the unaffiliated", and ideological rigidity would not be allowed to impede that' (Franco, cited in Payne 1999: 272). Leading Falangists such as Serrano Súñer gained positions of influence in the government, but given the victory of the military in the civil war, its leadership over the country was undisputed (ibid.: 291). Although 'the new government promised to begin construction of a "national-syndicalist state", it represented primarily the military and the right, not the national syndicalists or the *partido único*' (ibid.: 293). As the regime began the first phase of 'defascistization' after 1941, the influence of the Falange over Spanish politics further declined in relation to other conservative forces.[5]

Elsewhere in Europe, the influence of fascist leaders in government was largely contingent on external support from Italy and Germany. In Romania, the Legion of the Archangel Michael under Cornelieu Codreanu remained a peripheral force in the state before 1940, when Romania joined the Axis and Antonescu acceded to power. Codreanu combined the nationalist rhetoric and charismatic appeal typical of fascist leaders, although by the late 1930s

the actual number of 'true believers' in his visionary leadership had declined, partly as a result of opposition to the violence of the Legion (Fischer-Galati 2007: 110). After 1940, Legionnaires such as Horia Sima assumed positions of power in the government, but the movement was rapidly absorbed into the state apparatus as the sole legitimate political party in the 'national-legionary state'. Following Barrington Moore, Ioanid notes that Antonescu was also hostile towards the fanaticism of the Legionnaires, preferring instead '"the honourable fascism of civil servants", a fascism in which the role of the masses would be strictly controlled, a fascism that would forbid spontaneous initiatives' (1990: 181).

In Hungary, fascists made little progress until December 1938, when the authoritarian Regent of Hungary, Miklós Horthy, consented to the introduction of antisemitic legislation by the government of the pro-German Szeged fascist, Béla Imrédy.[6] The new laws created a precedent for the future assault on Hungarian Jewry, excluding most Jews from the economic and political life of the state – although the laws made no provision to dismantle the large financial and industrial monopolies owned by the Hungarian-Jewish elite (Nagy-Talavera 1970: 208). The Arrow Cross benefited from the rising tide of antisemitism, and with German support achieved an electoral breakthrough in the 1939 elections, winning 25 per cent of the vote based on a restricted franchise. As Nagy-Talavera comments, the election result represented not just an increase in support for fascism, but a direct challenge by the bourgeoisie to the established power of the Magyar aristocracy which still exercised a suffocating grip on political life (ibid.: 215–16). But it was not until 1944 under German occupation (opposed by the leaders of the Arrow Cross) that a collaborationist regime was formed under the Szeged fascists, which banned rival parties and participated in the deportation and extermination of the majority of Hungary's Jewish population. Opposed by the aristocratic Magyar establishment and other nationalist parties, Ferenc Szálasi's inglorious fascist ascendancy was short-lived, ending with the catastrophic invasion of the Red Army in October 1944.

In Croatia, a similar tension is revealed in the rivalry between the military commander Slavko Kvaternik and the Ustaše leader Anton Pavelić after the nationalist movement took power in 1941 with Axis support. Kvaternik was eager to emulate the example of General Antonescu by creating a military dictatorship, whereas Pavelić planned to transform the Ustaše into a state party on the model of Italy, merging party and state into a single structure (Hory and Broszat 1964: 75). In the event, as prime minister and leader of the Ustaše, Pavelić became the dominant force in the state, allowing him to implement a vicious policy of ethnic cleansing against the Serb population – first in the state bureaucracy, then throughout Croatia and occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. The result was a clientelist police state with Pavelić as 'national leader', which legally superseded the old kingdom of Yugoslavia until the collapse of the puppet state in 1945. Like the short-lived Arrow Cross regime in Hungary and the equally short-lived Italian Social Republic of Salò, inde-

pendent Croatia (*Nezavisna Dtržava Hrvatska*) existed only at the behest of Germany and was 'never fully sovereign in its own house' (Payne 2007: 11).

This type of political compromise highlights the weakness of historical accounts of 'dictatorship' which emphasize the functional importance of the fascist state as a means for transforming capitalist society along authoritarian-nationalist lines. The idea of the sovereign party-state as a unified actor with an omnipotent leader at the helm fails to capture the reality of interpersonal and interinstitutional rivalry which mitigated against the long-term realization of fascist goals. Despite outlawing all effective opposition, the farther fascists became entrenched in power in Italy and Spain, the less likely they were to realise the ambitions of the movement. Mussolini maintained formal decisional autonomy for twenty years, while Franco remained in power for three decades, and both leaders proved adept at balancing the conflicting interests in political society. Yet neither acquired 'absolute' power, and as Bosworth remarks of Mussolini, he 'deceived himself when he proclaimed that, as a Roman statesman, he was bending foreign and domestic history to his will' (1998: 81).

The prerogative state in Nazi Germany

Despite the initial caution of the Hitler government, the tension between political sovereignty and procedural rationality in Germany was never resolved. Instead, the substitution of legal and governmental rationality by arbitrary sovereign power ushered in a 'prerogative state' which undermined, without fully replacing, the 'normative' state based on the juridical system of law and administration. Assessing the contradiction between politics and bureaucracy in Germany, Neumann argues that the 'doctrine of state supremacy' in Nazi ideology was fundamentally incompatible with the Hegelian ideal of the state as the 'realization of reason' in the political affairs of mankind, and was therefore effectively emptied of meaning (Neumann 1942: 77–78). This tension between political sovereignty and legal authority is exposed with greater clarity in Fraenkel's theory of the *Dual State* as a type of sovereign power combining elements of the normative state and the prerogative state. Fraenkel uses the term normative state (*Rechtsstaat*) to denote an 'administrative body endowed with elaborate powers for safeguarding the legal order as expressed in statutes, decisions of the courts, and activities of administrative agencies' (1941: xiii). The prerogative state, on the other hand, implies an arbitrary system of rule (*Massnahmenstaat*) based on rule by decree and other emergency measures, where leading personalities exercise discretionary prerogatives. The prerogative state in Nazi Germany was, he argues, created by the Emergency Decree of February 28 1933, which made 'mandatory dictatorship' absolute. This was followed by the Enabling Act of March 24 which allowed Hitler's government to suspend the constitution, creating a state of exception lasting twelve years.

Although a state of exception can be declared with the intention of

restoring the rule of law, it leads in practice to the removal of legal restraints on the police, the abolition of judicial neutrality and the negation of formal procedural rationality in the organization of politics. 'The essence of the prerogative state,' argues Fraenkel, 'is its refusal to accept legal restraint, i.e. any "formal" bonds. The Prerogative State claims that it represents material justice and that can therefore dispense with formal justice' (1941: 46). The practical consequence of fascism is to turn the legal system into an instrument of the prerogative state – a political weapon to be used at will, making the courts an arm of sovereign executive power rather than an independent branch of the state. Normal life continues to be ruled by legal norms, but exceptions to normal law may be made at will at any time, reflecting what Wildt (2006) terms the distaste felt by Nazi oligarchs like Heydrich and Himmler towards the idea of universally binding legal and administrative norms. The limits of the prerogative state are not imposed from outside but 'by the Prerogative State itself. These self-imposed restraints . . . are of cardinal importance for the understanding of the Dual State' (ibid.: 58). As such, the 'self-limitation of the prerogative state is as deeply rooted in the nature of National-Socialism as its existence' (ibid.). What is meant by this observation, which seems to imply that sovereign power 'wills' its own limitation?

Intentionalist historians of Nazi Germany traditionally emphasize the unique role of Hitler in legitimizing and directing Nazi rule from the very beginning of the movement (Jaeckel 1972; Bracher 1979).[7] On this view, German fascism is seen as a 'monocratic' system of rule (*Alleinherrschaft*) which is not only dependent on the ideological vision of the leader but on his personal decision making. As structuralist historians argue, however, this interpretation downplays the multi-dimensional nature of decision making in the Third Reich and the deliberate cultivation of the 'Führer myth' as a legitimation device, which allowed Nazi rulers to attribute policy successes to the leader while blaming lesser functionaries for the chaotic reality of polycratic rule (Broszat 1981; Mason 1971; Mommsen 1991b). As Kershaw points out, this allowed the Nazi elite to project an image of the Führer as a *leader without sin*, a person who could transcend sectional interests and rise above everyday political squabbles. Yet the reality of politics in the Third Reich was, he suggests, rather different, as charismatic leadership 'was not only superimposed on existing bureaucratic power, but created new, extensive apparatuses of bureaucratic administration, and led not to diminished but to massively increased bureaucratic interference in all spheres of daily life' (1987: 255–56; cf. Geyer 1987). Although fascists emphasize will and intentionality against objective historical development, Kershaw argues that 'it is important to recognize that an "intention" is not an autonomous force, but is affected in its implementation by circumstances which it may itself have been instrumental in creating, but which have developed a momentum of their own' (1989: 80).

For Kershaw, the structuralist turn in historiography would have been

impossible without the 'masterly analyses' of Fraenkel and Neumann (ibid.: 65), who highlight the ambiguities in totalitarian regimes and the deep-rooted tension between democracy and sovereign power which transcends the historical, cultural and juridical framework of society. Like Schmitt, Fraenkel 'reacted to the bourgeois state's crisis of legitimacy and attempted to conceptualise the political outside the state' (Wildt 2006: 153). Unlike Schmitt, however, who assumed that a state of exception 'abolishes' law, Fraenkel recognized that the

> prerequisite for a state of exception is always the rule of law: it must always refer to a legal order, because the suspension of that order constitutes the exception. . . . It is not the exception which is beyond the realm of the rule; rather, the rule, by suspending itself, allows for the exception. Only because of its relationship to the exception does the rule establish itself as a rule. Thus the state of exception represents the most extreme form of a relationship which *includes by exclusion*.
>
> (Ibid.; emphasis added)

In this sense, the state of exception is essentially a *constitutional* construction which creates a paradoxical situation where the constitution is suspended yet sovereign power is reintroduced as executive rule with the functional competence to create law. In nominally democratic systems, sovereign power is juridically ordained, and thus constitutionally limited, although the 'substance of its omnipotence [is] unlimited and remain[s] in a state of latency, waiting to be aroused by exceptional circumstances' (Cristi 1998: 112). Under fascism, on the other hand, the 'will of the leader' becomes an integral moment in the subordination of the normative state to the prerogative state, legitimizing the intrusion of bureaucratic power into the private lives of individuals.

It is here that we can begin to perceive the link between sovereign power and racial community which demarcates German fascism from fascism in Italy, Spain and eastern Europe. Roberts notes perceptively that the purpose of law in the Third Reich was to 'protect and serve the community, not the individual. It followed that the scope of law and state intrusiveness was limitless, in light of all that could be construed as affecting the community interest' (2006: 352). Nazi jurists saw the people (*das Volk*) rather than the state (*der Staat*) as the true site of sovereignty, supplanting legal notions of citizenship (*Staatsangehörigkeit*) with a new concept of identity based on racial belonging:

> The perception of the core concepts of the National Socialist ideology like *Volk*, *Gemeinschaft* and Führer came about through a special cognitive procedure that dissolved dichotomies. The dynamic, not the content, is the defining feature of the conceptualizations. In this dynamic conceptualization procedure we also find the decisive characteristic of National

> Socialist legal thought. National Socialist legal concepts are defined through a specific procedure marked by the transcending and synthesizing of contradictory criteria. The concept of the *Volk*, for instance, was defined by a combination of spirit and nature, value and reality, blood and soil, life and history. Even the term National Socialism itself combines two contradictory components, nationalism and socialism, together into one concept, thereby alluding to a synthesis that transcends them.
>
> (Lepsius 2003: 35)

Unlike authoritarianism, or the weaker forms of fascism in Italy and Spain, National Socialism acquired and maintained a level of decisional autonomy above all sections of society – with the partial exception of the military leadership; and, as Mason argues, despite the hopes of some of its supporters, Hitler's regime 'did not fulfil its function of becoming obsolete' (1968: 59). Rather, German fascism led to a reconfiguration of sovereign power in an attempt to determine the phenomenal dimensions of human life in the modern state, the exclusion of 'unassimilable elements' in specially designed detention centres, and the judicial execution of those suspected of breaching the Law for the Prevention of Political Acts of Violence (counter-terrorism laws).[8] The nature of this prerogative state is exemplified by the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service introduced in April 1933, which was designed to remove Jews (except those who had served at the front in the First World War) from the state bureaucracy. The antisemitic purpose of this law is clear; but it also illuminates the 'naked professional self-interest' of educated middle class Germans, who used the legal proscription of Jews in public life to further their own careers (Burleigh and Wippermann 1991: 78). A similar tendency can be identified with the 'Aryanization' of Jewish property, the destruction of which allowed many Germans an opportunity to assuage feelings of *ressentiment* and envy driven by the psychological need to destroy an object they could not possess (cf. Adorno 1951).

Yet despite these manifestations of arbitrary power, which placed the 'sovereign will' of the racial community above the formal rationality and certainty of law, the normative state in Germany continued to adjudicate mundane legal disputes over employment and other aspects of economic life – for example, by limiting state interference in private commercial transactions. While self-limiting in its use of arbitrary power, fascism simultaneously denied the protection of the normative state to those 'unworthy' of the protection and certainties of the law. As Wildt concludes, the 'logic of the dual state is neither aimed solely and necessarily at dissolving the norm and replacing it, per decree, with chaos, nor is it aimed at replacing the constitutional Normative State with the political Prerogative State' (2006: 159). If Fraenkel is correct, he adds,

> we can forecast a more complex development, in which the norms emerge and politics creates a new juridical order. . . . [T]he possibility of such circumstances arising was already expressed by Carl Schmitt: "There is no norm applicable to chaos. For a legal order to make sense, a normal situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitively decides whether this normal state actually exists."
>
> (Ibid.)

The fascist aestheticization of politics

Cultural historians highlight the use of ritual, emotion and spectacle in fascist political communication, which suggest a break with the traditional format of aristocratic/liberal politics inherited from the nineteenth century – though as Jay rightly notes, for fascist intellectuals aestheticized politics is understood not as an 'expression of an irrational will, but as the sensual version of a higher, more comprehensive notion of rationality, not as the wordless spectacle of images, but as the realization of a literary absolute' (1992: 46). Yet Koepnick (1999b: 30) argues that the process of aestheticization 'disrupts' the traditional organization of politics by encouraging us to assess political action in terms of aesthetic categories, by viewing political leadership as a form of self-legitimating creative genius, and by replacing rational dialogue with images and 'visual distractions'. In this final section, I examine the aestheticization of politics in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and consider a possible parallel between the manipulation of public sentiment in fascism as a means for resolving social and economic struggles at a symbolic level (Koepnick 1999a), and the appeal to emotion rather than reason in contemporary political practice as a means for 'pleasing consumers' rather than 'informing citizens' (Stayner 2008). In both cases, the use of emotion, fantasy and mythic representation produces an *anaesthetizing* effect which limits the possibility of and demand for rational dialogue. Through a combination of technology, ritual and symbolism, fascism represents an early example of political *modernism*, creating a disturbing precedent for the erosion of rational dialogue in postmodern political communication. As one contemporary theorist has observed, the politics of late capitalist modernity is now one of 'generalized *ressentiment*', as the new

> uncertainties of capitalism and the surveillance of the state create in individuals a diffuse sense of powerlessness, the public expression of which is not positive and self-grounded praxis but a hasty and dependent reaction which usually takes the form of identity politics and ethicism.
>
> (Demertzis 2006: 104)

Liberal historians traditionally emphasize the 'sacralization' of politics under fascism, and the positive function of fascist ideology as a 'political religion' (Gentile 1990; Griffin 2007). They suggest that the use of ritual,

emotion, symbolism and other non-rational forms of mobilization by the fascist state can be understood as a compensatory response to the disenchantment of modernity, enabling citizens to rally behind the regime in mass displays of sentiment and symbolic identification. Yet as Falasca-Zamponi argues, explanations of fascism based *solely* on the concept of sacralization 'cannot explicate fascism's unique turn, its original totalitarian culture' (1997: 7). On the contrary, the decline of religion and traditional authority contribute to the 'auraticization' of fascism where the manipulation of auratic symbols serves to divert the masses from conscious, autonomous action. Following Benjamin (1936), she argues that the appeal of fascism is tied to the alienation of sensory experience in the stage-management and aesthetic (re)presentation of struggle:

> In this process, our system of projection ends up repressing our senses, deadening them as in an 'anaesthetic procedure', and we lose the capacity for shared meaning. For Benjamin, this alienation of the senses was a condition of modernity, not a creation of fascism. However, he believed that fascism took advantage of modernity's contradictions by filling the absence of meaning left by the loss of experience, thus enforcing the crisis in perception.
>
> (Falasca-Zamponi 1997: 12)

Although criticized for neglecting the determining role of the commodity form in late capitalist society – emphasizing instead the autonomous determining role of technology in the mechanical reproduction and aesthetic representation of struggle (Haug 1983: 132) – Benjamin correctly identified the separation of *need* from its *expression*.[9] The practical outcome of this is the appearance of 'fascist spectacle': the innovative, stage-managed use of technology, mass-produced artworks and public ceremony to project images of power, virtue, heroism and struggle, the outcome of which is nothing less than sensory alienation and the 'institutionalization of memory' (Berezin 1997: 101). Although the production of ritual necessarily entails improvisation, the choice of fascist spectacle is deliberate and carefully planned: fascist regimes, argues Berezin,

> may be based on the politics of non-rationality, but they are not irrational. Political symbolism is useless if no one understands it. Although no regime can guarantee the effects of its aesthetic actions, some symbols are more likely to resonate than others.
>
> (Ibid.: 35)

At the heart of fascist aestheticism lies a dual concern with the people as both audience and object of the political process. The organization of fascist political communication reflects this process, beginning with the glorification of charismatic leadership as a necessary correlate to the liquidation of democracy, symbolized most clearly by the myth of the leader-figure as an antithesis

to the perceived fragmentation of the liberal state. 'Driven by the idea of pure politics', argues Koepnick,

> fascist aestheticization proposes to recentre the state against the ever-increasing diffusion of power, to unchain political action from normative debates, and to undo the emasculating effects of procedural politics. Aesthetic politics attempts to move the state beyond bourgeois-democratic codes of legality, morality, and political emancipation. It seeks to redefine the political as the site at which nothing less than authenticity comes into being.
>
> (1999b: 3)

Koepnick correctly identifies the intense opposition felt by fascists towards an image of the state as an 'effeminate container for a number of disparate and non-political activities, a site that effaced the existential dimension of the political' (ibid.: 83). Although, as we have seen, this romanticization does not reverse the objectification and functional differentiation of legal-bureaucratic rule in fascist society – as Eatwell argues 'traditional forms of legitimation were present in interwar fascism' (2007b: 6) – fascism aspires to address the complexity and diffuseness of modern political life by appealing to a set of simpler codes. But the opposite is in fact the case, for by forcibly reintroducing an 'auratic' dimension to public life, the carnivalization of the state in fascist spectacle emerges less as a moment of jubilant release and cultural subversion (as Bakhtin believed) than a means for *stabilizing power*: 'Manifesting itself in the big rallies and through symbolic references to national and socialist traditions', argues Koepnick, 'the fascist masquerade allegedly neutralizes the existing hierarchy only to reinscribe its very foundations in the body politic' (1999b: 70).

The implications of this argument are profound: the fascist aestheticization of politics promotes a form of necessary *unconsciousness*, alleviating the need for conscious thought and rational action on the part of citizens. But this interpretation alone fails to do justice to the performative dimension of fascist political practice, which – by tacitly resituating subjects in a hierarchy of power relations previously placed in question by the collapse of traditional authority – implicates subjects in the material reproduction of relations of domination:

> Fascist discourse is articulated essentially at the level of practice; it organises a silence over its own class basis as the outcome of performative acts. Its primary aim is not to project towards some future goal; it is above all not a promise, to be measured against its future fulfilment – although it is this too. The primary and most effective form through which it succeeds in fulfilling a promise is the form in which it exists and is regularly repeated. Penetrating deeper into the everyday are the

> numerous activities, organised above all in education, through which an acceptance of fascist subjectivity is silently embedded.
>
> (Haug 1980: 74)

As we saw in Chapter 1, the continuous revalorization of commodities in the market is based not on their utility or 'added value' but on their capacity to arrest consciousness by disrupting autonomous development and excluding unmediated forms of interaction and exchange. In this way, argues Haug (1983), an illusion is maintained that conceals the deliberate creation of social necessity. As an aesthetic innovation in the sphere of politics, fascism fulfils a similar function, although sensory alienation and the incessant call for sacrifice create a concomitant risk of overpoliticization and overregulation, sufficient to stifle personal initiative and cooperation with the goals of the regime. 'In reality,' argues Falasca-Zamponi, the 'suppression of the senses and the taming of the "masses" was not an easily achievable task . . . , especially at a time when a developing consumer culture was beginning to establish itself in many Western countries' (1997: 126). This point is also made by Forgacs and Gundle, who note that even during its

> most interventionist and repressive phase . . . which lasted from the setting up of the Ministry of Popular Culture in 1937 to Mussolini's expulsion from office in July 1943, Fascist cultural policy always operated in an arena where other powerful forces were at play.
>
> (2007: 2–3)

This raises an awkward question, namely: is the suppression of autonomous subjectivity and personal gratification in fascist ideology compatible in political-cultural terms with consumerism as a generic model of political-economic organization in western capitalist modernity? Falasca-Zamponi suggests that the tension between communal sacrifice and personal gratification led the Italian regime to 'divergent programs of assailing consumption and spurring a market economy' (1997: 128–29). In Germany, on the other hand, realizing a possible link between overpoliticization and apathy, sensory alienation and civic passivity, the regime promoted consumerism to combat localized articulations of horizontal solidarity among the people. As Koepnick observes:

> At variance with the strict demands of ideological correctness, American-style consumerism in Nazi society delineated an ideal stage for what Theodor W. Adorno in his analysis of American mass culture considered pseudo-individualization – 'the halo of free choice' on the basis of standardization itself. Unlike the homogenizing rituals of the Nuremburg rally grounds, the commodity spectacles of Nazi mass culture entertained the individual with the utopian illusion that certain

> spaces remained beyond control, beyond politics, beyond the effects of coordination. By satisfying the popular demand for material and cultural commodity items, the agents of power were able to undermine articulations of solidarity that had the capacity to contest Nazi politics. The cult of private consumption impaired alternative definitions of German identity and solidarity coupled to notions of individual autonomy and emancipation.
>
> (1999a: 52)

By degrading autonomous artistic production and representing mass culture as a realm of authentic value, fascism transforms aesthetic production into a powerful instrument of domination. However, by sacrificing private consumption for geopolitics, fascism in power is incapable of reconciling the contradictory logic of 'total war' and popular-democratic legitimation, leaving a ruthless oligarchy to preside over a brutal system of exploitation by silencing dissent with limitless force.

Conclusion

Fascism aggressively asserts the external sovereignty of the nation-state in the international system, pursuing a geopolitical strategy designed to secure territorial gains and promote autarky (Kallis 2000). Internally, however, fascism leads to a transformation of the relationship between state and society, changing the structure of internal sovereignty by eroding the state/society distinction. As Mussolini declared, under fascism 'all is for the state, nothing is outside the state, nothing and no one are against the state'. Despite its nebulous character, this oft-cited remark captures the political aspiration of fascism, namely to reconstruct the state/society relation by eradicating civil competitors through the politicization of everyday life and the coercive regimentation of individuals in administered mass organizations. It is only with fascism that a conclusive assault on liberal pluralism becomes possible: fascism is committed to the destruction of pluralism, ushering in a new constituent power which acts *through law* to erode the legal-rational framework of postliberal capitalist society. Through the aestheticization of politics, however, fascism comes to symbolize what Benjamin terms the 'proletarianization of modern man'. Fascism, he suggests, 'attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving the masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves' (1936: 234).

5 Fascism and violence

Introduction

Fascism is distinguished from liberalism by the aestheticization of struggle and the glorification of paramilitary violence as primary features of political action. Whereas liberals seek to isolate or minimize the disruptive impact of violence – seeing war as the distinctive activity of military specialists – for fascists 'creative violence' is contrasted with the insipid cowardice of liberal intellectualism: violence is not just a means to an end, but an *intrinsic value* in itself. This reflects the influence of revolutionary thinkers like Sorel (1907) on the development of fascist syndicalism, but it also reflects the determinate relationship between violence, power and modernity, and the impact of colonialism on the internal-political development of European nation-states in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The origins of fascist violence lie in three sources. First, fascism extends and intensifies the violence implicit in the organization of nation-states. As Bauman argues, the

> etiological myth deeply entrenched in the self-consciousness of our Western society is the morally elevating story of humanity emerging from pre-social barbarity. This myth lent stimulus and popularity to, and in turn was given a learned and sophisticated support by, quite a few influential sociological theories and historical narratives.
>
> (1989: 12)

In an internal and external sense violence is integral to the foundation and consolidation of the nation-state; but while modernization theorists stress the mutually reinforcing interaction between democracy, international integration and economic interdependence (Brock 2006), the expansion of coercive power in nation-states reflects the 'two great ensembles of political knowledge and technology' embodied in the external-political and military management of international relations, on the one hand, and the internal-political management of territory and population, on the other (Foucault 1976, 1977; cf. Giddens 1985). In the advanced societies, the coercive power

of military and bureaucratic organizations continually threatens to overwhelm the institutional constraints imposed by governments, and the evidence of inter- and intra-state violence since the eighteenth century makes it difficult to escape the conclusion that 'war and violence are parts of modernity and not just of its prehistory' (Joas 2003: 42–43).

Second, fascism extends the militarist and racist violence established in colonialism. Although liberal and conservative historians distinguish between fascist militarism and the 'legitimate' militarism perpetrated by Britain, Russia, France and the United States in the imperial epoch, as hegemonic projects fascism and colonialism lie along the same trajectory. Under colonialism, violence was used to conquer territories and 'civilize' the non-white peoples of Asia and Africa, but also evolved into a form of power for its own sake, exerting a 'boomerang effect' through the militarization and polarization of European society itself. As the American social critic Michael Novick argues, the violence of settler colonialism creates a precedent for civil repression in the advanced countries themselves: through an assault on the domestic enemies of capital, fascism brings 'the methods of imperial rule in the colonies into the metropole' (2003: 2). Fascist violence testifies to the endorsement of *different standards for different people* (Pitts 2005), reflecting the disturbing parallel between colonial racism and class racism in bourgeois political society.

Third, the aestheticization of violence in fascism suggests a transgressive exaltation of violent action which exceeds bourgeois morality. Conventional explanations of fascist violence emphasize the link between fascism and social Darwinism, referring to Hitler's belief in war as an 'unalterable law of the whole of life' – as if this singularly irrational assertion could explain the destructive and genocidal logic of fascist militarism. The aestheticization of violence in fascist militarism is dependent on the idea of 'endless struggle', but such notions are inexplicable if detached from concrete economic and cultural factors. Not only should fascist paramilitaries be understood as 'dependable class warriors' who reinvest the destructive potential of modern warfare with an aura of 'heroism and leadership' (Benjamin 1930: 127), but the emphasis on revenge highlights the punitive dimension of fascism in an attempt to cleanse those heterogeneous features of modern society which threaten communal identities.

Power, violence and modernity

Purposive violence is understood by anthropologists as a natural trait, insofar as human society is predicated on the violation of nature. As noted in Chapter 2, industrialism is founded on the perpetual alteration of nature and the objectification of labour within a complex secondary infrastructure which compensates for mankind's lack of specialized biological equipment. Although *homo faber* is not simply a 'tool-using animal' (speech is equally a precondition for intersubjective development and cultural progress), human

industriousness is contingent on the purposive manipulation of the material environment and the development of techniques for exploiting nature. In this sense, Gehlen (1940) defined violence as instrumentality. Like Marcuse – but for different reasons – he identified the accumulation of natural power by humans which has been 'accompanied by their increasing intellectual and emotional estrangement from the sources of such power' (Poggi 2001: 4). And, like Adorno, he recognized that the technical subjugation of nature is a condition for social domination, providing an epistemological ground for a positive science of society predicated on the purposive application of differentiated fields of administrative knowledge. This dialectic of knowledge and control is a core feature of industrial civilization: emancipation is contingent not simply on the growth of autonomy but on the expansion of rational systems of organization and control to subdue the spontaneous chaos of human nature.

Mastery over natural forces is a prior condition for the survival of human communities, while control over resources is a condition of social power; but the fact of subjects purposively acting on the world explains neither the quality of this violation, its objective determinants, nor the contradictory forces which stand in the way of its realization. What is required is an understanding of violence as a *socially mediated* phenomenon – the most visible manifestation of power where conflicts of interests can no longer be concealed (Lukes 2005: 36). As Sánchez Vásquez argues,

> violence is manifested wherever the natural or human material of the object of his activity offers resistance to man; thus it is characteristic of those activities whose aim it is to detain, change or overthrow a particular natural or social reality. In this sense, violence is exclusive to man because he is the only being who needs to violate or do constant violence to an external legality (that of nature) in order to maintain his own human legality.
>
> (1977: 180)

Sánchez Vásquez understands violence as praxis, which he defines as the conscious practical activity of individuals adjusting their action to achieve specific ends. Praxis is always a critical transforming activity, one which entails a theoretical conception of its own logical purpose under specific historical conditions. In contrast with productive or artistic praxis, *political* praxis is directed towards the transformation of social reality, that is, towards the 'destruction or alteration of a given social structure and its relations and institutions' (ibid.). Critical transformative praxis presupposes its antithesis in law-preserving violence, a form of constituted power oriented towards the diversion or prevention of change. As Arendt argues, it is the 'function . . . of all political action, as distinguished from mere behaviour, to interrupt what would otherwise have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably' (1969: 30–31). While Arendt insists on a categorial distinction

between power and violence (arguing that violence has no essence and is therefore always instrumental), she concedes that violence is integral to the interruption of that which would 'otherwise have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably': violent action is central to the organization and disorganization of systems of social action, both within and between nation-states.

In an external sense, Herbert Spencer's distinction between 'industrial' and 'warfare' states is no longer valid while this distinction can be used to differentiate between warrior nations and settled communities in antiquity, attempts to differentiate between military and industrial societies in the modern age are less relevant since advanced nation-states have the capacity to wage war on an industrial scale. As Giddens argues most developed nation-states are 'military societies', not because generals have a monopoly over the means of violence or dominate politics, but as a result of the

> diffusion of the means of waging industrialized war. . . . The combined spread of industrialism and of the nation-state system has served to ensure that virtually every state around the globe now possesses armed strength far in excess of that of any traditional empire.
>
> (1985: 254)

In an internal sense, however, the need to 'contain' violence has led to attempts to reduce its prevalence by moderating the 'flow' of violence over time – creating the appearance of extended periods of peace interspersed with violent interludes (Poggi 2001: 40–41). But this peripheralization of violence beyond the normative horizon of society cannot eradicate the objective origins of violence in the asymmetries of power in civil society: subjective violence, argues Žižek, is experienced

> against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the 'normal', peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is precisely the violence inherent in this 'normal' state of things. Objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent.
>
> (2008: 2)

In an objective sense, force is *embedded* in the institutional framework of society in the form of administratively/economically sanctioned violence, which replaces the unconstrained battle of subjective wills in a 'prepolitical' state of nature. In this way the logic of self-preservation in Hobbes' perpetual civil war is transposed to another level, displaced onto objective fields of symbolic and sedimented power. This point was recognized by Foucault, who rejected theories of social order based on consensual submission to the sovereign, inverting Clausewitz's dictum on war: in the post-Westphalian order, *politics* is the continuation of war by other means. 'It would be false', he argued,

> to think that total war exhausts itself in its own contradictions and ends by renouncing violence and submitting to civil laws. . . . Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.
>
> (Foucault 1971: 85)

From this perspective, the legal constitution of society defined by contract theory is derived not from the voluntarist submission of consenting individuals to a Hobbesian sovereign but on acknowledgement of the continual possibility of violence between individuals with equal levels of power. 'Law is not pacification,' argues Foucault, 'for beneath the law, war continues to rage in the mechanisms of power, even the most regular. War is the motor behind institutions and order. In the smallest of its cogs, peace is waging a secret war' (ibid.: 50). What appears as a temporary resolution of conflict in the consolidation of sovereign juridical power conceals the internal racism of 'permanent purification' – a disciplinary 'war waged by the state and other institutions against various *biological* threats *to* its population *from* its population rather than against enemies in the political sense' (Hoffman 2007: 771).[1]

While original, Foucault's argument is in certain respects prefigured by Benjamin's observation that:

> law-making pursues as its end, with violence as the means, *what* is established as law, but at the moment of its instatement does not dismiss violence; rather, at this very moment of law-making, it specifically establishes as law not an end unalloyed by violence, but one necessarily and intimately bound to it, under the title of power
>
> (1921: 149)

Yet Foucault also demonstrates how the civilizing process itself simultaneously conceals and sanitizes the practice of violence in the production of 'useful citizens' (Gordon 1987). This approach has been criticized by, among others, Habermas (1987a), who defends the left-Hegelian view of enlightenment as an 'unfinished project'; and by Lukes (2005: 93), who accuses Foucault of adopting a 'one-sided, monolithic image of unidirectional control'. But as Hanssen argues, 'upon closer inspection, one notices that [Foucault] did not so much aim to dismiss the discourse of rights as to bare the hidden bequest of Enlightenment liberal discourse: the encroachment of a new disciplinary power on the scene' (2000: 115). As such, Foucault provides a corrective to the prevailing legalistic discourse of liberalism, highlighting the rule-producing function of violence in zones of 'intensive integration' such as modern nation-states: sanctions and punishments constitute an economy of violence, leading to the 'routinization of the types of social

behaviour which are compatible with existing order, and invigorate social docility. Conformism is the outcome of a rooted social habit of being docile towards the established order' (Vahabi 2007: 123–24).

From this perspective, the binding force of normatively sanctioned power is not posited law, but constitutive power in its foundational moment. Echoing Benjamin, Derrida suggests further that law is honoured and obeyed not because it is 'just', but because it expresses the foundational moment of constitutive power, the origins of which are impossible to detach from the force of law:

> Since the origin of authority, the foundation or ground, the position of the law[s] can't by definition rest on anything but themselves, they are themselves a violence without ground. Which is not to say that they are themselves unjust, in the sense of 'illegal'. They are neither legal nor illegal in their founding moment. They exceed the opposition between founded and unfounded, or between any foundationalism or anti-foundationalism.
>
> (1992: 14)

As McCormick notes, Derrida refuses to engage in an 'unreflective collapsing of what is *legal* and what is *just*' (2001: 398). As such, the derivation of legitimate authority from a juridical system of rules is a logical fallacy, if justified authority is understood as an effect of constituted power: no posited system of rules can will itself into existence; and no posited system of rules can bind a sovereign, for this would dilute the principle of unchallengeability upon which the myth of sovereignty is based.

Foucault and Derrida invite us to question the ontological status of force in the political and legal constitution of modernity, for the 'establishment of a system of justice itself presupposes a moment of violence that could not have been sanctioned by arrangements agreed upon by those over whom the violence is exercised' (McCormick 2001: 398). Whereas liberal philosophers locate violence at the margins of society – as a pathology of modernity that will eventually be 'solved' through economic development – thinkers like Foucault unveil power in its disciplinary form, with important consequences for a critical theory of fascism. 'Whether intended or not,' argues Hanssen,

> in charting the vicissitudes of power as war, rather than mapping the progressive power of reason, Foucault along the way drew the analogy of a war-ravaged modernity, whose deplorable end-point was the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century. At the base of his reconfiguration of power, lay the historical hypothesis that war, during the course of modern history, had changed from being a strategic military principle – the fare of martial experts – to becoming part of the inmost fabric of civil society where . . . it was wired into the filigree of peace. As it gradually left its position at the nation-state's outer periphery, where it served to

> subtend state boundaries, protecting the nation against external foes, war migrated inward, culminating in an 'internal colonialism' enacted in the state-sponsored regimes of 'bio-power', which aimed to control, eventually to eliminate, the social enemy, or other.
>
> (2000: 102)

Foucault's analysis also suggests a parallel with Schmitt's existential decisionism, based on a vision of the world rent by enmity. As we saw in Chapter 4, Schmitt locates the essence of the political in the 'friend–enemy' distinction, where 'each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence' (1932: 27). Liberalism, on this view, transforms the *economic* rival at the level of political ideas and interests into a 'debating adversary'; but in an adversarial society, the political is the 'most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend–enemy grouping' (ibid.: 29). Yet, while a parallels exists between Foucault's and Schmitt's refusal to concede any distinction between war and peace, Schmitt's authentic concern lies in the socially unifying impact of a decision *in favour* of (civil) war – that moment when the 'self-understood will to repel the enemy in a given battle situation turns into a rationally constructed social ideal or programme, a tendency or an economic calculation' (ibid.: 72–73). Whereas Foucault and Derrida demonstrate how law 'facilitates' a police state (McCormick 2001: 409), Schmitt (and later Strauss) criticize law as an 'obstacle' to the national-security state, highlighting a continuity between fascism and neoconservatism which share a belief in the utility of external threats as a means of preserving internal political order.

Liberal societies, argues Hüppauf, ultimately deny their violence using a technique of 'relegation', which compartmentalizes violence while allowing society to proceed with the illusion of a more peaceful future:

> The vision that western civilization continues to project of itself as one concerned with creating conditions for the emergence of a world free from war and violence is at variance with its own collective memory and continued political and cultural practices.
>
> (1997: 3)

By privileging the free development of private individuals, liberalism holds to the self-deception of a 'law-preserving' violence in the service of normative consensus:

> The strong resistance against deconstructing the grand narrative concerning the peaceful nature of the process of civilization adheres to the fundamental belief that violence is a legitimate element of modern

> society in as far and only as it contributes to the aim of the final eradication of violence.
>
> (Ibid.: 11)

However, the myth of a post-political consensus displaces antagonism to the level of moral disagreement, rather than acknowledge that politics necessarily functions as an *agonistic* means for determining social and political actions (Mouffe 2000b). Liberalism also suppresses individuality by demanding conformity with the rationalizing impulse of an abstract universal humanity which extinguishes uniqueness and particularity in its search for totalizing solutions (Newman 2005), creating a logic of disciplinary violence which finds its end-point in fascist totalitarianism. While it is important to recognize that historicizing approaches which equate fascism and modernity lead to trivialization, the *structural possibility* of fascist violence lies within rather than outside the disciplinary logic of modernity, leading to a radical intensification of governmental practices which expose subjects to classification and surveillance, transforming the 'internal racism' of liberalism and the 'external racism' of imperialism into a new form of internal colonialism where improvement of the domestic human economy becomes a direct concern of the state.

The legacy of colonialism

One of the paradoxes of the nineteenth century is the general absence of war from the European continent itself, as violence was displaced internally through the institutional-disciplinary matrix of state and society, and externally through colonialism. The balance of power in Europe and the development of European colonial power overseas meant that the reality of violence

> was hidden from the gaze of nineteenth century doctrines of enlightenment because the victims were far away in lands that were considered strange and alien. Moreover, these victims were not considered real human beings; the death of non-Europeans was of no moral consequence.
>
> (Lawrence 1997: 31)

This reflects not only the spatial separation of the victims of colonialism from the scrutiny of bourgeois society, but the enduring distinction between war among Europeans (*bellum hostile*), and war between Europeans and non-Europeans (*bellum romanum* or *guerre mortelle*), a distinction which has persisted in conflicts between western and non-western states such as the United States–Iraq war. The former, notes Kalyvas, 'was the norm in Western Christendom, and entailed regulations and restrictions, whereas the latter concerned wars against outsiders, infidels or barbarians where no holds were barred and all those designated as enemy, whether bearing arms or not,

could be criminally slaughtered' (2006: 62). It is difficult, if not impossible, to explain the eruption of fascist violence in Europe itself in the early twentieth century in isolation from the uncontrolled violence employed by settlers against the indigenous peoples of the European colonies. Following Arendt, Owens suggests that while Europeans might have assumed they could safely ignore the violence of their imperial administrators abroad, colonial violence 'was existential not only for the colonized'. Through a 'boomerang effect', she argues, colonialism 'unleashed a dynamic of violent and racist extremism, which in conjunction with other key elements of modernity directly prefigured the catastrophe faced by millions in the First and Second World Wars' (2007: 52; cf. MacMaster 2001: 25). This 'boomerang effect' was not limited to physical violence, however, for as Osborne reminds us, the levelling force of the concept of modernity as a periodizing category based on the '*non-contemporaneousness* of geographically diverse, but *chronologically simultaneous*, times' was mediated in the experience of colonialism: 'Once the practice of such comparisons was established in anthropology,' he argues, 'it was easily transferable to the relations between particular social spheres and practices within different European countries themselves, and thereafter, once again, globally, in an expanding dialectic of differentiation and homogenization' (1995: 16).[2]

Historians have begun to examine the links between colonialism, militarism and fascism, highlighting not just the parallel between colonial and fascist racism, but the structural link between liberal democracy in Europe and imperial expansion. As colonizing entities, argues Eqbal Ahmad, the imperial nations became instruments of corporate expansion abroad:

> The ability to export the tensions associated with social change made possible the growth of liberal democracies involving a subtle and complex balance between institutions of coercion and consensus. This perspective on the link between colonial expansion and the development of bourgeois democratic systems requires a renewed examination of the forces which led to the development of European fascism, for it is not incidental that fascism took hold in countries which underwent the process of industrialization while they were largely denied the colonial raw materials and markets, as well as the ability to export their tensions.
> (1980: 38)

Having witnessed European colonization of the American Midwest and the 'internal exclusion' of the Native Indian population, Alexis de Tocqueville (1841) championed the French colonization of Algeria, sensing correctly that relations with non-Europeans would become an 'inextricable element' of liberal democracy in the coming age: in an important sense, he argued, displacement of native populations, mass slavery and colonial (re)settlement were essential for the geographical expansion and political integration of European civilization itself.[3] Emphasizing the importance of unifying ideals,

Tocqueville articulated a theory of socioeconomic development similar to Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, who recognized the utility of externally unifying ideals, although he made no attempt to codify this theory, noting only that liberalism and democracy were ultimately characterized by their close dependence on militarism and imperial power: one presupposed the other, even if – as Pitts argues – the 'endorsement of radically different political standards for different people implied by liberalism require[d] theoretical justifications that form an unexpected and indeed uncomfortable element in liberal thought in the nineteenth century' (2005: 5). A similar point is made by Arendt (1951), who understood imperialism as a defining moment in the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie: until the late nineteenth century, bourgeois elites had achieved hegemony without aspiring to direct political rule, but the logic of exporting capital required the projection of political power to enforce the exploitation necessary to realize a high rate of return. In effect, the traditional framework of the nation-state was inadequate to the task of rapidly expanding capital, and colonialism offered a means for gaining access to protected markets and externalizing social tensions – a point made by Cecil Rhodes himself, who declared in 1895 that:

> in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesman must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced by them in the factories and the mines. . . . If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists.
>
> (Rhodes, cited in Lenin 1917: 79)

The violent logic of colonialism can only be understood, however, if we acknowledge the extra-juridical constitution of colonial rule and its retrogressive impact on European politics and society. Arendt suggests that empire building and colonialism had been in decline for centuries: 'They had been carried out successfully only by governments which, like the Roman Republic, were based primarily on law, so that conquest could be followed by integration of the most heterogeneous peoples by imposing upon them a common law' (1951: 169–70). But in the nineteenth century, she adds, the nation-state,

> based upon a homogenous population's active consent to its government . . . , lacked such a unifying principle and would, in the case of conquest, have to assimilate rather than integrate, to enforce consent rather than justice, that is, to degenerate into tyranny.
>
> (Ibid.: 170)

In effect, the expansion of empire created a dangerous logic of power for its own sake, creating a new class of 'state-employed administrators of violence' whose task was to enforce European rule in the colonies and whip up support

for imperialism on the home front.[4] It is here that the specific character of colonialism becomes apparent as a system of government based on the permanent transformation of the colonized society:

> While the administrators of permanently increasing power in past eras of moderate imperialism did not even try to incorporate conquered territories, and preserved existing backward communities like empty ruins of bygone life, their totalitarian successors dissolved and destroyed all politically stabilised structures, their own as well as of other peoples. The mere export of violence made the servants into masters without giving them the master's prerogative: the possible creation of something new. Monopolistic concentration and tremendous accumulation of violence at home made the servants active agents in the destruction, until finally totalitarian expansion became a nation- and people-destroying force.
>
> (Ibid.: 185)

In this respect, imperialism represents the first formal stage of bourgeois hegemony, when economic imperatives came to dictate the logic of geopolitics based on the *legal* constitution and political legitimation of colonial violence. On the one hand, this can be seen in the practice of genocide to eliminate an indigenous population – exemplified by Britain's genocidal colonization of Tasmania; on the other hand, it can be seen in the suppression of opposition to colonialism – exemplified by the punitive violence of Britain's response to the Indian Mutiny in 1857–58, and the cultural violence of the imperial institutions of the 'Raj' imposed after the mutiny to revitalize the shattered authority of British rule (Cohn 1983).

Colonialism can also be seen as a foundational moment in the creation of modern international law, which emerged as a formal system for justifying and codifying the relations of domination between Europeans and the indigenous inhabitants established by means of violence. International law did not arrive in the non-European world 'fully formed', but was created by Europeans *in response to* the colonial experience:

> colonialism was central to the constitution of international law in that many of the basic doctrines of international law – including, most importantly, sovereignty doctrine – were forged out of the attempt to create a legal system that could account for relations between the European and non-European worlds in the colonial confrontation.
>
> (Anghie 2004: 3)

The main consequence of the extension of positivism into international law was to undermine the cosmopolitan ideal of a uniform law of nations by retrenching public law within the 'civilized' community of Euro-American nations: regardless of the individual historical experience of non-European cultures, henceforth only European law imposed by force could count as

international law. This meant that non-European states were effectively excluded from the realm of law, and thus 'deprived of their membership and the ability to assert any rights cognisable as legal. In its most extreme form, positivist reason suggested that the relations and transactions between the European and non-European states occurred entirely outside the realm of law' (ibid.: 54). The implications of this hegemonic articulation for the future development of international relations are complex, but a clear parallel can be drawn with the hegemony of occidental rationalism: both illustrate the 'narcissism' of Eurocentric narratives of modernity based on a value-rational assumption of the moral and intellectual superiority of liberal reason. The primary consequence of this has been the symbolic annihilation of alternative cultural and philosophical perspectives (Said 1978). The impact of sudden, externally produced change on non-European cultures remained a subject for anthropologists rather than historians, who for too long avoided any comparison between the cultural degradation of colonialism and the devastating impact of the deliberate introduction of economic liberalism on the fabric of European society itself (Polanyi 1944: 166).

Aijaz Ahmad (2000) argues that the history of the twentieth century is principally a story of the transition from a world divided between competing imperialist powers to a single empire of elite nations and dependent (postcolonial) states united by the rule of capital – although global capitalism is not an empire 'without an address'. At the peak of inter-imperialist rivalry, the First World War unleashed oppositional forces in the imperial core and colonial periphery which challenged the hegemony of bourgeois rule and the civilizing mission ideology upon which colonialism was based. In 1914, argues Lawrence, Europeans

> had to come to terms with the fact that the instruments derived from industrial progress were turned inwards for use in intra-European war. In the countdown to the war, nationalism, xenophobia, romanticism and social Darwinism had fuelled enthusiasm for the coming conflagration.
>
> (1997: 38)

Although rebellions in the colonies did not discourage Britain and France from taking control of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the Levant, the war punctured the myth of European cultural superiority among indigenous elites socialized to accept European leadership, and unleashed a wave of revolutionary unrest across Europe (Adas 2004). The shock of this dual challenge to bourgeois hegemony and colonial authority set in motion a sequence of events which contributed to the rise of fascism, as a result of which colonial techniques of counter-insurgency and civil repression were employed against domestic subversion in Europe itself.

The unprecedented destruction of the First World War undermined the fragile system of high finance and diplomacy which had enabled the European powers to co-exist under the hegemony of the British Empire.

Kallis argues that support for colonialism in Italy and Germany prior to 1914 was linked to traditional assumptions of Italian and German hegemony in eastern Europe and the Mediterranean respectively, the 'areas where they had established their vast empires in the past and from where they had acquired their strength' (2000: 20). Although frustrated by the Entente, support for expansion was strong because both countries were challenged by powerful labour movements which could not be disciplined or integrated using traditional means. This expansionist agenda was appropriated by fascist leaders after 1918, eager to capitalize on the frustrated nationalism of the masses. Whereas the early imperial era (1830–78) had benefited the victorious imperial nations, business leaders in Germany, Italy, Hungary, Japan and Turkey demanded a further division of the world so that those states which had fallen behind in the scramble for territory might receive their 'fair shares'. This contributed to the radicalization of geopolitics after 1918, as nationalists sought to challenge the international balance of power. For Italy, this meant acquiring further territory in Libya, the Balkans and the Horn of Africa (Segrè 1975; Kallis 2000), despite the historic weakness of Italian military force in the late nineteenth century; for Hungary, this meant recovering the territory lost to Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia after Trianon; for Japan, this meant expansion into Manchuria and Southeast Asia (Beasley 1987); for Turkey this meant resettling the depopulated Armenian territories in the east while pursuing a pan-Turanian policy to unify the Turkic peoples of the Caucasus behind Ankara's political and cultural leadership (Mann 2005); and for Germany, this implied recovering the imperial colonies in Africa and the return of territory ceded to Poland and Czechoslovakia – although both of these aims shrank in significance once the goal of acquiring 'living space' in eastern Europe was established in the 1930s.[5]

As Novick argues, to 'say there is no difference between capitalism and imperialism in general, and fascism in particular, is wrong'. Fascism, he contends, should instead be understood as

> a form of imperialism *in extremis*, moved to taking desperate measures in the name of survival (often, but not only, because of the strength of its conscious opposition). The degree to which fascism must emphasize its mass appeal and its revolutionary face is a measure of the weakening of the grip of normal imperial and colonial thinking within the working classes, and of their allegiance to the deal they got. . . . All forms of imperialism, especially 'modern' imperialism and colonialism, have always been cross-class projects, in which working and other subordinate classes have always participated independently and directly, not merely under the direction of the bourgeoisie or ruling class.
>
> (2003: 3)

Novick illustrates the parallel between colonialism and fascism in two ways. On the one hand, the mass basis of colonialism was secured through the

participation of ultra-patriotic settlers who benefited from privileged access to the land and resources of indigenous peoples. This change in ownership rights created a European and indigenous propertied class and a semi-proletarianized class of urban and rural workers whose labour could be supplemented by surplus 'coolie' labour imported from elsewhere. With the rise of fascist paramilitaries after 1918, similar ultra-patriotic movements based on demobilized soldiers, nationalist intellectuals, small property owners and disorganized workers emerged in Europe itself, first in Italy, then across southern and central Europe. In the absence of credible alternatives, and unable to resolve the crisis through the power structure, local elites confronted the failing state by allying themselves with fascist paramilitary leaders who demanded the resolution of nationalist aims and the suppression of the left by extra-legal violence if necessary. Whereas colonial settler movements projected their hostility towards local indigenous cultures (an unassimilable racial 'other'), fascist paramilitaries projected a cross-class appeal, calling for unity against 'enemies of the people' (an unassimilable political 'other') in an attempt to dissolve the contradictions between the movement's nationalist and populist identity. Unlike their socialist rivals, however, fascist movements offered their supporters no guarantees of freedom, equality or prosperity, nor even a vision of modern governance, focusing instead on a Manichean ideology of struggle as the 'natural destiny' of sovereign nations.

On the other hand, the link between fascism and imperialism can be seen in the use of destructive power against Europeans which had previously been reserved for non-Europeans in the colonies (Fanon 1963). Colonial violence was justified by racism, which legitimized not only the compulsion of colonized peoples to work for European firms but a cultural reordering of the subjugated community itself and the sequestration of its most valuable assets through unlimited force. In the history of empire, argues Novick, 'genocide has been the rule, not the exception, of imperial rule. . . . The mass base of participation in colonial rule came via the settler population, who participated actively and often independently in land grabs and extermination without waiting for bourgeois legitimacy' (Novick 2003: 2). Through a transformation of the economic infrastructure in favour of Europeans, colonial regimes went beyond simple conquest to engage in a form of cultural genocide based on the 'systematic elimination of distinctive features of the native society, combined with the refusal to allow its members integration with the parent country, or to benefit from its advantages' (Sartre 1967: 70). In this sense, the violence employed to neutralize threats to European racial hegemony is mirrored in the violence used to neutralize domestic political resistance to bourgeois rule in Europe, illustrated most powerfully, perhaps, by the 'shock and awe' destruction of the Basque town of Guernica in April 1937.[6] While liberal historians are reluctant to draw parallels between colonialism and fascism, there are obvious similarities between the destructive power of colonialism and the violence of the Axis in occupied Europe which cannot be ignored. A striking example of this can be seen in Britain's

response to the nationalist rebellion in Ireland in 1921, where the violence of British auxiliaries was as savage as the punitive expeditions of fascist *squadristi* in northern Italy in the same year.[7] A similar lack of perspective can be seen in responses to the comparable reprisals carried out by German security forces against Czech civilians in retaliation for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in 1942, and the massacre of up to 45,000 Algerians in Setif in 1945 by French security forces in retaliation for the killing of local European settlers by Arabs – an event which launched Algeria into a spiral of violence, systematic torture and civil war until the country was granted independence by De Gaulle in 1962 (Evans and Phillips 2007: 52).

Mass incarceration, forced labour, land requisitioning and counter-insurgency all have their immediate precedent in colonial practices, and remain the favoured tools of neocolonial regimes to the present day. This is not to suggest facile comparisons between the violence of the British plantations in East Africa in the 1890s and the use of slave labour by Nazi Germany during the Second World War: both are examples of violence driven by rational economic calculation, and both were predicated on the expropriation of indigenous resources – but there is a qualitative distinction between British rule in East Africa and the German treatment of Soviet prisoners of war. Yet the use of forced labour is consistent in both cases with a coercive system of capitalism based on the marriage of corporate and state power, which was free to use maximal force in the absence of legal scrutiny (cf. Kamiński 1982). As Galtung (1987) argues, the Nazi *Drang nach Osten* must be seen in the context of a broader European *Drang nach Suden*, a geopolitical drive to dominate the southern hemisphere which has determined the course of world history since the eighteenth century. To illustrate this point, Zimmerer draws a striking parallel between the genocidal violence used by German colonial administrators in Southwest Africa before 1914 and the violence of Nazi forces in occupied eastern Europe. Under National Socialism, he observes, the 'master-race' narrative of colonialism 'returned to Europe. The binary encoding of black–white, natives–non-natives, rulers–servants, human–subhuman, worthy of life–unworthy of life, was profoundly colonial. The discursive formation of colonial ideas contributed to a broad and wide-ranging acceptance of such categories by the population' (2007: 122).

The extermination of European Jewry in the Second World War was a racially motivated crime without parallel (Hilberg 2003), but was nonetheless made possible by a conjuncture of ideological and organizational developments specific to European civilization. Following Bartov (2000), Traverso argues that the mechanized and depersonalized extermination of millions of soldiers in the First World War can be seen as a kind of 'anthropological break', a 'transformative moment in the history of human conflict which revealed a new perception of human life that essentially paved the way for the genocides of the future'(Traverso 2003: 83). As we shall see in Chapter 8, traditional antisemitism was a causal factor in the persecution of European

Jewry, yet Nazi antisemitism finds its authentic origins not in a revival of medieval anti-Jewish hatred, but in 'scientific' race-thinking harnessed to bureaucratic reason and the association of Jews with the abstract domination of capitalism. As Bauman argues, the

> Hobbesian world of the Holocaust did not surface from its too-shallow grave, resurrected by the tumult of irrational emotions. It arrived (in a formidable shape Hobbes would certainly disown) in a factory produced vehicle, wielding weapons only the most advanced science could supply, and following an itinerary designed by scientifically managed organization. Modern civilization was not the Holocaust's *sufficient* condition; it was, however, certainly its *necessary* condition. Without it, the Holocaust would be unthinkable.
>
> (1989: 13)

Although the path to the 'Final Solution' was conceived in stages – as a response to changing ideological and economic priorities (Browning 1992) – the decision in favour of extermination was, Bauman notes, ultimately a product of discipline and 'routine bureaucratic procedures', a means–end calculus designed to resolve the technical issue of segregating, resettling and exploiting the large Jewish population of eastern Europe trapped under Nazi rule (1989: 17). The means–end calculus of the Nazi judeocide must be placed in the context of German policy to reduce the 'excess' population of eastern Europe and resettle the region with ethnic Germans.[8] At the same time, the logic of total war provided the context for the unprecedented exploitation of slave labour by German industrial firms both within Germany itself and across occupied Europe, organized by the Reich Business Administration Office of the SS whose managers and engineers married ideological zeal and bureaucratic professionalism in an attempt to meet the material and logistical needs of military production (Allen 2002). But neither physical extermination nor economic exploitation were unique to Germany, and a disturbing parallel exists between what Bauman terms the 'social production of moral invisibility' (where the ethical consequences of action are concealed by bureaucratic procedure and the application of differentiated ethical standards) that facilitated European colonial rule in Africa and Asia and the genocidal totalitarianism of Nazi colonial rule in eastern Europe (Zimmerer 2007; Traverso 2003; Weitz 2003; Lindqvist 1996).

The specificity of fascist violence

Through its elimination of internal opposition, through cultural homogenization and the projection of sovereign power in pursuit of geopolitical goals, fascism rehearses and intensifies patterns of violence in imperialism. And, by mythologizing war, fascism extends a type of militarism established in the nineteenth century and intensified in the First World War. Yet there is an

additional dimension to fascist violence that transcends the bureaucratic-militarist ethos and instrumental justification for violence associated with traditional 'garrison states'. As Berghahn argues,

> the dynamics of Hitler's system of government cannot be understood without the devotion and enthusiasm with which the professionals in the armed forces went about their work together with managers of industry, party functionaries, architects and other highly-trained specialists to secure the smooth execution of a technological and technocratic militarism.
>
> (1981: 112; cf. Aly and Heim 1991; Allen 2002)

Fascist violence has three main functions, namely to weaken the power of opposing movements through physical confrontation, to promote an experience of struggle and solidarity among cadres, and to project a display of strength and order (Reichardt 2002: 135). In addition, fascist violence arrests and captures the public's attention, creating patriotic 'martyrs' and sowing tension. In this sense fascist violence *itself* becomes a cognizable commodity, a retributive counter-insurrectionary force in which opponents are perceived only as enemies to be exterminated. As a means to terrorize and silence, fascism constitutes a powerful yet ultimately mythic project to determine through overwhelming force which kinds of identity can legitimately be reproduced in a system of social relations. Fascist violence thus constitutes an anti-praxis – a ritualized mode of political action detached from a reflexive conception of its own purpose, which proceeds by annihilating the redemptive, emancipatory function of politics through mercenary professionalism and mythic terror.

In Italy, the core of the *Squadri d'Azione* in the Fiume crisis of 1920 were the *arditi*, a group of patriotic, lower-middle class army officers recruited by Mussolini after the war, who demonstrated the force of fascism's 'authorized lawlessness'. Recruitment among the officer class was a priority for the development of *squadrismo*, but as Elazar rightly argues, the 'systematic employment of anti-Socialist violence required not only a military capacity but also a *political* license' (Elazar 2001: 77; italics added). Fascist paramilitaries formed alliances with industrialists who saw socialism as a threat to the principle of exclusive property rights, and agrarian elites who saw the left as a threat to the profitability of their estates and their traditional way of life. By embracing fascist *squadrismo*, both groups contributed to the decline of traditional political organization in favour of militarization, aided by the active collaboration of local police forces, financial donations, favourable publicity in the media (ibid.: 90–93), and alliance with representatives of the state itself. As Forsyth argues, by 'the time Giolitti's government fell in late June 1921, a fascist state-within-a-state was coming into being in much of north-central Italy, with the connivance of local and central government authorities, including Giolitti himself' (1993: 237). The seizure of power followed three

stages: first, the *Squadri d'Azione* engaged in punitive raids against provincial socialists; second, fascists closed down independent trade unions and forced workers to join Fascist Syndicates created in partnership with employers; third, fascists allied themselves with local dignitaries to overthrow local administrations (ibid.: 126). As Elazar argues, however, it is doubtful whether local fascists planned from the outset to seize power themselves; rather, they were emboldened by the success of 'authorized lawlessness' to collaborate with local elites. A similar process took place at the national level when Mussolini was invited by the Italian political establishment to lead the government.

In Germany, a parallel process unfolded following the November Revolution, which overthrew the Prussian monarchy, but left power in the hands of right-wing Social Democrats allied to the General Staff. Deflated by military defeat, yet unable to accept its verdict, many battle-hardened veterans with experience behind enemy lines eagerly joined *Freikorps* units to prevent a potential radicalization of the revolution and defend the government of Friedrich Ebert, Gustav Noske and Philipp Scheidemann. Under the overall direction of General Ritter von Epp, *Freikorps* mercenaries used pitiless force to crush workers' organizations in the industrial cities of the Reich, contributing to the collapse of the Spartakus rising in January 1919 – an ill-fated communist putsch against the new Weimar state led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg which threatened the vital communications industry in Berlin. *Freikorps* units were subsequently used to crush the short-lived 'Soviet Republic' in Munich (a city which rapidly turned into a centre of right-wing paramilitarism), and were also deployed in the eastern borders of the Reich in skirmishes with Polish, Lithuanian and Latvian forces. Yet the significance of the *Freikorps* lies not just in their deployment to suppress industrial unrest in the wake of the failed revolution, but in the gravitation of Freikorps leaders towards the NSDAP to defend the fledgling party and intimidate its rivals (Reichardt 2002: 136). The majority of these mercenaries came from a lower-middle class rural background, providing a more secure bulwark against the left than the proletarian rank-and-file of the Reichswehr. Although often overlooked by historians and sociologists – Mann (2004) for example makes no reference to the movement in an otherwise useful summary of Nazi paramilitarism – as Jones (2004) argues, the evidence suggests a continuity between the targeted violence of the *Freikorps* and the growth of right-wing terrorism which led to the Kapp Putsch and Hitler's abortive attempt to seize power in Munich in 1923. Indeed, as a grim reminder of the continuity of right-wing extremism in Germany, Jones notes that most of the leaders of National Socialism graduated from the *Freikorps* to engage in more insidious forms of violence in the Third Reich, including Ernst Röhm (leader of the SA), Heinrich Himmler (leader of the SS) Rudolph Höss (commandant of Auschwitz), Reinhard Heydrich (leader of the SD), and Hans Frank (governor-general of Nazi occupied Poland).[9]

Nolte is unequivocal in his assessment that the violence of the *fasci di*

combattimento was reactionary in both its character and mode of execution: 'within a few months,' he observes,

> a few hundred squads of young men, supported by almost all the established forces of society, in a ruthless, naked class war destroyed with fire and sword in the principle regions of Italy all those hard-won institutions in which the process of the people's self-education had taken place, but which, after the attempted impossible revolution, seemed to large sections of the middle class an intolerable threat.
>
> (1965: 198)

This violence, he insists, was a product of the 'injured and threatened higher classes – from lower-middle class to aristocracy – cynical, systematic, purblind, devoid of any human relationship to its own people' (ibid.: 201). However, he cautions, while this violence was defensive in its social function,

> sociological or psychological explanations do not exhaust the nature of fascist violence. It contains something of original evil, of cynical contempt for human beings, and diabolical delight in the humiliation of another human being, of a dark love of force for its own sake.
>
> (Ibid.: 202)

This picture of 'malignant aggression' is further developed by Fromm (1973), who highlights the inherent sadism and incestuous fascination with death implicit in fascist militarism.

Jones offers a similar assessment of proto-fascist mercenaries: 'To assess the historical significance of the *Freikorps*,' he suggests, 'one must see them in the world that gave them such a bloody birth.' As the vanguard of Nazism, they were the

> children of the trenches, spawned by war out of revolution. Owing something to the dark, non-Christian roots of German history, something to the prevailing fashion for anti-rationalist mysticism, but much more to the savage habits of a mind bred by four years of war, the *Freikorps* were above all the natural representatives of a time of social chaos, confusion, revolution and reaction.
>
> (2004: 268–69; cf. Bessel 1984: 41–42)

In the writings of men like Jünger, 'war and right-wing politics promised decisiveness, clear boundaries, and masculine community with an opportunity for instinctual release' (Herf 1984: 76). As former 'day labourers of death', these revolutionaries of the right sought violent redemption in an aestheticized fantasy of the 'armed male community', one which could overcome pacifism, internationalism and socialism and win the proletariat over to a 'new nationalism' by reconciling traditional German *Geist* and modern

Technik (ibid.: 80–86; cf. Theweleit 1989; Woods 1996). As Bartov argues, in their 'fascination with naked violence', right-wing paramilitary fanatics

> straddle the line between nihilism, fascism and postmodernism, articulating the enormous appeal of modern industrial destruction as event and image, memory and anticipation: destruction on such a monumental scale that it fills one with awe, even while being devoured by it.
>
> (2000: 22)

This capacity to inspire awe remains fundamental to the use of spectacular punitive violence (air strikes on civilian areas, phosphorous weapons, etc.) by militarily advanced societies over their weaker adversaries (Lamb 2007).

The link between the experience of war and fascist paramilitarism is clear from the war eulogies and fantasies of fascist auxiliaries; but so too is the distortion of this formative experience among individuals engaged in 'purblind' acts of violence, where organized groups momentarily achieve sovereignty through armed confrontation, with logistical and ideological support from local elites. This point is captured acutely by Benjamin, who notes the formative importance of the war for *Freikorps* officers, whose violent example was emulated by fascist stormtroopers in the 1920s. However, Benjamin also notes how violence became central to their consecration as bourgeois 'class-warriors', whose

> attempts to come to terms with the loss of the war show a clear pattern. These attempts began with an effort to pervert the German defeat into an inner victory by means of confessions of guilt which were hysterically elevated to the universally human.
>
> (1930: 123)

However, he adds, on closer inspection:

> it becomes obvious how very much their concept of the heroic has changed; we can see how much the virtues of hardness, reserve and implacability they celebrate are in fact less those of the soldier than of the proven class militant. What developed here, first in the guise of the World War volunteer and then in the mercenary of the *Nachkrieg*, is in fact the dependable fascist class warrior. And what these authors mean by nation is a ruling class supported by this caste, a ruling class – accountable to no one, and least of all to itself, enthroned on high – which bears the Sphinx-like countenance of the producer who very soon promises to be the sole consumer of his commodities.
>
> (Ibid.: 127)

Benjamin correctly highlights the dramatization of military-technical power in the work of Jünger and other conservative revolutionary intellectuals, and

the fantasy of revenge and annihilation which drove right-wing paramilitaries in Germany (and Italy). This pattern was repeated in Spain, where developments in the republican zone created panic among bourgeois voters concerned for their property and security, but where Falangists alone were unable to mobilize adequate forces against democracy. The Falangist revolt of 1936 was, argues Payne, a

> preventative blow, aimed at seizing power before the main enemy could take over the government. In this case, the main enemy was the revolutionary left, and the pre-emptive revolt had the paradoxical consequence of precipitating the very revolutionary takeover it was designed to avoid.
>
> (1999: 206)

How, then, should we distinguish between fascist violence and emancipatory violence at a theoretical level? Historians typically link fascism with Sorel's (1907) syndicalist theory of revolutionary violence, despite the fact that Sorel opposed fascism, describing the fascist corporation as a tool of social domination based on the coerced collaboration of antagonistic classes (Roth 1980). Following Bergson, Sorel rejected positivism, believing that myth alone could ground the human will to act because mythic ideals (unlike scientific hypotheses) are secure from refutation and thus immune to contradiction in the struggle against liberalism. In place of Marxian political economy, he championed the general strike as a mythic ideal with practical consequences for the destruction of social order (Goldhammer 2005: 129). However, while Mussolini praised Sorel's syndicalist philosophy of action, like Bakunin, Sorel was anti-elitist, aware that the creative moment of revolutionary force is rapidly institutionalized and contained in the post-revolutionary state: whereas fascism is founded on the myth of the total state, syndicalism is based on workers' councils, where post-revolutionary administration is controlled not by career officials but by producers themselves. There are affinities between Sorel's syndicalism and fascism, but the authentic social character of fascist violence is revealed in its anti-emancipatory function. To understand the implications of this, we need to differentiate between two conceptions of sovereign violence, which posit the ideal of a violence outside the juridical framework of the state and law.

As we saw in the last chapter, Schmitt conceived of mythic violence as the '*ex nihilo* creation of a new legal and constitutional order', a foundational, constituent force which can only be realized in a 'juridical and normative vacuum' (Kalyvas 2000: 351). For Schmitt, this constituent force is defined metaphysically as the 'form-giving power of the multitude' (ibid.), although in his later work sovereignty is associated largely with the discretionary violence of the protective leader in his/her capacity to determine the exception. Benjamin, on the other hand, acknowledges the relevance of Sorel's theory of myth, but identifies a 'pure' violence separate from the constituent

power of law-making violence and the law-preserving violence of constituted power. For Benjamin, law-making is *always already* power-making: 'Justice is the principle of all divine end-making, power the principle of all mythic law-making' (1921: 149). Despite giving the illusion of change, the mythic nature of foundational violence is revealed as a new dominative rationality: far from 'inaugurating a purer sphere, the mythic manifestation of immediate violence shows itself fundamentally identical with all legal violence, and turns suspicion concerning the latter into certainty of the perniciousness of its historical function, the destruction of which becomes obligatory' (ibid.: 150). Mythic violence, on this view, does nothing more than return humanity to the same place in a continuous reconstitution of legally sanctioned power legitimized through a parodic aestheticization of change. Against this, Benjamin theorized a non-instrumental force outside law which is not law-making but 'law-deposing': 'if the former sets boundaries,' he argued, 'the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythic violence brings at once guilt and retribution, *divine* power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood' (ibid.: 150–51).

Benjamin's critique remains the subject of continued philosophical debate, but the implications of his insight into violence can be deciphered. Examining Benjamin's thesis, Hanssen suggests that once disconnected from the 'thetic force of the legal order, revolutionary violence [finds] its very condition of possibility in divine justice, as it gesture[s] towards the coming of a new historic era, on the other side of mythic violence' (2000: 22). This conceptualization of violence, she insists, involves a break with existing theories of revolutionary action:

> Benjamin seemingly retained the legacy of liberalism in *Unterredung* while also opting for the violence of an anti-liberal proletarian strike. To do so, he needed to modify Sorel's revolutionary model and reject Schmitt's variant of anti-liberalism. Thus Benjamin did not adopt Bergson's theory of *élan vital*, which centrally informed Sorel's revolutionary spontaneism, nor did he take over the latter's conception of myth as the condition of class identity.
>
> (Ibid.)

Whereas Schmitt (1922: 7) asserts a distinction between legitimacy and legality, and upholding a doctrine of sovereignty based on decisional power which exists simultaneously inside and outside the law (believing that while the sovereign 'stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety'), Benjamin defends a concept of 'unalloyed means', a capacity '"uncontaminated" by the sphere of profane law' (1921: 21). Against Schmitt's belief in a 'primordially belligerent human nature', Benjamin detaches violence from instrumentality, unleashing the 'critical

force' of violence to end the vicious cycle of law-making (constituent) violence and law-preserving (constituted) violence which characterizes history – a quasi-theological move which reveals the latter's messianic anarchist tendencies. As Agamben argues, this exchange between Schmitt and Benjamin on public law can be read as a debate on the nature of sovereignty which reveals the distinction between existential decisionism (based on mythic terror) and revolutionary justice (based on divine terror): although Schmitt's sovereign aspires to a decisional autonomy outside the law,

> it is in order to neutralize [Benjamin's] new figure of a pure violence removed from the dialectic between constituent power and constituted power that Schmitt develops his theory of sovereignty. The sovereign violence in *Political Theology* responds to the pure violence of Benjamin's essay with the figure of a power that neither makes nor preserves law, but suspends it.
>
> (Agamben 1995: 56)

From this perspective, we can define fascist violence as an 'anti-praxis', a mythic violence which halts a radicalization of democracy through a series of reactions which may be reconstituted at the level of a common ideological crusade. Unlike Marxism, fascism represents a radicalization of the conservative revolutionary tradition which grounds a permanent state of exception through the constitutive force of law: 'While Schmitt attempts every time to reinscribe violence within a juridical context', argues Agamben, 'Benjamin responds to this gesture by seeking every time to assure it – as pure violence – an existence outside the law' (ibid.: 59). As Žižek observes, it is

> mythic violence which demands sacrifice, and holds power over bare life; whereas divine violence is non-sacrificial and expiatory. One should therefore not be afraid to assert the formal parallel between the state annihilation of *Homini sacer*, for example the Nazi killing of the Jews, and the revolutionary terror, where one can also kill without committing a crime and without sacrifice – the difference resides in the fact that the Nazi killing remains a means of the state power.
>
> (2008: 168)

Whereas critical revolutionary praxis is a transforming activity – based on a theoretical conception of its own nature and a conscious adjustment of action to substantive ends – fascism is based on the myth of sovereign power as the collective self-institution of society. Responding to military failure, economic collapse and class polarization, the mythic violence of fascism challenges yet regrounds the law-preserving violence of constituted power, employing retributive force (mythic terror) against the domestic enemies of capital with an unprecedented mercenary professionalism.

Neofascist violence

Although ideologically distinct from historical fascism, neofascism is implicated in a similar aestheticization and glorification of violence. Part of the appeal of the extreme right stems from a celebration of activism as a direct, visceral experience centred on a subculture of violence and intimidation. This type of violence is normally restricted to the margins of society – skinhead subcultures, survivalists, and so forth. But it has, on occasion, acquired a more lethal force when linked to autonomous right-wing agendas, or when mobilized by clandestine groups for political ends. In Italy, for example, a grey area existed in the 1970s between the far right, organized crime, political freemasonry and the security services, elements of which were implicated in attempts to prevent political change through a 'strategy of tension'. Similar forms of violence have been used elsewhere by neofascists, and by right-wing militias in the United States opposed to racial desegregation, minority empowerment and liberal social legislation. To these examples, we should add the routine violence aimed at minority communities in most European cities, exemplified by the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence (Hewitt 2005), and the extreme case of David Copeland, an English white supremacist who planted bombs in London's Bangladeshi, Afro-Caribbean and gay communities in April 1999. Yet the question remains: can we compare neofascist violence with the violence of historical fascism, or are these phenomena distinct? To answer this question, we need to understand the ways in which extremists seek to influence the political process: like fascists in the 1920s, their aim is to influence the direction of politics by force – to determine which identities may be considered 'legitimate' within a definite range of social relations. And, as in the 1920s, their power lies less in the physical harm inflicted by violence than in their capacity to create tension and interrupt the normal development of democratic politics.

In a recent study of Italian neofascism, Cento Bull (2007: 4–5) divides the strategies of the far right into three categories, namely terrorist massacres (*stragismo*) such as the Bologna station bombing of 1980, right-wing subversion within the security services, and low-intensity guerrilla warfare. Although the Italian example after 1945 is unique given the legacy of Mussolini's regime, there are parallels between events in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Argentina, Chile and Turkey during the postwar period, when violent confrontation developed between right-wing forces allied to (and within) the state and left-wing forces opposed to US hegemony and NATO (Ganser 2005). To illustrate the link between fascism and neofascism, we will concentrate here on the example of *stragismo* in Italy as a carefully orchestrated intervention designed to prevent a radicalization of the democratic process. Unlike urban guerrilla warfare – a strategy employed by both extreme left-wing and right-wing groups, many of which were still fighting battles from the Mussolini era – it is the cold, indiscriminate sacrifice of innocent civilians which distinguishes Italian neofascist terrorism most clearly. As

Cento Bull argues, in the case of Italian neofascism *stragismo* is the 'most mysterious, the most bloody, the most sinister, the most repulsive, and the one that arguably has left the deepest scars in the country' (2007: 7).

Why is this form of neofascist violence so lethal, and why has it had such serious consequences for the Italian state? The primary reason is that no one has ever claimed responsibility for the bloody attacks on civilians which created an intense atmosphere of suspicion and fear in the 1970s. Even in Argentina, where the security forces murdered more than 30,000 civilians between 1976 and 1982 in a network of secret camps, it is clear who was responsible and why suspects (trade unionists, journalists, intellectuals) 'disappeared' or were tortured. The Argentine regime adhered to an anti-Marxist, anti-Amerindian national security ideology similar to that of the Chilean dictatorship, whose operatives were trained by the CIA at the School of the Americas in Georgia, and who served as mercenaries in an international network of right-wing terrorists (Dinges 2005). As Feitlowicz (1998) argues, the key motive of the violence in Argentina was to forestall calls for land reform, a policy which threatened the land-owning oligarchy's control of the military and state bureaucracy. Although Jews formed a disproportionate number of activists and intellectuals murdered, the regime employed antisemitism in a conventional rather than biological sense, identifying Jews with subversion rather than as a threat to racial identity.

The use of *stragismo* in Italy is seen as particularly sinister because the perpetrators were protected by figures inside the state, suggesting a 'type of violence that was masterminded by forces radically different from and much more powerful than, its actual perpetrators (extreme right activists)' (Cento Bull 2007: 7). The purpose of this violence appears to have been to create the conditions for a state of emergency in order to 'prevent' a civil war, although it is far from clear whether anything approaching a state of civil war actually existed in the country (Ferraresi 1996). Figures within the intelligence services conspired with right-wing terrorists to promote tension and instability, but were not *themselves* motivated by the neofascist ideology of groups like the MSI, *Ordine Nuovo* or *Avanguardia Nazionale*, suggesting that for its supporters in the Italian establishment, neofascism was primarily an insidious form of law-preserving violence rather than sovereign violence, oriented towards the defensive manipulation of the political process. While self-confessed neofascist terrorists were committed to the ideal of violent action for its own sake and remained irreconciled to the democratization of Italian society after the war (portraying themselves as 'heroic victims' excluded from mainstream society), the evidence suggests that many allowed themselves to be used as pawns in an elaborate form of strategic intervention orchestrated by the western security establishment (Willan 1991).[10]

In the United States, ultra-right-wing Christian fundamentalists and neo-Nazi militias have also resorted to extreme violence, such as the murder of doctors willing to practise (legal) abortion, and the destruction of government facilities, culminating in the rise of the militia movement and the

destruction of a US Federal government building in Oklahoma in 1995 (Wright 2003). As in Italy, such attacks have been used by extremists to destabilize US politics, although the precise motive and identity of the perpetrators in the Oklahoma atrocity is unclear. Working from the assumption that all acts of terrorism have a political purpose, three things can be said with some certainty. First, the bombing was carried out by an ideologically motivated 'political soldier' (Timothy McVeigh) who admitted responsibility, claiming that the growing power of the 'New World Order' rendered the US Federal government a legitimate target. Although other individuals were involved in devising the attack, McVeigh's goal was to send a message to the nation's political class while rallying support for the Patriot movement in the aftermath of the Waco siege of 1993. Second, the social profile of the perpetrator (white, male, military background) correlates closely that of other right-wing extremists – outsiders steeped in the macho world of paramilitarism and survivalism.[11] In this fascist subculture, status is earned for acts of bravado and self-sacrifice, and it is reasonable to assume that other individuals within this sub-culture have a similar capacity for violence. Finally – as in the Bologna case – the events in Oklahoma created tension, suspicion and fear on a huge scale, altering the mood of the nation in favour of harsher anti-terrorism laws, which in turn reinforced the image of a repressive Federal government. Whether or not this was the aim of the conspirators, it allowed the US government to intensify its surveillance and infiltration of domestic extremists and to broaden its definition of 'terrorist activity' to include a wider range of 'subversive' groups, and, after the passage of the Patriot Act in 2001, to further criminalize domestic opposition within the United States to neoliberal globalization (Boukalas 2008; cf. Lafer 2004; Raskin and Spero 2007).

Conclusion

The logic of fascist violence lies in its simultaneous offensive and defensive function: on the one hand, fascists challenge the liberal state though force; on the other, fascists defend social order against 'forces of chaos', refurnishing the sovereign law-preserving violence of the state with unprecedented prerogative power. Drawing on revolutionary syndicalism and populist nationalism, early fascist syndicalism was distinguished from Marxism by its rejection of rationalism, and from pluralism by its emphasis on the persistence of irreconcilable antagonism in industrial societies. But as a state ideology, fascism advances instead a revolutionary myth devoid of emancipatory or redemptive force. Through an extension of retributive violence against domestic subversion, and through an extension of imperial aggression against other sovereign states, fascism employs intimidation and terror in effective ways to control subject populations. But fascist paramilitaries do not always act exclusively in accordance with their *own* ideological agenda. In

transitional situations, the eruption of right-wing violence may divert attention from a rightward drift in mainstream politics, or prevent the growth of autonomous movements which challenge structural asymmetries of power created by social domination and economic compulsion. As a political commodity that engenders fear and produces tension, fascist violence challenges yet augments the objective structural violence of the liberal state, leading to appalling consequences for its victims.

6 Fascism, capitalism and the market

Introduction

Liberal historians traditionally reject any direct causal relation between fascism and capitalism, pointing to the totalitarian implications of fascist-type movements which are opposed to economic liberalism. Why, it is asked, would capitalists invest in fascist movements which could eventually harm their commercial interests? As we saw in Chapter 4, however, part of the answer lies in the internal contradictions within the ruling power-bloc: as a 'least-worst option' – a satisfactory rather than ideal strategic choice in the absence of alternatives – fascist movements appeal to capitalists not because an *identity* of interests exists between fascism and business, but because fascism offers a means for mobilizing intermediate strata and neutralizing contradictions between competing fractions of capital. By appealing to nationalist sentiment, fascists facilitate a temporary alliance between sectors of industry, between industry and agriculture, and between large-scale modern industry and traditional petty bourgeois producers, whose mass support allows economic elites to extend their influence over the state and to discipline organized labour through the abolition of collective labour rights and the reduction of law to an instrument of state terror (Wahnser 1994: 29). Yet the relationship between fascism and capitalism is more complex than this sociological model allows, and cannot be understood without a formal analysis of the political economy of postliberal capitalism following the collapse of international economic cooperation in the global slump of 1929–33. To achieve this, we need to examine the *politicization of capitalism* as a strategy for transferring risk from the private sector to the public sector: then as now, the shift towards economic fascism cannot be explained in terms of nationalism alone (as if the demand for protectionism, cartelization or labour market controls were just random policy initiatives advanced by irrational demagogues). Rather, we need to accept a more fundamental possibility, namely that faced with the choice between state socialism and political capitalism, the transnational corporate elite in the advanced western nations consistently opts for the latter – albeit at the price of conceding some level of state disposition over the investment of private capital.

Following the collapse of the global economy between 1929 and 1933, it is possible to see economic fascism as a postliberal regulation regime infused with residual elements of popular anti-capitalism. Economic fascism attempts to resolve the crisis of liberal capitalism through state intervention, a strategy favoured by leaders as different as Roosevelt and Mussolini, who (reluctantly or otherwise) rejected the liberal model of a 'free economy and strong state' as unworkable, opting instead for a form of managed capitalism based on the insulation of the national economy from market turbulence (Schivelbusch 2006). After a decade of relative stabilization, it was the crisis of 1929–33 which drove democratic and fascist governments alike to confront the instability of unregulated capitalism, marking the 'end of the prewar system of multilateral trade and payments and the free movement of resources across national boundaries' (Aldcroft 1996: 13), and the end of Europe's dominant position in the world economy. Of course, postliberal capitalism assumed different forms in accordance with national traditions. Notwithstanding a substantial increase in the use of emergency powers, democracy prevailed in the United States, although the structural weakness of the American economy was concealed by rearmament and (after 1945) by the adoption of 'military Keynesianism' to manage unemployment among unionized workers (Reich 1973; Griffin *et al.*1982). In Germany, on the other hand, where the interlocking structure of the economy was more advanced by 1914, fascism triumphed, linking a new political class with vested interests in industry, banking and the military. While some observers question the validity of the concept 'state capitalism' – Ptak (2004), for example, argues that there is a tendency to exaggerate the planned nature of the Nazi economy – there is no question that in both Germany and the United States corporate and state actors acquired major significant powers over economic resources which had previously been the exclusive right of private individuals and firms.[1]

In what follows, I assess the structural and ideological links between fascism and capitalism in three stages. First, I examine the historical sociology of fascism as a specific form of postliberal capitalism with its roots in imperialism and the collapse of the self-regulating market in the interwar period. At the heart of this debate lies the role of the fascist state in the reproduction of the conditions of economic production, which an earlier generation of critical theorists interpreted as a totalitarian form of postliberal capitalism (Pollock 1941a). Although this term remains in currency its usefulness has been challenged more recently by writers who question the formal role of the state in the fascist economy and the convergence-theoretical assumptions implicit in the term 'state capitalism'.[2] Second, I examine fascist economic ideology as a blueprint for autarkic managed capitalism, paying close attention to the fascist theory of corporatism. Finally, I examine the structure and organization of the fascist economy, comparing fascist economic policy with 'corporate liberalism' in the United States.

Fascism and postliberal capitalism

From a theoretical perspective, fascism highlights the affinities between libertarianism and Marxism – two opposing critical paradigms for understanding the development of capitalism since the nineteenth century. In an economic sense, fascism can be seen as a feature of postliberal capitalist societies which cannot be described as 'fascist' in the usual sense of the term, which forces us to consider the distinction between postliberal capitalism in its totalitarian and democratic forms. Despite approaching the problem from a different normative perspective (libertarians interpret fascism as a further assault on the Lockean ideal of property freedom), there are points at which the libertarian and Marxian critique of statist capitalism intersect. Radical libertarians and Marxists both interpret the expansion of the state as a response to the changing structure of capitalism: for Marxists, the state intervenes in civil society on behalf of economic interests to reconcile tensions arising from the antagonistic contradiction between labour and capital; for libertarians, the corporatization of politics is a consequence of deliberate intervention in the market and the formation of cartels to reduce risk and competition, a process which is accelerated by the 'ratchet effect' of war and economic crisis on the political organization of society (Higgs 1987). Whereas the conservative liberal critique of collectivism is let down by a failure to acknowledge the concentration of economic power in the hands of financial oligarchies, left-wing libertarians highlight the erosion of independent entrepreneurial activity by corporate business. As Kolko argues, the rise of 'political capitalism' is tied to the demands of business for regulated markets, based on the assumption that 'the general welfare of the community could be best served by satisfying the concrete needs of business' (1964: 3). In contrast with the reformist zeal of liberal progressives who wished to stem the power of corporate trusts, he argues, 'this came about because regulatory movements were usually initiated by the dominant businesses to be regulated . . . ' (ibid.).

For Polanyi, the Hayekian assertion of an 'anti-liberal conspiracy' against the self-regulating market is a 'pure invention', for the

> great variety of forms in which the 'collectivist' counter-movement appeared was not due to any preference for socialism or nationalism on the part of concerted interests, but exclusively to the broad range of the vital social interests affected by the expanding market mechanism.
>
> (1944: 151–52)

In this respect, the origins of economic fascism do indeed lie in the shift away from liberalism but not because fascism is a socialist ideology. Unregulated markets require regulation not just because they are hostile to wage-earners or lead to the expropriation of the *rentier* class, but because they harm the interests of monopolistic producers who seek protection from the state to

defend their market position and maintain access to resources. If the interlocking structure of national economies cannot be controlled or at least regulated by the state, it is argued, they are likely to succumb more easily to crisis tendencies in one or more sector, with potentially disastrous consequences for the wider economy. This is especially relevant to the labour market, which requires regulation (and, in some cases, regimentation) to preserve an unstable but financially profitable system of monopolies.

Unregulated capitalism is based on the twin assumptions of utility maximization and rational adaptation to market conditions, although many economists now accept that decision making may be based on *bounded* rationality (Simon 1955). Taking into account the mutual inconsistency of human cognition and the absence of complete information, the classical ideal of *homo oeconomicus* has been challenged by the more realistic view that agents 'satisfice', making decisions more as 'intuitive statisticians' than utility-maximizers (Salehnejad 2007: 70–71). This reality would not, of course, have been lost on J. S. Mill, who not only acknowledged the fallibility of human reasoning, but also recognized that utility can be maximized in practice precisely by *not* attempting to maximize utility. Yet as Gray (1998) argues, neoliberals cling to the orthodox view that, faced with a choice between an *embedded* economy responsive to local conditions and unregulated capitalism, communities will opt for free trade – as if the plurality of capitalisms which emerged in the twentieth century must inevitably converge around the laissez-faire premises of the Anglo-American model. 'The idea that the free market economy is a self-stabilizing system is archaic', he concludes, 'a curious relic of Enlightenment rationalism' (1998: 198).

Unregulated market capitalism is formally rational in a positive and negative sense: on the one hand it is (hypothetically) free from the constraints of convention and parochial interests; on the other, it is purely instrumental in what it seeks to achieve (i.e. private accumulation), regardless of competing criteria of rationality. Recognizing the limits of rational choice and self-regulating markets, Polanyi (1944) highlighted the paradox that the development of capitalism since the nineteenth century has been characterized by a 'double movement': the attempt to impose a self-regulating market based on the commodification of all social and natural resources (including 'fictitious' commodities like land, labour and money) inadvertently created a protectionist 'counter-impulse' supported at different moments by both capitalist and non-capitalist interests concerned with protecting life and property from the degradation of unconstrained *laissez-faire*. Polanyi recognized, as many contemporary thinkers are reluctant to do, that 'there is no such thing as a disembedded and fully autonomous economy; all market economies are constrained or shaped by non-market institutions and non-market values' (Block 2005: 6). This led him to conclude that market economies depend on a progressive expansion and development of state power, for without state intervention the social foundations of the economy are impaired. Capitalism can only avoid the degenerative tendencies of self-equilibrating markets which

induce a race to the bottom and undermine the autonomous fabric of civil society by re-embedding the market in a durable institutional framework.

Polanyi thus recognized that to defend autonomous ways of life humans attempt – not always successfully – to moderate the impact of the market through countervailing strategies which subvert the strict formal rationality of commodity-determined societies based on an abstract exchange of equivalents: for wage labourers, such strategies include promoting *horizontal* solidarity between proletarianized workers through trade unions; for farmers, a key strategy is to seek protective subsidies or tariffs to neutralize the effect of imports; and, for capitalists, typical strategies include cartelization or cooperating with the state in the penetration of new markets. In all three cases, groups seek to mitigate the self-equilibrating force of the market by re-embedding exchange in a network of social and institutional structures which absorb market turbulence and moderate the negative effects of rapid economic change. As a result, the state is drawn into market regulation at three levels: monetary policy, labour policy and environmental policy, which place constraints on the activities of capitalists, but without which market liberalism could not function. This extends to the ideological management of popular expectations: as Aglietta argues, the 'capitalist dynamic tears apart [the] social ethos which forms the substance of an older civil society'. To manage the contradictions arising in this system, he notes, 'new social norms must be centrally instituted, and these take on a state form. The state thus develops by penetrating civil society and profoundly restructuring it' (1979: 32).

Yet the development of capitalism did not take place in a geopolitical vacuum: as we saw in Chapter 5, liberalism was itself contingent on imperialism and war as means by which capitalist economies could expand beyond the confines of the nation-state – a process repeated in the United States in the so-called 'Progressive Era' (1900–1920) which witnessed the expansion of US imperial rule in Cuba, Panama and the Philippines and Theodore Roosevelt's 'war-preparedness' movement (Pearlman 1984; Kramer 2006).[3] Although commercial interests in the Atlantic sea-faring nations had established trading colonies in the seventeenth century, and although European colonial settlement in the Americas and Australasia was an established reality, the dramatic acceleration of imperialism in the closing decades of the nineteenth century was caused by a confluence of economic and political factors which transformed the nature of capitalism itself. These factors must be understood before we can examine the transition to managed capitalism as a strategic response to the collapse of the self-regulating market.

For Polanyi, the rapid expansion of imperialism in the late nineteenth century was an unintended consequence of the depression of the 1870s, which shook 'confidence in economic self-healing' (1944: 223). At the centre of this process was the creation of a central banking system to manage the contradiction between money as a *commodity* and money as a *means of payment*, which prevented a separation of politics and economics within the sovereign

state by ensuring that decisions on currency management remained subject to political influence. From the 1870s onwards, the role of central banks as mediating institutional structures between economy and society increased, because fully 'monetarized communities could not have stood the ruinous effects of abrupt changes in the price level necessitated by the maintenance of stable exchange rates unless the shock was cushioned by the means of an independent central banking policy' (ibid.: 207–08). Polanyi's argument correlates closely with Lenin's analysis of imperialism, although the latter places more emphasis on the concentration of capital as a reason for the development of postliberal capitalism. Whereas Polanyi saw imperialism as a logical result of the 'refusal of countries to trade with one another indiscriminately, and their aiming instead at the acquisition of overseas and exotic markets' (ibid.: 224), Lenin focused on the way banks provide capital to sustain corporate expansion, leading to the creation of trusts which contribute to a 'coalescence of bank and industrial capital', against which small producers are unable to compete (1917: 44). This results in the expansion of 'finance capital', which gradually acquires its own autonomous interests in the economy (cf. Hilferding 1910). As a hyper-profitable enterprise, finance capital generates huge surpluses which require investment in new markets to maximize returns: 'Under the old capitalism,' argues Lenin, 'when free competition prevailed, the export of *goods* was the most typical feature. Under modern capitalism, when monopolies prevail, the export of *capital* has become the typical feature' (1917: 62). This explains the urgency with which European corporations lobbied their governments to support imperialism as an extractive form of capital accumulation which not only contradicts the basic premises of classical political economy by relegitimizing oligopolistic (and finally monopolistic) commercial practices, but places huge financial advantages in the hands of the imperial nations by exploiting the vast asymmetries of economic development between industrial and pre-industrial nations (Semmel 1993; cf. Kiernan 1980).

The development of monopolistic capitalism in the industrialized nations established a pattern in the colonies themselves: global trade expands, but imperialism divides the world into spheres of influence dominated by rival powers who subvert the discipline of the market while eliminating negative externalities. This made imperialism a *necessary feature of the expanding capitalist system*, a fact recognized by Weber who – in spite of his liberal convictions – believed that Germany could only achieve its potential if the country's producers were allowed greater access to colonial markets (Mommsen 1984).[4] Although free trade collapsed in 1914, this did not diminish the desire of elites in Germany, Italy and Japan to challenge the supremacy of Britain and France and win their 'place in the sun'. This, argues Ahmad, allows us to posit a direct link between imperialism and fascism, which proved 'very attractive for bourgeoisies in those countries which had become major industrial powers only during the Second Industrial Revolution, in the latter part of the 19th century, and had not acquired colonies . . . '. This is particularly

relevant in the case of Japan, 'the one Asian country that launched a full-scale colonizing project and where fascist ideology became such a powerful force' (2000b: 4). Fascist imperialism, he concludes, appealed to those nations which had '(a) acquired sufficient industrial means to genuinely start competing with the old colonial powers economically and militarily, but (b) had entered the competition for colonial possessions much too late' (ibid.).

Lenin's analysis of imperialism as the 'highest stage of capitalism' had a major impact on the development of Marxism, but the limitations of his critique must be noted before we can proceed with our analysis of economic fascism. Lenin correctly highlighted the collusion between corporate and state actors in the subversion of free trade in the penetration of colonial markets, but his theory of imperialism entails an economistic bias which has, in turn, contributed to a theoretically problematic concept of state capitalism. As Aglietta comments:

> Like the power of which it is the most global expression, imperialism is not a notion that can form the object of any explicit definition that originates from economic concepts. Imperialism can only be grasped on the basis of a fully developed theory of the state, capable of studying the significance of inter-state relations in all these mediations and showing that these express the most complex form of capitalist socialization.
>
> (1979: 30)

Although imperial states enforce the legal framework within which corporate actors operate, we can only understand imperialism in the context of inter-state rivalries, for the 'state form of institutionalization of social relations reinforces existing antagonisms and gives them the tremendous violence of a conflict of state powers' (ibid.: 31). With this qualification in mind, it is possible to conceptualize imperialism as a hegemonic system based on *international* division of labour, enabling corporate actors to transgress the legal-institutional limits of the bourgeois nation-state, without relinquishing their original national-economic context: empire is organized geographically, not as a monolithic system without borders (Agnew 2005; Radice 2005).

What Lenin defined as state capitalism was in fact the bureaucratic economy created in Germany in the First World War, an exceptional type of capitalism adapted to military needs. The theoretical question remains, however, whether it is possible to distinguish fascism as a totalitarian form of state capitalism – a system based on the supersession of the economic sphere by the political system and the elimination of the distribution-oriented contradiction between the productive forces and relations of production – or whether the concept of state capitalism is too static and all-embracing to explain how complex modes of regulation underpin capitalist accumulation regimes, both democratic and non-democratic. As Aglietta argues, there is a danger that the theory of state monopoly capitalism

> assumes as a starting point what might be produced as the result of a theory. The state is seen as an entity that is at once objective and subjective, devoid of internal contradiction, composing a single system together with the monopolies. This is the system's sole contradiction. The state must therefore be freed from the grip of monopolies so that the forces of production can also be liberated and a gradual transition to socialism can ensue.
>
> (1979: 26–27)

To characterize fascism as a seamless structure of domination based on a separation of ownership and control, and the separation of prices from movements in supply and demand, we not only risk blurring the distinction between capitalism and socialism, but also risk exhuming an outdated model of totalitarianism as a neo-absolutist system based on the total annihilation of individual initiative and rationality.

Although early critical theory was correct to identify the increasing role of the state in managing the capitalist economy, and although the theory of state capitalism reflects the pessimism of the Frankfurt theorists confronted by fascism, as Postone argues Pollock interprets the shift towards postliberal capitalism 'in terms of the constitution of a new form of social totality, one without an intrinsic structural contradiction, hence without an intrinsic historical dynamic from which the possibility of a new social formation could arise' (1993: 86). Because Pollock assumed that state-managed capitalism can resist the crisis tendencies of self-regulating markets by eroding spontaneous exchange, his pessimism is not just contingent but necessary, making it impossible for him to grasp in an immanent sense the socially contradictory and directionally dynamic character of capitalist social relations which are unable to constitute a 'stable unitary whole' (ibid.: 88).

The weakness of Pollock's argument stems from his use of ideal types, which result in a static characterization of postliberal capitalism. As Poulantzas (1974) argues, the fascist state has characteristics in common with the state under monopolistic capital: relative separation between the economy and political system combined with the relative autonomy of the state from the hegemonic class. Unlike the capitalist state in its monopolistic form, however, fascism intervenes in an *exceptional* way by defending unprofitable corporate interests at the price of economic rationality. This point was made by Neumann in 1942, whose analysis of economic fascism in Germany remains surprisingly relevant today:

> In the period of monopolization, the new auxiliary guarantee of property is no longer the contract but the *administrative act*, the form in which the state interferes. But because this is so, it is the form and content of the interventionist measure that now assumes supreme importance. Who is to interfere and on whose behalf becomes the most important question for modern society. The possession of the state machinery is thus the

> pivotal position around which everything else revolves. This is the only possible meaning of primacy of politics over economics. Shall the state crush monopolistic possessions, shall it restrict them for the sake of the masses, or shall it be used to strengthen the monopolistic position, to aid in the complete incorporation of all business activities into the network of industrial organizations? Shall the state become the weapon by which the masses will be made completely subservient to the policies of the industrial empires within it?
>
> (1942: 260; italics added).

Although Pollock is correct to argue that regulation of the market and restrictions on private ownership are insufficient in themselves to achieve a transition to socialism; and, although fascism introduces a specific collectivist dynamic in decision making, by blurring the distinction between capitalism and socialism, he obscures the link between social structure and economic organization. As Postone notes, by characterizing 'state capitalism as a class system, he considers its basic economic organization (in the broader sense) to be the same as that of socialism: central planning and the effective abolition of private property under conditions of developed industrial production.' More importantly, this 'implies that the difference between a class system and a classless society is not related to fundamental differences in their economic organization; rather, it is simply a function of the mode and goal of its administration' (Postone 1993: 100). Yet it is precisely this myth of a crisis-free economy based on the primacy of politics which underpins the attempt by fascists to 'freeze' capitalist social relations and defend corporate power in an administratively controlled system.

The assumption that fascism creates a nationalistic form of socialism, in which the social tensions arising from the collision of private interests are subsumed in a harmonious order, is misleading. The opposite, in fact, is the case: the private interests of individuals may be subsumed in the logic of etatist control; but to assume that the profit motive is eliminated under fascism is, as Pollock himself notes, to 'overlook the transformation of such a category as "profit" in modern society' (1941a: 205). While the profit motive may be subordinated to a productivist agenda (productive activity conducive to the goals of the regime is rewarded), no 'capitalistic government can or will dispense with the profit motive for two reasons. First, elimination of the profit motive would destroy the character of the entire system, and second, in many respects the profit motive remains an efficient incentive' (ibid.). This was particularly true in the regimented, neo-Darwinistic Nazi economy, where price controls forced producers to seek more ruthless methods for ensuring profitability (cf. Neumann 1942: 314–15). It is also false to assume that state intervention eliminates tensions between capitalists (whose goal is profit) and state managers (whose goal is to compensate for market failure). As Block notes, the main

> consequence [of regulation] is that many of the state actions that have served to strengthen capitalism have been opposed by large sections of the capitalist class because they are seen as threats to class privilege and as steps towards the Leviathan state.
>
> (1987: 86)

As we shall see, by supporting fascism industrial and financial elites attempted to increase their social power *through* the state while simultaneous preserving their functional autonomy *from* the state – even in Germany, where industry had to cooperate with the regime to the bitter end because it had become dependent on the state for contracts and because alternative channels of political representation had been destroyed (ibid.: 88–89).

Economic ideologies of fascism

In those countries where fascism was successful, economic policy did not follow an ideologically consistent course from the beginning of the movement to the end of the regime. Rather, what emerged was a mixture of pragmatism and doctrine, incorporating existing national-economic traditions in a new system of managed capitalism. In Spain, for example, the national-syndicalism of the Falange was combined with existing corporatist structures (*Comités Paritarios*) established under the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera, enabling corporate and state actors to supplant traditional forms of representation and 'resolve' the breakdown of order in Spanish society. In Germany, by contrast, Nazism was based on an incoherent mix of economic principles, some archaic, some anti-liberal, and some – such as Gregor Strasser's national collectivism – which alarmed the industrial establishment, which continued to seek representation through traditional parties of the right until leftists in the NSDAP had been defeated.[5] Economic ideology was poorly defined in the early years of German fascism, directed largely against the 'slavery of interest' and the myth of Jewish financial power, which Hitler combined with a vague determination to subordinate private ownership of the means of production to overall state control (Barkai 1990: 27).

Despite these differences, it is possible to reconstruct fascist economic ideology as a response to *abstraction*, predicated on a false ideological distinction between a 'healthy' productive capitalism (the production of concrete use values subordinated to national goals), and a chaotic, unproductive capitalism (the production of abstract exchange value). Fascism opposes the Marxian critique of the historical character of labour as a socially mediating activity, positing instead an idealized, post-historical conception of the national 'work community' based on class collaboration and the production of 'concrete' value. As we saw in Chapter 2, however, fascism is based on a fallacy present in romantic anti-capitalism, namely that the objectification of commodity-determined societies can be resolved by negating the

'parasitic' sphere of unregulated, spontaneous exchange through a fictive re-enchantment of industrial culture. On this view, the impersonal, disenchanted character of capitalism can be rectified by returning to a 'repersonalized', 're-enchanted' system of economic relations in which subjects are subsumed in the 'political body' of the nation (Vikor 1964).

Revisionist historians are correct to argue that fascism is not simply a backward-looking ideology: it contains both reactionary and modernizing tendencies, and cannot be reduced to a species of conservatism. Yet, in their unwillingness to discuss the links between capitalism and fascism, critics of the 'fascism as reaction' thesis inadvertently reiterate a hypostatized concept of 'regeneration' based on a futural restaging of history as myth. What is at stake here is not the modern/anti-modern nature of fascism, but the distinction between a traditional (wholesome) *community* and a modern (decadent) *society* to explain the appeal of regeneration for the beleaguered middle class – as if the structural origins of the crisis of liberalism could be resolved merely by turning away from the present and recreating an embryonic '*Ur*-community'. Despite its heuristic appeal, Tönnies' binary community/association – which Griffin (2007: 49) redeploys in his model of primordial modernism, is a historically empty device for delineating modern and premodern societies that is ultimately rooted in the tragic consciousness of philosophical anthropology.

The decline of the bourgeois individual in postliberal capitalism cannot be explained using the 'traditional community'/'decadent society' ideal-type which, in positing an abstract continuum from traditional to modern society, assumes a linear process of emancipation and detraditionalization inconsistent with the objectification of social relations and the homogenization of subjectivity in capitalist modernity – a process which acquires a new dynamic in the transition from liberal to postliberal capitalism. By assuming a unidirectional path towards individualism, the community/association binary fails to account for the alienation of social relations in postliberal capitalism, in which abstract labour functions as a social mediation *over and above* the immediate social relations between autonomous producers. Romantic anti-capitalism may reflect the powerlessness of the bourgeoisie 'trapped in the reified world which they created' (Lukács, cited in Frisby 1992: 97), but it is equally a moribund worldview based on a static, communalist vision of society. By treating alienation in purely subjective terms – as a spiritual malaise which can be overcome through a change in value-orientations – idealist historians fail to grasp the objective causes of anti-capitalism among non-proletarian groups which Fromm (1960) diagnosed as a 'fear of freedom'. As O'Neill argues, once

> economic recession betrays the dream of independence, self-sufficiency becomes an emotional liability and induces despair and purposelessness. With nowhere immediately to turn, and with their confidence eroded, the

> tendency is to seek security . . . , to fear the very 'freedom' they have been concerned to maintain.
>
> (1993: 6)

The populist appeal of fascism lies less in regenerationist myth than in the tendency of marginalized groups to reject bourgeois individualism and borrow from socialist ideology *without* relinquishing an underlying identification with bourgeois hegemony (Poulantzas 1974: 240; 252). This not only helps to explain middle class extremism, but highlights the syncretic nature of fascism as a means for combining contradictory social forces in a single ideological system.

Historians also stress the importance of corporatism as a distinctive fascist response to political regulation of the market. Theorists disagree about the unity and utility of corporatism as a social-scientific concept (Jordan 1983), but it is clear that corporate-style political organizations operate by restricting competition within and between their constituent elements in the interests of unity and stability. Corporatism, argues Schmitter, is a

> system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organised into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognised or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supports.
>
> (1979: 10)

Williamson (1985: 8–9) identifies four features of corporatist ideologies: (i) the presence of a dominant state willing to intervene to 'establish and maintain a particular social and economic order'; (ii) the limitation of democracy; (iii) the use of state control to manage tensions arising from private ownership of the means of production and wage labour; and (iv) the use of organized interest representation. The ideological orientation of corporatism is typically anti-liberal rather than anti-capitalist, but corporatists also oppose Marxian socialism which threatens private property. Relations between capital and labour should not be a trial of strength, but should be regulated via the 'consciously exercised authority' of the state and state-licensed intermediaries (ibid. 39).

There is a tendency in traditional studies to present fascist corporatism in utopian terms. 'Corporatism in the fascist sense,' argues O'Sullivan, is 'ultimately intelligible only with the all-embracing vision of an organic, spiritually unified and morally regenerated society' (1983: 132). As an attempt to overcome the fragmentation of liberal capitalism, he insists, fascist corporatism offers a 'third way' between capitalism and socialism, a *dirigiste*

economic order based on 'mutual self-sacrifice in the national interest,' allowing subjects a 'release from the petty, egoistic concerns of everyday life and an opportunity for total devotion to the nation and the leader' (ibid.). Yet such definitions fail to resolve the underlying theoretical issue, namely the extent to which state-licensed intermediaries increase or decrease the power of the state over the economy. In formal ideological terms, fascism is linked to the idea of balancing economic interests: attempts were made to impose a regulatory framework in Spain, Italy, Germany, Portugal and elsewhere. But does corporatism in its fascist form reduce the power of private cartels through state regulation, or does it not in fact *delegate* governmental authority to cartels, thereby reinforcing property rights and increasing the influence of business over state policy? Posing the question in this form problematizes the idea of corporatism as a 'third way' ideology, redirecting the investigation away from economic romanticism in order to consider the balance of power between corporate and state actors in the reorganization of capitalism.

In its most abstract sense, a corporation is defined as a group of individuals acting as one body with a single purpose and collective identity. Unlike the medieval guild state or the special-status corporations in the European trading colonies (British East India, the Dutch East Indies, etc.), the modern corporation is the outcome of two systemic features of capitalist modernity: the regulation of competition between fractions of capital, and the rationalization and concentration of resources in a centralized managerial structure. The origins of modern corporatism lie in the development of postliberal capitalism in Europe and America prior to 1914, based on the emergence of self-regulating monopolies which combined to form cartels in order to control prices and markets. The shift away from liberalism in Continental Europe may be contrasted with the more cautious corporatization of politics in America, where corporatism was employed as a regulation strategy to bolster the legitimacy of capitalists by limiting the power of corporate management and transferring part of this authority to political society (Drucker 1946; McQuaid 1978; Radosh 1972). Yet both forms of postliberal capitalism have their immediate precedent in the *precorporatist* 'war collectivism' introduced by governments on both sides of the Atlantic in the First World War, as political leaders imposed an anti-liberal organizational framework on their national economies. As Adler notes in the case of Italy:

> Despite the absence of a fully articulated corporatist ideology and institutional framework . . . one can identify in the wartime state structural trends which prefigured, and historical experiences which preconditioned, subsequent corporatist development. This is certainly not to suggest that 'state corporatism' was the only conceivable outcome of the war, but merely that an alternative regime form was in the making, available for future appropriation and development should the reconstituted liberal regime fail to resolve its own inherent weaknesses, much less deal

> with the manifold conjunctural problems related to postwar reconstruction.
>
> (1995: 90–91)

The First World War demonstrated to plutocratic elites the possibility of moving from a

> largely free-market capitalism to a new order marked by strong government, and extensive and pervasive government intervention and planning, for the purpose of providing a network of subsidies and monopolistic privileges to business, and especially to large business interests.
>
> (Rothbard 1972: 66)

War collectivism created a precedent for economic fascism, though unlike mercantilism in its original form – which was linked to the defence of ruling elites – the 'New Mercantilism' required popular legitimation, which liberals in the United States and fascists in Europe sought by advancing the idea of a harmonious 'middle-way' between laissez-faire capitalism and Marxian socialism.

In contrast with America, where Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration (NRA) legalized the break-up of the economy into semi-autonomous 'associations' giving labour a vaguely worded right to organize, fascist corporatism was characterized by a transition from autonomous cartels based on voluntary participation to *state-regulated compulsory cartelization*, which reduced the power of organized labour while providing an effective lobbying forum for business interests (Williamson 1985: 96–99; Sarti 1971; Gao 2001). In Germany, where corporatism was restricted to agriculture (Barkai 1990), this issue was less important, particularly given the greater level of arbitrary economic controls exercised by the state after 1936. But even here private enterprise remained a central pillar of the 'crisis-free economy', justified by a need to maintain investment and employment. As one Nazi ideologist argued, a controlled economy is preferable to liberalization, which offers only short-term benefits: what is the point of freedom for the entrepreneur

> if the possibility of investing according to his own judgement exists in reality only during the short period of an occasional revival, which is succeeded every few years by a crisis during which it is impossible for him to make any investments at all?
>
> (Utermann 1941: 22–23)

To make sense of corporatism as a system for mediating capital and labour interests, it is important to understand that this ideological innovation was not a full-scale assault on capitalism or competitive individualism, but a

restructuring of economy and society on postdemocratic lines. For this reason, Long defines economic fascism as a type of plutocratic oligarchism based on a 'partnership between the official state apparatus and the nominally private beneficiaries of state power' (2005: 2), a system of economic domination which erodes enterprise and initiative through vertical coordination and cartelization. Despite archaic overtones, fascist economic ideology is based on a productivist vision of postliberal capitalism where (a) the labour resources of the nation are mobilized through a fusion of political and corporate power, (b) decision-making power is delegated to private institutions supervised by state actors, and (c) collective power and advantage are placed before personal gain. This, argues Pollock, 'is the real meaning of the ideology *Gemeinnutz geht vor Eigennutz* [mutual gain before personal gain]. The interest of the ruling group as a whole is decisive, not the individual interests of those who form the group' (Pollock 1941a: 207). This ideology was particularly pronounced in Germany where there existed a strong intellectual tradition of state economy dating back to Fichte's theory of the closed 'nationalist-etatist state' (Barkai 1990: 105); but the subordination of private gain to mutual interest was also popular in Italy, where the state insisted that business

> should be subject to the regulation, control, and discipline of the State which shelters and protects, defends and encourages it; it must not be allowed to make the personal fortune of the entrepreneur unless the goal he seeks coincides with the requirements and aims of the State.
>
> (Tassarini 1938: 20)

The political economy of fascism

The relative autonomy of the state in capitalist society derives from the capacity of state actors to respond to competing pressures and honour obligations without relinquishing overall control over their own internal operations or their commitment to strategic goals, and as Poulantzas (1974) argues there are no historical forms of capitalism in which the state does not play a role. As we saw in Chapter 4, however, the capacity of the state to achieve its aims is determined in the final analysis by the relationship between those entrusted with executive power of decision and the objective sovereign power of political society in a broader sociological sense. Ruling groups can be powerful not just in their own right but by satisfying and advancing the interests of others (Lukes 2005). When their aims correspond, as in Italy in the 1920s, or Spain in the 1940s, the stabilization of fascist rule is possible. But where the sovereign aims of rulers exceed the interests of established elites or become dysfunctional to accumulation, then – as in Germany – stabilization is impossible. As Mason argues, the primacy of politics in the Third Reich cannot be explained simply by pointing to the totalitarian nature of the Hitler state. To understand the logic of fascist political economy in Germany, we need to recognize that

> far-reaching changes *must* have taken place both in the economy and the society before it became possible for the National Socialist state to assume a fully independent role, for the 'primacy of politics' to assert itself.
>
> (1968: 54)

The task for economic historians is to measure and compare the development of fascist political economy in countries as distinct as Germany, Spain, Italy and Japan without losing sight of the specificity of each particular case. Yet as Woolf (1968) notes, the basic problem for any discussion of the 'fascist economy' is the applicability of the category itself: did a fascist economic system exist, and if so, what impact did it have on the existing economic structure of the society in question? The first thing to note is that fascism was successful in a range of countries at different stages of development: as the world's third largest industrial economy in 1913, Germany cannot easily be compared with Portugal or Spain without resorting to trivialization, particularly if we compare the influence of finance capital in Germany, where the large banks played a critical role in the formation of joint-stock enterprises, with the dependence of southern European states on foreign capital. As Giner argues, the

> defeat of the industrial revolution in some parts (Portugal, Greece) and its circumscribed success in others (Italy, Spain) meant that, initially, capitalism confined itself for a long time afterwards to the commercial and the property spheres. . . . the societies of the south had ceased to be precapitalist but their new-found capitalism became stunted.
>
> (1982: 178–79)

Yet two factors unite the distinctive historical experience of Spain, Portugal, Italy, Germany and Japan: on the one hand, industrialization created a 'dualistic' economy, divided between an advanced industrial sector with high wages and high productivity and a backward traditional sector with low wages and low productivity, which 'tended to accentuate the crowding of labour in the traditional industrial and commercial sectors' (Woolf 1968: 122); on the other hand, in all cases the state played a greater role in promoting industrialization than had been the case in England, increasing a structural tendency towards monopolization and cartelization. This tendency was, as we have seen, exacerbated by the war and the discrepancies which re-emerged between domestic and international prices in the 1920s as governments attempted to readjust to market discipline. As Woolf notes, the 'greater the importance of foreign trade in the country's economy, the more vulnerable [was] the economy to cyclical movements of world trade'. This, he argues, was particularly serious because the attempt to return to the gold standard in the 1920s diminished the 'control of governments over the direction of the economy, by making them acutely sensitive to fluctuations in the foreign value of the national currency . . . ' (ibid.: 125).

Examining the logic of fascist economic policy in the interwar period, a pattern quickly emerges: as an alternative to economic liberalism, fascist economic ideology was for all practical purposes irrelevant *until* the economic crisis of 1929–31, after which point counter-cyclical policies were adopted by democratic and non-democratic governments in Europe, America and Asia. Despite high unemployment, both democratic and non-democratic governments remained committed to deflationary policies in the hope of achieving macroeconomic stability, a policy which was only abandoned after the crisis of 1929 led to a catastrophic slump in industrial production. The problem for fascist governments was the difficulty of solving unemployment in precisely those backward sectors of the economy (small business, artisanal production) which provided a well-spring of support for the regime among lower-middle class strata, but where there was no scope for rationalization. This, argues Woolf, highlights a key contradiction in fascist ideology, namely the tension between its archaic and modernizing potential:

> In the industrial sphere the fascist regimes found themselves faced by the indisputable fact that large units of production were capable of greater expansion and were more competitive than small units. Moreover, the existence of large private industrial complexes could only be challenged by massive direct state intervention in the economy, and then at the risk of considerable upheaval and loss of skilled management personnel. Even then, the close connections between the commercial banks and the industrial complexes in Italy and Japan (though less so in Germany after the bank collapse of 1931) would have made it difficult effectively to combat the predominating influence of the complexes.
>
> (1968: 129)

Unlike in France, where the banking crisis was less severe, and where finance capital 'seemed to continue only a very slow upward movement' in the interwar period (Bouvier 1984: 61), fascist economic policy in the 1930s represents a shift away from the deflationary policies pursued by the industrialized nations in the 1920s.[6] Yet, as Woolf makes clear,

> despite the sporadic protests of the fascist left wings against big capital and absentee landowners, the regimes rapidly abandoned any attempt radically to change the existing structure of economic power, and endeavoured instead to turn this structure to the service of their politically motivated aims.
>
> (1968: 129)

This phenomenon can be identified in the Italian case. Despite the early radicalism of the Fascist Programme of 1919 and the creation of a corporatist state in 1926, Italy remained a market economy until the early 1930s when protectionist measures were extended throughout the economy, including

import controls, price controls, controls on the import and export of gold, and control over the value of the lira (Miller 1938: 73):

> It was behind this wall of insulation that the corporate state operated. In large part protectionism and its consequences set the terms of reference of the corporate state's operation – adjusting to recession, restructuring industry and agriculture, trying to develop import substitutes and – most prominently – allocating the share of the burden of recession and restructuring. This is not to argue that the intervention under corporatism was all the result of the drive for economic insulation. For one thing the state had always played an active economic role from Cavour onwards; the state had been a key factor in economic development under the liberal regime, where there had been an absence of a substantial entrepreneurial class. Additionally, the Italian economy consisted of a relatively small number of concentrated, powerful economic entities who developed close links with the state. The experience of the war helped to strengthen these relationships between the state and private entities.
>
> (Williamson 1985: 86)

The main concern of the state was to increase its level of control in order to manage the crisis, but its failure to achieve *de facto* control over the economy can be explained by its relative timidity towards the business class. Corporations were entrusted to carry out an array of regulatory functions, including fixing salaries and subsidizing initiatives to improve production; but as Williamson notes, their real function was to 'act as a legal showpiece; the regulatory functions were given little credence. . . . Instead, most of the corporations acted as arenas to lobby with numerous resolutions being passed, import substitutions being the favourite theme' (ibid.: 91).

The fate of corporatism in Italy is well documented, and suggests a triumph of institutional form over political-economic substance. As Adler comments, for radical syndicalist elements in the regime, the results of the experiment were disappointing in an ideological and economic sense: 'Measured against the conception of *corporatism integral et pur*,' he argues, 'Fascism was found wanting. Classes in the old sense – that is hierarchy based primarily on property – had not been abolished but were actually legalized in the juridical recognition of separate and distinct syndicates representing capital and labor' (1995: 358). The weakness of corporatism clearly stemmed from the resistance of employers, but the experiment was also undermined by the institutional rivalry of the traditional state bureaucracy, which resisted the challenge of this parallel institutional framework to its own administrative authority (ibid.: 362).

Gregor (1976) interprets the growth of state enterprises in Italy in the 1930s as further evidence of the left-modernizing nature of the Fascist regime, which, he claims, was committed to a single goal: rapid economic growth based on a programme of state-led modernization. As Cohen argues,

however, Italian nationalization policy was in fact a pragmatic *ad hoc* reaction to a severe financial crisis:

> The state had essentially two choices. It could sit by and watch as the system collapsed with the hope that the private sector could dig itself out of the rubble and rebuild. In the very long run, such restraint might have produced a robust and invigorated private sector. In spite of the strong interventionist tradition of the state, this option was considered quite seriously by policy makers. It was decided, however, that the short-run economic and political costs were too great and, after an unsuccessful attempt to use the *Istituto di Liquidiazioni* for salvage purposes, first IMI [*Istituto Mobilare Italiana*] then IRI [*Istituto di Recostruzione Italiano*] was created to handle the biggest rescue operation in the country's history.
>
> (1988: 106)

In other words, these temporary emergency institutions (which remained independent of the National Council of Corporations) were a response to market turbulence rather than programmatic design. If the regime's concern *had* been to accelerate growth, it would not have introduced market-distorting measures like compulsory cartelization and protectionism. Cardoza also rejects the description of Italian fascism as a developmental dictatorship, which distorts the role of the propertied classes and capital in general: 'The regime's responsiveness to the immediate interests of strategic industrial and agrarian groups,' he suggests,

> often came at the expense of long-term developmental needs of the economy. Wage and tariff policies that defended established profits and eased balance-of-payments difficulties served to accentuate the perennial inadequacy of the domestic market by reducing incomes and compressing consumer demand.
>
> (1982: 453)

By accepting fascist ideology at face value, Gregor exaggerates a false identity between the ideological declarations and economic actions of the regime. While he is justified in stressing the role of the state in managing the Italian economy and organizing welfare, one of the main aims of the syndicalist institutions created in 1926–27 was to depress wages as part of the regime's wider policy of currency revaluation. This was not simply a consequence of government intentions, however, but of the capacity of employers to use the corporatist system to extract wage reductions (Williamson 1985: 96–97; Cohen 1988). The introduction of price controls in the 1930s can also be seen as a *political* rather than ideological response to scarcity in sectors of the economy, brought about in part by the impact of the disastrous colonial war in Ethiopia. As one observer noted in the 1930s, despite the vague claims

of regime ideologists and economists concerning 'just prices', it is 'difficult to discover a clear-cut philosophy on the formation of prices in the corporative state' (Miller 1938: 76). 'Although the professors of economic theory in Italy are now called professors of corporate economy,' he notes, 'they have failed to develop a consistent theory of prices in the corporate state' (ibid.: 80).

The ideological compatibility between state and industry in Italy remains controversial, not least because industry achieved a more secure position in Italian society after 1945 than it possessed in the Giolitti period when employers were under pressure to cooperate with a reformist agenda. With Mussolini's accession to power, the balance between capital and labour shifted in favour of the latter, as the new government tried to avoid alienating the business lobby.[7] As Williamson notes, despite 'limited efforts to improve the conditions of labour, which were squeezed dry for their propaganda value, Italian corporatism clearly had as a principle objective controlling and disciplining labour' (1985: 99). However, he cautions, while labour was indeed subject to increased discipline and while private ownership was secure under Mussolini, employers feared that the syndicalist system could always potentially be used to reduce the autonomy of capital itself, particularly after 1932 when the economic justification for increased regulation allowed the regime greater freedom to intervene. This point is also made by Sarti who, while emphasizing the mutuality of interests between corporate and state actors, insists that industrialists never took Mussolini's conservatism for granted. After an initial adjustment period, the Matteotti crisis of 1924 exposed the vulnerability of northern industrialists to fascist intimidation, as the regime encouraged a wave of strikes in response to criticism from the industrial lobby over the actions of the regime (Sarti 1971: 66–67). The regime expected solidarity from the business establishment, and could use the threat of intimidation to ensure cooperation. For their part, industrialists realized that the collapse of Mussolini's regime could mean a return to industrial conflict, and for this reason cooperated with the syndical laws of 1926 and 1934 which created compulsory state-sponsored cartels and which gave the *Condeferazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana* (the main employers' organization) the 'administrative autonomy of a private organization and the juridical authority of a public institution' (ibid.: 76). But while industrialists had to recognize the legitimacy of the new order, they also acquired a formal role in the administration of the fascist state, thus increasing private control over the direction of public policy (ibid.: 79).

It is in Germany that the contradictory relationship between rationalization, cartelization and fascism can be seen most clearly. The German example also highlights the nuanced relationship between economic interest and ideological orientation within German industry during the crisis, which exposed the antagonism between supporters of free trade and supporters of 'capitalism in one country'.[8] German state governments had traditionally been expected to promote growth within their territories (Henderson 1975: 71), and banks had always played a direct role in the formation of cartels. The

result was a highly concentrated economy based on a network of corporate interlocks, which reduced competition but yielded significant economies of scale – a pattern repeated in the financial sector which was dominated by the big four 'D-Banks' (ibid.: 183).[9] Also significant was the speed of German industrialization, which transformed the Reich from a patchwork of dynastic entities into a unified state, although industrialization did not erode the power of the agrarian oligarchy in the Prussian military and state bureaucracy.

The economic logic of German fascism is linked to the restrictions placed on German imperialism at Versailles, which ended the Reich's expansionist economic and foreign policy, and the restrictions placed on Germany by reparations and subsequent attempts at debt rescheduling (the Dawes Plan, followed by the Young Plan).[10] In an attempt to appeal to patriotic opinion, Hitler called for the creation of a 'Greater Germany', an inflated version of the Bismarckian Reich encompassing all the German-speaking lands of central Europe either through sovereign political control, or through the creation of dependent client economies incorporating the Baltic and Danubian lands in a German-dominated economic space. This expansionist policy implied the end of existing financial development programmes organized by the League of Nations, which would have been impossible without overturning the Paris treaties that tied east-central Europe to Britain and France in a network of security guarantees. The leaders of Germany's industrial and agricultural cartels were also unable to achieve their commercial ambitions without simultaneously reducing the power of organized labour, which was impossible as long as workers' interests were represented in the Reichstag and by independent trade unions, and as long as rationalization continued to increase the share of fixed capital as a cost of production (Sohn-Rethel 1973: 25). As the leader of the German Labour Front (DAF) declared in 1934, the unregulated market had 'reached a barrier which it could not overcome by its own means. The risk of conquering new economic territory was so great that it could not be taken by private capital' (Robert Ley, cited in Marcuse 1942: 74). This problem was particularly acute for steel and mining industries (in contrast with the electrical and chemical industries), although the economy as a whole was undermined by the effects of structural rigidification and class conflict (James 1986).

How, then, should we approach the fascist economy in Germany? For many historians, the answer is straightforward: a criminal regime 'hi-jacked' German capitalism for its own purposes, setting the Reich on a course of rearmament and war. In a simplistic sense, this statement is true, for the German economy was redirected towards war production and was led by a new elite who combined ideological fervour and abject criminality in a new and unique form, and who subsequently initiated a ruthless pursuit of wealth and power across occupied Europe (Aly 2005). But the primacy of politics in Germany after 1936 does little to explain why the structural development of the German economy in the 1920s led to a shift away from market liberalism

towards a dysfunctional mercantilist economy in which the commercial interests of the *least profitable* sections of industry and agriculture prevailed through a policy of 'disequilibrium and capitalist dysfunctionalism' (Sohn-Rethel 1973: 89). It also fails to explain the relationship between corporate financiers and industrialists linked to corporate giants such as IG Farben, without whose industrial capacity the Reich could not have embarked on total war. Like the industrialists in the Harzburg Front (Thyssen, Krupp, etc.), the leaders of IG Farben concluded that both economic *and* political methods were required to ensure their survival and expansion.[11] The iron and steel producers in particular favoured a 'closed' economy based on military production, which promised to stem the decline of this sector relative to the chemical and electrical industries. But the conflict between the two sectors could only be resolved by forging a new platform based on a 'concentration of all the decisive elements of German monopoly capital'. Only then, adds Sohn-Rethel, could a 'government be formed which would represent the real power in Germany and which could put the necessary impetus and mobilization of resources behind the nation's overdue imperialist expansion' (ibid.: 46–47). As Neumann illustrates, the development of capitalism in Germany after 1933 must be seen in the context of the tendential (yet incomplete) cartelization of German business before 1933, following the failure of Brüning's attempts to counter price-fixing and anti-competitive practices. The significance of Hitler's first cartel decree of July 1933 was to destroy any capacity the state had to prevent cartels from undermining competitors who tried to reduce prices – the destruction of fair competition 'by private power with the sanction of the state' (1942: 264). This was following by a second decree instituting compulsory cartelization, giving large employers new powers which would not have been possible in a democratic parliamentary system.

Guerin (1938: 205) argues that the industrialists who supported Hitler in the March 1933 election quickly vetoed a radical reorganization of property relations, leading Hitler to remove Otto Wagener as head of the economic section of the NSDAP. Wagener had been committed to a neocorporatist *Ständesstaat*, something large employers viewed with suspicion. Hitler brokered a compromise between the industrial lobby (which refused to give up its existing forum of corporate interest representation), and the 'plebeians' in the NSDAP (who refused to give up the populist myth of 'national socialism'). In the end, Schacht imposed a solution based on the amalgamation of all the employers' organizations into one, thus preserving the power base of the *Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie* (RdI), bringing the fascist 'revolution' to an abrupt end. For Guerin, the radicalization of the regime in the late 1930s is explained less by ideology than by the subordination of ideology to the functional needs of heavy industry whose need for profits led the Reich towards a massive programme of rearmament. To a large extent, German fascism made a *virtue of necessity*, responding to the needs of monopoly capital but only by 'restricting each individual capitalist's freedom

of movement, and by sacrificing the other branches of the economy on the altar of heavy industry' (ibid.).

If Guerin argues that the Nazi leadership sacrificed corporatism 'on the altar' of big business, from a liberal perspective, Harold James (1986: 359) emphasizes the limits of middle class radicalism after Hitler's appointment. In 1933, many of the party's policies were still aimed at the *Mittelstand*, whose leaders in the party assumed they could force the pace of events by attacking the industrial lobby and Jewish department stores. These radicals were disappointed by the caution of the regime, as were SA leaders whose massive organization was disbanded at the behest of the Reichswehr in 1934. As James notes, stabilizing the economy 'involved the exclusion of party members from policy-making: the Reich Economics Ministry was to be left in charge here' (ibid.: 362), though NSDAP officials did maintain a level of influence over the 'party sector' of the Nazi economy by assuming positions of command within the industrial combine under Goering's control (cf. Neumann 1942: 301–05). Some NSDAP officials retained positions of influence, but their presence was symbolic – until 1936 when Schacht's own isolation led to his own downfall as the government entered a new period of radicalization based on a 'readjustment of the relationship of authority between the private economy and the state' (ibid.: 366).

Guerin also highlights the use of intervention in the Nazi state: to defend industry and reduce unemployment, the new regime provided temporary relief from the economic pressure of the market by refloating failing companies rather than allow them to fold or subject them to nationalization. One consequence of this was the emergence of 'mixed' enterprises, public–private partnerships where the state assumed responsibility for losses incurred by dysfunctional businesses. In such situations, argues Guerin, the state

> furnishes its share of the capital, guarantees a return on the private investment, and alone stands all the risks in the hope that some day, when a profitable return from these enterprises is assured, it can hand them back to private initiative.
>
> (1938: 216)

Although this policy might appear to be indistinguishable from nationalization, the difference between the two strategies lies in the preservation of private equity and management based on the assumption of full reprivatization under normal economic conditions.[12]

The limits of Guerin's analysis lie not in his assessment of complicity between the captains of heavy industry in the RdI and NSDAP before and after 1933 (though he does not distinguish adequately between employers sympathetic to the Harzburg Front and employers sympathetic to Brüning[13]), but in his failure to accept that the turn to fascism was indicative of the total collapse of the democratic party system between 1929 and 1933 and the disintegration of civil society, which called for a political solution to the crisis

(Mason 1968), rather than a temporary reconciliation of tensions between competing fractions of capital or the introduction of public works to reduce unemployment. As Barkai argues, the idea of introducing public works financed by deficit spending was, in itself, hardly original: 'The theoretical foundations for such a policy were established in previous years, and the Papen and Schleicher governments had begun to prepare practical plans in this spirit' (1990: 161). What distinguished Nazi policy was not its originality, or the fact that rearmament was disguised as work-creation – as Tooze (2006: 63) notes, military production accounted for 47 per cent of employment growth in 1934 and 41.6 per cent in 1935 – but the fact that the regime 'implemented them with a degree of decisiveness and to an extent that exceeded all forecasts' (Barkai 1990: 161). As we saw in Chapter 4, the shift from Papen and Schleicher to Hitler introduced a *qualitatively new* form of sovereign power, as a result of which legal authority was superseded by a parallel 'prerogative state' which furiously channelled its energies into a range of competing projects requiring Hitler to act as a 'final arbiter' between his feuding plenipotentiaries (Broszat 1981; Mommsen 1991b). The 'conquest of unemployment' was no exception to this institutional chaos, as 'personal influence and authority did not necessarily suffice either to overpower stubborn economic and financial realities or to suppress political and bureaucratic rivalries that impeded successful implementation of the plans' (Silverman 1998: 70).

Guerin notes that public works schemes placed the German government in debt while creating 'fabulous profits' for Krupp and other magnates, and that the regime also used coercive means to ensure that the people's savings would be instrumentalized for the purposes of rearmament (1938: 223, 227). But what is not properly explained is the negative impact of rearmament and the regime's attempts at planning on the structure of the German economy once Goering assumed control of the economic administration. Whereas Schacht had presided over 'rearmament within limits' in an attempt to make Germany invulnerable to external pressure as quickly as possible (Tooze 2006: 207), Goering's ruthless ambition pointed in a different direction: as Sohn-Rethel argues, the rise of Goering's dictatorship was the 'most significant phase of the process in which the levers of economic command of industrial fascism passed out of the hands of the bourgeoisie into those of the fascist functionaries themselves' (1973: 81). What this yielded in practice was an artificially induced manufacturing boom based on the generation of absolute surplus value (i.e. value based on an increase in the quantity of labour and resources used rather than productivity gains or technological innovation), which benefited labour-intensive industries while undermining newer, more profitable concerns outside the arms economy (ibid.: 83).

Emphasizing the impact of radicalization, Mason argues that the integrity of the market in Germany was gradually eroded by political control, which undermined the unity of the industrial lobby and created serious economic distortions:

> By virtue of their position as monopolies and of the importance of their products for the war economy, firms maintained close and direct contacts with the machinery of state and the military; sometimes they even achieved through their personnel the equation of the interests of the state with those of their firms – leading managers were seconded to public agencies. But rearmament also meant that the *direct* relationships with the agencies distributing contracts became more important for most big firms than *collective* dealings with the state through the channels of the economic and industrial organisation. Once the problem of the allocation of raw materials and labour had become crucial, the traditional form of collaboration between industry and the state had become secondary. For all these reasons, which were inherent in the political and economic system, the capitalist economic structure largely disintegrated into its constituent components.
>
> (1968: 184–85)

In other words, the unprecedented militarization of a capitalist economy in peacetime laid the foundations for a new system of technocratic militarism, but *weakened* precisely those industries which had sought protection through economic fascism. Intensive rearmament – as the army's own economic exports had warned (James 1986: 385) – also created distortions in the economy resulting from a lack of foreign exchange, labour shortages, conflict between firms engaged in the arms drive and those in other sectors, and an absence of customers to sell surplus military hardware and replenish currency reserves, which threatened the viability of a postliberal economy based on state-led investment and state-induced demand. The overproduction of industrial commodities was a direct result of the introduction of price controls which, as Neumann (1942: 315) points out, prevented firms from responding rationally to a slackening of demand by increasing prices, forcing them to seek alternative methods for ensuring a ready supply of labour and raw materials – typically by exploiting personal connections within the state. This, he suggests, reveals the true function of price controls in a totalitarian economy, namely to prevent checks on the expansion of production:

> In preventing all prices from going up simultaneously [in Germany], the system of price regimentation that culminates in the price-freezing legislation equally prevents a general slump, which would be inevitable when the buying capacity fell short of the exorbitantly priced supply. Yet, price freezing does not and cannot hamper intrinsic changes in the price correlations. On the contrary, the restrictions imposed upon the arbitrary raising of prices compel the production agents to hunt for compensations both in the manufacturing set-up and in the cost elements of production. . . . . The market, instead of being abolished by regimentation, functions invisibly underground and maintains, within the framework of

> regimentation, legions of uncoordinated economic decisions that scorn planning and control.
>
> (Ibid.: 314–15)

Furthermore, as Mason notes, labour shortages revealed anew the 'old contradiction between the potential political power and the economic impotence of the working classes that had apparently been "solved" when the National Socialists destroyed the workers' organisations in 1933' (1968: 183). The gap between official ideology (a 'contented' workforce) and reality (militarization of the economy) 'reproduced the contradiction between the mass basis necessary to National Socialism and the unchanged structure of property relationships. Labour exploited its own growing scarcity and the government had to acquiesce in this' (ibid.). By 1938, there was no reserve army of the unemployed to discipline workers, and a wage-freeze was impossible in peacetime, even though the cost of wages as a proportion of national income did fall continuously throughout the 1930s from a highpoint of 58.1 per cent in 1931 to 51.8 per cent in 1939 (James 1986: 416).

Tooze argues that it is not unrealistic to speculate that the German economy would have recovered at roughly the same pace under a different government. More importantly, however, he insists that although rapid the recovery

> was not vastly superior to the recovery achieved in the United States under a very different policy mix. Nor, in terms of the rate of growth, was it superior to the rebound from the Weimar Republic's first severe recession over the winter of 1926–27 . . ..
>
> (2006: 65)

What is significant is the increase in state spending between 1933 and 1935, which was 70 per cent higher than in 1928, while private investment fell by 22 per cent (ibid.). Furthermore, imports declined rapidly as industry was encouraged to produce all necessary manufactured goods (ibid.: 107). These figures indicate the importance of the state in postliberal accumulation regimes, where, in the absence of market-led recovery, the state assumes a role as an 'engine of growth' centred on production for war. Also significant is the role of the state as an apparatus of coercion which concealed the discrepancy between propaganda and the reality of the German economy, which, by 1935, was still incapable of self-sustained growth despite years of direct and indirect government stimulus (Silverman 1998: 226).

Corporate liberalism in the United States

Wolfgang Schivelbusch highlights the parallel architectural modernity of 'postliberal monumentalism' in Europe and America, where neoclassicism

became indicative of the imposing power of the state over society under both democracy and totalitarianism. Just as scholars now reject 'simplistic equations of monumentalism and totalitarianism', he argues, it is now possible to 'look beyond the simplistic dichotomy of liberal democracy on the one hand and repressive dictatorship on the other' (2006: 9–10). Although direct comparisons between European fascism and American corporatism are problematic, the evidence suggests that one of the negative consequences of the Progressive Era was to legitimize a non-totalitarian form of economic fascism which undermined free market capitalism in the United States. In a country where democracy was entrenched, F. D. Roosevelt reintroduced wartime legislation in the crisis of March 1933, exploiting the closure of the banks to justify an expansion of state economic controls and the transfer of legislative sovereignty from the Congress to the executive. What became known as the 'New Deal' irreversibly changed the course of American politics.

But what exactly was the New Deal, and in what way can it be compared with fascism? The first point to note is that however authoritarian the governments of Wilson, Hoover and Roosevelt, the economic goals they pursued were broadly progressive in intent. Contrary to Goldberg's (2007) tirade against 'liberal fascism' among the American left, the aim of the first New Deal was to organize US industry and agriculture into semi-autonomous industrial associations, each designed to regulate investment and trade within a specific sector.[14] This innovation was consistent with corporatism in Italy which created cartels to regulate industry and commercial agriculture, but because the corporate system in the United States was not an integral part of the state it was not seen as anti-democratic (Radosh 1972: 167). However, while the US government was careful to avoid any public association between corporate liberalism and fascism, in private Roosevelt did not disguise his sympathy for the scope of policies followed by the Italian government (Schivelbusch 2006: 30). And, although still more keen to avoid negative associations with German fascism, the New Dealers around Roosevelt introduced populist 'back to the land' initiatives and extended public works schemes to reduce unemployment, a policy exemplified by infrastructural projects which rivalled those introduced in Germany and Italy.

As one legal historian argues, some of the leaders of the NRA (particularly General Johnson) were decidedly anti-parliamentarian in their views, but remained ideologically aloof from fascism. They disliked the inefficacy of Congress and lauded Roosevelt as a 'man of action'; and they were prepared to use authoritarian tactics to intimidate their opponents in the Supreme Court. But as pragmatists, argues Whitman, they 'never proclaimed the fundamental fascist premise that representative government was a dangerous thing because of its connection with class warfare' (1991: 769). Whitman is correct in a formal sense: as Higgs notes, 'the New Deal, especially at its beginning, manifested no coherent ideology' (1987: 172), and it is clear that fascist sympathizers were outnumbered by pragmatists in the NRA who

exploited the crisis to introduce reforms and concentrate decision-making power in the hands of a cartel of financiers and resource allocators. Realist analyses of the New Deal insist that this increase in state controls, which made ready use of propaganda and mobilization to enforce compliance with new legislation, was only a Keynesian response to recession, accelerating the nationalization of American politics (Weir and Skocpol 1985). Yet this explanation suggests a slight misreading of American economic history, for several reasons.

First, it assumes that the experiment in economic fascism in America was a purely temporary response to contingency, overlooking the genealogy of corporate liberalism in the Progressive Era, and the use of mass organizations and propaganda campaigns to mobilize public opinion against criticism of corporate power. During the Progressive Era, the aim of business was to direct public sentiment against socialism through organizations like the National Civic Federation, which worked to persuade workers and lower-middle class commercial interests of the value of corporate firms to national life (Weinstein 1969). Although conservative historians typically depict the Progressive Era reforms as a departure from old-fashioned capitalism, the real aim of corporate actors was to participate with the Federal government in framing legislation to regulate the activity of firms expanding outside individual state boundaries – not because regulation was seen as essential, but to counter 'state regulations that were either haphazard or, what is more important, far more responsive to more radical, genuinely progressive local communities' (Kolko 1964: 6). A similar logic governed the reforms introduced with the New Deal: sensing an irreversible tide of change away from unregulated capitalism, corporate elites sought to influence the reform process from the inside, which allowed them to manage the unification of corporate and state power *without* relinquishing their strategic influence.

A second reason for doubting conventional analyses is that many of the reforms introduced by the NRA had their precedent (as in Germany) in regulatory controls introduced during the First World War. Although initially temporary, these changes – like the technocrats entrusted to run the economy – outlasted the war itself:

> Historians have generally treated the economic planning of World War I as an isolated episode dictated by the requirements of the day and having little further significance. But, on the contrary, the war collectivism served as an inspiration and as a model for a mighty army of forces destined to forge the history of twentieth century America. For big business, the wartime economy was a model of what could be achieved in national coordination and cartelization, in stabilizing production, prices, and profits, in replacing old-fashioned competitive laissez-faire by a system that they could broadly control and that would harmonize the claims of various powerful economic groups.
>
> (Rothbard 1972: 93)

The war paved the way for the corporate statism of the NRA, which was administered by disciples of Bernard Baruch (leader of the War Industries Board) who tried to extend the system beyond its wartime *raison d'être*. Although the WIB was disbanded in 1918, the spirit of cartelization survived, resurfacing as official policy during the Depression.

Third, there are reasons to question Whitman's suggestion that the difference between economic fascism in Europe and America lies in the fact that Roosevelt was more concerned to find means to regulate competition *between* capitalists than in resolving conflict between capital and labour. While Roosevelt was anxious to balance the competing interests of rival fractions of capital, this argument is false on two grounds. On the one hand, it ignores the violence of labour struggles in America, particularly in the late 1870s and mid-1890s, and the use of co-optive means to undermine autonomous labour organizations (Isaac 2002; Shefter 1986).[15] On the other hand, it ignores the social function of corporatism as a means for balancing labour and capital interests. In the first New Deal (1933–34) Roosevelt had been concerned with regulatory controls on trade and distribution, setting prices through the National Industrial Recovery Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Act; in the Second New Deal (1935–38), however, the government went further and introduced the Labour Relations and Social Security Acts, which recognized the right to join trade unions and the statutory right to welfare. For many laissez-faire liberals these policies were anathema, and Roosevelt encountered bitter opposition to his proposals. Yet while historians often point to the gap between public support and business opposition to these changes as evidence of the left-wing orientation of the New Deal, as Radosh argues it is important to define what is meant by 'business': defenders of Roosevelt as the people's hero fail to distinguish between opposition to reform among small employers in the National Association of Manufacturers, and support for reform among corporate employers, who were in a position to pass on increased national insurance costs to the consumer and who would not be liable for an increase in income tax (1972: 158). Furthermore, he adds,

> industrial unionism was not inherently radical, and its recognition by government was not revolutionary. Rather, industrial unions functioned in the era of corporate capitalism to exert discipline on the workforce so that labor productivity would be improved and cooperative relations with employers would emerge.
>
> (Ibid.: 179)

Conclusion

The state, argue Cohen and Arato, 'intervenes in the liberal capitalist economy, at the price of its liberal character, to protect the capitalist structure endangered by endogenous crisis tendencies and processes of impaired self-regulation' (1992: 242). If direct comparisons between fascism and

corporate liberalism in the United States are invalid, then structural parallels certainly do exist. One of the differences between these two forms of postliberal capitalism is the relevance of ideology, for although 'opportunistic and frequently shifting, the New Deal was restricted by its ideology' (Bernstein 1970: 277). The reforms stabilized American capitalism, but did not change it, and – as in Germany – state intervention ultimately failed to stimulate a self-sustaining economic recovery. Yet as Feldman argues, neither National Socialism nor Italian Fascism 'can be accused of having contributed anything to economic thought or to have had any original vision of a new economic order replacing capitalism' (2002: 4–5). Instead, he notes, they were

> advantaged by their theoretical opportunism and purely instrumental and decisionist approaches to economic problems. They were anti-capitalist enough to be threatening to private enterprise and property but flexible enough to take advantage of the efficiencies of capitalist enterprises in the mobilization of societies.
>
> (Ibid.: 5)

Although dismissive of historical materialism – which he sees as suitable only for the analysis of developing societies, Feldman's argument correlates with Mason's (1968): as a political innovation, fascism is distinguished by an absence of coherent economic ideology and an absence of serious economic thinking at the summit of the state. Not only are economic factors *alone* an insufficient condition for understanding fascism, but the decisions taken by fascists in power cannot be explained within a logical economic framework. Although the concept 'state capitalism' offers an insight into the structural conditions of fascism as a form of postliberal capitalism, it cannot, in itself, provide a fully adequate account of fascist political economy. What is required is a theoretically and historically informed analysis of the specific economic and political conditions which contribute to and sustain economic fascism in its different forms.

7 Fascism and nationalism

Introduction

An unquestioned assumption of mainstream historiography is the view that fascism is a militant form of nationalism based on an authoritarian rejection of liberal democracy in favour of 'nationalist socialism'. Representative of this view is Sternhell (1986), who highlights the combination of nationalist and collectivist themes in the development of fascism in France where, despite the failure of the movement, regenerative nationalism was seen as a means to address the negative impact of liberal individualism on the political culture of French society. Also representative is Griffin, who defines fascism as an 'ideology *whose mythic core in various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism*' (1991: 26). Both writers locate the appeal of fascism in a populist definition of citizenship based on the glorification and regeneration of the 'in-group', whether this group is defined in political, cultural or racial terms. Yet as we saw in Chapter 1, the equation of fascism and nationalism is less straightforward than some commentators suggest. While fascism is oriented towards the re-enchantment of collective identities in an attempt to unify the nation behind a new state project, there are reasons to question the premises of the new consensus approach. The reduction of fascism to populist ultra-nationalism undermines efforts to define the phenomenon: nationalism has its origins in the intellectual field, and while fascism develops to an extent from intellectual sources, it is more closely tied to the field of politics (Breuer 2005), specifically the acquisition of power, the targeted use of violence, and the articulation of modern forms of propaganda and behavioural control.

In what follows, we will attempt to explain the political and cultural logic of fascist nationalism, beginning with an assessment of contemporary theories of nationalism in historical sociology and political theory. Fascists typically reduce the nation to a primordial category – an unquestionable essence, inaccessible to rational explanation or comprehension. This reveals the influence of social Darwinism and vitalism on right-wing ideologies, and as Neocleous explains, the 'centrality of nature to fascism is manifest in the clash between being and thinking, between will and reason, and between

instinctive allegiance and considered solidarity' (1997: 79). Yet this emphasis on primordial origins conceals not only the ideological function of the modern nation form as an instrument of class hegemony, but the *non*-linear development of the nation-state as a series of conjunctural relations based on the codification of language, the centralization of legal and fiscal authority, the concordat between organized religion and the state, and the concealment of class. National history, argues Balibar,

> is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative which attributes to these entities the continuity of a subject. The formation of the nation thus appears as the fulfilment of a 'project' stretching over centuries, in which there are different stages and moments of coming to self-awareness, which the prejudices of the various historians will portray as more or less decisive . . . , but which, in any case, all fit into an identical pattern: that of the self-manifestation of the national personality. Such a representation clearly constitutes a retrospective illusion, but it also expresses constraining institutional realities.[1]
>
> (1991b: 86)

Although the ethnic origins of nations are relevant, nationalism is primarily a state-centred doctrine based on economic unification and cultural homogenization, a complex process in which political opportunities merge with cultural specificities, leading to an increased emphasis on national values and symbols which are typically presented as timeless and invariant. In this sense, nationhood is the principal means through which collective identities are realized and sustained (Delanty and O'Mahony 2002).

Like nationalism, fascism is concerned with the 'enclosure of the polity – the drawing of its physical, human and cultural boundaries' (Beissinger 1998: 174–75). Some fascist movements (such as Italian fascism) are driven primarily by political aspirations; others (such as Ustaše-fascism in Croatia) are also motivated by ethnic antagonism. Unlike nationalism, however, fascism is concerned above all with power – with the internal rationalization of the human resources within the state, and the external expansion of national power beyond the confines of the state: fascism is determined by a specific constellation of economic and structural forces which create the objective conditions necessary for a reconfiguration of sovereign power internally and externally. This returns us to Arendt's assertion that totalitarianism reveals the crisis of the bourgeois nation-state in the transition to modernity: while the nation-state has been the primary unit of political rule in the modern era, it has not been the only outcome. Another is imperialism, which Arendt (1951: 181) defined as the 'expansion of political power without the formation of a body politic', where rival communities outside the in-group are either incorporated as conquered subjects or physically destroyed. As Arnason argues, the

> association with imperialism shows that nationalism can give rise to or be translated into aspirations which go beyond the nation-state and the system of nation-states, and that developments in this direction add new aspects to the combination of tradition and modernity.
>
> (1990: 226)

In this sense, revisionist interpretations of generic fascism as a form of populist ultra-nationalism oversimplify the function of the nation form in fascist ideology, on the one hand concealing its origins in state racism, on the other hand obscuring the strategic orientation of fascist geopolitics which exceeds the nationalist discourse on territorial/cultural unity to become a fully-fledged colonial 'space policy' (Kallis 2000: 122).

Theories of nationalism

The tension between 'instinctive allegiance' and 'considered solidarity' lies at the heart of theoretical debates on nationalism, and to understand the link between nationalism and fascism we first need to consider the structural and historical relationship between nationalism and modernity. Nationalism is a modern political movement linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie and the development of industrial capitalism – although there are examples of nationalism in preindustrial societies such as Greece and Ireland in the eighteenth century (O'Leary 1998). Classical liberal nationalists asserted the rights of all peoples to sovereignty and self-determination, connecting sovereignty and territorial security as a basis for national development. The philosophical importance of self-determination in nationalist ideology is sometimes linked to Kant, whose influence Kedourie (1960) traces through the work of romantic nationalists such as Fichte, Herder and Arndt, idealist thinkers who stressed the unique, *sui generis* quality of individual nations (Özkırımlı 2000: 19). More recent thinkers reject this view, however, suggesting that Kedourie ignores the political origins of nationalism in the work of Rousseau, an egalitarian thinker who advocated the subordination of the individual will to the general will of the community, and whose ideas prefigure the development of nationalism after 1789. According to Rousseau, citizenship and patriotism are only possible in the context of a nation-state: cultural similarities are important, but are insufficient to create a nation, as individuals must see a point in sharing a culture (ibid.: 21). In this sense, the French Revolution put the ideal of the nation into practice in legal and political terms: the nation is, or at least should be, based on the equal membership of all citizens.

Contemporary debates on nationalism focus on the ethnic and political dimensions of nation-state formation, and the extent to which a homogeneous culture enclosed within a sovereign territorial state is a functional imperative of industrialization. Moving away from Kohn's (1944) problematic distinction between a rational 'western' tradition of political nationalism

and an irrational 'eastern' tradition of ethnic nationalism, theorists can be divided into three schools of thought. 'Primordialists' emphasize the perennial existence and continuity of nations: although culture and ethnicity are renegotiated by successive generations, nations have always existed because they are the most 'natural' form of human organization, developing from the extended family or tribal unit (Shils 1957; Geertz 1963). This perspective is rejected by 'modernists' such as Gellner (1964; 1983), Breuilly (1993), Anderson (1991) and Hobsbawm (1990), who each emphasize the construction of nationhood and national identity by cultural and political elites: nations may in some cases be based on enduring ethnic identities, but nation-states are modern political entities adapted to the challenge of industrialization, which 'dissolves spatially confined and corporatively differentiated social orders', creating the 'cultural basis for a communicatively integrated mega-space that an industrial division of labour and the commercial exchange of commodities require' (Wimmer 2002: 49). Both of these perspectives are rejected in turn by 'ethno-symbolists', who hold that nationhood is an authentic expression of ethnicity which evolves into national identity, but which is not perennial or unchanging in form (Smith 1986). Smith suggests that nationhood is continually reproduced in symbols and rituals, which provide resources for nationalists to mobilize supporters. He also stresses the emotional intensity of national identities which are strong enough for people to risk their lives for their country. Surely, he protests, this would not happen if identity did not resonate at a deep level – even if the symbols of nationhood must be reproduced continually to maintain their effectiveness (Eller and Coughlan 1993; Özkırımlı 2000).

There are, however, strong reasons to doubt both primordialist and ethno-symbolist approaches. In the first place, primordialism is a notoriously vague concept which fails to acknowledge the social-structural determination of ethnic identity and culture. Anthropologists like Geertz stress the 'givenness' of traditions, suggesting a natural status for what are in fact socially constructed and inherited traditions; but as Eller and Coughlan argue, there is something odd about the idea that ethnic traditions could be *causa sui*, which have no source beyond themselves. They suggest three problems with the primordialist thesis. First, the evidence suggests that the assumption of apriority in ethnic identity is false, for identity is negotiated by each generation and 'claims to ethnic membership arise and change according to situationally variable circumstances and interests' (1993: 188). In reality, ethnic mobilization involves two dimensions:

> (1) the activation of cultural resources which are real enough but which were relatively 'dormant' and not previously the subject of 'primordial attachment', or (2) the literal creation, either of new groups which did not previously exist, coalesced around pre-existing cultural resources, or actually of new cultural resources which did not previously exist.
>
> (Ibid.: 189)

Second, the idea that ethnic attachments are absolute and binding on members of collectivities implies that such attachments are 'ineffable' or unquestionable: nothing more can really be said if we assume primordial attachments because these are unaccountable and thus impervious to external scrutiny, even though no system can be explained entirely through its own premises: all systems require explanation against the background of their extra-systemic environment (ibid.: 190). Finally, the thesis of primordialism exaggerates the importance of affectivity: primordialists argue that human agency is determined by affective factors, and cultural attachments and ethnic identity are no exception, but this results in the conflation of 'primordial' and 'emotional', which leads in turn to a

> mystification of emotion, a desocializing of the phenomenon, and in extreme cases can lead to the positing of a biological imperative of bond-formation. . . . if bonds simply *are*, and if they have no source at all, then they must have a genetic source.
>
> (Ibid.: 170)

Though an improvement on primordialism, critics of ethno-symbolism argue that it too fails to account for the fact that most nation-states lack ethnic antecedents. Writers like Armstrong (1982) and Smith (1986) emphasize the long 'birth process' of nations emerging from a distant ethnic past, but this fails to account for the dramatic rise of postcolonial nationalism in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, where a large number of new nations were created in a short space of time without any historical precedent. A further criticism is that while most individuals have little choice but to identify with their nation of origin, many people emigrate and *learn* to identify with adopted nations. Immigrants preserve some of their cultural traditions, but as the history of the United States shows they adapt pragmatically to their host nation and their loyalties change accordingly. Communities claim a moral interest in preserving their culture over time (Gans 2003), but if ethnicity were the only factor which mattered, then assimilation into new identities would be impossible. As Özkırımlı argues, the persistence and continuity of ethnic identities ultimately require other mediating forces to effect the transition from premodern collectivities to modern nation-states, which serve a specific function in capitalist modernity, and Smith underestimates the distinction between ancient ethnic communities and self-consciously modern nations. Özkırımlı reiterates Calhoun's criticism that 'nationalism is not simply a claim of ethnic similarity, but a claim that certain similarities should count as *the* definition of political community. For this reason, nationalism needs rigid boundaries in a way that premodern ethnicity does not' (2000: 185). This does not mean that national identity is 'false' or 'fictive', only that it exists primarily in the perceptions and imaginations of individuals socialized into collectivities. As such, it is the lived immediacy

of culture rather than its historicality that gives it force (ibid.: 223; cf. Anderson 1991).

While no definition of nationalism will ever be fully acceptable to all parties, it is clear that nationalists typically cultivate entropy-resistant genetic and cultural markers in the construction of communal identities, although these may be formed from very meagre sources. For Gellner (1983) this is possible because status-based premodern communities do not presuppose cultural homogeneity, anonymity or equality of membership, and do not therefore require universal patterns of communication.[2] Although state-based patriotism can serve as an alternative to cultural homogeneity as a means of integration by codifying the rights of citizens within a definite political and legal framework, as Taylor notes it is

> an undeniable feature of modern market, growth-oriented, industrial economies, embedded as they are in bureaucratic polities, that they force a kind of homogeneity on language and culture, both designedly, as through the education system, and by the very way they operate, as through their media.
>
> (1998: 183)

Nevertheless, nationalism is not just an objective historical process but a lived social practice – a discourse on identity – which continually reproduces and redefines the relation between culture and power. At the level of subjective consciousness, it is 'a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world, a frame of reference that helps us to make sense of and structure the reality that surrounds us' (Özkırımlı 2005: 9). All knowledge, including ideological knowledge, is contingent on social practices which take place in specific contexts, reflecting the material and cultural needs and interests of communities. What modernists sometimes fail to explain is the appeal of identity and belonging for subjects: in an abstract sense, Gellner (1982) identifies the crucial trait of the nation as anonymity of membership as a prerequisite for an 'accreditalised society presupposed by industrial production' (Haugaard 2002: 122), but fails to see that nationalism can also be understood as a reaction against the replacement of essentialist reason and teleological justification with meritocratic legitimation and egalitarianism.

Nationalism can be justified in normative terms by arguing that linguistic and cultural systems represent unique or distinctive means of communication, interpretation and understanding and because individuals have a 'fundamental interest in adhering to components of their identity' (Gans 2003: 43). But this still fails to explain the appeal of nationalism in an empirical sense. Belonging is clearly rational in a legal sense because nationality confers positive rights on subjects (rather than purely abstract 'human' rights which are more precarious and difficult to defend). Yet belonging only makes sense in sociological terms as a response to the burden of reflexivity and

self-constitutive agency characteristic of modern industrial societies, which create a counter-requirement for disemburdenment and familiarity:

> While it is undoubtedly the case that the spirit of the Enlightenment has problematised identity and, as a consequence, contributed to pressure towards self-reflexive constitution of identity there is good reason to believe that this has created new ontological insecurities which in turn have led to a desire for ideologies and modes of behaviour which *counteract this drive toward reflexivity*.
>
> (Haugaard 2002: 128; italics added)

In practical terms, this highlights the need for a 'mutual structuration of meaning': 'Because the reproduction of structure is not a solipsistic event, confirm-structuring others have to be found. Establishing a self-identity which is considered valid by others is an act of structuring the self in a manner which will elicit confirm-structuring others' (ibid.: 130–31). This point is reiterated by Schöpflin, who notes that where

> values and identity are broadly shared between different social strata, where they regard one another as sharing certain commonalities and respond to the same symbols, where they take the view that, whatever may divide them, they do share certain key moral aims and obligations, the basis for a redistribution of power becomes a less hazardous enterprise. A society and polity must not only rely on solidarity, but it must organise itself in such a way as to reproduce it.
>
> (2000: 40)

The structuring of meaning though social knowledge is a collaborative act: meaning is arbitrary, hence durable, legitimate structures must acquire a non-arbitrary quality; they must appear universal and timeless, which is precisely what happens with nationalism. Whether identity is real, imagined or imposed by a literate high culture on a patchwork of autochthonous local identities, it functions as a defence against *infinite regress*. As such, argues Haugaard, the 'ideological appeal of nationalism is that it offers an escape from the ontological insecurities of "mere convention" created by reflexivity' (Haugaard 2002: 135).

These arguments do not refute Gellner's claim that cultural homogeneity is objectively functional for industrialization, only that the appeal of nationalism at a subjective level lies in its capacity to disemburden subjects from the potential arbitrariness of meaning inherent in modernity. Haugaard sets out to explain not the primordial existence of nations as ethnic groups but the importance of ontological security. In this sense, his approach is consistent with Balibar's argument, namely, that in

> constituting the people as a fictively ethnic unity against the background of a universalistic representation which attributes to each individual one – and only one – ethnic identity and which thus divides up the whole of humanity between different ethnic groups corresponding potentially to so many nations, national ideology does much more than justify the strategies employed by the state to control populations. It inscribes their demands in advance in a sense of belonging in the double sense of the term – both what it is that makes one belong to oneself and also what makes one belong to other fellow human beings. Which means that one can be interpellated, as an individual, *in the name of* the collectivity whose name one bears. The naturalization of belonging and the sublimation of the ideal nation are two aspects of the same process.
>
> (1991b: 96)

As a modern collectivity, the nation form is socially produced, but in a functional sense its continuity serves as a defence against entropy, against the lack of pattern and organization in preindustrial communities. This is particularly important for political elites in underdeveloped communities, whose primary interest lies in managing industrialization while maintaining their cultural integrity against rival nationalisms or imperialist intervention.

In summary, nationalism links culture and power in the nation form as a means for negotiating modernity, which Delanty and O'Mahony define as the 'permanent institutionalization of social change and cultural transformation by globalized communication' (2002: 3). Although the nation-state is only one possible political form for negotiating modernity – as Chernilo comments 'the *theoretical* or *explanatory* version of the argument of methodological nationalism arises when it is assumed that the deep-seated conceptual structure of the social sciences would have led them to think *exclusively from within* the national box' (2008: 9) – the nation form prevails because it allows groups to acquire self-determination; because shared culture provides a secure context for organizing politics on the basis of norms of reciprocity and trust; because the nation-state provides a context within which to organize a modern economy and to sustain industrialization, innovation and development; and because the patriotic ideal of the nation serves as a form of social knowledge created by intellectuals through which citizens come to know their society and represent this identity to its members (Delanty and O'Mahony 2002). Yet despite these positive outcomes, arguments in favour of nationalism can also be 'manipulated for illiberal purposes: whether articulated by anti-colonial movements, or by established political elites, they may be used to obtain and exploit territorial, administrative and economic monopolies' (O'Leary 1998: 78). Nationalists might see sovereignty as a condition for realizing political values or defending identities, but the success of nationalist movements depends on geopolitical realities rather than the merit of the values and/or identities in question.

The sources of fascist nationalism are complex, but it should be clear that attempts to define fascism as the logical outcome of primordial ethnic ties are unhelpful because they fail to grasp the point that nationalism forges identities through the rationalization of commonalities functional for the group in question. Integral nationalism and fascism are characterized by the 'racialization' of the national work community through the renaturalization of social antagonism and the transcendence of class: both systems share an assumption that democracy is only viable where it is organized around a bounded collective identity or 'race-nation' with shared cultural norms. This racialization of industrial society must be distinguished from the politicization of ethnicity typical of postcolonial societies, where relations between majority and minority groups within arbitrarily drawn borders are more problematic (Wimmer 2002: 92–93), although both types of political integration are inimical to the liberal foundations of nationalism.

Integral nationalism

'Among the great debates in Europe since the eighteenth century,' argues Schöpflin, 'has been whether to organise power on the basis of reason or identity. This debate continues, indeed, it cannot be settled' (2000: 9). Yet it is precisely this confusion which bedevils attempts to explain the development of integral nationalism as a departure from the liberal foundations of industrial capitalist society. According to Kohn's (1944) typology, liberal nationalists are concerned with the realization of rights and freedoms through the framework of the sovereign nation-state, emphasizing the importance of reason as a means to constrain power and prevent disorder. Ethnic nationalists, on the other hand, are concerned with the assertion and preservation of identities as means to ensure the assertion of historic identities – a tradition associated with the 'darker' forms of nationalism in eastern Europe. Yet it is difficult to theorize the development of nationalism using this binary distinction, which quickly collapses once we consider the relevance of culture for the generation of solidary ties and the reproduction of authority relations in modern nation-states. In seeking to explain historical and social phenomena, an exclusive focus on false consciousness or irrationality renders social scientists blind to the importance of identity. For liberal nationalists, political legitimacy resides in a sovereign state comprised of equal citizens, a civic community reinforced by shared norms and values; yet nationhood is difficult to classify in abstract, civic-political terms because citizenship is only one dimension of 'belonging' in modern collectivities. *Democratic* citizenship provides a normative framework for the regulation of conflict in civil society, but competes with cultural identities and/or ethnic attachments which may be instrumentalized through the assimilating and rationalizing power of the state.

Although integral nationalism is understood in reactionary terms, it is a mistake to represent this departure from liberal nationalism as 'irrational'.

Nationalism, in whichever form, must be contextualized as a response to given political and economic conditions. For integral nationalists, the nation form is a mode of exclusion – the exclusion of non-identical, inassimilable otherness as a threat to the integrity and uniformity of the social body (Balibar 1991b). In contrast with classical nationalism, which was hailed by its supporters as a framework for economic development and limited democratic participation within a territorially bounded political community, integral nationalism 'affirms the primacy of the nation and the nation-state at the expense of the historical forces with which they were previously associated in a more balanced way' (Arnason 1990: 232). The dynamics of integral nationalism lie less in civic virtue than in the cultivation of state patriotism based on the rationalization and homogenization of identity.

If we compare integral nationalism with the 'unification nationalism' of Italy and Germany, this distinction becomes clear. Although in practice Italian and German unification can be seen as examples of internal colonization which eroded regional identities and dynastic ties through the aggrandizement of Piedmont and Prussia, the state-seeking nationalism of Italian and German patriots in the mid-nineteenth century clearly belongs to the second phase of liberal state formation in Europe. In both cases, a cultural elite capable of promoting national feeling transcended existing dynastic borders, and through the pragmatic statecraft of Cavour and Bismarck successfully challenged the balance of power in Europe at the expense of Austria and France (although the unification of Italy would almost certainly not have occurred without the tacit support of Louis Napoleon). In neither case did formal unification result in *actual* unity, given the depth and variability of regional identities in the Italian and German lands which still persist today. Yet the aspiration to codify and impose a high culture over an array of local identities and linguistic traditions was keenly felt by Italian and German liberals who saw the state as an engine of political modernization and economic development.

Integral nationalism, by contrast, can be seen as the nationalism of established nations and imperial civilizations. It is often associated with the rise of the radical right in the French Third Republic, a monarchist movement which called for a return to dynastic leadership and the subordination of subjects to an authoritarian integrated state. As we saw in Chapter 2, right-wing nationalists in France were motivated by the military defeat of 1870–71, by an irreconcilable contempt for democratic forms of government, and by a virulent antisemitism which was brought into sharp relief by the Dreyfus affair. But it was a more fundamental concern with the health and loyalty of the masses in the wake of the Paris Commune and the rise of proletarian internationalism which motivated leaders of the French right, who viewed the state as a means for improving the human resources of the Third Republic. In an attempt to consolidate national unity and prestige, France moved towards a chauvinistic form of nationalism in which republican and

parliamentary traditions were overshadowed by a new concern with the ideological reliability, masculinity and vitality of the nation.[3]

Liberal historians (Mosse 1999; Griffin 2007; Sternhell 1986; Winock 1998; Gentile 2003) explain integral nationalism either as a nostalgic cultural rebellion against the perceived decadence of capitalist modernity, or as a 'revolutionary revitalization movement', creating fertile soil for the subsequent rise of fascism. In the case of France, Griffin notes that the

> anti-Dreyfus camp was rent by divisions over which ethnic group constituted the 'root race' of the French (the Aryans, the Celts, the Romans, the Franks), over which aesthetic was associated with health or decadence (classicism, medievalism, modernism), over the role attributed to monarchism, Catholicism, socialism and anti-Semitism in the process of national regeneration, and over the attitude to be adopted to urbanization, technology and rural life.
>
> (2007: 177)

However, to attribute integral nationalism exclusively to a new generation of conservative revolutionary intellectuals is to overlook the objective emergence of integralism as a state ideology – a model of political integration in which the liberal discourse on rights is subsumed beneath a rhetoric of assimilation, leading ultimately to the 'conquest of the state by the nation' (Arendt 1951: 296). In this sense, integral nationalism marks a new phase in the historical evolution of the modern state based on the nationalization, militarization and homogenization of populations, an 'extreme version of the state patriotism that was typical of many of the established states in its absolutism and militarism, combining a total identification of nationhood with the state' (Delanty and O'Mahony 2002: 126).

The dynamic behind integral nationalism lies less in the preservation of identity against the 'decadence' of capitalist modernity than in a cultivation of identities adequate to the economic modernization and the militarization of European society in the imperial era: the institutionalization of war-preparedness was already official policy in Britain, France, Germany and the United States before 1914 as rulers sought to ensure that their civilian populations (and, to a lesser extent, their colonial subjects) were not only materially prepared to fight, but ideologically inclined to do so – a shift in the nature of strategic policy which contributed to the rise of fascism after 1918. Integral nationalism also highlights the influence of race-thinking as a feature of official state nationalisms in the new age of empire. As an organizational principle, argues Lentin, race

> is related to the growing reliance on the internal rationalisation of populations and, in a second step, the external fortification of the nation-states in which they lived. This was governed, on the one hand, by the perceived threat of external defeat in international war, often conceived

> of as wars between 'races', and on the other, by the fear of internal degeneration of the national population, again seen to constitute a distinct 'race'. While the obsession with social Darwinist 'race' strengthening initially targeted the 'inferior' working classes, the increased pace of the imperialist project and the beginning of immigration of a significant level at the turn of the century shifted the focus onto the non-national Other.
>
> (2004: 37)

This created a new dialectic of *internal* integration and *external* projection: integral nationalism and imperial expansion became the means through which governments could project their sovereignty in an internal and external sense. As we saw in Chapter 5, external imperialism is justified by a 'civilizing mission ideology', reflecting the assumed racial and cultural superiority of white Europeans. In an internal sense, however, it is justified by class racism, a tendency to view the proletariat in ethological terms as a 'degenerate race' which must be 'reformed', 'reprocessed' and 're-educated' to comply with the capitalist order. This racialization of the working class can be seen as a strategic response to the ever-present possibility of class war, which posed a threat to hierarchy and aristocracy as 'natural' principles of social organization, illustrating how easily the colonial discourse on race could be extended from the imperial periphery to the metropole itself in an attempt to 'renaturalize' antagonism by defining class conflict in quasi-biological terms (Lentin 2004: 53; cf. Magubane 2004). The health, obedience and patriotism of the working class had become essential for the external 'proving' of the nation, and it is no coincidence that the introduction of universal suffrage and state education was followed by the rise of new 'sciences of the state' (demography, social hygiene, etc.) and the introduction of immigration controls in European capitals (ibid.: 55).

We will examine the relationship between fascism and race more fully in Chapter 8, paying attention to the distinction between French, Italian and German race-thinking. It should be clear from the foregoing analysis, however, that just as nationalism is based on a variable synthesis of political and cultural factors, so the terms 'race' and 'nation' cannot be understood as mutually exclusive categories: as Balibar rightly argues, racism is a 'supplement internal to nationalism' (1991a: 54), which is extended under integral nationalism and fascism through the aestheticization of physical difference and the racialization of citizenship. Integral nationalism thus represents a radical departure from the nationalist doctrine of sovereignty and self-determination, linking race, nation and state in a new strategic synthesis. However, although it constitutes an important source of fascist ideology, it must nevertheless be clearly differentiated from the political practice of fascism itself, which radically exceeds the legal and territorial framework of the nation-state in its attempt to transcend the class antagonism of industrial society.

The nation form in fascist ideology

Fascist nationalism appeals to a broad constituency by attempting to transcend class: for Sternhell (1986), fascism represents a nationalistic revision of socialism in which the historical-materialist premises of Marxism are replaced by nationalist myth. Neocleous (1997) agrees that the appeal of national syndicalism among elements of the labour movement is significant because syndicalism substitutes a voluntaristic philosophy of action for collective emancipation. Nationalist myth effectively replaces reason in the social psychology of revolutionary mobilization:

> Sorel's revisionism divests Marxism of mechanistic scientism but retains and highlights the apocalyptic moment, concentrated in the revolutionary class struggle, which explodes at key historical junctures. The attempt to reconstitute Marxism as a real mobilising force turns Marx's critique of political economy into an ethics, Marx's materialism into vitalism, and Marx's analysis of class struggle into collective will expressed via irrational myths. . . . Rather than seek the motives for mass action in reasoned class consciousness, our attention should be directed to the feelings and affects that give rise to it. Socialism, then, is a product not of class struggle, but of a will to struggle on the grounds of certain ethical values.
>
> (Neocleous 1997: 9)

As a result, identity and emotion become powerful organizing principles, displacing the rationalism implicit in Marxian revolutionary theory. However, Neocleous rejects the view that fascism can be understood simply as a Sorelian revision of Marxism. This would only be feasible, he argues, if we were to follow Sternhell further and separate Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, even though the two ideologies are obviously linked: both are irreconcilably *anti*-socialist, and both adapt ideas from the conservative revolutionary tradition to reverse the possibility of universal emancipation implicit in historical materialism. He also suggests that the very idea of revisionism is inappropriate: an authentic revision of Marxism would preclude the replacement of Marx's core theoretical ideas (critical political economy) with a new syncretic ideology based on expansion and war. Although socialists have appropriated nationalist ideas to legitimate their rule (Yasui 1999), the principal anti-economistic revision of Marxism in the twentieth century has taken place among the New Left.

For Griffin (1991), fascism is understood as a secular religion – a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism based on the myth of 'rebirth'. As we have seen, however, Griffin's typology is problematic because it fails to account for the complexity of the fascist synthesis of modernity and counter-enlightenment and the geopolitical relevance of fascism as a pan-European ideology (Eatwell 1992, 1999), and because it obscures the tacit affinity

between fascism and bourgeois culture. As Hobsbawm (1994) notes, nationalism was in fact highly problematic in countries such as Norway or Vichy France where loyalty to the regime implied loyalty to the pan-European imperialism of the Third Reich: not all fascists could afford to be nationalists, and patriotism has rarely been a characteristic of cosmopolitan finance capital. In some cases mobilization against local fascist parties actually helped to promote a patriotism of the left, as occurred in Yugoslavia and France, and indeed in Italy after the collapse of Mussolini's regime. Payne's (1996) complex typology of 'fascist negations' is an improvement on other revisionist approaches, but is so all-inclusive that its explanatory value is diminished. Payne observes that some form of nationalism is present in all fascist doctrines, but so too are anti-socialism, militarism and anti-feminism, all of which are also consistent with the conservative traditionalism of authoritarian leaders such as Horthy, Franco, Metaxas and Salazar who offered no specific agenda other than the prejudices traditional to their class, or who co-opted fascist movements to consolidate an alliance of the right. Both Griffin and Payne offer programmatic readings of fascism based on regeneration, but despite its mythic appeal the practical relevance of rebirth as a political response to spiritual decay and cultural despair is unclear.

To understand the function of the nation form in fascist ideology, we need to examine its dual logic. On the one hand, as a primordial entity, the nation represents a hegemonic identity based on the chosenness/destiny of the group; but while fascists present the nation in racial, cultural and gendered terms (emphasizing its 'noble', 'historic' and 'virile' features), the purpose of fascist nationalism is to recreate *through political means* the unity destroyed in the transition to industrial class society. Nationalism is dependent on the reproduction of norms of reciprocity and solidary ties based on empirical markers such as language and custom, but these cultural resources do not themselves create collective action – something which requires effective leadership, organization and material support to achieve its aims (Woodwell 2007). On the other hand, fascism radically extends the idea of the nation as the *living wealth* of society, a rationalized human economy necessary for the realization of given political aims (Agamben 1995). To the extent that fascism is a nationalist creed, it reflects not just the compensatory appeal of shared identity and reciprocity in an age of increased insecurity, nor the demand for cultural renewal, but the internal rationalization of a domesticated human economy through a set of normalizing practices designed to protect and improve the biological inheritance and geopolitical living space of the group.

These twin dimensions of fascist nationalism begin to make more sense if we recall the unprecedented crisis caused by the creation of new nation-states in east-central Europe and the Balkans after 1918, which not only extended a model of political organization already in question in western Europe, but left the national question in Germany and Italy open and unresolved. For Germans in particular, war-guilt, reparations and loss of territory revealed the hypocrisy of the western powers who absolved themselves of all responsi-

bility for the war, and even had the economic crises of the 1920s not been so severe, the perceived injustice of Versailles and the unfulfilled war aims of the German military and industrial elite would have been sufficient to destabilize the Weimar party system and prevent a normalization of politics. Pan-German imperialists had traditionally sought to erode the distinction between the historic German-speaking lands (*deutscher Volksboden*) of central Europe and a much wider sphere of German cultural influence (*deutscher Kulturboden*) in eastern Europe and the Balkans (Burleigh 1988). But as we saw in Chapter 5, this expansionism was hardly exclusive to Germany: it also existed in Hungary after the dismemberment of the Dual Monarchy, and it was a feature of Pan-Turanianism in post-Ottoman Turkey.[4] Further examples can be cited, including Polish territorial ambitions in Lithuania and Ukraine, Italian expansionism in France, Albania, Greece and northeast Africa, and the Romanian policy of unifying all Romanian speakers in the Danubian and Transnistrian regions in a greater Romania. To a lesser extent than the German case, but with equal significance for the nations involved, the new borders separating Italian, Romanian, Hungarian and other minorities from their co-nationals ensured that a normalization of diplomatic relations would be impossible if national governments attempted to exercise their political sovereignty by imposing assimilation or resorting to expulsion. Despite the existence of minority treaties, Versailles created a profusion of stateless and unassimilable minorities and refugees without rights in their adoptive countries, whose statelessness was a threat to the 'necessary distinctions between nationals and foreigners, and to the sovereign right of states in matters of nationality and expulsion' (Arendt 1951: 363). Unable to manage the legal and political complexities of naturalization, governments handed responsibility for controlling non-nationals to the police, creating a dangerous precedent for the future development of population management under fascism (ibid.: 365).

The importance of this development cannot be overstressed, for it allows us to link theoretically the crisis of the sovereign nation-state in the early twentieth century to the internal rationalization of the population favoured by integral nationalists, and to the racialization of the nation form as a 'natural' phenomenon in fascist ideology, resulting in the substitution of monolithic national identities for existing attachments to class or party: by insisting on the primordial, exclusive essence of the nation, and by subsuming the individual within a fictive ethnic category from which all rights are derived, fascist nationalism reveals the contradiction implicit in the doctrine of national sovereignty between the natural 'rights of man' (the inalienable rights belonging to individuals by virtue of their equal status as humans), and the positive rights of citizens (the legal rights conferred on individuals by virtue of their equal 'native' status). This racialization of citizenship accelerates the growth of the 'police state' in its numerous forms, a type of governmental regime based on the minute control of conduct through the exercise of sovereign power. As we saw in Chapter 5, the outcome of this process is the

'captivation of life within law for the sake of exercising violence on it' (Vatter: 2007: 5). Fascist nationalism completes this shift away from an Aristotelian tradition of politics as debate over ultimate values (rights, justice, civic virtue) towards a totalitarian cultivation of unity, homogeneity and conformity through the biopolitical management of the living wealth of the state. As Arendt argues, once human rights can only be protected as *national* rights,

> the very institution of a state, whose supreme task was to protect and guarantee man his rights as man, as citizen, and as national, [loses] its legal, rational appearance and [can] be interpreted by the romantics as the nebulous representative of a 'national soul' which through the very fact of its existence [is] supposed to be beyond or above the law. National sovereignty, accordingly, [loses] its original connotation of freedom of the people and [is] . . . surrounded by a pseudo-mystical aura of lawless arbitrariness.
>
> (1951: 297)

For individuals without a national community to belong to, however, law effectively ceases to exist: the excluded subject ceases to be a *political* being with the capacity to acquire freedom, and is instead exposed to the unmediated domination of sovereign power acting on the body politic. Under fascism, this sovereign domination is quickly extended (through legal means) from the routine surveillance and expulsion of non-natives to the exclusion or eradication of whole categories of human being whose very existence is perceived as an intolerable threat to the community. It is this exclusionary practice inherent in integral nationalism and fascist totalitarianism which Agamben theorizes so innovatively using the concept of 'sacred life', where, as Vatter observes, 'someone or something is declared to be sacred (*sacer esto*) by excluding it from the protection afforded by the law, thereby separating from the context of human life a rest of life, which he calls "bare life"' (2007: 6–7). In effect, 'bare' or 'sacred' life is life excluded from the legal protection of citizenship, suggesting that the discourse on 'rights of man' should be rethought: the rights of humans are always defined in a positive sense as the rights of native citizens, which are imperilled where the integrity of nationhood is placed in question.

While Griffin concentrates on the 'palingenetic' quality of fascist ultranationalism as a myth of rebirth – where a degenerate culture is rejuvenated through a vision of 'higher values' (Griffin 2007: 182) – an alternative way to approach the question of regeneration is to reconnect the idea of birth as the moment of *biological reproduction* and birth as a condition for the *reproduction of sovereign power*. Declarations of rights represent a key moment in the transition from monarchical to national sovereignty, and it is here that we can see the real significance of the birth–nation link in fascism, symbolized by the conjoining of *nativity* and *sovereignty* in the body of the sovereign subject:

> It is not possible to understand the 'national' and biopolitical development and vocation of the modern state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries if one forgets that what lies at its basis is not man as a free and conscious subject but, above all, man's bare life, the simple birth that as such is, in the passage from subject to citizen, invested with the principle of sovereignty. The fiction implicit here is that *birth* immediately becomes *nation* such that there can be no interval of separation between the two terms. Rights are attributed to man (or originate in him) solely to the extent that man is the immediately vanishing ground (who must never come to light as such) of the citizen.
>
> (Agamben 1995: 128)

For Agamben, the disruption of the birth–nation link is the key to understanding the racialization of nationalist ideology in the early twentieth century: when the distinction between birth and nation

> entered into a lasting crisis following the devastation of Europe's geopolitical order after the First World War, what appeared was Nazism and fascism, that is, two properly biopolitical movements that made of natural life the exemplary place of the sovereign decision.
>
> (Ibid.: 129)

In this way, he links the 'blood and soil' ideology of National Socialism to the problem of citizenship. Although the myth of 'blood and soil' propagated by figures such as Alfred Rosenberg and Julius Evola assumes the appearance of tribal nationalism, its authentic source is not folk-romantic ideology – the content of *völkisch* mythology 'could hardly matter to anyone except certain intellectuals and artists, or possibly certain educators or professors' (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 1990: 292) – but an older legal conception of citizenship as 'birth from citizen parents' (*ius sanguinis*) and 'birth within a certain territory' (*ius soli*). These concepts acquired a far deeper meaning in the nineteenth century, resulting in a new legal situation where citizenship no longer meant subjugation to monarchical authority or equality of membership, but the 'new status of life as the origin and ground of sovereignty' (ibid.).

How can this naturalization of citizenship and identity be demonstrated in practical terms? The first point to note is that the fascist call for regeneration must be understood as a potential effect of sovereign power, and that the revisionist conceptualization of fascism as a primordial 'revitalization movement' should be resituated in a theoretical critique of biopolitics. Furthermore, rather than concentrate on the minutiae of fascist negations, what is required is a systematic analysis of the ordering of both the *living space* and *living wealth* of collectivities through the exercise of biopower. Griffin (2007) acknowledges the importance of Nazi biopolitics in his recent work, and also draws a link between fascism and 'gardening states',

suggesting a link with Gellner's (1983) sociological theory of nationalism.[5] And, like Roberts (2006), he emphasizes the modern rather than archaic dimensions of fascist totalitarianism as a failed experiment in social engineering. In a banal sense, this experiment takes the form of ostentatious militarism, mass gatherings, labour initiatives, cultural revivalism and coordinated physical activity – all of which serve to reinforce a sense of collective energy and purpose. But the reproduction of the nation form under fascism also points towards a new correspondence between law and life predicated on the legal violation of natural life itself, which begins with experiments in public health screening, suppression of 'deviant' sexuality, and demographic planning (Lenz 1983; Ipsen 1997; Ebner 2004), but which culminates in eugenic totalitarianism, epitomized by the systematic exclusion and extermination of 'life unworthy of life' across Nazi-controlled Europe.

Following Agamben, it is also possible to link the naturalization of the nation form under fascism to Schmitt's concept of the 'state of exception', namely, the permanent threshold of exclusion which allows a legal order to suspend itself through emergency powers. As Vatter argues, 'what distinguishes Agamben from constitutionalists is that it is the *sovereign moment* in every legal system that is prior to the exception, not a basic law, like a written constitution' (2007: 11). He refutes the independent existence of the law divorced from the possibility of the sovereign exception, arguing instead that

> to be in force, to rule, the law must be given from the outside by its referent. What is given to it as reference is 'bare life' itself; and the manner in which law captures this life is through the declaration of the state of exception.
>
> (Ibid.: 12)

Law, argues Agamben, 'has a regulative character and is a "rule" not because it commands and proscribes, but because it must first of all create the sphere of its own reference in real life and *make that reference regular*' (1995: 26). The originary violence which exists prior to the constituted law of nation-states 'signals that something which does not break the rule (exclusion) comes under the rule *qua* something that can be violated without breaking rules (inclusion)' (Vatter 2007: 14–15). By identifying the 'unlocalizable' (that which cannot be absorbed or assimilated), but by granting this 'unlocalizable' a 'permanent and visible location', this juridical move enables rulers to create and introduce new categories of violation and exclusion, a procedure employed against 'resident aliens' across Europe after 1918, but which only acquired totalitarian implications under fascism (and, in a different form, under Stalinism). This internal exclusion results in a paradoxical situation where the 'unlocalizable' simultaneously belongs to a given order, yet is excluded precisely by the mode of its inclusion, that is, by remaining 'permanently and visibly' located in an indeterminate zone, a threshold in 'which life

is both inside and outside the juridical order' (Agamben 1995: 27). In this way, the reproduction of hegemonic identities becomes coterminous with the exercise of sovereignty via the internal exclusion of particularity: sovereign power enacted internally on the rationalized human economy of the nation, or (as under fascism) projected externally through an 'imperial space policy'.

The internal rationalization and external projection of fascist totalitarianism transforms the nature of exclusion and belonging in the modern collectivity, and as we shall see in the next chapter, the logic of racism is itself entwined with the nation form as an ordering principle of modern politics. Race and ethnicity are *dependent* variables in the construction of national identities rather than causal factors, and play a critical role in the reproduction and legitimation of hegemonic projects such as Pan-Germanism and white supremacism as

> superior to disruptive historical or cosmopolitan identities which disrupt the purity of the imaginary nation. This imaginary purity must be constantly demarcated and defended against the plethora of 'false' nationals, impostors without appropriate or acceptable national (racial) characteristics or culture.
>
> (Balibar 1991a: 60)

This idea also finds expression in Theweleit's interpretation of fascist racism as the ultimate expression of patriarchal exclusivity, based on a terror of decomposition: in fascism, he suggests, the 'internal counterpart of a nation's external imperialism is racism – racism as a deadly struggle against the 'alien race' within, as incitement to class struggle across the very body of the racist' (1989: 77). The militant yet absurdly melodramatic mobilization of the race-nation in fascism reflects the historical salience of nationhood as a narrative of identity, which, as ethno-symbolists concede, consists in the continual reproduction of ethnicity/culture through a shared use of symbol and ritual: even where ties to ancient ethnicities can be traced, such identities are *effects* to be explained rather than assumed. By insisting on the primordial status of the nation as an unproblematic essence, fascism conceals the process of exclusion and reconstruction which complicates the reproduction of the nation form. In this way, fascism extends the basic assumptions of methodological nationalism by representing the nation as a historical 'given', where sovereignty is understood as a master signifier of identity in an international environment characterized by perpetual conflict between rival nations over territory and resources. Presented as a primordial essence rather than a negotiated social community, the fascist nation becomes a material/human resource for realizing the domestic-political and geopolitical aims of national elites, leading to the transgression of the bourgeois nation-state as a territorially and legally bounded entity.

Neonationalism and the far right

As we saw in Chapter 3, contemporary far right parties in Europe occupy a specific space along the 'internal periphery' of politics – as an 'alternative force' responsive to voters' economic insecurity and hostility to immigration which has attempted to acquire greater political respectability by moderating its racist and anti-capitalist discourse. This trend is apparent across Europe, and has become known as the 'Italian model' after the example of the reformed AN (Adler 2004: 232; cf. Hainsworth 2008). Across western Europe, right-wing populists have emerged as a powerful third force, entering into coalitions and voting alliances with conservatives at national and regional level. Only in Britain and Germany has the far right failed to make significant progress at national level, partly for technical reasons (Germany's electoral system imposes a five per cent threshold before parties can be represented in the Bundestag, while Britain uses a single member plurality system for Westminster elections), but also for political reasons – German voters treat the parties of the far right as 'protest parties' (Williams 2006) while support for the BNP remains largely confined within traditional white working class constituencies. In eastern Europe, on the other hand, support for the far right is closely linked to democratization, but is stronger where historical and cultural conditions create crises of representation and ethnic antagonisms. The main historical factors determining support for the far right in this region are the presence of a historic minority within a country's border, or communities of co-nationals in adjacent states (Minkenberg and Beichelt 2002). Postsocialist Hungary is a good example of this syndrome: having lost two-thirds of its territory in 1920, and having endured decades of Soviet rule, many on the right saw the return to pluralism as an opportunity to reassert territorial claims over neighbouring Slovakia, Croatia and Romania, criticizing the pragmatic diplomatic realism of the ruling establishment as cowardly (Karsai 1999: 136).[6] However, while Hungary has experienced increasing displays of Magyar chauvinism and antisemitic violence (Margolis 2008), the centre-right (Fidesz) and reform socialists (MSZP) still continue to dominate parliamentary politics, winning 85 per cent of the vote in the 2006 election.

The key issue is not whether far right parties employ nationalist rhetoric to generate support, but whether nationalism as such is a primary or secondary consideration. Banks and Gingrich suggest that '"national cultural values" are instrumental tools for mobilising support, but are not an end in themselves . . . ' (2006: 18). To assess the truth of this assertion, we need to look behind the label 'nationalism', which conceals a range of exclusionist, chauvinist, racist and other discourses and practices designed to reaffirm and reproduce the collective identity and agency of the race-nation, while simultaneously resisting counter-hegemonic strategies designed to promote diversity, equality and integration. Cultural nationalism is an important ideal for the leadership and core membership of regional parties like *Vlaams Belang* in

Belgium, who defend Flemish identity against the 'threat' from Francophone culture and economic migration (De Witte 2006). Yet as Prowe (2004) argues, the nationalist right is more concerned with issues of entitlement than regeneration, reflecting the ingrained intolerance and chauvinism of native citizens towards non-nationals. This neonationalism is characterized less by struggles for self-determination than by 'local reactions to larger events and processes', specifically, the 'restructuring of Europe since 1989, as well as global processes, [which] may have started out as a right-wing phenomenon, but has moved on to become one that dominates the entire political spectrum and the large majority of the population today' (Hervik 2006: 93–94).

Despite differences in ideology, purpose and organization, neofascist, secessionist and neonationalist movements can all be classified broadly as integralist in their focus on a 'chauvinistic territorially based essentialism' (Banks and Gingrich 2006: 3), combining nationalism and right-wing populism with varying degrees of success. Unlike neo-Nazi movements such as the National Front or the old BNP under John Tyndall – who called for the 'decontamination' of British society and an assault on cultural modernism and socialist progressivism (Copsey 2004: 87) – far right populist parties are professional political organizations committed to expanding their representation in regional and national parliaments; and, unlike traditional ethnic nationalists, modern neonationalists are aware of the limits of consanguinity as a basis for national identity. As Banks and Gingrich argue, 'much neonationalist rhetoric is sufficiently pragmatic to accept that blood-based homogeneity can never define the boundaries of the nation, let alone the state, and seeks to generate an argument based on historical association' (2006: 9). Although physical features such as skin pigmentation remain important markers for members of the far right, more fundamental are the narratives and myths that celebrate and reinforce the ethnic origins of nations whose historical path to statehood have been characterized by contingency. The rhetoric of exclusion in contemporary integral nationalism testifies to the sovereign inscription of homogeneity on subject populations through socially legitimated cultural and behavioural practices, revealing the historic effects of boundary maintenance in the production of hegemonic identities. Underneath the nationalist rhetoric, however, the subjective appeal of the far right lies in a rejection of democratic universalism and bourgeois cosmopolitanism, suggesting a reaction to the 'silent revolution' of the 1960s. As Minkenberg argues, for the far right the

> counter-concept to social differentiation is the nationally defined community, [while] the counter-concept to individualization is the return to traditional roles and status of the individual in such a community. It is this overemphasis on, or radicalization of, images of social homogeneity which characterizes radical right-wing thinking.
>
> (2000: 174)

In a recent study of the extreme right in Germany, Klein and Simon (2006) begin from the assumption that an emphasis on identity provides individuals with a sense of belonging, distinctiveness, respect, meaning and agency, which in turn reinforce practices such as self-stereotyping, conformity, prejudice and discrimination. Support for the right not only promotes disengagement with universalistic norms but reproduces popular demands for exclusion and boundary maintenance, expressed most clearly in resentment towards the 'illegitimate equality' promoted by liberal elites between the native population and non-nationals. For the extreme right, they argue,

> the 'natural' privilege or taken-for-granted hegemony of one's own collective (national) identity is seen as under threat. At the stage of adversarial attributions, aliens are blamed for this (as well as for grievances that are more directly related to material resources), but civic authorities and other segments of the establishment are also held responsible for (not doing enough to remedy) this identity grievance.
>
> (Klein and Simon 2006: 246)

This resentment is most acute among right-wing nationalists themselves – among voters irreconciled to globalization, immigration and the erosion of hegemonic identities. But a further element in the politicization of collective identity is the projection of local frustrations and resentments onto the 'silent majority' of the general population in an attempt to align the collective identity of the far right with collective national identity as a whole. It is this projection, sustained through propaganda, activism and – in some cases – violence which functions as a transmission belt for the expansion of right-wing politics based on a wider societal acceptance of the 'injustice' of treating nationals and non-nationals equally. Although disturbing as protest movements, the continued weakness of German neonationalist parties can be explained as a consequence of fragmentation and organizational underdevelopment. Unlike in Austria and France, where the far right is viewed as an alternative to the ruling establishment, German neonationalists 'appear to be a receptacle of radical right-wing supporters only when the mainstream parties are perceived to be negligent on issues of immigration and national identity' (Williams 2006: 113). As such, the German far right exerts an influence on popular debate *without* acquiring political power. This trend can be seen in the growth of popular resentment towards Germany's liberal asylum laws: although the right 'do not deserve the credit for implanting such ideas in the minds of Germans, they [have] played a role in rabble-rousing support for highly restrictive policy changes to asylum law and immigration practices' (ibid.: 137).

Neonationalism is also particularly visible in the case of Denmark, where the *Danske Folkeparti* was invited into the ruling conservative coalition in 2001 in the wake of a xenophobic campaign aimed at the Muslim minority.

As Hervik (2006) notes, however, this sudden shift in the fortunes of the far right was hardly an unexpected turn of events given the long-term decline of liberal toleration in Danish society. This process began in the early 1990s with the growth of opposition to European integration, economic migration and the arrival of Bosnian Muslim and Somali asylum-seekers, allowing the far right a series of opportunities to project its ideology and extend its support among the middle class. At the heart of this neonationalist revival is the 'protection' of Danish people from the 'harmful' effects of foreign (i.e. Muslim) influences, a discourse directed against multiculturalism in which culture is 'essentialised, homogeneous and seen as rightfully and naturally belonging to certain (non-western) spaces rather than others. Accordingly, when refugees arrived in Denmark, they were seen to bring with them a "culture" which did not fit very well there' (Hervik 2006: 99). The arrival of asylum-seekers led to calls from the far right for legislation to ensure that non-nationals would quickly adapt to the Danish way of life, albeit as second-class citizens with less access to welfare entitlements than native-born citizens, though as Hervik notes this racist stipulation in the New Integration Act of 1999 was subsequently removed by the government (ibid.: 101). Nevertheless, while the authorities' response to this politicization of collective identity was firm, it failed to prevent a permanent shift away from liberal multiculturalism among Danish middle class voters. As Hervik notes, in the 'lead up to the election on 20 November 2001 neo-nationalism had become the decisive factor and successfully mobilised voters across traditional party loyalties. Surveys further revealed that 80 per cent of Danes welcomed neo-nationalist calls for a tougher policy towards "foreigners" in Denmark' (ibid.: 104), and that support of the far right would persist as long as the 'in-group' feel its collective identity and material benefit threatened by non-nationals.

Williams argues that the

> genius and innovation of radical right-wing parties in Europe . . . are their strategy. While political parties have generally been viewed as a vehicle for the organized representation of popular interests, the radical right-wing parties have reversed this relationship. To some extent the radical right attempts to create the popular interests that provide a basis for party organization.
>
> (2006: 4)

By projecting disquiet and mobilizing bias over issues like unemployment, immigration and welfare, neonationalists promote agenda change, institutional change and policy change to their advantage, forcing mainstream politicians to adjust established positions to prevent a haemorrhage of votes away from the centre-right. The impact of this phenomenon is illustrated vividly by the May 2006 local council elections in the United Kingdom, when the BNP made dramatic gains in the London Borough of Barking and

Dagenham. While this victory was significant in itself, demonstrating the progress made by the far right under the leadership of Nick Griffin, more disturbing were the pre-election comments of the Labour MP for the area and ally of Tony Blair, Margaret Hodge, who made a revealing statement to the *Sunday Telegraph* in which she appeared to condone the shift towards the BNP as a logical response of white working class voters angry at the changing ethnic mix of the borough. Although less than 0.02 per cent of council properties in the area are used to house asylum-seekers, and only 15 per cent of the local population are from ethnic minorities, the impression given by Hodge was that her 'white' constituents were justifiably upset because this once 'majority white' area was becoming more like 'Camden or Brixton' (areas with a high level of immigrants). In a critical analysis of the affair, McFadyean suggests that Hodge's intervention was but the

> latest in stream of comments, insinuations and inaccuracies from leading New Labour politicians which have had the effect of reinforcing prejudice against immigrant communities and asylum-seekers. The voters of Barking and Dagenham have given their answer. If Britain's rulers indulge and covertly endorse the BNP, they cannot be surprised if people vote for it.
>
> (2006: 2)

As Banks also notes, former Home Secretary David Blunkett's support for a 'citizenship test' in 2001 to determine 'Britishness' is a good example of how 'a minority neonationalist party proposes what appears to be a vote-winning policy that is then adapted and adopted by the majority party or coalition as a strategy of containment of the minority party or, more cynically, to remain in power' (2006: 57). As comparative studies confirm (Norris 2005), one of the main factors determining the success of neonationalist parties is the impact of electoral systems, which either enable or prevent extremists to maximize their presence in regional and national parliaments. This factor is clearly linked to the failure of the BNP to take greater advantage of resentment towards immigration and anxieties about globalization among working class and lower-middle class voters. Yet as Givens comments, 'what is remarkable about radical right parties in western Europe is not the differences in their electorates, but the similarities, no matter their level of electoral success' (2005: 151).

Conclusion

Although nation and nationhood are central components of fascist political discourse, the simplistic reduction of fascism to (ultra-)nationalism ignores the complex economic and social forces which produce and sustain right-wing populist ideologies. The reproduction of the nation form under fascism points towards a closer correspondence between law and life predicated on

the legal violation of natural life itself, beginning with experiments in demographic planning, public health screening, repression of homosexuality and racial eugenics. In key respects, these policies reflect the influence of integral nationalism in the late nineteenth century, although the belligerence of fascist nationalism is also linked to an imperial defence of the race-nation as an economic entity, dependent on imperial expansion and war to sustain growth and compensate for internal political tensions. Contemporary far right nationalism, on the other hand, reflects a more defensive stance based on the preservation of hegemonic identities against the combined 'threat' of multiculturalism and globalization. Hence the recent growth of the far right in Europe and the increasing presence of right-wing populism in the political mainstream as centrist parties struggle to outflank far right parties by co-opting xenophobic rhetoric to assuage resentful middle class and working class voters.

8 Fascism and race

Introduction

In Chapter 5 we examined the impact of colonialism and militarism on European political culture, noting how the violence of imperial conquest and colonial rule created a 'boomerang effect' which contributed to the unprecedented destruction of the First World War and the growth of political violence in the 1920s and 1930s. This historical development was juxtaposed with the internalized violence of the civilizing process itself in industrial societies – the ordering practices embedded in the institutional and transactional framework of civil society which take the form of administratively and economically sanctioned violence. In Chapter 7 this argument was taken one stage further, highlighting the 'racialization' of politics and society in the established nation-states of Europe (integral nationalism), and the totalitarian implications of fascist nationalism as a radical form of biopolitics grounded in the state of exception. It was suggested that revisionist attempts to define fascism purely on its own terms – as an intellectual/cultural phenomenon divorced from objective historical conditions – are inherently limited because they overlook the link between fascism and capitalist modernization. Without this contextualization, the 'sudden' appearance of fascist regenerationist movements in the 1920s cannot adequately be explained: fascism is reduced to a violent nationalist outburst or social pathology, an inexplicable descent into racial violence and unreason. It is also impossible to explain the racialization of the nation form in fascism unless we acknowledge the reciprocal determination of racialized representations created by the experience of colonialism in the period 1870–1914, which brought into being a 'world racial system' based on white supremacism (Winant 2004; Füredi 1998), and which encouraged European elites to redeploy racist classifications to 'renaturalize antagonism', ordering women, workers and non-whites or other minority groups within the hierarchical structure of European capitalist society itself (cf. Magubane 2004; De Groot 1989).

In this chapter, we will examine the relationship between fascism and race, focusing on the introduction and social reproduction of racial ideology in Euro-American societies. Our primary concern is to understand the specific

character of *fascist* racism as a type of race-thinking: what exactly do the terms 'race'/'racial superiority' mean in fascist ideology, and how can we distinguish this subtype of race-thinking from other racial ideologies such as colonial racism, white supremacism, elite racism and traditional religious antisemitism? We will also consider the relationship between racism and nationalism, and the extent to which the latter determines or is determined by theories of race and racial difference. Inevitably, the Holocaust stands as a permanent reminder of the dangers of race-thinking, in particular the scientific pretensions of biological racism as it emerged in the late nineteenth century. But it is important to situate the causes of the Holocaust within a broader periodization of racial formations without trivializing the unique nature of this terrible event, which reflects a qualitative shift in the nature of race-thinking in Europe and America in the modern period. Whereas in early modern race-thinking the physiological differences between population groups were *rationalized* in the interests of domination, in modern race-thinking they have become *politicized* (Taylor 2004: 74), primarily to demarcate assimilable and unassimilable groups within a racial formation. Following Omi and Winant (1994), Taylor defines a racial formation as a 'socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed' (2004: 24). A racial formation is, he suggests, linked to a specific racial project, which assigns meaning to human bodies and bloodlines, and distributes resources along racial lines. Modern race-thinking is not simply a question of classification, however, but a process through which societies reproduce identity and authority relations:

> The problem of racist ideology should not be analyzed in terms of its doctrinal content, but rather in terms of the strength that the assumptions of race have in activating mechanisms of power, in generating a device for producing collective identification, and in eliminating a form of alterity that has often been created *ad hoc*. The identitarian construction provided by the body and by biological life is in fact an extremely powerful identitarian identification, more powerful than any other kind of communitarian ethic.
>
> (Forti 2006: 11)

Emerging at the high-point of imperialism in the 1920s, fascist racism reflects a new and militant subtype of 'Europeanism', a permutation of established racial projects which combined to produce an aestheticization of physical difference and superiority in defence of European cultural hegemony. That this commodification of racial distinction should have occurred in its most extreme form in Germany reflects not merely the peculiar myth that German *Kultur* was the 'most truly European, because least entangled in the world' (Kiernan 1980: 152), but the common currency of white supremacism and antisemitism in all European and European settler societies at the time.

Race and race-thinking in Europe

The human race is divided into physically distinctive subgroups, which Taylor (2004) classifies in anthropological terms as 'breeding populations'. Early monogenist theories of race (theories which locate the origin of the species in a single biological source) attempted to naturalize differences between population groups, defining race in terms of 'variety'. The term 'race' (Spanish: *raza*, Portuguese: *raça*, German: *Rasse*) originally signified 'breed', and can be seen as the founding concept of early race-thinking based on the naturalization of status as a consequence of ancestry. The modern idea of 'race', however, is a product of anthropology – of a scientistic aspiration to classify the range of human population groups outside Europe, many of whom appeared in European eyes to belong to an 'obsolete' human past (Llobera 2003). Yet the idea of race graduated from a taxonomical device to a methodological precept, and as Hannaford notes, by 1914 'race as an organizing idea claimed precedence over all previous formulations of nation and state' (1996: 326–27). To explain why this happened, he argues, we need to take into account not just the discovery of new population groups, but the retrospective imputation and legitimation of the category 'race' by historians and philologists as an ordering idea present in earlier civilizations. Yet Hannaford refutes the idea of race as a consistent feature of human communities: 'The emergence of the idea of race,' he argues, 'had something to do with the insouciant and often deliberate manipulation of texts by scientists and historians abandoning earlier paradigms of descent, generation, and right order (and especially the political order) for an even later one (the racial order)' (1996: 6). This revisionism implied a rereading of Ancient Greece and Rome as 'racially ordered' civilizations, yet the idea of race is, he insists, 'fundamentally an Enlightenment notion used within the structure of legitimate intellectual inquiry to explain complex human arrangements, such as caste and tribe, that are based on historical presuppositions and dispositions totally antipathetic to both politics *qua* politics and to race' (ibid.). Although founded on slavery, neither Hellenic nor Roman civilizations were 'racially ordered' in the sense of South Africa under the old apartheid system. On the contrary, ancient societies were notable for the 'absence of race as an ordering idea', despite the retrospective imputation of modern assumptions about race in the analysis of classical texts (ibid.: 85). The works of Cicero and Virgil were not concerned with race in its modern sense, but reveal instead a commitment to an

> institutional and legal framework (a *nomocracy*) capable of accommodating the differences of quaint and strange peoples within a well-ordered citizenry. The major categories within their discourses are *res-publica* and *res-populi* – differentiated private peoples bound together in a nexus of law and in a common citizenship and engaging together in the language of politics.
>
> (Ibid.)

Earlier civilizations engaged in race-thinking, but it was not the deterministic race-thinking which places hereditary background before culture and socialization. In ancient and medieval thought, the most important categorical distinction between humans was not race but the distinction between *political man* and *barbarian*, and it was not until the discovery of the New World that the term 'race' became a key idea in the lexicon of anthropology and biology.

Prescientific concepts of race in Europe were motivated less by genetic differentiation than cultural prejudice, usually toward religious or ethnic minorities such as the Jews or Roma in Europe. Such prejudices did not disappear from Europe – developing alongside narratives of nationhood and national identity; yet their presence was overshadowed by the development of new concepts of race driven by economic and scientific concerns. The origins of modern racism are located in the rationalist idea of creating categories to classify the empirical world. The 'science' of race, argues MacMaster,

> did not emerge clearly until the eighteenth century with the work of thinkers like Linneaus, Buffon and Blumenbach. The Age of Enlightenment was one in which self-confident reason set out to impose order on a natural world by elaborating systems of classification that would enable the underlying structures and patterns of the material universe, regulated by the laws of nature, to be identified and analysed.
>
> (2001: 12)

In this respect, there is a correlation between race-thinking and modernity, which finds its clearest expression in the view that all human political and cultural achievements are, in the final analysis, racially determined, either by observable physiological differences or by attributed characteristics. This assumption laid the basis for the development of 'scientific racism' which 'theorized, and thereby widened, the gaps between races, treating them not as provisionally differentiated varieties but as essentially distinct types. And it refined and expanded the techniques of racial domination and the mechanisms for disseminating the new "racial knowledge"' (ibid.: 43). It is this type of race-thinking that coincides with the emergence of white supremacism and antisemitism, racial formations based on the replacement of 'variety' with 'type', reflecting a new tendency to theorize distinction as a consequence of hereditary processes, and a new typological perspective suggesting that humans should be ranked according to their relative worth or value (ibid.: 44).

In addition, MacMaster notes that the development of biological racism correlates with the new anti-liberal mood in European politics in the 1890s, with the rise of militarism and integral nationalism, and with the emergence of new communications technologies which allowed racist thinkers to reach a wider audience. 'The disquiet with modernism,' he observes, was 'translated into a *fin de siècle* pessimism that regarded European civilization as threat-

ened from without by a process of physiological and racial disintegration' (ibid.: 22). This 'disquiet' with modernity – with the sudden transformation of landscape, economy and society, was shared not just by conservatives but by a new generation of modernists disconcerted by the failure of liberalism to react to the apparent degeneration of European society. As Lentin comments,

> the possibility for racism to emerge with the advent of nationalism, as a *revolutionary project for the organization of populations in the state*, is indicative of 'race's' position at the cusp of a central tension in modernity. On the one hand, it is the novel interest in rationality and progress emerging with Enlightenment . . . . On the other hand, the complete shift to a discourse of polygenetic racial hierarchy is only made possible with the concomitant rise of the idea of separate and unique nations that emerges from an anti-Enlightenment movement: political Romanticism.
>
> (2004: 46; italics added)

As we saw in Chapter 7, the racialization of the nation form reflects not simply a politics of reaction, but the anxieties of rulers confronted by the decline of traditional authority and social stratification. This point is reiterated by Taylor, who notes that after 'capitalist expansion began to occasion labor migrations and other social upheavals, states needed ways to unify, mobilize and mollify their increasingly literate and politically active populations, especially in the face of economic distress, cultural disruption, and potential class conflict' (2004: 44). Just as liberal nationalism was superseded by integral nationalism, an older 'humanitarian' form of race-thinking based on *variety* was supplanted by an new 'intolerant' racism based on *type*, exemplified by the work of anthropologists such as Robert Knox, who posited a theory of racial determinism stressing the 'irrevocable inferiority' of Africans (MacMaster 2001: 14). While black Africans were presented as 'alien outsiders', as a (largely) external threat to European identity, European Jews were depicted as 'aliens within', as an internal threat. This new antisemitism is exemplified in the work of H. S. Chamberlain who, drawing on Gumplowicz, Gobineau and Darwin, combined traditional cultural prejudice and biological racism in an elitist philosophy of race in which 'Jewish' cosmopolitanism and civilization were juxtaposed with noble 'Aryan' culture. Any attempt to develop a coherent understanding of racism in Europe must, argues MacMaster, synthesize these twin racial formations.

White supremacism and antisemitism

The development of new racial formations in Europe and America before and after the First World War is closely tied to national and class projects, such as antisemitism in Germany, Russia and Austria–Hungary and segregationism in the United States (Smith 2002). As Balibar argues, the reciprocal

link between racism and nationalism can be understood most clearly in terms of a dialectic of particularity and universality. Modern racism can be seen as a variable system of classification and hierarchization which simultaneously fetishizes particularity while articulating a *more fundamental universality*:

> racism figures both on the side of the universal and the particular. The excess it represents in relation to nationalism, and therefore the supplement it brings to it, tends both to universalize it, to correct its lack of universality, and to particularize it, to correct its lack of specificity. In other words, racism actually adds to the ambiguous nature of nationalism, which means that, through racism, nationalism engages in a 'headlong flight forward', a metamorphosis of its material contradictions into ideal contradictions.
>
> (1991a: 54)

At the same time, modern racism also expresses the aestheticization of distinction, reflecting the nineteenth-century concern with humanity as a project-in-progress based on the valorization of specific forms of life as 'worthy' of cultivation (ibid.: 58). Given the division of humanity into distinct nations, it became increasingly necessary for 'true nationals' to consolidate their position as the authentic race-nation by promoting ideal types such as the 'white Anglo-Saxon Protestant' (WASP) in the United States (descendents of German, English and Dutch settlers), whose hegemonic status still derives in part from their claim to be the 'true Americans'. Yet by bolstering national identity through the codification of *non*-national criteria, racism negates the principle of national belonging as a project based on citizenship, and therefore undermines political nationalism: 'By seeking to circumscribe the common essence of nationals,' argues Balibar, racism becomes an

> obsessional quest for a 'core' of authenticity that cannot be found, [and] shrinks the category nationality and destabilizes the historical nation. This can lead, in an extreme case, to the reversal of the racial phantasm: since it is impossible to *find* racial-national purity and guarantee its provenance from the origins of the people, it becomes necessary to *create* it in conformity with the ideal of a (super-)national superman.
>
> (Ibid.: 60–61)

Theories of nationhood based on consanguinity may be linked to national questions such as the presence of significant Jewish or black communities within the nation; but they can also assume transnational/transhistorical forms in response to variable economic and political conditions. In this sense, the ideological products of antisemitism and white supremacism are 'transferable commodities', identitarian constructions dependent less on national criteria than the reproduction of non-assimilability in hegemonic narratives of belonging. As a device for producing identification, physical distinction

acquires a level of force and legitimacy which dwarfs alternative modes of integration based on equal citizenship and popular sovereignty as the primary normative principles of nationalism.

Garner argues that the category 'white' is a 'marked racialised identity whose precise meanings derive from national regimes' (2007: 2). The importance of this phenomenon can be seen in the United States where, despite the marginal status of the extreme right, colour has historically functioned as the primary marker of identity, and where social knowledge concerning race continues to be reproduced at an intellectual and everyday level. In America, white racial supremacy is not the exception but the norm, and 'causality in the mechanisms for generating and sustaining white ignorance on the macro level is social-structural rather than physico-biological' (Mills 2007: 20). For Mills, the category 'white' is a structuring property reflecting changing patterns of migration and changing categories of inclusion and exclusion: 'whiteness' is 'universally, instantly, and homogeneously instantiated' (ibid.). Some Europeans (Jews, Celts, Slavs, etc.) were admitted to the 'white' race very late, qualifying for Caucasian status at the same time that segregation between whites and blacks was intensified and codified in US state law. American capitalism required new 'white' migration, and in this new racial formation 'nationality' was no longer viewed as a racial category as it had been in the nineteenth century. This led to a situation where a

> complex system of classification had given way to a strict scheme of black and white, which itself implied an absence of race on the white side and presence of race on the black. The 'ethnic' experience of European immigrant assimilation and mobility, meanwhile, became the standard against which blacks were measured – and found wanting.
>
> (Jacobson 1998: 110–11)

As in British South Africa and French Algeria after 1918, the wartime sacrifices of African Americans were insufficient to collapse this bifurcation, which focused explicitly on the black/white colour line as a marker of status. This reflects not just the ethnocentrism of Euro-American culture, but the ignorance engendered through the reproduction of 'white' self-consciousness. This colour line has become 'entrenched as an overarching, virtually unassailable framework, a conviction of exceptionalism and superiority that seems vindicated by the facts, and thenceforth, circularly, shaping perception of the facts' (Mills 2007: 25).[1] White normativity, he adds, 'manifests itself in a white refusal to recognize the long history of structural discrimination that has left whites with the differential resources they have today, and all of its consequent advantages in negotiating opportunity structures' (ibid.: 28). If 'American civilization' was to remain 'white' civilization, then whiteness was necessary to counter competing identities between European nationals on the one hand, and African (and Southeast Asian) groups on the other. As in South Africa, Australia and other colonial societies, the integration of

'Caucasians' as a race-nation was achieved through white educational institutions which functioned as the

> sites for the ethically legitimated production and distribution of ignorance regarding other races as well as for the production and distribution of the ethically sanctioned knowledge regarding the absolute and relative superiority and inferiority of the white and the 'colored' races, respectively.
>
> (Outlaw 2007: 201)

In Latin America a similar racial regime emerged based on the hegemonic status of Europeans, whose location at the apex of the hierarchy is preserved through the institutionalization of discrimination and racial elitism which use colour as a marker of socioeconomic status (Van Dijk 2005; cf. Garner 2007).

The development of political antisemitism in Europe in the same period illustrates the growing importance of racism in European culture. For Arendt, antisemitism was a means for mobilizing the plebeian urban masses (the 'mob') behind imperial expansion and other populist projects. Imperialism 'undermined the very foundations of the nation-state and introduced into the European comity of nations the competitive spirit of business concerns'. As a result, 'Jews lost their exclusive position in public finance to imperialistically minded businessmen, although individual Jews kept their influence as financial advisors and inter-European middlemen' (Arendt 1951: 15). Emancipation and assimilation led to the loss of their best defence, namely their marginal location outside the class structure: whereas Jews had always occupied a geographical and symbolic space at the margins of society, perceptions changed with their rapid advancement in the division of labour, reinforcing the myth that Jews possessed a unique 'power' which allowed them to succeed where Gentiles had failed. Paradoxically, then, the very success of Jews in assimilating increased their visibility, and hence their vulnerability to overrecognition. This resulted in Jews acquiring a contradictory 'pariah/parvenu status': they could simultaneously be blamed for being different yet cursed for simply adapting too well:

> The roles of pariah and parvenu persisted despite the fact that neither adequately represented Judaism, from an historical or religious point of view, nor did individual Jews identify with them. They survived, and came to form the popular rationalizations for political anti-Semitism, precisely because of the ambiguity in which Jews were held, based upon the artificiality of the choice they nevertheless felt it necessary to make in order to achieve acceptance.
>
> (Lentin 2004: 63)

Talented Jews could no longer be seen as exceptions to the uneducated Jewish masses who had previously lacked any profile in mainstream society,

and as Arendt comments 'exception[al] Jews were once again simply Jews' (1951: 61). 'The Jew' as a reductive category was born, and, once categorized as a 'threat', this alien Other was easily transformed into a scapegoat for social ills, to be classified alongside a long list of racial impurities and inherited social diseases deemed a threat to the health of the nation (cf. Maccoby 2006).

The transition from traditional cultural antisemitism to modern political antisemitism illustrates the antinomies of universalist reason: enlightenment produces a fully rationalized world based on the equal right of citizens to compete for resources and rewards; racism, on the other hand, is a means to deny the moral equality of humans by institutionalizing discrimination. As such, politicized racism draws on entropy-resistant cultural markers which, as we saw in Chapter 7, acquire a political relevance in industrial societies as a means for sustaining homogeneity and order in the face of atomization and dedifferentiation. Counter-entropic markers such as skin pigmentation or physiognomy are functionally irrelevant to the distribution of life-chances and status, yet their persistence visibly contradicts the egalitarian ideology of industrialism in which achievement is contingent on talent and effort. As Arendt argues, the paradox of atomization and dedifferentiation in capitalism is that it shows up human *inequalities* with greater clarity. This paradox is nowhere more apparent than with the Jews, whose differences became clearer for all to see, in particular their disproportional immersion in and mastery of the intellectual and cultural spirit of the time. Dedifferentiation made Jews (who by assimilating largely abandoned their physical distinctiveness) identifiable targets for those groups who were irreconciled to capitalist modernity or who sought to recreate an older form of exclusion by political means.

However, there is a further dimension to modern antisemitism which makes this racial ideology unique, namely the association of Jewishness with a negative dimension of capitalism itself. Jews were reviled as usurers in the medieval and early modern period, but this negative association was superseded by a new anti-materialist association of Jews with the disruptive consequences of capitalism. Highlighting the tension between traditional culture and modern civilization, radical conservatives everywhere drew a schematic distinction between nationalism and Jewish cosmopolitanism, implicating Jews as a threat to the racial harmony of the body politic. As a result, new stereotypes of Jewish 'perversity' emerged which juxtaposed historic national identities with Jewish 'abstraction', and which defined Jews as a degenerative force. Once this 'threat' was defined in biological terms, it was a short step before Jewish alterity could be theorized (alongside other 'negative' racial influences) as an issue for racial hygiene, as a source of 'disease' threatening to infect Gentile society as a whole.

Eugenics and racial hygiene in the interwar period

Jackson and Weidman argue that during the early twentieth century 'nearly every modernizing society had some form of eugenics movement. . . . Popular understanding of eugenics is often restricted to the horrors of Nazi Germany, but, in fact, leftists proclaimed their adherence to eugenic doctrines as much as those on the right' (2004: 109). This reflects the appeal of social Darwinism and the principle of heredity among ideologists of both left and right in the Edwardian era, who saw in eugenics a means to address the 'inherited' deficiencies and backwardness of poorer sections of the population in the rush to create a homogeneous industrial society. While racial science was advanced in Germany on the eve of the First World War, and while German colonial forces had – like other European colonial powers – engaged in genocidal land clearances in Sub-Saharan Africa, there was little at this stage to suggest a unique pathology in German nationalism, placing in question the assumption that German history had followed a 'special path' (*Sonderweg*) from Luther to Hitler distinct from the 'liberal' trajectory of Anglo-American history. Only in Turkey had nationalism resulted in a fully-fledged policy of genocide, leading to the expulsion and killing of two-thirds of the Armenian population of Anatolia in the First World War (Malešević 2006: 206). The radicalization of race-thinking in Germany after 1918 was not simply a consequence of *völkisch* nationalism but of the trauma of the war and its aftermath, which contributed to the radicalization of German racial science in the 1920s.

Richard Weikart argues that one of the most important features of Darwinism is that it provides a 'secular answer to the problem of evil and death' (2004: 73). Darwin's theory of natural selection, he notes, 'provided an explanation for the existence of evil and promised that evil would ultimately fulfil a good purpose' (ibid.). It also provided a 'scientific' justification for denouncing Judeo-Christian morality as an obstacle to the fulfilment of racial destiny, subsuming traditional notions of compassion, reason and pity for a vision of death as the 'natural engine of evolutionary progress' (ibid.: 75). Although Darwin repeatedly asserted the common racial ancestry of all human types, common ancestry in itself did not imply a belief in racial equality. The assumption that certain humans are less equal than others appealed to social Darwinists because life could be presented as a pitiless struggle, resulting in the 'survival of the fittest'. This banalization of Darwin's theory of natural selection appealed (and continues to appeal) to racists at an intuitive level, usually with the flimsiest of reasoning: the argument that only the strongest deserve to survive is easy to demonstrate by pointing to the evidence of nature (though it is more difficult to explain why the experience of civilization erodes the capacity of humans to survive without the complex industrial-technical structures which mediate between domesticated human life and its primary natural environment). Yet the importance of social Darwinism lies not simply in the concept of evolu-

tionary struggle, but in the belief that *if* certain life-forms do not deserve to exist because they fail to demonstrate and conserve appropriate genetic traits, *then* it is more humane to allow them to become extinct or assist in their eradication. It was this idea which drove research into eugenics in Europe and America in the early twentieth century, but which only acquired totalitarian implications under fascism.

The term 'eugenics' (from Greek: well-born) was introduced by Francis Galton in the 1880s, whose primary interest was selective breeding. Eugenics is based on the simple yet dangerous idea that those individuals with a positive genetic inheritance should be encouraged to breed while those with a negative hereditary profile should be discouraged from doing so, either through forced sterilization or judicial murder. This idea was popular among scientific positivists who believed that biology could resolve intractable social problems by applying rational principles of selection: if the weak, criminal or insane members of society could be eliminated through preventative measures or extermination, then the genetic inheritance of the population as a whole could be improved and the social costs of poverty, criminality and disease drastically reduced. In a utilitarian sense, the welfare of the greatest number would be increased by sacrificing 'undesirable stock' as a burden to the healthy majority. This idea won adherents as distinct as Madison Grant in the United States and George Bernard Shaw in Britain, both of whom – for different reasons – believed that society reserved the right to control its biological destiny. What separates Nordicists like Grant from positivists like Shaw, however, was Grant's racist assumption that the Nordic people were a hegemonic race, whose ingenuity and industriousness had forged America, but whose racial hegemony was threatened by immigration and miscegenation, either by allowing Jews to be categorized as 'white' and to marry Europeans, or by allowing African Americans to integrate into white society (Jackson and Weidman 2004: 112; 117). For positivists like Shaw, on the other hand, the appeal of eugenics was to maximize the evolutionary potential of society and overcome the burden of disease, ignorance and criminality, the persistence of which he used to justify judicial murder as a way to eradicate incorrigible and imbecilic elements in the population, using a 'lethal chamber' to execute the criminally insane in a humane way (Stone 2002: 127–28). However, while Darwinists on both sides of the Atlantic championed eugenics by emphasizing its evolutionary benefits, as Stone argues the 'whole language of racial deterioration, elimination of the unfit, and scientific, objective and hence unalterable descriptions of the evils of miscegenation, hybridisation and degeneration fed deftly into the programme of the racists' (ibid.: 131).

The reciprocal development of racism in Europe and America in the interwar period remains a subject of great controversy, and illustrates the importance of MacMaster's argument that antisemitism and anti-black racism share many parallels. However, the progress of eugenics and racial hygiene in Europe and America *also* demonstrate striking parallels, revealed

most clearly in the intellectual exchange between American eugenicists and German racial hygienists in the 1920s and 1930s. Racial science subsequently assumed totalitarian dimensions under German fascism, linking racial hygiene, antisemitism and racial mythology in a new and lethal form, but it is important to register the extent to which American and European race-thinking converged in this period, and how faith in eugenics survived the Second World War despite the horrific consequences of the forced sterilization and 'euthanasia' programmes which prefigured the Holocaust.

Miller (1996) notes that eugenics in the United States was to a large extent the result of a marriage of science and wealth: funded by wealthy families, this new branch of biology reflected the racial elitism and anxiety of privileged sections of US society towards the breeding practices of poor communities and the 'rising tide of colour' in US society (cf. Brunius 2006). American racial science developed in the Progressive Era, as social reformers rose to positions of influence in public life, introducing legislation to regulate the market and improve the health and productivity of the workforce. A central element of this strategy was to apply eugenic conceptions of racial integrity to address three issues, namely: (i) the problem of non-white immigration; (ii) the task of maintaining segregation amid the migration of blacks to the industrial cities of the north; and (iii) the need to sterilize individuals considered racially degenerate or biologically inferior, particularly poor whites in backward states of the South.

In the first case, the primary goal of eugenicists in the United States was to regulate the flow of immigrants through a new policy of selection. Integral to this was a fear not just of race-mixing but of *political* contamination – principally from east European immigrants harbouring revolutionary ideas. One of the principal targets of the proposed legislation was the 'swarm' of Polish Jews, whose cultural identity was considered alien to American traditions (Jackson and Weidman 2004: 115). This resulted in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, which ruled that all future immigration quotas be adjusted to match the existing racial profile of the country, privileging northern over eastern and southern Europeans. Yet the passing of this act also had consequences for the 'Negro problem', encouraging racial scientists to downplay the hereditary distinctions between 'whites' while simultaneously reinforcing the black/white divide – a goal supported by Grant in his bid to prevent miscegenation between white and black Americans (ibid.: 117). Yet while the colour divide was preserved through Jim Crow segregation laws, the enforced isolation of blacks paradoxically encouraged the latter to develop their own forms of capitalism independently of white society. This contributed to the emergence of a modest black middle class in the 1920s, whose new prosperity became an instant source of resentment for poor whites, culminating in the racial terrorism of 1921 when white mobs murdered 300 black Americans in the city of Tulsa, destroying the property of the black community in the process (Luis *et al*. 2006: 89–91). Finally, the question of hereditary deficiency and racial inferiority was addressed with

legislation designed to impose involuntary sterilization on individuals considered to be of 'poor racial stock'. Instrumental in this process was the 1927 Supreme Court ruling *Buck* v. *Bell*, when Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes declared that it is '"better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind"' (Holmes, cited in Jackson and Weidman 2004: 119). One target for the eugenicists was 'white trash' communities who became the subject of field studies designed to highlight the pathology of groups who 'transmitted morally unacceptable and socially and culturally inappropriate qualities to generation after generation' (Wray 2006: 68). Wray adds that although these

> studies get short shrift in most historical accounts of eugenics, they are of great significance, not only for the influence they had on the subsequent development of social science in the United States, but also for their baleful influence in other parts of the world, including, most notably, Nazi Germany.
>
> (Ibid.)

As Stefan Kühl notes, the 'importance of the United States for German eugenicists [is] revealed by the allusions of nearly every German medical dissertation about sterilization in the United States as the first country to enforce eugenics legislation' (1994: 25). American eugenicists were also closely acquainted with racial hygiene in Germany, and watched with fascination the radicalization of German race-protection laws after 1933. Throughout the 1920s, scientists from both countries collaborated on research, which continued into the 1930s as US academics maintained active and supportive ties with their Germanic counterparts (ibid.: 53). Although Nazi ideologists caricatured the United States as a society dominated by 'parasitic' Jewish capital, among the German scientific community at least there was admiration for eugenicists like Harry Laughlin who championed the Nordicist tradition of racial science against 'progressive' schools of eugenics as a reformist movement.

Hinting at problems to come, Schafft argues that one of the hallmarks of anthropology and racial science in Germany during the interwar period was the lack of direction in research. Researchers collated data on population groups for no reason other than the 'need' to record 'racial distinction', encouraging a form of scientism where research is tailored 'to match government agency agendas without offering clear statements about the limitations such funding and policy influences place upon the scientific enterprise . . . ' (2004: 3). Professionalization encouraged an uncritical, accommodating outlook towards authority, with researchers participating in ethnological fieldwork to produce a cultural atlas of German communities in eastern Europe in an attempt to show the importance of racial origin as a factor in determining cultural development (cf. Burleigh 1988). This research was

partly funded by money from the Rockefeller Foundation, which awarded grants to scientists at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology whose work on the racial composition of the German *Volk* struck a deep chord with the reading public whose interest in race had been ignited by the disruption and atrophy of German society in the aftermath of the First World War (ibid.: 57).

As in the United States, racial scientists in Germany, Austria, Sweden and Switzerland were concerned not just with selective breeding but with defending 'Nordic stock'. Biologists like Alfred Ploetz warned that nationalities in eastern Europe with 'strong Asiatic traits' (Poles, Russians, Hungarians, etc.) presented a threat to the Nordic type, although his racism did not embrace political antisemitism. In his view, racial hygiene involved 'a sequence of generations rather than a group-purification process', and, given the substantial cultural and intellectual achievements of the Jewish people throughout history, limited miscegenation between Jews and non-Jews was acceptable 'as a means of enhancing racial fitness' (Miller 1996: 68–69). Similarly, though feted by the Nazi state, Ernst Haeckel was sceptical about the value of Aryanism as a basis for racial science, viewing English cultural hegemony as a more serious threat to the German nation than Judaism (ibid.: 72). Reflexive antisemitism was also rejected by Widekund Lenz, who criticized the use of the term 'antisemitism' as unscientific because there was, in his view, no 'Semitic' race as such. Like Ploetz and Haeckel, Lenz believed that defence of the Nordic race was the primary issue, reflecting a prevailing theme in racial science in the Weimar era, namely that as a result of war, economic crisis and disease, the German population was no longer reproducing itself, creating an unsustainable 'nation without children' (ibid.: 108). As Ehrenreich (2007: 45) notes, racial science and racial unity were increasingly seen as remedies for population decline, encouraging wider discussion of racial issues, and of the 'Jewish racial problem' in particular. Revealing an underlying hostility towards the concept of egalitarianism, the practice of race-mixing was increasingly criticized not just as a threat to racial purity, but as a barrier to the assertion of racial superiority.

Fascist racial ideology

Eugenicist and natalist themes recur repeatedly in fascist racial science and race laws, not just in Nazi Germany but also in Italy, Croatia, Romania and Hungary, reflecting an inter-European concern with racial expansion and racial hygiene which overrides the traditional ethical concern in Judeo-Christian culture with the sanctity of human life. At the heart of this post-Christian ethic of progress lies the view that natural selection requires continual permutation in order to maximize human evolution, hence population expansion is an essential prerequisite for the survival of 'races' because it increases the possibility of racial evolution. This idea – promoted by Darwinists like Galton, Grant, Ploetz and Haeckel before 1914 – appealed to

ideologues of the right and 'progressive' evolutionary thinkers on the left. Married to a militarist belief in the utility of war and war preparedness, fascist racial science served to legitimate a discourse of racial classification, persecution and extermination which enabled agencies of the state to identify forms of human life 'unfit' for existence. It is this confluence of post-Christian ethics and pseudo-scientific determinism which made possible an epochal catastrophe on the scale of the Holocaust.

At the centre of fascist racial ideology lies a *systematic devaluation of unproductive life*, linking social Darwinism and Bergsonian vitalism in a powerful new form. Although this post-Christian discourse on evolution and death finds its most sinister expression in Nazi racial myth, the aestheticization of racial purity is a consistent theme in fascism, extending an existing concern with breeding and heredity in European scientific and political discourse by linking biological racism with a post-Christian ethic of natality oriented towards the maximization of human reproductive power in the struggle to preserve European racial hegemony. And, although this ideal finds expression in white supremacism and other forms of racial elitism, only in fascism do the concepts of aristocratic breeding and selection acquire an explicit political significance, leading to an amoral revision of established ethical principles governing human reproductive activity. Furthermore, it is only in fascism that established ethical principles governing military conflict are finally abandoned as an unnecessary constraint on the struggle of nations for 'living space'.

The historical literature on the origins and development of Nazi racial policy is rich and extensive, outlining in detail the progression from extermination of the mentally ill and disabled to the creation of mass extermination sites in occupied Poland.[2] Of primary concern for the present study, however, is not the administrative economy of racial hygiene and antisemitism in fascist society, but the instrumentalization of race as a device for generating collective identification. To make sense of Nazi racial legislation, we have to explain its role in shaping consciousness – in reproducing the material and cultural conditions of 'Aryan' identity: Nazi antisemitism must be explained not simply in terms of biological racism, but as an aesthetic idealization of nobility and alterity in which the negative racial, cultural, moral *and* economic dimensions of Jewish life are juxtaposed with the 'fully human' and 'heroic' racial identity of the Aryan people (Weikart 2004: 218; cf. Marten 1999).

Nazi racial myth embodies a 'racism of form', according to which 'the effectiveness of race lies in its mythical and "transfiguring" force' (Forti 2006: 14). Nazi anthropologists such as H. F. K. Günther were influenced less by Galton and Darwin than by a pseudo-metaphysical Hellenophile racism common in western philology based on a eugenicist reading of Plato's stipulation that the life which must be cultivated in its purest form is not that of the individual subject but the 'body of the *ghenos*, the body of the race, or more precisely, the expression of the eternal soul of the race' (ibid.: 19). This

racism of form eliminates the distinction between medical and juridical ideals:

> Justice and health are no longer connected in a metaphorical sense; rather their relationship becomes a literal identity: justice is the health of the *ghenos*, and attaining the state of health is the expression of the truth of justice. As *Kallipolis* implies health, so politics implies medicine, and medicine expresses itself politically as the ability to make a people just through selection. True politics is therefore eugenic: matrimonial regulation, the treatment of infants, and the elimination of the abnormal and the deformed.[3]
>
> (Ibid.: 19)

In National Socialist Germany, experiments in breeding, selection and extermination become tools of official state policy, but the 'soul' and aesthetic form of the Nordic race were understood to be the real political ideals. The emphasis of this Hellenistic-Nordic myth is clear from Günther's *Humanitas*, an 'Ariosophical' rereading of humanism, according to which

> only a conception that distinguishes between the best and the worst can preserve the true ethics and ideals, an aristocratic conception . . . a conception which is the knowledge of the best blood that must be increased and the worst blood for which one cannot wish many descendents.
>
> (Günther, cited in Forti 2006: 23)

In contrast with Aryans, Jews are depicted as a simulacrum, because they are 'deprived' of a pure soul, which is further reflected in their impure physiognomy: 'Jews are not simply a different Type, a different soul, of an inferior race: they are the anti-Type *par excellence*' (ibid.), whose presence poses a threat to the racial health and idealism of the Nordic 'type'. In Nazi racial mythology, the

> characteristics of the Jews placed them, term for term, as ignoble is opposed to noble, in opposition to the Aryans. They supposedly possessed no idealism and consequently no solidarity . . .. They had no religion – only a simple code of practical behavior – no culture other than through imitation, and no state, since they were incapable of organizing one. All they did have, in abundance, was deception, the weapon par excellence that enabled them to live as parasites.
>
> (Burrin 2005: 43)

For occultists like Alfred Rosenberg and members of the Thule Society, the Nordic spirit was viewed as a motor of cultural and technological progress from the Hellenic age to the present.[4] Rehearsing themes in the work

of Chamberlain, Spengler and others, Rosenberg (1930) believed that the dilution of Nordic blood and the spread of Jewish materialism – embodied in Soviet communism and plutocratic capitalism – threatened to destroy European culture. As such, confrontation with 'world Jewry' was theorized in nothing less than apocalyptic terms, namely a war of annihilation.

This dichotomization between a resolute Aryan identity and a rootless Jewish persona was used to foster an image of 'Jewishness' as the epitome of cosmopolitanism and abstraction, which Herf elaborates into a sophisticated theory of reactionary modernism, connecting German fascism with the conservative revolutionary tradition in German philosophy and sociology. Thinkers such as Spengler and Sombart sought to reconstruct a post-bourgeois industrial community in which the corrupting effects of capitalism would be overcome by a '"Germanic-Roman spirit" that contrasted sharply with the speculating Jewish spirit' (Herf 1984: 145). In effect, technology should predominate over commerce: the 'concrete immediacy' of German industry and technology should be detached from abstract exchange (ibid.: 151). But as Postone argues, the association of Jews with the abstract domination of capitalism is inadequate: descriptive approaches that identify fascist antisemitism with the rebellion against the 'Jewish spirit' of modernity are inadequate because they would also have to include capital. Yet industrial capital was, he argues, 'precisely not an object of anti-Semitic attacks, even in a period of rapid industrialization. Moreover, the attitude of National Socialism to many other dimensions of modernity, especially towards modern technology, was affirmative rather than critical' (1986: 306: cf. Postone 2004). Instead, Postone explains Nazi antisemitism using a social-historical epistemology based on Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, where the structural forms of capitalism (abstract labour, value, etc.) are not just economic categories but objectified social relations between things: 'When one examines the specific characteristics of the power attributed to the Jews by modern anti-Semitism – abstractness, intangibility, universality, mobility, it is striking that they are all characteristics of the value dimension of the social forms analyzed by Marx.' But this dimension, he argues, 'like the supposed power of the Jews, does not appear as such, but always in the form of a material carrier, the commodity' (ibid.: 308).

As we have seen, labour in capitalism has a dual character, first as a socially productive activity (concrete labour), second as a social mediation in lieu of overt social relations between producers (abstract labour). Because abstract labour mediates itself, 'it constitutes a social structure that replaces systems of social relations and accords its social character to itself' (Postone 1993: 154). This dual character of labour is reflected in the commodity fetish, which creates the false perception of two transhistorical realms of activity, one based on abstraction (the exchange value of commodities), the other based on a substantial and enduring realm of human activity (the concrete use value of commodities). This false juxtaposition is exemplified in those

romantic anti-capitalist ideologies which identify an antinomy between the two dimensions, but 'which perceive capitalism and that which is specific to that social formation, only in terms of the manifestation of the abstract dimension of the antinomy' (Postone 1986: 309). A similar phenomenon occurs in conservative revolutionary and fascist ideologies, where 'Jewish finance' is hypostatized and juxtaposed with 'Aryan production'. But while fascism differentiates between these dimensions, in commodity-determined societies the two levels are *inseparable*: the myth of a noble Aryan realm of production based on an industrious, racialized community of labour is a pure idealization. As we saw in Chapter 2, this false juxtaposition mistakenly identifies the 'self-valorizing' nature of capital, whose concrete dimension changes in accordance with changes in the character of labour. By separating the concrete (Aryan) and abstract (Jewish) forms of value, Nazi antisemitism assumes the character of a robust anti-capitalism oriented towards social harmony and community. In Nazi myth, the negative portrayal of Jewish capitalists – regardless of their actual or imagined harm to the nation – promotes antisemitism, challenging the social order but from a standpoint immanent to that order. As Postone observes, this highlights the biologization of capitalism in the person of international Jewry, who 'were not seen as *representatives* of capital (in which case anti-Semitic attacks would have been much more class-specific).' Rather, they were transformed into a '*personification* of the intangible, destructive, immensely powerful, and international domination of capital as an alienated social form. . . . The overcoming of capitalism and its negative social effects became associated with the overcoming of the Jews' (ibid.: 312–13).

From this perspective, the Holocaust was not merely an extreme outcome of race-hatred, but an industrial attempt to eradicate abstract value – to eliminate the biological personification of abstract value represented by international Jewry. Fascism is not opposed to capitalism, but to globalizing capital as it appears to undermine the concrete integrity and sovereignty of historic nations – a vague threat, but one which is easily translated into the language of the mob: those elements of romantic anti-capitalism that appeal to the mob constitute a false projection, a means of unifying the fragmented mass around an ambivalent but identifiable pariah. This point has been made in a less subtle way by earlier representatives of the Frankfurt School, who saw fascism as an example of status-quo anti-capitalism based on a perverse theory of equality:

> Anti-Semitism as a national movement was based on an urge which its instigators held against the Social Democrats: the urge for equality. Those who have no power to command must suffer the same fate as ordinary people. The covetous mobs – wherever they appeared – have always been aware deep down that all they would get out of it themselves would be the pleasure of seeing others robbed of all they possessed.
>
> (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972: 170)

Postone's analysis represents an advance on this type of approach not because he denies the pseudo-egalitarianism implicit in fascist anti-capitalism but because he connects the ideological dimension to the false antinomy between value in its concrete and abstract forms. Unlike Adorno, for whom antisemitism was one form of identitarian integration among many, Postone recognizes the *singular* role of international Jewry in Nazism: as symbols of international finance and international communism, no other minority could have adequately assumed the unique role of the Jews as an enemy of the race-nation.

In Italy three traditions of race-thinking emerged after unification, one emphasizing Italian membership of the 'Mediterranean' race, one emphasizing Italians' 'Nordic' identity, and one based on the idea of a Latinate 'Italian' race unique to the peninsula. These rival theories of Italian racial identity were supported by different factions in Mussolini's regime, often for very different reasons, but each reflected in a particular way existing patterns of racism in Italian society. Yet none managed to become dominant, even after the introduction of antisemitic laws in 1938, and Italian racial science remained strongly natalist, aimed at increasing the birth rate to improve the military preparedness of the nation. As Gillette argues,

> Mussolini believed that race had the potential to transform society along the lines first enunciated by Weber and Durkheim, and so introduced an official racial ideology into fascism in 1938 in an attempt to unify the Italian peoples and eventually mould them into uniform copies of the fascist archetype.
>
> (2002: 4)

To achieve this, the government 'transformed Africans and (especially) Jews into symbols of the deadly "Other", the anti-fascist nemesis whose existence helped to define the new fascist man' (ibid.; cf. Polezzi 2007). But this was a flawed project from the start, which failed to account for the differences *between* Italians themselves, relying on a notional idea of Italian ethnic homogeneity. Sixty years after unification, there were serious inconsistencies in the Italian idea of the 'race-nation' which were exacerbated by competing views about Italian identity among factions of the fascist state. These, he concludes, effectively

> cancelled one another out, leaving Italian racial identity as ill-defined at the end of the fascist period as it was at the beginning. The only consistent elements of racial policy in the late fascist period were anti-Semitism and anti-Africanism, both of which had an impact on the Italian people, and led to the most dreadful consequences.
>
> (Ibid.: 5)

According to Gillette, Italians had inherited an inferiority complex about the country's status as a 'second-rate' imperial power, which increased their

susceptibility to racial explanations for the relative backwardness of the state. Although anti-Germanic feeling increased during the First World War, there was a recognition among some members of the Italian academic establishment that Italy should also aspire to membership of the 'Nordic race', which was seen as superior to the Mediterranean identity of the South. Italian racism was based less on biological factors than an ideology of reproduction, aimed at 'improving' the Italian social body (De Grazia 1992). Behind this eugenic racism was a profound need to overcome the disorganization, apathy and disunity of the Italians as a once great people with a unique cultural inheritance and a (potentially) glorious future. But despite the efforts of figures like Julius Evola, who championed the conservative-revolutionary ideas of Spengler, and who divided history into its heroic masculine stages and degenerate feminine stages according to levels of heroism and decadence, race-thinking and racial legislation in Italian domestic politics ultimately remained less virulent than in Vichy France.

In Spain, an exaggerated belief in national honour was seen by fascists as the solution to the degenerative tendencies of modernity, and non-Spaniards were obvious targets for discrimination among elite sections of society. Traditional antisemitism among the Spanish right was based on historical and mythic sources, namely distrust of Jews and the Judaic religion following the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors, and the supposed role of Jews in a 'Judeo–Masonic–Bolshevik' conspiracy. However, the presence of antisemitism in Spanish fascism highlights a further complicating factor, namely Spain's colonial involvement in Morocco where Spanish-speaking Sephardic Jews represented a sizeable proportion of the population. This problem was also shared by France in Algeria. In both colonies, Jews played a meditating role between Europeans and Arabs, finding it easier to assimilate despite their non-Christian identity. However, despite the popularity of the philosephardic movement among liberals, Spain remained a conservative and religiously intolerant society.

One of the paradoxes of Spanish regenerationism is that supporters of eugenics viewed the expulsion of the Sephardim after 1492 as a grave error, a 'bloody amputation' which had harmed the 'body of Spain' (Pulido y Fernández, cited in Rohr 2007: 15). Sephardic Jews were seen as distinct from the Ashkenazi communities of eastern Europe, whose culture was entirely alien to Spain, and many Spanish intellectuals supported the idea of repatriation and renewed interaction. Philosephardists believed that the 'Sephardic race'

> stood as an intermediary between the 'pure Israelite and the Castilian'. 'The pure Jew', who could be found in 'the Jewry of Warsaw' 'would be out of place in any Spanish city' because he had 'extremely harsh features' and 'the physical and psychological profile that literature and satire had attributed to him on many occasions'.
>
> (Doussinague y Teixidor, cited in Rohr 2007: 32)

In other words, for cultural and aesthetic reasons, the Sephardim were deemed racially acceptable but the Ashkenazim ('pure Jews') were as alien as the Moors. In this sense philosephardism was not only opportunistic (a means to promote Spanish colonialism in Morocco in competition with France, and to extend cultural and commercial ties with Ladino-speaking communities in the Balkans), it was also explicitly racist, setting the limits of physical and cultural distinction between Spaniards and 'acceptable' Jews. Such distinctions also operated in German fascism, which relied on an exaggerated image of the 'eastern Jew' (*Ostjude*) as an alien type living within the Indo-European family of peoples, distinct in appearance and culture from the liberal and assimilated middle class Jewish population in Germany itself.

Although this peculiar cultural bias in favour of Sephardim was preferable to the vicious antisemitism in central and eastern Europe, it was not shared by most figures on the Spanish right, for whom Jews were an untrustworthy international minority whose cosmopolitanism and commercialism gave them an element of power which could only be rationalized in conspiratorial terms. As Rohr (ibid.: 38) notes, this mythologization of Jewish power was enhanced by the First World War and the Russian Revolution, but came to fulfil a more specific function among fascists and monarchists in the 1930s, allowing them to focus on 'imaginary enemies' and preserve a semblance of unity in their struggle against the democratic government of the Second Republic. For Spanish fascists, the Republican regime's defence of Jews and support for Zionism suggested a failure to understand the 'secret' influence of Jews, Bolsheviks and Masons who were not only driving Europe towards war but were intent on weakening Spanish colonial rule in Morocco and the internal unity of the Spanish state itself as it succumbed to increasing regional fragmentation (ibid.: 53). Although Spanish fascists did not provoke organized violence against Jews, their rhetoric became increasingly racist and bellicose in the mid-1930s, demonstrating public sympathy for the antisemitic legislation enacted by the National Socialist regime in Germany.

The racist ideology and racial practices of the Kemalist state in post-Ottoman Turkey highlight the dialectical interplay between race and nation in fascism with great clarity. Although not fascist in a formal sense, as Gökmen notes, the

> Kemalist regime and the path it followed especially in the years between 1931 and 1945 had some obvious features overlapping with fascism, such as contenting with a single party, a strong reaction against the old regime, existence of solidarist and corporatist, and later on totalitarian tendencies, coalescence of state and party, adoption of a national leader system and increasing state interventionism in the economic field.
>
> (2006: 677)

Having fought on the losing side in the First World War, Turkey's remaining possessions in the Middle East and the Balkans were confiscated, which

encouraged nationalists to look inwards to consolidate Turkish and Muslim hegemony over the rump territory of Anatolia. The Armenian genocide was followed by the forced expulsion of the Greek population of Constantinople and the eastern Aegean, but it was only in the 1920s and 1930s that the Turkish secular state was able to codify a racially specific definition of 'Turkishness' which eliminated competing forms of national or religious identification. In the new Turkey, racial theory and nationalism worked in tandem: race-thinking created the myth of consanguinity to complement common geographical location and common culture, while nationalism helped to meet the 'state's demand for a more integrated – and thus "popular" – relationship between state and society' (Eissenstat 2005: 240). The linguistic and cultural diversity of the population of Anatolia presented the Kemalist regime with a persistent challenge.

The origins of the Armenian genocide can be traced back to the rise of nationalism in response to the fragmentation and decline of the Ottoman Muslim state. The Armenian genocide remains a taboo subject in modern Turkey today, largely because official acknowledgment of the genocide would undermine the legitimacy of the Turkish state, which was founded on the myth of a purely Turkish identity at odds with the cosmopolitan legacy of the Ottoman empire (Anderson 2008). Furthermore, despite the ideological claims of Turkey's secular political elite, in 1918 the term 'Turkish' also meant 'Muslim'. In the founding years of the state, to differentiate between Turkic and non-Turkic Muslims (the war of independence was understood as a 'Muslim war', hence the extreme violence of the anti-Armenian pogroms) would have been counter-productive due to the need for Muslim migration from former Ottoman provinces (Albania, Rumelia, Bosnia, etc.); but as the regime gradually consolidated its control over Turkish society, the aspiration to minimize the formative role of Islam in the creation of the republic, and the desire to homogenize Turkish *racial* identity, acquired particular intensity. As Eissenstat argues:

> Tropes of race had always had an intellectual potency for Turkish nationalist intellectuals. Race and nation were, after all, closely tied in much of nationalist thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Turkish nationalism reflected this. The changing balance of emphasis in Turkish nationalist discourse, however, seems rooted in practical politics as much as intellectual lineage. The increasing secularism of the state and the reforms collectively known as the 'Turkish Revolution' dramatically altered the relationship of the state to society and the nature of state legitimacy. In the process, the state took an increasing interest in elaborating a definition of Turkish identity that would simultaneously act as a counter to Islamic symbols of political identity and yet still be able to incorporate the vast majority of the Republic's citizens.
>
> (2005: 251)

The solution to the problem of political integration was to assert Turkish racial identity as the inspiration and founding source of Anatolian civilization, downgrading Islam as a unifying force in the state in an attempt to redefine Turkey as an equal to the 'white' European nations of the West (ibid.). In practice, the regime elevated the status of Turkish racial identity while suppressing non-Turkic ethnic groups like Roma, Kurds, and Abkhazians, primarily through coercive assimilation. This led to perverse attempts in 1932 by the regime to classify Turks as an 'Aryan nation', and to define Turkish ethnicity in terms of inherited physical-anthropological characteristics such as skull size (Akyol 2007). As in Germany, Croatia, Hungary and Romania, the racialization of national identity in Turkey was used to assert unity over diversity, and increase the efficiency of administration. Throughout the fascist epoch, the Turkish state intensified this strategy, which remains official policy in Turkey today.

Conclusion

The determining role of race in fascist ideology remains a controversial subject, particularly in the case of National Socialism. The intentionalist/functionalist dispute in German historiography has largely run its course, but the causal significance of antisemitism as an explanation for the Holocaust continues to preoccupy researchers. Most commentators accept that the 'Final Solution' would have been unthinkable in the absence of a deep and irrational form of antisemitism of the type identified above. Yet as Volkov argues, it is

> easy to forget that long-established history lesson, namely that ideologies are never simply *realized*; that they are never just *put into practice*. The common model of background and events, preparation and performance – the familiar two-tier structure, in which the first always explains the second – has repeatedly proven flawed.
>
> (2003: 40)

Ideology – in this case the cultivation of racist dispositions which orient themselves towards their chosen object – is reproduced in the political process itself. As such, the determining role of race in Germany should not blind us to the fact that National Socialism was a product of elements which became 'constitutive in a historical phenomenon *only* after being condensed and crystallized within it' (Smith 1986: 234). Nazism was successful in binding Germans behind its programme because 'its structure was built around central concepts that, in the political environment of interwar Germany, appeared to integrate the disparate individual elements of the party's programme in a convincing fashion' (ibid.). Nazi racial imperialism also reflected political aims not caused by antisemitism, namely the reassertion of sovereignty (up to 1936), the quest for autarky (1936–41), and the

prosecution of *Weltpolitik* following the invasion of the USSR (ibid.). A similar process occurred in Italy, where the embrace of Aryanism and anti-semitism in the 1930s (in addition to anti-Africanism) coincided with the country's formal alliance with Germany and Mussolini's enthusiasm for eugenics as a scientific means for producing 'fascist man' (Sznajder 1995).

Anti-liberalism and opposition to globalization are common threads uniting historical fascism and the contemporary far right but the function of racism in the two phenomena is distinct. As Prowe argues, fascism

> intensified and transformed traditional racism and injected it into the internal social and political conflicts spreading throughout Europe. In contrast, the radical right phenomenon of recent decades is a consequence of fierce decolonization struggles that ultimately drove Europeans into an often bitter defensive.
>
> (2004: 128)

Yet as Sykes (2005) notes, defence of white identity and fears of racial degeneration have been consistent themes in right-wing discourse. As we saw in Chapter 7, the extreme right in Europe and America is divided between white supremacists and right-wing populists; but their mutual concern with preserving monoglot identities reflects deeper and more persistent anxieties among both affluent and disadvantaged voters about the future of European identity and the realities of economic migration and multiculturalism in a global market economy. Hence the defensive issue of race remains a powerful weapon in the ideological armoury of the extreme right who, while distancing themselves from the codified state racism of interwar fascism, make effective use of racial stereotypes and xenophobia in their bid to protect European culture from external 'contamination'.

9 Fascism, gender and sexuality

Introduction

It has been suggested that to understand fascism we first need to explain its relationship to the commodity form as a structured social practice which conditions the ways in which reality is understood. As a social form, the commodity is independent of its material content, implying that 'value' – as a social mediation – is contingent on the specificity of historical-social relations in different commodity-determined societies. In this final chapter, we will be concerned with the *kinds of body* fascism produces by analysing the social production of gender and sexuality in fascist societies. Building on the argument in Chapter 8, the aim is to highlight not simply the aestheticization of gender and sexuality in fascism, but the connection between the triumphant fascist body and its cultural and economic coordinates. Here it is important to link our discussion of gender with Foucault's (1977) conceptualization of productive power as control over the homeostatic social body, focusing on the techniques adopted by fascists to cultivate the internal equilibrium of the race-nation by adjusting its physiological reproduction. The organization of the social body in fascism exceeds the constraints of bourgeois law, medicine, demography and criminology to acquire a totalizing force: the fascist body becomes a 'corporeal text', the site of breeding practices and disciplinary projects which exceed the established framework of liberal governmental regimes.

In what follows, we will be concerned with three themes. First, it is essential to locate the fascist representation of gender and sexuality in bourgeois culture and society. Mosse (1985, 1996) argues that modern definitions of masculinity and heterosexuality are closely tied to bourgeois nationalist discourse in the nineteenth century, and locates fascism in this tradition. Although it is no longer viable to view this discourse on gender in purely negative terms – as De Groot notes 'women's history has extended beyond exclusive concern with female subordination to explore the many and diverse forms of subversion, accommodation, and resistance which developed in order to deal with their situation' (1989: 89) – it is impossible to explain the stratification and commodification of gender in fascism without reference to

the historical relation between capital, gender and asymmetric power relations between men and women. To make sense of this relation, we need to understand the differentiation of forms of value between a *relative* masculine sphere of production, material exchange and control and an *equivalent* feminine sphere of reproduction, emotional exchange and subordination (Holter 2003). As noted in Chapter 2, fascism connects a mythical past with an idealized future through a revalorization of archaic themes, fixing and preserving an artificial value for ideological commodities through state intervention. This phenomenon is revealed unambiguously in the fascistization of gender and sexuality, which reinforces a type of gender asymmetry indicative of reactionary modernity.

Second, we need to explain the construction of masculinity and femininity in relation to the corporeal aesthetics of fascism. Here we can link the discussion of gender with our earlier discussion of nationalism and racism, highlighting the links between gender, race and nation in the cultivation of the fascist social body. In bourgeois culture, alternative gendered and racial identities are things to *be* represented – to be contrasted against a rational ideal type of white, male heterosexuality, and so distantiated spatiotemporally from European modernity.[1] The fascist discourse on gender offers an exaggerated defence of white masculine identity in a period of crisis: the mythic construction of masculinity and femininity in fascism is contingent not simply on the separation of gender roles or the legitimation/proscription of bodily practices, but on the ideologization of virility and fertility as *political* imperatives (Korotin 1992; Spackman 1996). Yet, while defence of white masculinity remains a consistent and defining feature of right-wing discourse, the cultural reinforcement of what Kaufman (2007) terms a mysterious yet repellent male identity remains vulnerable to the levelling force and abstraction of modernity in which feminine moral psychology competes with yet also *completes* a 'surplus-repressive' masculinism predicated on the fantasy of power. Fascist man, argues Theweleit (1987), actualizes the repellent masculinity which bourgeois man is prohibited from expressing in order to perpetuate a sex/gender system based on structured inequalities of power.

Third, we must explain the ambivalent connection between fascism and homosexuality. The received view of fascism as a homophobic ideology conceals a more complex set of determinations. On the one hand, fascism is directed against all manifestations of effeminacy and sexual deviance, and the persecution of gay men and lesbians in Nazi Germany testifies to the extreme cruelty of fascist regimes. On the other hand, the performative enactment of hypermasculinity in fascist political culture militates against the stabilization of bourgeois gender roles through a suppression of feminine identities and a highly charged sentimentalization of male camaraderie outside the context of heterosexual domesticity. Although the normative idealization of heterosexuality in fascism is omnipresent and oppressive, the misogynist violence of fascism highlights the tension between a prescribed homosocial fantasy of 'male autarky' (where men are invulnerable to and independent of women)

and a proscribed homosexual culture (where men dispense with the necessary mediation of capitalist patriarchal relations in the possession and exchange of women) (cf. Spackman 1996: 59–60). As a largely 'male event', fascism cultivates a homoerotic charge between men yet promotes a 'cognitive and ideological apartheid around homosexuality' (Sedgwick 1994: 51).

The social construction of gender in late bourgeois culture

Historical analyses of fascism and gender emphasize the exaggerated masculinity of fascist cultural production, connecting this emphasis on maleness to the experience of soldiers in the First World War. Historians note the formative experience of the war on the male psyche, which encouraged anti-liberal and anti-feminist attitudes among veterans unable to adapt to civilian life. 'As the self-proclaimed voice of the values of *combattentismo*,' argues Falasca-Zamponi, fascism

> glorified the masculine experience of the trenches and exalted struggle as a source of life. History could not unfold without contrasts and conflicts: a social war was now necessary to refurbish spiritual and moral values in Italy and to ensure the country's renewal.
>
> (1997: 119)

Theweleit (1987, 1989) documents a similar logic in Germany where demobilized *Freikorps* 'soldier males', having 'turned their backs on intimacy' and suppressed every vestige of human desire, employed savage violence to eradicate subversion in working class communities. But to what extent was this hypermasculine fantasy of violence and anti-feminism latent in European culture before the war?

Virginia Woolf argued that men's traditional power over women is a form of fascism in itself. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf examined the reproduction of asymmetric gender relations in the Victorian middle class family, based on the economic dependence of women on men. The women in Woolf's work, argues Gättens, 'are forced to support a sex/gender system based on a concept of maleness that depends as much on providing for a family as on maintaining male virility, which is closely linked to militarism' (1993: 37). The evidence suggests that the polarization of gender in fascism radically extends a stereotype of gender and sexuality in the normative reproduction of capitalist relations which correlates closely with the invention of 'race' in colonial discourse.[2] A glance at the early work of Marinetti confirms that the hypermasculinity, misogyny and homophobia in fascism all predate the war, and cannot be understood as a 'pathological' failure to readjust to bourgeois normality. However, fascist discourse on gender is not simply a retrenchment of patriarchy, as Theweleit (1987) suggests, but a new model of masculinity in which the horror of abstraction as a threat to concrete identities occasions a misogynist negation of autonomous femininity and a homophobic negation

of homosexual desire. The methodological error of radical feminist theory lies not in its identification of gender as the most fundamental division of human experience, but in its failure to historicize this category by linking the development of asymmetric gender relations to the changing economic organization of society. As Sedgwick argues, despite its achievements in defining patriarchy, radical feminism 'has shared with structuralism a difficulty in dealing with the diachronic. . . . Implicitly or explicitly, radical feminism tends to deny that the meaning of gender for sexuality has ever significantly changed' (1985: 13; cf. Abrams and Harvey 1996). The social construction of gender in bourgeois society has been determined not just by cultural factors but by the interaction between gender and capital. This point was acknowledged by Engels (1884), who argued that because women do housework and nurture and support male workers, 'it is through the reproduction of labour power that women are articulated into the surplus value nexus which is the *sine qua non* of capitalism' (Rubin 1975: 162). Rubin questions the value of the term patriarchy which in her view obscures the 'distinction between the human capacity and necessity to create a sexual world, and the empirically oppressive ways in which sexual worlds have been organized. Patriarchy subsumes both meanings into the same term' (ibid.: 168). Although 'patriarchy' is a well-established concept in the lexicon of social science, a more neutral term might be 'sex/gender systems', through which 'concrete forms of socially organized sexuality' are reproduced (ibid.: 169).

As Di Stefano argues, 'gender' refers to representations of difference 'constructively imposed on human subjects. In most cultures, gender is patterned in dualistic and hierarchical modes that promote male privilege and female subordination' (1991: 31). Liberal historians acknowledge the link between gender and culture, and in an insightful study Mosse (1996) narrates the evolution of masculinity as a new stereotype of sexual identity. 'The manly ideal', he observes,

> corresponded to modern society's felt need for order and progress, and for a countertype that would serve to increase its self-confidence as it emerged into the modern age. Moreover, from its beginning, the manly ideal was co-opted by modern nationalism, giving it an additional powerful base.
>
> (Ibid.: 77)

This new conception of masculinity is distinct from older models of maleness precisely because it developed in response to the changing needs of bourgeois society: 'Modern stereotypes did not exist in an earlier age, even if appearances mattered and men were supposed to walk and stand in a proper manner' (ibid.: 5). Modern masculinity – like virtuous femininity – should be understood as a 'positive' stereotype based on an 'objectification of beauty' integral to nationalist discourse, which could be valorized against 'negative' stereotypes of homosexuals, blacks and Jews. The new stereotype of mascu-

linity also acquired an aesthetic quality as the *white* male body was identified with order and progress, obscuring an older, aristocratic ideal of masculinity which lacked coherence and moral force: traditional concepts of honour remained, but were codified into new representations of masculinity based on virtue and physiognomy (ibid.: 37 cf. Hoch 1979). Here Mosse touches on an issue raised in Chapter 8, namely the connection between scientific discourse and popular culture: against out-groups like homosexuals and Jews, anthropologists 'exalted the "physically beautiful" as an attribute of superior European species' (ibid.: 59). It is for this reason that Italian anthropologists could maintain that the 'inferiority' of Africans was 'inscribed in their bodies, as a testimony of decay and involution' (Polezzi 2007: 45).

Mosse also draws a link between the new model of masculinity and modernization. In the *fin de siècle* period, he suggests, the hegemonic image of masculinity came under increasing attack from all quarters: from women demanding equality, from homosexuals demanding rights, and from a 'generalized threat of degeneracy' (Mosse 1996: 100–101). All of these threatened the self-image of the race-nation represented by virtuous masculinity as a bulwark against the abstraction of modernity. Partly for this reason, the nations of Europe welcomed the outbreak of war in August 1914 with an unprecedented outburst of irrational exuberance, as the war 'tied nationalism and masculinity together more closely than ever before, and, as it did so, brought to a climax all those facets of masculinity that had merely been latent and that now got their due' (ibid.: 110). This exuberance reveals a reciprocal relation between militarism and masculinity which has outlived the despotic origins of war in ancient society as a hierarchically organized, lethal activity (Hopton 2003). For warrior-intellectuals like Marinetti and Jünger, it was only in war that authentic freedom could be experienced and the gulf between an insipid bourgeois civilization and an honourable martial culture reaffirmed – even if, as Mosse observes, the 'reality of [industrialized] war had, for the most part, put an end to the close association of war and adventure' (Mosse 1996: 114).

Mosse identifies the ideological determination of masculinity in bourgeois society, which was further reinforced in colonial settler societies such as British South Africa and French Algeria with the expansion of European imperialism. As De Groot argues, throughout this period

> one can observe the reshaping and intensifying of a range of social boundaries and differences. On the one hand this process involved the emergence of clearer distinctions between female and male, worker and employer, and between different ethnic or cultural groups; on the other hand it required closer, more compelling interactions between 'sexes', 'classes', or 'races'. In gender terms this meant sharper male/female distinctions within families but also close mutual economic and personal reliance, a paradox manifest in struggles around the 'family wage', women's rights, and the cult of domesticity.
>
> (1989: 91)

If distinctions based on gender or race could be depicted as '*essential*, "naturally" fixed categories, then they could not be affected by *contingent* factors, whether history, social change, or demands for reform' (ibid.: 96). As such, assumptions of inferiority and inequality could be artificially sustained, justifying a hierarchy of 'worth' from the most to the least highly valued specimens of humanity. Such distinctions were not simply tools to sustain relations of domination, but 'images of otherness', which expressed the 'conflicts, desires, and anxieties which were part of the lived relationships between sexes and races, the *realities* of sexual and imperial power' (ibid.: 100).

Conventional sociological theories of gender and sexuality keep the categories 'gender' and 'capital' separate, but as Butler argues, ideological representations of these values are 'systematically tied to *the mode of production* proper to the functioning of political economy' (1998: 40). Cultural representations of gender and sexuality are embedded in the materiality of social relations, forcing us to consider the ways in which capital and gender are internally related. Holter (2003) suggests that capitalism brings about a 'reordering' of men and women in contrast with traditional patriarchal societies. To explain this, she posits a model of gender mediation which parallels Postone's (1993) theory of labour mediation in an attempt to explain how certain forms of exchange require and produce gender. Given a certain relation between the masculine and feminine sphere and the specific ways in which this relation is renewed, gender is an outcome: a sex/gender system is not simply a matter of performance as some radical feminists argue, but the social manifestation of background relations which appear not directly but as value forms: 'Although the question "*why do they appear in this form*" is perhaps the most interesting aspect of Marx as a sociologist,' she writes, it is neglected 'in favour of a humanistic, non-forms aware interpretation of Marx, or an orthodox, dialectical-materialist one. Both tend to put the concept, the abstraction, above historical change, which is precisely what Marx tried to avoid' (ibid.: 35). The real question is: why does the relation between society's production and reproduction processes appear as a gender relation? Holter's analysis reveals two levels of exchange:

> On the first, symmetrical level, one person is posited as being equal to the other, and differences between the two are incidental or personal. On the second, deeper level, there is a not a meeting of persons in this sense, but of money and social control on the male side, and women as sex and beauty on the female side. . . . [It] is precisely the *combination* of the two levels that creates our concepts of gender. This is the case because the symmetrical level relation basically only creates personal positions and identities, while the second level basically only creates men as subjects while women become their collective objects. The combination retains the second element and yet makes women themselves, as subjects, 'in on the deal'. An exchange of women (as objects) between men is thereby fulfilled through an exchange between men and women (as subjects).
>
> (Ibid.: 35)

Two positions arise in this double-level hierarchical relation: the *relative* and the *equivalent*, which characterize masculinity and femininity respectively. In this binary, the

> commodity in the relative (or production sphere) position in the symmetrical relation does not depend on this relation for its realization even though it depends on it for its longer-term reproduction needs. . . . The commodity in the equivalent (or reproduction sphere position), on the other hand, depends on this relation for its realization, and therefore gender is not perceived as a minor matter or comparable to other exchange but rather as a *key link* to the world at large.
>
> (Ibid.: 36)

Crucial to this is the differentiation of forms of value in the (male) sphere of production and (female) sphere of reproduction, where the public, masculine actor acquires a level of autonomy and rationality relative to other free (male) agents, while the domestic, feminine sphere is devoid of instrumentality. The gender system which arises is not a universal structure of patriarchy, but one dimension of a social formation in which asymmetric relations are reproduced under new historical conditions, creating a tension between the formal egalitarianism and levelling force of capitalism and sexual relations of domination.

Synthesizing these positions, it is clear that the elevation of hegemonic masculinity and the subordination of femininity cannot be understood in isolation from capital. Smith stresses the need to locate a bridge between cultural theory and critical political economy, noting that in traditional Marxism 'racism and sexism are given some attention, but only insofar as the oppression of racial minorities and women produces a recognisably "economic" effect' (2008: 80). From a neo-Weberian perspective, feminists like Fraser (1997) distinguish a politics of distribution from a politics of recognition, which can be modelled using axes of wealth and status; yet by ignoring the way capitalism 'intertwines itself with the perpetuation of compulsory patriarchal heterosexuality . . . , Fraser risks ignoring the gains made by socialist feminists and leftist psychoanalysts in the 1970s and 1980s' (Smith 2008: 81–82). Butler, on the other hand, overturns the (false) distinction between the economic and the cultural: gender and sexuality are not epiphenomenal effects, but integral moments in the capitalist mode of production. From a poststructuralist standpoint, it is possible to theorize a 'mutually constitutive relation between the regulation of sexuality and the reproduction of capitalist relations in specific contexts, but such a relation would have to be demonstrated with reference to specific historical cases through structured empirical research' (ibid. 84–85). As we shall see, research on fascism highlights a specific determinate relation between gender, patriarchy and capital where subjugation of autonomous femininity becomes critical for the continued supremacy of hegemonic masculinity, both in an economic and sociocultural sense.

Fascism and the cult of masculinity

In feminist historiography, fascist discourse on gender is interpreted as an exaggerated defence of masculine identity and patriarchy: fascist propaganda is replete with references to virility, fertility, male invulnerability and superhuman power, suggesting an asymmetric differentiation between a masculine 'totality' and a feminine 'lack' which Blum (1996) identifies in the literary production of Marinetti. Like Theweleit, she links the horror in fascism towards the 'formlessness' of femininity with the anxiety of bourgeois society towards the 'decomposition' of modernity: femininity indicates to Marinetti castration and loss of power, hence his obsessional evocation of 'oppressive masculinity, imperialist aggression, and the technological violence with which nature is subjugated and reduced to a monstrous, hyperproductive but unliveable environment' (ibid: 45). To understand this syndrome it is not enough to emphasize the destabilizing effect of war on the male psyche or the trauma of readjustment to bourgeois 'normality'. As Spackman observes, studies which present the exaggerated masculinity of fascism as a psychological aberration 'imply that its roots could not be traced in all that had come before it, and that it did not leave seeds for future fascisms' (1996: 4). Such assumptions make little sense, for there are no unassailable distinctions between liberalism and fascism: the defence of hypermasculinity and male potency in fascism finds its origins in the disciplinary violence and emotional repression necessary to sustain a universally binding stereotype of virtuous masculinity adequate to the biological reproduction and aesthetic representation of the race-nation. A more plausible strategy might be to explain the boundary maintenance function of exaggerated fascist masculinity in the context of a transgressive modernism whose ambivalence towards emancipated femininity highlights the fragility of bourgeois 'normality' itself.

The exaggerated masculinity of fascism is based on a fantasy of virility and patriarchal domination in which the suppression of femininity and the corrupting 'feminine' effects of egalitarianism, democracy and cosmopolitanism are considered vital for the cultural survival and economic progress of the race-nation. Yet in a more extreme sense, this emphasis on masculinity and virility builds upon a radical exclusion of the feminine in the social construction of nationhood, the primary consequence of which is a gendered distinction between the public/private sphere and active/passive citizenship. The radical suppression or exclusion of the feminine in fascism emerges as the prior condition for a hypermasculine definition of nationhood in which reproduction and socialization become direct concerns of the state. Although this can be understood as a tendential feature of industrial societies – where the state augments and intrudes upon a formerly private, domestic realm of socialization and pedagogical development – the denial of the feminine in fascist society as a legitimate dimension of human experience extends an anachronistic sex/gender system which is incompatible with cultural modernization. But not only does fascism negate the influence of femininity in social-

ization, as Ockenfuss observes, it also seeks to 'remove the locus of regenerativity from its biological seat within the female and place it squarely within the artificial, cultural domain of the male, where it must be maintained by force' (1997: 213).

A central feature of fascist hypermasculinity is the revalorization of martial traditions which demarcate the public role of the male in protective, militarized societies. From a historical-sociological perspective, Harrison points out that the 'military uses its socially constructed polarity between masculine and feminine in order to use masculinity as the cementing principle that unites "real" military men in order to distinguish them from non-masculine men and women' (2003: 75). An added component in this process is the dehumanization of out-groups (women, ethnic minorities, foreigners) which 'draws members of combat units together and facilitates the characterization of members of the dehumanized groups as "the enemy", whenever this characterization becomes necessary or convenient' (ibid.). Although women are not excluded *ipso facto* from military communities – as Yuval-Davis (1997) notes, modern warfare has led to the recruitment of women into military bureaucracies – the sphere of military organization is a bounded zone of activity based on the reproduction of authoritarian values such as hierarchy, discipline, obedience and command. These values are typically present in non-military spheres of activity such as government bureaucracies and large corporate organizations, but in the military they acquire a totalizing force that silences alternative orientations that may place in question the legitimate monopolization and concentration of lethal violence.

The link between violence and gender in fascism has been analysed most closely by Theweleit, whose study on the literary production of former *Freikorps* officers in Germany after the First World War is a landmark text in fascist studies. Synthesizing perspectives from psychoanalysis, radical feminism and critical theory, Theweleit describes the characters in Jünger's work as men who 'look for ecstasy not in embraces, but in explosions, in the rumbling of bomber squadrons or in brains being shot to flames' (1987: 41). Compared with the noble calling of the 'soldier male', union with the feminine is equated with fear of dissolution: desire 'flees from its object' into violence, leading these horrified men to portray 'proletarian women' as whores (ibid.: 45, 69). Theweleit locates the cause of this horror in a primal male fear of castration and loss of gendered identity: the armed and dangerous communist female is a threat to their masculinity, and this loathing extends to 'red nurses' who tend to the wounds inflicted by their rifle butts and bayonets. By erasing intimacy and purging themselves of natural desire, the real love interest of the soldier male is transferred to female family members (mothers and sisters) who symbolize chaste purity (ibid.: 112). For Theweleit, male inadequacy and contempt for femininity were exacerbated by the class hatred between provincial, petty bourgeois *Freikorps* officers and the urban proletarian women and men they were hired to suppress, which

contributed to the violence that scarred Germany's industrial cities in the first years of the Weimar Republic.

Theweleit also defines the misogyny of the *Freikorps* officers as a reaction against the historic transformation of women's roles in capitalism, which leads to the production of more 'malleable' feminine identities within the context of capitalist patriarchy (ibid.: 323). Although he does not elaborate on these new feminine identities, juxtaposed to emancipated femininity is the 'soldier male', whose repellent masculinity is acquired through a ruthless suppression of sensitivity and intense psychological and physical deprivation. Soldier males learn to conceal feeling and desire in a training regime which creates a 'machine-like order of bodies', and Theweleit interprets the 'armoured man of steel' in Jünger's work as a 'physical type devoid of drives and of psyche,' a man who has 'no need of either since all his instinctual energies have been smoothly and frictionlessly transformed into functions of his steel body' (1989: 159). The armoured man of steel becomes, in effect, a vehicle for absorbing sexual desire: 'Jünger calls on the machine to take over from the body, to perform functions for which the body is inadequate: to function frictionlessly, quickly, powerfully, brilliantly, expressively – perfectly – and to remain whole despite internal explosions' (ibid.: 197). Such brutal socialization was hardly unique to Germany, as can be seen in the case of Britain, where militaristic indoctrination has traditionally been used to transform middle class men into willing servants of empire. Yet as Mangan notes, in the

> light of the success of British militaristic indoctrination, it is interesting that in a German setting what was of further significance was imagery. Ernst Jünger, while no Fascist, played a significant part in projecting this imagery. . . . Men 'discovered their true nature as warriors'. War offered the freedom 'to be a man'.
>
> (1999b: 129)

This idealization of the fascist class warrior can be seen as a precursor not only to the petty bourgeois street-fighters of the SA who terrorized the left in the 1920s and early 1930s, but to the later idealization of the 'political soldiers' of the SS, an organization whose professional, technocratic ethos revealed a 'radical longing for solidarity, pugnacity and the advanced mechanization of war' (Reichel 1999: 165).[3]

A similar reverence for hypermasculinity and heightened anxiety towards feminine emancipation can be seen in the misogynistic, homophobic work of Marinetti, whose futuristic ideas highlight the fantasy of power in imperialist and fascist ideology. Gori (2000: 33) argues that of all the intellectual movements of the late bourgeois age, it was futurism which 'most absorbed the mysticism of the Superman', developing a racist fantasy of Italian creative genius which was transformed by the fascist state into the model of 'fascist man'. As Blum observes, the rhetoric of gender in the *Manifestos* is saturated

with contempt for the feminine, exemplified in the rejection of nostalgia, sentiment, lust and historical yearning as 'intellectual poisons' containing 'obvious elements of symbolic femininity' (1996: 32). 'By colonizing the feminine body as the locus of artistic creation,' it is argued, 'the decadent aesthete attempts to sublimate the limits it symbolizes, but in so doing he withdraws from the "virile" world of ideas and action into the "feminized" world of sensuality and introverted passivity' (ibid.). For Marinetti, women are identified with formlessness and lack: feminine sexual identity implies castration, and passive retreat from reality, and any appropriation of or reconciliation with femininity therefore runs the risk of surrender to it. Femininity equals sterility, and even if men require women to function reproductively, normal bourgeois cohabitation 'destroys the need for danger'. 'Only during war can proximity to women be celebrated,' argues Spackman, 'for fighting on the national front allows the male to ease up on another. Girded with nationalistic ardor, the futurist can even cross the border between homosociality and homosexuality' (1996: 15).

Spackman examines the development of exaggerated masculinity in Italy in detail, and locates its principal node of articulation in the concept of *virility*. Developing Laclau's (1977) theory of ideology as a condensation of discourses which interpellate individuals as subjects of power, she insists that virility binds the constituent elements of fascism together – although she notes that in Italian culture the word 'virility' is used in a more general sense to mean '"that which is proper or suitable to the strong, well-balanced and self-confident person",' rather than simply potency (1996: 2). Like Blum, for whom 'Marinetti's metaphor of sexual violence is a radical version of a very old phallic fantasy: the exposure or unveiling and subsequent penetration of nature' (Blum 1996: 45), Spackman sees the virile leader of fascism as a rapist who dominates the feminized and submissive nation. In this sense, the projection of *national* virility is at the centre of Mussolini's image: the leader becomes a commodified icon for the highest values of the regime, projecting male power and charisma with the aid of modern photographic and cinematographic media. Gori (2000, 2004) places a similar emphasis on the importance of virility, noting the aggressive physicality of Mussolini as a 'political athlete'. In contrast with Germany, where Arno Breker's Greco-Roman images of masculine perfection 'symbolized the iconography of a new Aryan, whose steely will was made flesh through iron muscle, cold expression, calm gaze' (Mangan 1999c: 13), the image of the superman in Italy was identified with the corporeal form of Mussolini, who as Gori notes had to live up to this commodified representation of virility even as the ideology he embodied through this image became 'petrified' in Italian consciousness.

Mangan links the commodification of the nude male body in fascist art with the ideal of 'displayed masculinity' in the sporting culture of imperialism. This ideal acquired grotesque proportions under fascism, as the 'ideal body' came to symbolize the 'mental and moral worth of a man'. In fascism, he argues, the 'aim is to create a sense of masculinity as unified and singular

and to establish an image of the ideal male which accords with the martial principle' (1999a: 112). The cult of the male physique was already popular before the economic crisis, reflecting a conservative predilection for the reassuring image of the warrior male; but this predilection was transformed in fascist art into glorification – a ritual aesthetic legitimation in which the virile fascist was (once again) contrasted with the feminized image of the homosexual and of the Jew. A similar trend can be identified in British fascism, which drew heavily on an image of manliness inherited from the Edwardian era, defining masculinity and hardness as fascist virtues in contrast with left-wing effeminacy (Collins 2000: 149). Like Mussolini, Oswald Mosley eagerly adopted the superman persona, projecting hypermasculinity in a militaristic exaltation of physical strength, ardent heterosexuality and emotional invulnerability.

Representations of femininity in fascist ideology

The definition of masculinity in fascism depends not merely on an exaggerated image of the invulnerable male but on the functionalization and subjugation of femininity which neutralize the autonomous public persona of women. As Yuval-Davis argues:

> Women usually have an ambivalent position within the collectivity. On the one hand . . . they often symbolize the collective unity, honour and the *raison d'être* of specific national and ethnic projects, like going to war. On the other hand, however, they are often excluded from the collective 'we' of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position. In this sense the construction of 'womanhood' has a property of 'otherness'. Strict cultural codes of what it is to be a 'proper woman' are often developed to keep women in this inferior power position.
>
> (1997: 47)

Research into historical fascism and contemporary neofascist and right-wing subcultures confirms that the subordination of femininity requires women to perform a 'passive spectator' role in a world defined by hypermasculine virtues (Fangen 2003). Although women's reproductive potential is understood as essential for the growth and prosperity of the race-nation, the value of women to the fascist movement/state is always subordinate, and indeed must be so given the asymmetries of power between men and women and the masculine arrogance which contribute to fascism. The possession of hegemonic masculinity becomes, in effect, a condition for the performance of public functions in the fascist polity (only men can act as authentic subjects in the exchange of *relative* positions, commodities and resources), while femininity becomes an objective quantity – an *equivalent* value in the exchange of resources between males. As Spackman notes, in the

> fascist topography of gender and sex, stepping out into the public sphere 'masculinizes' and 'sterilizes' women, while the loss of a position in the public sphere necessarily 'devirilizes' men. . . . [O]nly men involved in economic production are figured as capable of sexual reproduction, whereas involvement in production is presumed to destroy women's ability to reproduce.
>
> (1996: 35)

Even though many women support fascist parties and participate in right-wing movements, their function as 'new women' or 'comrades' is always circumscribed and limited to the performance of traditional social roles, the most important of which is motherhood and domestic labour. Yet even in these traditional realms the autonomous role of women is increasingly mediated and augmented by the intrusive policies of the fascist state.

The reactionary modernism of the fascist state in its representation of femininity and policies towards women must be seen in the context of an emergent emancipation movement in Europe which began before 1914, but mushroomed after the war with demands for equal suffrage and equal labour rights for women. Although governments were cautious towards social-structural change, these pressures led to unavoidable changes in gender relations, which as De Grazia notes,

> went hand in hand with the recasting of economic and political institutions to secure conservative interests in the face of economic uncertainty and the democratization of public life. In no previous period did state action focus so intensively on institutionalizing what Michel Foucault has called the 'government of life'.
>
> (1992: 3)

Central to this discourse were the correct role of women in society and the need to 'improve' both the quantity (size) and quality (health/vitality) of the population, policies begun during the liberal era but accelerated under fascism.

In Fascist Italy, a modernist façade was promoted, behind which women were required to accept traditional roles without question. As Gori notes, the 'wind of female emancipation that had been blowing from the beginning of the twentieth century was increasingly moderated by a newly re-emphasized "masculinism" that asserted that women were different from men and inferior to them' (2004: 55). In an attempt to 'nationalize' women by defining how women should behave and what goals women should aspire to, the primary aims of the regime were to reverse progressive changes in family planning and coerce women out of the labour force using the 'vast machinery of political and social control that had made it possible in the first place to shift the burden of economic growth to the least advantageous members of society' (De Grazia 1992: 5). By naturalizing and politicizing differences

between men and women, the state sought to govern as closely as possible the permissible bounds of female sexuality in an attempt to revalorize familial and paternal authority against 'deviant' expressions of bourgeois feminism and the socialist women's movement. At the heart of the pronatalist campaign was not just a demand for more Italians (the regime wanted to increase the population by 50 per cent to combat declining birth rates) but a desire to 'normalize' sexuality by diverting the people's energies into domesticity and parenthood.

Although the corporatist economic system was already institutionally biased against women workers, following the decree of September 5, 1938 Italian employers were forced to reduce the proportion of women in their offices and factories to 10 per cent of the workforce (De Grazia 1992: 166–67). This resulted in many career women losing positions to younger, inexperienced men because domestic labour was seen as harmful to women's 'generative attributes', although this made little difference to working class women who had to return to work after pregnancy for economic reasons (ibid.: 173; 185), and who often resisted the inducement to have more children, as this was a potential cause of resentment between those working class women who used birth control and those who accepted the inducement to have large families (Passerini 1987: 155–57). A similar trend can be observed in Germany, where a marriage incentive programme was introduced requiring women to leave paid employment in return for state child-rearing subsidies. As Koonz (1987: 188) observes, the target population for racially motivated breeding programmes run by the women's section (*Frauenwerk*) of the NSDAP was largely confined to middle class housewives who could afford to leave their jobs rather than working class women who continued to work in unfavourable conditions in German factories. 'Behind the façade of the "One *Volk* one Führer",' she argues, 'Nazi rule established a highly segmented society, with the members of the respectable middle class as its beneficiaries' (ibid.: 188–89).

The attempt by fascist regimes to exclude women from the workplace highlights one of the glaring contradictions at the heart of fascist ideology, namely the tension between its socially conservative and cultural-revolutionary dimensions. Koonz (1987) highlights the tension in Nazi propaganda between the image of women as 'defenders' of idealism and tenderness in a male-dominated society, and the brutal reality that women were also required to support inhuman state actions against minorities, 'asocials' and dissidents. Although all German women were forced to accept their subordinate, protected status in the Reich and renounce the achievements of female emancipation in the Weimar period, a favoured few were able to join party and/or civic organizations in which they themselves were in control of resources, and where specifically female concerns and issues could be negotiated. Richmond (2003) captures a similar tension between the fascist idealization of subordinate femininity and female activism in her

analysis of the women's section of the *Falange Española*, run by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the deceased leader José Antonio Primo de Rivera. As an administered mass organization designed to advance the moral and spiritual values of the regime, the *Sección Femenina* (SF) launched a conservative-revolutionary counter-attack against republican support for female emancipation and gender equality in the 1930s. Although the educational and cultural programmes offered by the SF helped some women to negotiate the barriers to advancement in a male-dominated society, the aim was to do so without challenging male authority (Richmond 2003: 10). Women were encouraged to identify with historic female saints and to act as agents of moral regeneration against 'godless republicanism' by devoting themselves to family life (ibid.: 40, 52), yet as in fascist Germany and Italy, Falangist policies aimed at excluding women from the labour force were problematic because the

> cheapness of their labour contributed substantially to the profits of bosses and factory owners. Ideologically, the SF women were caught between the parallel but contradictory aim of restoring women to domesticity while promoting and restating their essential role in contributing to the national economy.
>
> (Ibid.: 21)

Despite the social conservatism of fascism in its representation of femininity, the female form itself provided an aesthetic weapon for fascist propaganda, particularly but not exclusively in Germany. As we saw in Chapter 4, the political aesthetic of fascism is concerned with the 'suppression of the senses' and projection of collective harmony as antidotes to fragmentation. Following Schulte-Sasse (1995), Gordon (2005) notes the use of similar techniques in popular films from the 1930s featuring chorus-girls – films based on the model of American musicals which also projected an illusion of wholeness through a collective representation and orchestration of the female form in a fascist 'esprit de corps' reminiscent of the mass party ritual or military parade: 'The deeper meaning of the film [*Wir tanzen um die Welt*] lies not in the romantic life of the girls,' she argues, but in the 'communal ethos which binds them together, the end of which remains unnamed' (ibid: 177). What is specific to fascism, she suggests, is the 'explicit nationalization and instrumentalization' of the genre in an attempt to coordinate and contain the legitimate dimensions of female sexuality and sociality by integrating these into fascist spectacle (ibid.: 183). Such choreographed reality was also used to arresting effect in the gymnastics sequences of Riefenstahl's Olympia, in which appropriately Nordic-looking women seduce the subject, 'inviting the viewer to join in the cult of the body and take part in the organic wholeness of the social sphere' (ibid.: 198).

Fascism and homosexuality

It is clear, then, that a certain ambivalence lies at the heart of the fascist conception of sexuality. Although fascism is often linked with sexual repression (Reich 1942), as Marcuse (1942) observed, the Nazi state politicized sexuality as a tool to weaken the autonomous realm of the family, exposing the private life of individuals to increased state control. Although fascists reasserted the necessity of heterosexual marriage and biological reproduction, there is evidence to suggest that German fascism in particular used sexuality as a tool of manipulation, and that a liberalization of heterosexuality took place under fascism which continued pre-existing cultural trends (Herzog 2005: 4). For Marcuse, the totalitarian function of German fascism was to extend an existing pattern of atomization in industrial class society by fostering dynamism in labour and the duty of sacrifice. Added to this, however, was an attempt to disrupt the family's socialization function, by giving the state greater control over maternity, by encouraging illegitimate children and non-marital sex between racially approved sexual partners, and by eroding the private realm of the family as a space of potential resistance to the state – policies which, with the exception of state-sponsored maternity, could not be adopted with equivalent zeal in Italy for cultural reasons.

Yet while fascism promotes heterosexual virility and fertility with a demonic intensity – defending pre- and extra-marital sex as a desirable and perhaps inevitable element of a healthy society – this secular glorification of sexual potency categorically excludes any acceptance or legitimation of homosexual relations, whether as the exclusive object-choice of practising homosexual men and women, or as an erotically charged intensification of ordinary homosocial attachments. On the one hand, the relationship between fascism and homosexuality raises fundamental questions about the sexual organization of capitalist society, including the necessity of the heterosexual family, the categorization and repression of desire, the racialization of masculinity, and the fantasy of male 'parthenogenesis' based on the autarkic reproduction of masculine society without women (Spackman 1996). On the other hand, as Hewitt (1996) argues, through a misidentification of sexual and political deviance, the 'narcissistic' nature of homosexuality itself has come to function as an allegorical representation of fascism, as a source of the very racism which seeks to categorize and annihilate alternative sexual and cultural identities.

Hocquenghem suggests that capitalism creates the category 'homosexual' as a necessary but false subdivision of desire. 'Properly speaking,' he argues,

> desire is no more homosexual than heterosexual. Desire emerges in a multiple form, whose components are only divisible *a posteriori*, according to how we manipulate it. Just like heterosexual desire, homosexual desire is an arbitrarily frozen frame in an unbroken and polyvocal flux.
>
> (1978: 50)

Yet, paradoxically, the category homosexual '[e]xpresses something – some aspect of desire – which appears nowhere else, and that something is not merely the accomplishment of the sexual act with a person of the same sex' (ibid.). He links the rise of homophobia in the Victorian period to the 'growing imperialism of a society seeking to attribute a social status to everything, even to the unclassifiable' (ibid.: 51). This new definition of homosexuality as a separate category inevitably led to its repression in an attempt to buttress the heterosexual family and reassert heterosexual object-choice as the 'symbol of adult sexuality' (ibid.: 117).

This repressive categorization of homosexuality suggests a need to essentialize the distinction between hetero- and homosexual types, the logical consequence of which is pathologization and/or criminalization. This reflects not simply the normalization of heterosexual object-choice in European society, but the need to promote martial values in defence of nationalist and imperialist policies (Mosse 1985). Freud (1905) observed that a feature of homosexuality is that men no longer see other men as potential rivals to be subjugated but as potential objects of desire. This insight sheds light on the sexual organization of fascism: the disavowal and repressive intolerance of homosexuality in fascist ideology reflects a neo-Darwinist attachment to competition based on a refusal to sanction cooperative social relations between men which might contradict a paranoiac urge to dominate:

> the process of converting rivals into love objects is the mirror image of the process by which passive homosexual love is transformed into persecutory and delusional paranoia. In the latter case, 'I love him' is transformed by negation into 'I hate him', and then rationalized through projection into 'He hates me', so that paranoia keeps the subject from becoming homosexual. Moreover, this theory accounts for the notable correspondence between homosexuality and highly developed social feelings and altruism, since the mechanism of reaction formation transforms violently murderous fantasies into exaggerated social impulses and intentions.
>
> (Lewes 1988: 30)

The fact that homosexual object-choice often coincides with stereotypical masculinity is irrelevant: the spectre of homosexuality points to the possible limits of enmity between men as an ordering feature of society, with potentially serious consequences for the generation and maintenance of heteronormativity and gender distinctions between men and women. Yet while homosocial solidarity between men could not be allowed to stray towards homosexual object-choice, the militarization of European society in the imperial period paradoxically gave rise to increased opportunities for male-bonding and camaraderie, a pattern exacerbated in fascist societies organized around the mobilization of the male population for war (Duncan 2004: 189).

To understand the peculiar intensity of fascist homophobia and sexual repression, we need to explain why homosexuality was viewed as a threat to the integrity of the race-nation. This is immediately apparent in the German case, where homosexual behaviour contradicted the demographic imperative of the Nazi state:

> Men who engaged in it were unlikely to fulfil their duty to reproduce and were thus 'population policy zeros'; such men might pass on to their offspring a 'constitutional predisposition to homosexuality'; and such men were the antithesis of the National Socialist masculine ideal, which linked manliness to physical and mental strength, heroism, and a capacity for self-sacrifice – an ideal that achieved its apotheosis in the figure of the soldier.
>
> (Micheler 2005: 96)

As corrupters of youth ('pederasts') and enemies of the state, same-sex-desiring individuals would either have to be reformed or eradicated because such conduct was deemed 'incompatible with traditional notions of morality and with the gender ideology of a patriarchal, heteronormative bourgeois society' (ibid.: 98). Despite its legitimation of pre- and extra-marital heterosexual intercourse between racially acceptable Germans, this homophobic stance allowed the state to depict itself as a defender of bourgeois respectability. As Schoppmann (1996) argues, the aim was to uproot the institutional basis and communicative structure of homosexual subcultures by apprehending male homosexuals and denouncing unmarried and/or childless women suspected of lesbian activity.[4] In this sense, campaigns against lesbians formed part of a wider anti-feminist campaign to deter the masculinization of women and the blurring of gender distinctions.

Homosexuality was equally anathematic to the state's definition of 'race' in Fascist Italy, although here denial of the issue was a consistent element of official discourse. As Ebner notes, an

> essential but relatively latent component of Fascism's ultra-nationalist and racist claims to Italian racial superiority was the myth that Italy was essentially free of homosexuality, that Italians were in this sense 'healthier' than other peoples. . . . making reality conform to this myth became more pressing.
>
> (2004: 140)

Given the reproductive sterility of same-sex-desiring relations, state orchestrated homophobia was aimed at improving the 'moral health of the stock' (*stirpe*), 'a rationale that reflected both the socially conservative element within Fascism as well as the regime's more "revolutionary" rhetoric of state-led social engineering' (ibid.: 141). The point, argues Ebner, was to 'cleanse' society of individuals who might weaken or corrupt the 'race' (ibid.: 147),

although unlike Britain and Germany, Italy recoiled from criminalizing homosexuality for fear of 'encouraging' or drawing attention to it (cf. Duncan 2004).[5]

A pattern emerges, therefore, where fascism problematizes homosocial relations yet denies (or at least minimizes) the social and cultural consequences of heightened feeling and camaraderie between men. Spackman identifies this tension in Marinetti's equation of femininity and sterility, and his attempt to break free from the suffocation of domesticity and male dependence on women for the biological reproduction of society. This leads him to indulge in the fantasy of male parthenogenesis – reproduction without women – a bizarre futural reality in which the 'sexual and the economic are necessarily entwined in the fantasy of male autarky', but where in 'acting out the fantasy of male autarky that underlies this project, an additional factor emerges . . . homosexual panic' (1996: 54–55). This is brought about by the peculiar relation which emerges between the son and the male mother in Marinetti's novel *Mafarka*, who assumes the role of 'social mother' and 'cultural gestator' in the process of reproduction. Although heterosexual reproductive relations with women are seen as debilitating, sapping virility, Marinetti still requires women to be accessible to male sexual violence to prevent homosexuality. In this respect, argues Spackman, Marinetti's fantasy is indicative of what Irigaray terms the male 'hom(m)o-sexual' economy, namely the

> patriarchal, exogamic economy in which women are exchanged among, serve as the mediation and alibi for relations (economic as well as sexual) between, men. . . . For Irigaray, male same-sex relations are subversive insofar as they forgo the prescribed mediation through women and put into circulation the phallus that serves as (excluded) universal equivalent, and thus deprive the economy of its 'money'.[6]
>
> (Ibid.: 59–60)

By excluding sex with women, homosexuality would 'bankrupt the hom(m)o-sexual economy', that is, the heteronormative 'economy of the same' under a masculine signifier, where 'masculine' functions as the 'absolute standard, the sole yardstick, in relation to which the "feminine" must always be found wanting, or in relation to which the "feminine" may only be perceived negatively' (Sandford 2001: 7).

As Sedgwick observes, fascism is distinctive 'not for the intensity of its homoerotic charge, but rather for the virulence of the homophobic prohibition by which that charge, once crystallized as an object of knowledge, is then denied *to* knowledge and hence most manipulably mobilized' (1994 50). Put differently, fascism can be understood as a homophobic form of masculinism defined in opposition to homosexual masculinist discourse (Hewitt 1996). Rejecting the conflation of fascism and homosexuality, where the victim is blamed for the crime, Hewitt notes that to 'read fascism through the

psychologizing prism of homosexuality is . . . to trivialize its historical reality: that which is invoked to explain the crime (i.e. homosexuality) itself becomes the crime' (ibid.: 4). It is true that fascism and homosexuality share a taboo-like status as 'unspeakable' features of European civilization; but the 'allegorical press-ganging of homosexuality as a vehicle for articulating a historically resistant fascism relies on the fact that neither homosexuality nor fascism speaks its own name' (ibid.: 9). In other words, the conflation of fascism and homosexualism results in a misidentification of political and sexual deviance:

> [The] linkage of homosexuality and fascism results from the parallel fears that all social order might result in fascism, and that all homosocial structures are potentially homosexual. The cathexis of a particular object as the representative of the 'other' – as the object of the phobia – clearly indicates a differentiation made within the realm of that dedifferentiated other that threatens us, in turn, with effacement.
>
> (Ibid.: 11)

Hewitt also rejects any idea that fascism is opposed to homosexuality because it fears homosexuality to be its 'true identity' (homophobia as a product of homosexual self-loathing). As a historical phenomenon, fascism is indeed susceptible to allegorical representation because to explain its essence would be to justify it logically. Hence the need for allegory as a means of representation: homosexuality becomes a metaphor for representing fascism, among liberal and communist opponents, who ridicule the homosocial subculture that stands outside the heteronormative framework of bourgeois and proletarian society. Yet despite this, concludes Hewitt, fascism is not a homosexual ideology conditioned and suppressed by its own self-hatred, but a homophobic refusal to acknowledge the intensity of its homoerotic component (ibid.: 34).

Conclusion

It is possible to summarize the complex role played by gender and sexuality in fascism by considering the phenomenon in two ways. On the one hand, there is a clear link between gender and race in the fascist worldview: appropriate gender roles and manifestations of sexuality are subordinated to the biopolitical design of the state in an attempt (a) to increase the size of the breeding population, and (b) to improve the fitness and health of the population. From this respect, population science and family policy became tools of state policy, increasing the intrusive power of the state over the private sphere of individuals – particularly over the lives of women whose mobility within the workforce was checked by new laws designed to promote motherhood. This increased the distinction between a *relative* masculine sphere of production and material exchange and an *equivalent* feminine sphere of reproduction and

emotional exchange (Holter 2003), reducing female autonomy and reaffirming the subordinate role of women. On the other hand, fascism is intimately concerned with the aesthetic representation and idealization of virility as a cardinal virtue, leading to a somewhat grotesque display of masculine energy and power in the arts and architecture, and a relentless emphasis on martial values as a means to stave off the 'decomposing' effects of abstract (feminine) modernity. In an important sense, this reveals the extent to which the commodification of gender and sexuality are linked to national projects, in an attempt to consolidate and amplify the homogeneity and vitality of the race-nation against 'deviant' social and cultural forces.

If the structural and ideological coordinates of fascism are, as we have suggested, interlocked with European modernity, it nevertheless remains important for historians and social theorists to refrain from excessively historicizing narratives which *equate* fascism and modernity. While it is important to place fascism in its correct historical-sociological context, it is equally important to recognize that historicizing approaches which equate fascism and modernity result in trivialization. As Koepnick (1999b) argues, this tendency is present in the work of revisionists who conflate fascism with a generic process of rationalization. For uncritical postmodern thinkers, fascism results from rationalization, beginning with self-disciplining through labour and ending in a fully administered society – suggesting that modernity not fascism is the issue. But, as should be clear from our analysis of fascism and gender, such interpretations elide any critical distinction between the *exceptional* decline in freedom in fascism and the *routine* surveillance, manipulation and control of postliberal capitalist societies. Instead, we should consider the possibility that fascism aims to resolve liberalism's ideological 'impasse' by determining through violence which racial, cultural and sexual identities can legitimately be reproduced in a given set of social relations.

Notes

2 Fascism, rationality and modernity

1 Limitations of space prohibit a full discussion of Gehlen, who argued that the ubiquity and extreme variety of human action and 'openness to the world' can be traced back to mankind's 'instinctual plasticity' and lack of specialized biological equipment. In order to compensate for these deficiencies, humans develop an elaborate system of institutions (generalized rules of conduct) to restrict the possible range of action and thus reduce the complexity of life. Although Arendt (1958a) cites Gehlen's work approvingly, she distances herself from the controversial premise of his theory of action which opens the way for an authoritarian-conservative emphasis on guidance and control. Luhmann (1995), on the other hand, has developed a sophisticated theory of modernity which owes much to Gehlen's theory of 'alleviation' (*Entlastung*) as the process through which institutions reduce complexity and 'disemburden' subjects.

2 Although capitalism is limited by the compulsion and degradation required to organize and sustain a new division of labour, attempts by Marxist-Leninists to adapt the model failed. Leninists adopted a productivist commitment to the dominant social paradigm, replacing exchange value with a planned production of use values (Kornai 1992; Staniszkis 1992), an approach justified by Engels, who criticized anarchists for supposing that a postcapitalist order could be built without authority, and who defended a fatalistic acceptance of the irreversibility of industrial and technological development as a means for satisfying human needs:

> If man by dint of his knowledge and inventive genius has subdued the forces of nature, then the latter avenge themselves on him by subjecting him, in so far as he employs them, to a veritable despotism independent of all social organization.
>
> (Engels 1874: 521)

Yet by embracing the instrumentality of means as a condition for overcoming alienation, Marxism-Leninism became ensnared in a performative contradiction: division of labour becomes 'the source of a hateful alienation and, at the same time, of an increased productivity that is prized precisely because it will supposedly remedy that very alienation' (Gouldner 1980: 187).

3 On conflict over the role of women in the German workforce, see Koonz (1987). Spackman (1996) emphasizes a similar phenomenon in Italy, where women were discouraged from seeking paid employment which might challenge traditional conceptions of male virility.

4 See Theweleit's (1989; Chapter 2) discussion of work brigades (*Spatensoldaten*) in Germany as a technique for keeping sections of the unemployed engaged in largely valueless labour.

5 Peter Osborne is critical of Postone's analogical extension of the category abstract labour to the realm of abstract time as the universalizing time of capital, suggesting that absolute time as an independent variable is in fact a more 'radically temporalizing time, not of "living labour", but of *free activity*' (2007: 19). But Osborne's alternative historico-ontological account of labour time in terms of human finitude ('life-time') is based on the subjectivistic notion that 'anticipation of death is the existential basis for temporalization', an idea associated with Heidegger. Postone's point is that abstract time functions as a kind of independent framework within which concrete-historical time is produced as a dependent variable, which creates a tension between the 'accumulation of historical time and the objectification of immediate labor time [which] becomes more pronounced as scientific knowledge is increasingly materialized in production'. The dialectic of forces and relations of production in capitalism is rooted on the one hand in the value and use value dimensions of labour and of socially constituted time, and on the other hand in the 'abstract compulsion of temporal necessity in both its static and its dynamic dimensions' (Postone 1993: 297; 302).

6 Winock (1998: 76–79) lists the principal ideological themes of French radical nationalism as: hatred of the present; nostalgia for a gold age; praise of immobility; anti-individualism; apologia for a society of elites; nostalgia for the sacred; fear of genetic degradation and demographic collapse; censure of moral values; and anti-intellectualism, many of which are retained in the contemporary ideology of the French far right.

7 As Lebovic (2006) notes, along with Bäumler, Lukács blamed Ludwig Klages for the fascistization of philosophical vitalism in Germany.

8 For a detailed critique of Griffin's definition of primordial modernism, see Woodley (2008).

9 On the ambivalence felt by Italians (fascist and non-fascist) towards the United States as the world's foremost capitalist power, see Gentile (1993).

10 Debate continues as to whether Heidegger was naïve in his association with the NSDAP. Steiner suggests that the excuse of 'naïveté' is part of an elaborate intellectual defence of the philosopher's reputation based on an attempt to separate Heidegger the philosopher from Heidegger the man – a claim which does not stand up to scrutiny.

11 Fritsche questions the received view of Heidegger's use of the term *erwidert*, which in the original 1962 English translation of *Sein und Zeit* is rendered as the 'reciprocative rejoinder' of Dasein [authentic being], when in fact the grammatical context in which it is used (requiring the accusative) suggests a different, more militant meaning, namely to 'revoke' or 'cancel' historical possibilities. Comparing *Mein Kampf* and *Sein und Zeit*, Fritsche notes that:

> the logical structure of Hitler's concept of history and the 'turning-point' is identical to that of Heidegger's concept of historicality. Thus in Hitler one finds numerous sentences showing the same logic as Heidegger's sentence on erwidert [response] and disavowal. For Heidegger, in the moment of crisis authentic Dasein erwidert, responds to, the call for help of fate and of a past world which is being pushed aside but which demands to be repeated. Authentic Dasein hears the message that, in order to repeat the past world, it has to push aside what is now pushing the past aside or has already done so, that is, authentic Dasein must cancel, or widerrufen, Gesellschaft [modern society].
>
> (1999: 83)

3 Fascism and social structure

1 See Hamilton (1982), Kater (1983) and Childers (1983), who stress the importance of middle class voters for the success of the NSDAP in 1932. Their decision to vote for Hitler *en masse* cannot be explained by war-induced psychosis, antisemitism or militant nationalism. Hamilton (1982: 214) notes that Nazi election propaganda in 1932 was cleansed of residual left-wing themes and targeted directly at small employers.
2 Though as Dan Stone (2002) rightly argues, even if fascism did not get beyond the stage of a successful mass movement, we should not underestimate the long tradition of proto-fascist thought present in Britain before 1918.
3 The concept of a 'dual state' was first developed by Ernst Fraenkel (1941) in an early study of National Socialism. Fraenkel differentiates between a 'normative state' (based on routine legal-rational administration) and a 'prerogative state' (based on arbitrary political decision making). Mann appears to use the term to mean a state in which rival elites engage in a destructive competition for power and resources. See Chapter 4.
4 See Passerini's (1987) oral history of the Turin working class. Passerini argues that workers maintained a cultural resistance to fascist ideology, but accepted the idea of order and uniformity as positive values.
5 In contrast with the disenfranchized peasantry in Paxton's study on rural fascism, who turned to radical populists in the absence of alternative channels of representation. Henri Dorgères' Greenshirts benefited from the fact that during the Depression there 'seemed to be no leader or institution in the French Third Republic with sufficient concern, comprehension, or will to devote public attention to the peasants' plight' (1997: 11).
6 Tamir Bar-On (2007) explains the emergence of the *Nouvelle Droite* in French fascist subculture as a 'cultural war' against left-liberal politics and 'hypercapitalism'. Although the movement failed to take off in electoral terms, aspects of *Nouvelle Droite* ideology found their way into mainstream discourse. Leaders of the New Right in the United Kingdom adopted an authoritarian-populist agenda based on the free economy and strong state (Gamble 1988), although the success of the New Right has principally been contingent on acceptance of global free trade and transnational governance in spite of a communitarian defence of sovereignty and identity. Despite the initially fierce objection of the UK Conservatives to supranational/multilevel governance in the European Union, it is the failure of the mainstream New Right to reconcile deregulated capitalism and popular sovereignty which has enabled right-wing populists to emerge as a potent force, creating a new internal periphery within the political system.
7 Although Minkenberg (2000: 175) rightly questions whether tactical support for market libertarianism by far right parties is a valid indicator of their actual ideological beliefs.
8 This assessment correlates with the comparative analysis of right-wing support conducted by Norris (2005), who confirms high levels of support for the far right among lower-middle class, skilled working class and unskilled working class male voters in a large sample of industrialized countries. 'What we can conclude with more confidence,' she argues,

> is that radical right parties are not simply appealing across all sectors equally, for example based on temporary protest politics and a period of widespread disenchantment with mainstream politics, as some previous studies suggest. The continued attraction of the petite bourgeoisie to the contemporary radical right, for example, indicates that there are deeper roots which also characterized interwar fascism.
>
> (Ibid.: 139)

9 On the charismatic appeal of Haider as a 'man for all seasons', see Gingrich (2006). In 2005, the FPÖ experienced increasing conflict between its populist and radical nationalist factions, which led Jörg Haider to form a breakaway party called the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) which remained the strongest party in the south of the country. In the 2008 general election, the FPÖ and BZÖ together won 28.3 per cent of the national vote. In October 2008, Haider was killed in a car accident.

4 Fascism, sovereignty and the state

1 In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argued that the

> power of the sovereign itself contains the three moments of the totality of within itself, namely the *universality* of the constitution and laws, consultation as the reference of the *particular* to the universal, and the moment of ultimate *decision* as the *self-determination* to which everything else reverts and from which its actuality originates. The absolute self-determination constitutes the distinguishing principle of the power of the sovereign as such . . . .
>
> (1821: 313)

2 This point is reiterated by Neocleous, who notes that the idea that permanent emergency can – under appropriate conditions – be rescinded by legislating a return to constitutional legality 'involves a serious misjudgement in which it is simply assumed that legal procedures, both international and domestic, are designed to protect human rights from state violence'. Such reasoning leads to

> legal fetishism, in which law becomes a universal answer to the problems posed by power. . . . This produces the illusion that law has a life of its own, abstracting the rule of law from its origins in class domination and oppression and obscuring the ideological mystification of these processes in the liberal trumpeting of the rule of law.
>
> (2006: 207–8)

3 Foucault adds that the historical narrative of sovereignty 'must proclaim right to be something ancient; it must demonstrate the uninterrupted nature of the right of the sovereign and, therefore, the ineradicable force that he still possesses to the present day' (1976: 67). Historical narratives also serve the function of 'memorialization', recording history to reinforce royal power:

> Everything [kings] do can be, and deserves to be, spoken of and must be remembered in perpetuity, which means that the slightest deed or action of a king can and must be turned into a dazzling action and an exploit. At the same time, each of his decisions is inscribed in a sort of law for his subjects and an obligation for his successors.
>
> (Ibid.)

4 While the Hobbesian idea of sovereign authority conceals the actual proliferation of multiple agencies of regulation and control in modern integral nation-states, Trainor (2006: 776) insists that Hobbes was aware that the state does not possess sovereign authority as such, but authorizes its empirical government to rule as the 'institutional expression of and operational presence of the state'.

5 For a detailed analysis of the 'Latin' fascist elites in Italy, Spain and Portugal, see Lewis (2003).

6 The Szeged fascists were a pro-German faction on the Hungarian extreme right.

7 Although Bracher argues elsewhere that the

> omnipotence of [Hitler's] position rested not least on the ill-defined relation-

> ship of party and state; he alone was able to resolve the costly jurisdictional conflicts which were part of the system. Regardless of whether this was an unavoidable dilemma of totalitarian dictatorship or a consciously wielded tool of dictatorial rule, the widespread idea about the better organized and more effective 'order' of totalitarian one-man rule is a myth all-too-easily believed in crisis-ridden democracies.
>
> (1971: 297)

8 The first camps in Germany were opened in March 1933 for holding communists. Within a month, they held thousands of individuals who were never indicted with offences (Berghahn 2006: 96). The idea of the camp was to separate 'inadmissible' elements of the population from the conformist societal community. On the evolution of mass incarceration in the Third Reich, see Caplan (2005).

9 Haug adds that in his preoccupation with technology,

> Benjamin overlooks the high status of illusion in capitalism, an inevitable product of the economic basic relations, and originating fully in the economic structure of bourgeois society in its normal condition . . . the aestheticization of commodities is a necessary consequence of exchange. It is a fact that at all levels of the system in bourgeois society the people's vital interests are *neither* the highest objective nor the determining aim. To the extent that in the social relations corresponding to the different levels of social life it is necessary to make these relations appear to serve vital human needs directly and exclusively, the ruling class is required to create a kind of expression and justifying scenario, to produce the relation that social relations really do serve the vital needs of all. This illusion must convey complete classlessness, justice, humanity, welfare, etc. and/or make subjugation service, discipline and sacrifice, appear to be natural and the highest fulfilment.
>
> (1983: 134)

5 Fascism and violence

1 Foucault defines race not in physical terms but as a set of distinctions based on language, kinship, status, custom and religion, and traces the origins of the biopolitical discourse on 'race war' back to the struggles of the Frankish and Norman nobility to assert its hegemony against challenges from emergent popular forces. Race war is, he argues, the ultimate origin of class war. As we shall see in Chapters 7 and 8, modern 'state racism' is based not simply on xenophobia or prejudice but on the elimination of bearers of 'biological threats' in an attempt to 'improve' the social body of the nation.

2 Osborne argues that a key function of traditional anthropology was the 'denial of coevalness', i.e. the establishment of historical differences between societies in the present (ibid.: 17).

3 On the epistemic bias of Tocqueville's otherwise illuminating account of the 'Three Races that Inhabit the Territory of the United States', see the discussion in Outlaw (2007).

4 As Semmel (1993: 125) notes, this point was recognized by Thorstein Veblen in his critique of imperial 'adventurism', which required 'a consistent policy of police and judicial repression of popular sentiment hostile to imperialism'.

5 A tension had always existed between mainstream geopolitical theory in Germany and Nazi imperialism, reflecting the concern of the former with *space* and the latter with *race* (Murphy 1997: 247), though as Woodruff Smith notes, German fascism successfully integrated the *Weltpolitik* and *Lebensraum* traditions of German imperialism. Fascist imperialism was successful in generating popular

support because 'its structure was built around central concepts that, in the political environment of interwar Germany, appeared to integrate the disparate individual elements of the party's programme in a convincing fashion' (Smith 1986: 234). Eastward expansion helped to unite the population behind the 'geopolitical insight' that a nation's destiny is determined by its geographical location.

6 Curiously, a tapestry copy of Picasso's famous picture of Guernica was removed from the walls of the UN building in New York during a visit by former Secretary of State Colin Powell in February 2003 to advance America's case for the invasion of Iraq, presumably to avoid causing diplomatic embarrassment. Some commentators have remarked on the historic parallels between the assault on Guernica in 1937 and the US assault of Falluja in 2004.

7 Newsinger (2006: 105) cites the example of one British soldier, who described the violence meted out by British irregulars in Ireland in a letter home, noting that '[m]any who witnessed similar scenes in France and Flanders say that nothing they have experienced ever compared to the punishment meted out to Cork'. On the ideological links between imperial interests and fascists in Britain see Linehan (2000), who cautions against simplistic comparisons between pro-imperialist and fascist movements. He argues that the

> quintessentially fascist predilection for authoritarian solutions and elite leadership was simply not in evidence [with earlier imperial defence and anti-labour groups]. The majority remained essentially narrowly based pressure groups representing specific sectional interests, such as the Economic League and the British Commonwealth Union.
>
> (2000: 55)

8 In contrast with Diner (1992), Aly and Heim (1991) insist that Nazi policy on the 'Jewish question' be located within the broader framework of demographic planning in Nazi occupied eastern Europe, a modernization project which preoccupied experts from several academic disciplines. Aly and Heim show that the ruler of the General Gouvernement in Poland, Hans Frank, also envisaged the eventual liquidation of the remaining Polish and Ukrainian population after the war, as a prelude to the resettlement of the area by ethnic Germans. On German population policy and geopolitical strategy in the colonized lands of Poland and occupied eastern Europe, see Burleigh (1988).

9 Alfred Bäumler, the infamous Nazi interpreter of Nietzsche, who subsequently became director of Nazi Pedagogy at Berlin University in 1933, was also a veteran of the Freikorps on the eastern front.

10 Willan provides excellent evidence to suggest that left-wing terrorists in Italy (including the Red Brigades who kidnapped and murdered Aldo Moro in 1978) were also subject to subtle manipulation by the western intelligence services. Testimonies from key actors indicate that several well-known Italian Marxists may even have been intelligence assets.

11 On the rise of the American militia movement and right-wing Christian fundamentalism, see also Durham (2000), Mulloy (2004), Levitas (2002) and Hedges (2007). Compare the activities of the British paramilitary organization Combat 18, a right-wing splinter-group which emerged from the factional strife within the British far right in the 1990s. Using participant observation, Ryan (2004) studied the leaders of the group, tracing its origins, and links with paramilitary organizations. Reflecting the bitterness felt by the far right towards non-white immigration, the aim of the leadership was to spread racial conflict using precipitate acts of violence, although as Copsey (2004) notes this violence served to discredit the BNP at the moment when the party was poised to achieve electoral gains in London, leading some to speculate whether individuals within C18 might have been intelligence assets. C18's strategy of violence was based on a belief that

dialogue with the liberal political class is futile because only direct action can bring about real change: by inciting racial conflict, C18 sought to provoke unrest to pursue its goal of a white-only enclave outside London.

6 Fascism, capitalism and the market

1 Ptak argues that the anti-liberal rhetoric of the Nazi state was used by Ordoliberals (German exponents of neoliberal market economics) after 1945 as evidence for the claim that the Nazi regime was opposed to the free market in order to obscure the continuities and similarities between National Socialism and Ordoliberalism in the 1930s which were both concerned with managing capitalism through state intervention.
2 The term 'state capitalism' has often been misapplied in neo-Trotskyist analyses of communism. Chris Harman (1983), for example, interprets Soviet-style socialism as a 'state capitalist' system with bureaucratic distortions in which the state substitutes itself for a plurality of small competing firms in the process of industrialization.
3 For an example of US imperial ideology, see Weinberg (1935). The Spanish–American war of 1898 was a defining moment not only for Spain (which lost), but for the patrician elite in the United States, who were determined to use foreign engagement and colonialism to resolve domestic social tensions and promote national unity. As Pearlman (1984: 35–39) argues, the 'war-preparedness' movement was an early example of militarist ideology in America, whose supporters campaigned vigorously for participation in the First World War and universal military training as means to foster character and martial discipline among US military/colonial personnel. This included a thorough education in a British-style 'civilizing mission ideology', translated in American terminology as 'uplift'. On the differences between European and US imperialism, see Kiernan (1974).
4 Mommsen notes that 'Weber's conception of national power, by associating the nation's foreign political interests with international economic questions, developed into a national imperialism of the most intense variety' (1984: 68). Weber realized that the 'increase in cooperative or state-guaranteed monopolistic forms of production and trade, which were especially apparent in Germany before the First World War, would drive capitalism increasingly on to an imperialist track' (ibid.: 78). On the rise of colonial interest groups in the German Empire before 1914, see Wehler (1987); on the quest for colonial markets in France before 1914, see Lebovics (1988).
5 On Gregor Strasser's resignation in December 1932 following General von Schleicher's failed attempt to appoint a centrist government, see the documents in Noakes and Pridham (1998: 110–15).
6 The banking crisis of 1932 was much milder in France than in Germany or the United States, and the banking sector emerged from the crisis in a more concentrated, stronger position. Large companies like Renault were also less dependent on the banks, and the distinction between deposit banks and corporate finance was preserved. Although the French central bank was effectively nationalized in 1936, the French response to the crisis was muted and ineffectual. By the end of the 1930s, argues Bouvier, France was a country

> whose economy did not succeed in leaving the 'great crisis', whose social fabric seemed frozen in its structures, and whose political leaders let themselves be carried along by the waves rather than seeking to subdue them. The spirit of innovation and the capacity of rapid adaptation seemed to be paralyzed.
>
> (1984: 68)

7 Sarti notes that Mussolini went out of his way to reassure industrialists in 1922 that 'business had much to gain from a Fascist victory. On October 26, just as Fascist columns were beginning to march on Rome, Mussolini spoke to a group of industrialists headed by Benni and Pirelli.' According to eyewitnesses, he adds, Mussolini 'assured the industrialists "that the aim of the impending Fascist move was to re-establish discipline particularly within the factories and that no outlandish experiments would be carried out"' (1971: 37).
8 Desai uses this expression in *Marx's Revenge* (2002).
9 Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank, Darmstadt Bank and the Disconto-Gesellschaft.
10 See Woodruff Smith (1986). On the continuity of German foreign policy, see the discussion of Germany's war aims in the 1914–18 war in Fischer (1967). Fischer's views are rejected by conservative historians such as Gerhard Ritter and Andreas Hillgruber, who argue that the expansionist logic of Nazism was a new and unique phenomenon.
11 IG Farben and its Swiss and American subsidiaries doubled in size between 1927 and 1939. For a detailed analysis of the links between German industry, American corporate finance and National Socialism, see the controversial study by Antony Sutton (1976), who notes that the influence of Wall Street in the rise of German fascism is an area of historical research almost totally unexplored by the academic world. Sutton cites Thyssen's declaration that 'I turned to the National Socialist Party only after I became convinced that the fight against the Young Plan [of 1928] was unavoidable if complete collapse was to be prevented' (ibid.: 25). The Young Plan increased flows of US capital into Germany, fuelling economic rationalization, but was blamed for increasing unemployment, which in turn fuelled support for the NSDAP.
12 Parallels may be drawn here with the nationalization of insolvent banks in the United Kingdom in response to the financial crisis of 2008–09. In the United States, Treasury officials have used the term 'conservatorship' rather than 'nationalization', indicating the legal right of the state to assume responsibility for the assets of banks deemed fully or partially incapable of assuming responsibility for themselves. The implication of 'conservatorship' is that the banks will be fully *reprivatized* once the crisis has passed, allowing the banks to transfer risk from the private sector to the public sector at the taxpayers' expense. The reluctance of the US authorities to use existing legislation to place insolvent Wall Street banks into formal receivership reflects the fear felt by these institutions towards the idea of an independent audit, as well as their refusal to accept any change in their business model. The effect of the US bail-out has been to prop up financially insolvent (yet politically powerful) Wall Street banks (JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Citibank, Goldman Sachs, Wells Fargo–Wachovia) which are considered 'too big to fail', and thus exempt from the normal pressures of market forces. The discrepancy between the economic weakness and political influence of the Wall Street banks in 2009 can be compared to the economic weakness and political power of German heavy industry between 1928 and 1933, which after 1930 shifted its support away from the centre-right DVP towards the conservative-nationalist *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP), and finally – after 1932 – towards the fascist NSDAP.
13 On the links between employers and the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP), see Döhn (1970) and Grübler (1982).
14 Goldberg argues that fascism has nothing to do with right-wing politics, and is essentially a consequence of 'democracy gone mad'. On this view, the entire history of progressive liberalism and left-wing radicalism in the United States conceals a fascist agenda: from Wilson and Roosevelt, to Kennedy and Johnson, to Bill and Hillary Clinton – all have attempted to increase the power of the Federal government at the expense of civil liberties and property freedom.

Goldberg is of course correct to stress the enthusiasm of reformers like Roosevelt for expanding the economic role of the Federal government; but at no point does he pause to consider the *actual* subversion of democracy and growth of militarism in the United States under the Republicans (right-wing conservatives such as Oliver North, John Negroponte, Dick Cheney, Norman Podhoretz, Richard Perle, William Kristol and David Wurmser are not even mentioned). For a critical review see Neiwart (2008), who argues that Goldberg,

> who has no credentials beyond the right-wing nepotism that has enabled his career as a pundit, has drawn a kind of history in absurdly broad and comically wrongheaded strokes. It is not just history done badly, or mere revisionism. It's a caricature of reality, like something from a comic-book alternative.

15 Shefter highlights the formation of capitalist militias in the late 1870s as a response to the growing working class strength. These counter-movements directly confronted proletarian ideology by 'equating it with chaos, revolt disorder, and social disintegration' (1986: 367). Labour militancy was seen as a threat to the social status of elites and middle class groups, municipal order and public morality, not dissimilar to prevailing attitudes in England and France during the same period.

7 Fascism and nationalism

1 Balibar adds that 'there is a close implicit relation between the illusion of a necessary unilinear evolution of social formations and the uncritical acceptance of the nation-state as the "ultimate form" of political institution, destined to be perpetuated forever' (1991b: 91). That the individual sovereign nation-state is not the only type of social community consistent with capitalism can been in the evolution of the European Union, a supranational formation which has, paradoxically, acquired – through the efforts of its supporters – a kind of legitimacy and facticity normally reserved for the nation form itself. This, of course, is precisely why the European Union is viewed with such hostility by nationalists.

2 The term entropy is used in sociology as a metaphor for disorder or dissipation. Gellner (1983: 63) employs the term to mean a lack of pattern or organization in industrial societies in which

> membership is fluid, has a great turnover, and does not generally engage or commit the loyalty and identity of its members. . . . [T]he old structures are dissipated and largely replaced by an internally random and fluid totality, within which there is not much (certainly when compared with the preceding agrarian society) by way of genuine sub-structures.

The purpose of culture is, therefore, to provide entropy-resistant markers in order to sustain a sense of order, homogeneity and cohesion.

3 As Mosse (1996: 7) argues, there is a link between nationalism and masculinity which 'from the very start was co-opted by the new nationalist movements of the nineteenth century'. As we shall see in Chapter 9, the political culture of fascism is constructed in such a way as to resonate closely with masculine notions such as strength, patriotism, honour, sacrifice, duty and bravery – although this association between masculinity and fascist nationalism does not preclude feminine identification with such themes.

4 The collapse of Russian and Ottoman rule between 1915 and 1917 created tensions in the Caucasus between ethnic groups based on the cultural-linguistic division between Indo-Iranian and Turkic communities. Like the Pan-Germans,

Pan-Turanians in Kemal Atatürk's new state looked eastwards, with the aim of unifying Turkic-speaking groups (Turks, Azeris, Turcomen, etc.) under Turkish leadership.

5 Griffin does not mention Gellner in an otherwise very well-documented study. Instead, he cites Zygmunt Bauman in *Modernity and Ambivalence* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

6 Karsai (1999: 145) speculates whether parties like István Csurka's Hungarian Justice and Life Party may in fact have been manipulated by the state in the 1990s in an attempt to divide the right, creating a useful 'bogeyman' for a nationalist threat which did not exist at that time. Yet there is ample evidence of extra-parliamentary right-wing mobilization in Hungary since the late 1990s, among neofascist groups such as the Magyar Gardá whose antisemitism and calls for a 'Greater Hungary' are popular among xenophobic right-wing voters and disillusioned ex-socialists.

8 Fascism and race

1 Owen argues that whiteness is dependent on ignorance of its own structuring effect, citing Toni Morrison's ironic definition of white privilege 'as "an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious"' (2007: 211).

2 For a general introduction to the subject, see Burleigh and Wippermann (1991). See also Proctor (1988), Clay and Leapman (1995), Browning (1992) and Burrin (2005).

3 Mosse suggests that the stereotype of the Jew as a physical countertype against which respectable masculinity could be measured was well established in bourgeois culture by the mid-nineteenth century. 'The linkages of body and soul,' he argues, were 'solidified and sharpened by the role that medicine played in designating and defining the so-called outsider' (1996: 60). Negative representations of Jewish physiognomy also became important for the reproduction of Jewish otherness, in terms of both masculinity and moral character, themes adapted and expanded under National Socialism. See the discussion of racial physiognomy in Burleigh and Wipperman (1991).

4 *Die Thule-Gesellschaft* was a secret society founded in 1918 in Munich by Robert von Sebottendorff, dedicated to Nordicism. The society counted figures like Alfred Rosenberg, Gottfried Feder, Rudolf Hess and Dietrich Eckart among its members, and popularized an obscure mystical nationalism derived from Nordic mythology. Among the society's more bizarre beliefs was the idea that the Aryan race had once populated an ancient lost homeland in the extreme northern hemisphere (*ultima thule*, from Latin: most distant north). In a more practical sense, however, the society helped to fund the NSDAP in Munich in 1919, which was merely one of a number of extreme right-wing organizations opposed to the November Revolution. For a detailed discussion of the occult roots of Nazism, see Goodrick-Clarke (1985).

9 Fascism, gender and sexuality

1 In this context, Stokes (2005: 132) suggests an epistemological parallel between white supremacism and heteronormativism:

> Whiteness needs heterosexuality in order reproduce itself, in order to guarantee the pristine white future it depends upon; heterosexuality, on the other hand, needs whiteness – with its claim to an unblemished morality, as a safeguard against the moral taint of the *sex* in heterosexuality . . ..

2 On the links between colonial racism and bourgeois sexuality in Foucault's work, see Stoler (1995).
3 Reichel emphasizes the middle class character of the SS, which recruited largely from the professional and educated classes, creating honorific titles and ranks for individuals without specific military or security related positions.
4 Schoppmann stresses that it was more difficult to criminalize sexual deviance between women given the more open continuum between female homosocial and homosexual relations (cf. Sedgwick 1985). Lesbians were also deemed less of a threat to the state.
5 On the history of homophobia in Britain, see Davenport-Hines (1990). Homosexuality between men was a criminal offence until 1967. In Italy during the 1930s, non-lethal forms of repression were employed at a local level, for example forced confinement in 'pederast colonies'. On the ideological representation of homosexuality in Spanish fascism, see Pérez-Sánchez (2007).
6 See 'A two subject culture', in Irigaray (1994).

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