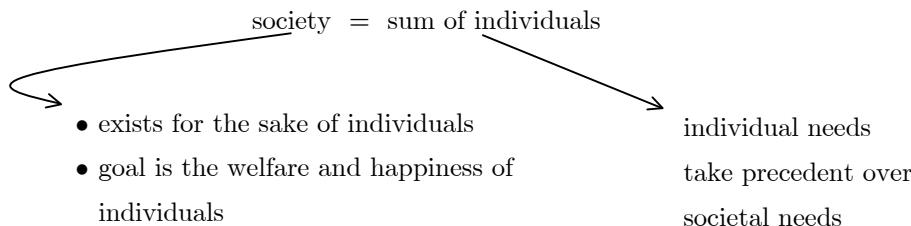


Alfredo Rocco (1875-1935) “The Political Doctrine of Fascism” (1925)

- Minister of Justice under Mussolini.
- Mussolini founded the Fascist party in Italy in 1919; rose to power in 1922; assassinated in 1945
- “fasciare” - to bind or to envelop

I. Rocco’s Critique of Liberalism, Democracy and Socialism

1. All subscribe to an *atomistic doctrine* of state and society:



The atomistic doctrine is “*anti-historical*”: Society is reduced to the existence of a single generation of individuals at any given time.

pg. 197: The atomistic doctrine “... isolates the present from the past and the future.”

“[I]t rejects the spiritual inheritance of ideas and sentiments which each generation receives from those preceding and hands down to the following generation, thus destroying the unity and the spiritual life itself of human society.”

(Note: Mill’s concerns about child welfare and his emphasis on the role society plays in the cultivation of self-regarding qualities.)

2. Liberalism, Democracy and Socialism agree on goal (welfare of individual) and differ only in the *methods* they employ to secure it.

Liberalism → Democracy → Socialism

• individual liberty	• individual liberty + equality	• economic as well as political
• secured by checks and balances on government	• secured by people as government	equality
• government has negative function (minimal interference)	• government has positive function (secures equality)	

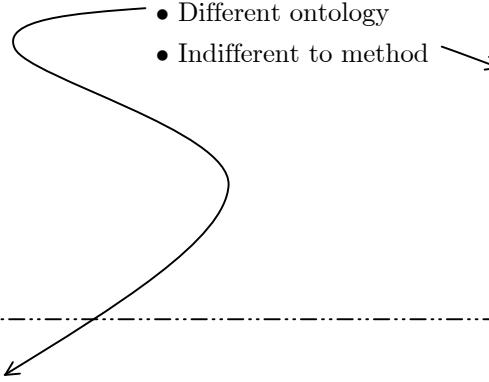
According to Rocco, inequalities (natural and social) make the intervention of the state necessary in order to preserve individual liberty. Hence the “logical” progression from Liberalism to Socialism. (pg. 198)

Liberalism/Democracy/Socialism

- Same ontology
- Different methods

Fascism

- Different ontology
- Indifferent to method



According to Rocco, Fascism is concerned with the goal of upholding the welfare of the state, and is indifferent to the methods of securing this goal - it uses "... now liberal ways, now democratic means and at times even socialistic devices" (pp. 201-200). Compare this with what Palmieri later says.

II. Rocco's Notion of the State

Society = a single, unified *organic* and *historic* entity

“spiritual” elements: unity of language, culture, religion, tradition, customs, feeling, volition
“material” elements: unity of economic interests, living conditions, territory

Question: To what extent does Rocco consider the state as a biological organism?

He says each society is “a fraction of the human species” and then claims “If social groups are then fractions of the human species, they must possess the same fundamental traits of the human species, which means that they must be considered as a succession of generations and not as a collection of individuals” (pg. 200). This is an argument from analogy:

1. Human societies are like the human species.
2. Species are a succession of generations, and not a collection of individuals.
3. The ends of the human species are not those of human individuals.

-----4. Therefore, societies are a succession of generations and not a collection of individuals; and the ends of a society are not those of its individuals.

Another example of an argument from analogy is the following:

1. Chimpanzees are like humans.
2. Chimps can survive spaceflight.

-----3. Therefore, humans can survive spaceflight.

- The criterion of strength for such arguments is that the analogy must be strong: the relevant similarities must outweigh the relevant dissimilarities.
- So if chimps are relevantly similar to humans with respect to the conditions of spaceflight, and their dissimilarities are not relevant to the context of spaceflight, then the second argument is strong).
- So we should ask Rocco, is the analogy between human societies and the human species strong enough to justify the conclusion of his argument? (Apart from this, we should also ask whether the characteristics he attributes to the human species are legitimate.)

Question: What does it mean to say that human societies are “fractions of the human species”?

Possible responses:

1. Human societies are members of the human species; i.e., societies are organisms like individual humans.

However, on page 201, Rocco says that the analogy between human societies and the human species does not entail that human societies are biological organisms:

“I do not wish to convey the impression that I consider society as an organism... but rather to indicate that the social groups as fractions of the species receive thereby a life and scope which transcend the scope and life of the individuals...The important thing is to ascertain that this organic concept of the state gives to society a continuous life over and beyond the existence of the several individuals.”

So to say that human societies are fractions of the human species is not to say that human societies are like individual members of the human species; i.e., individual human organisms.

2. Human societies are parts of the human species in so far as the members of a human society are also members of the human species (i.e., human societies are subsets of the human species).

Does this mean that any given society shares all the global properties of the human species, taken as a whole? If so, how many individual members must there be in order for the social group to exhibit such global properties?

III. Rocco on Liberty

Recall: Mill’s concern was safe-guarding the conditions that allow the free development of the individual.

Rocco agrees with a qualification: The individual must be allowed to develop his personality *on behalf of the state* (pg. 202).

Rocco’s concept of liberty: The freedom to do what you have to do. (Humpty-Dumpty theory of meaning.)

More substantially, Rocco says that liberty is a *method* to use on behalf of the state; it is not a fundamental principle.

Example: According to Rocco, economic liberty (free trade) best serves the interests of the state.

Mario Palmieri “Fascism and the Meaning of Life” (*The Philosophy of Fascism* 1936)

I. Fascist Notion of the Individual

(recall Rocco's Humpty-Dumpty definition of “liberty”)

- Individuality is fully realized only in the “Life of the Spirit”; in contrast with the mechanism of the Atomistic Doctrine.
- 4 institutions by means of which the Life of the Spirit is realized:

Family

Church

Nation

State

state as organism - created by “conscious act of restricting [one's] own free will”, with knowledge that everyone else does the same (pp. 206-207).

- The Life of the Spirit is fundamental (pg. 207):
 - to be human is to engage in the Life of the Spirit
 - to deny the Life of the Spirit is to deny one's humanity
 - Family, Church, Nation, State are the only way to express the Life of the Spirit

II. Three Principles to Conduct Behavior

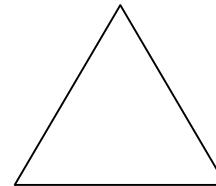
1. Unity - oneness of being; organic view of nature.

2. Authority - divine essence of hero.

3. Duty - ‘greatest principle’

The Pyramid of Duty:

Hero



The state as a social, political, economic, moral, religious organism

Fascist morality story about Duty:

“To be a fascist is of all things the most difficult in the world... The life of a fascist is a life of ascetic self-denial, heroic self-sacrifice, moral abnegation and religious enthusiasm” (pg. 208).

III. Liberty (Humpty-Dumpty definition again)

Recall: To be an “individual” is to live for the state - to engage in the “Life of the Spirit”.

To be “free” is to be able to be an “individual” - to be able to live for the state:

“To be free means to be no more a slave to one's own passions” (pg. 209).

Palmieri admits there are two “radically different” notions of liberty - the fascist notion, and the standard notion.

IV. Fascist State

Palmieri evokes the strong analogy: The state is a living organism with a will, a personality, a consciousness, with goals, purposes, needs, etc:

“Henceforth the State is no longer a word denoting the authority underlying a complex system of relationships between individuals, classes, organizations, etc., but something of far greater import, far greater meaning than that: it is a living entity, it is the highest spiritual entity of the political world” (pg. 211).

Palmieri’s “Nation” denotes the collection of citizens (i.e., the “complex system of relationships between individuals...”, etc.). His “State” exists over and above the Nation.

V. Corporative Ideal

Palmieri thinks fascism is not compatible with capitalism or communism (unlike Rocco), because:

1. Economic interests are always those of the state, not of individuals.
2. Open competition destroys wealth instead of creating it.
3. Private wealth belongs to the State; not to individuals.
4. Distribution of wealth is more important than production.

Instead of capitalism or communism, Palmieri advocates “national syndicalism”:

- syndicate = union. Goal of a union - economic welfare of its members.
- Goal of “national syndicalism” - economic welfare of the State.
- The State as a single corporation (“guild”).
- The State as consisting of, and running, various corporations (pyramid structure again).

VI. Hero

Recall the problem Hobbes’ absolute sovereign faces: How do we protect against Quackery?

Palmieri’s test: sincerity, courage, faith, and “mystical intuition”. Other than this, time is the test: If the hero is really a quack, he won’t be able to accomplish his goals. (What does this say about Mussolini?)