CHAPTER 5

Comparative Probing of Fascism: Japan and America

1 Primitive Accumulation and Modern Capitalism: Clearing a Path

One first confronts the historical importance of feudalism in the shaping of social formations of modernity. The issue is whether a feudal past, its presence or absence, proves decisive in the subsequent development of political structure and ideology. Japan is a no-brainer. There is widespread agreement on the continuity from feudalism to modern industrial society. The only disagreement is over how structurally entrenched feudalism has remained in the social system enclosing industrialism within its foundations. Modernity, the fig leaf covering liberalism, has largely had its way unmolested, to the point that the historical elimination of a peasantry has been the sine qua non, in social analysis, of capitalist democracy.

1.1 Pre-modernism: Historical Transference of Feudalism

That is Moore’s main point, the historical traversal of modernity to the present, and whether or not a specifically bourgeois phase has been present in the interim between pre-modern and modern formations. Otherwise, feudalism is carried over whole to the new setting, ensuring the hierarchical structuring both of industry and the class system. In Japan’s case, the peasantry, in manner, ideology, and ethos, if not in number, has remained, accompanied by a comparatively weak bourgeoisie. As for ethos, we equally
see the cultural transmission of militarism from the feudal base—again the weakness of the bourgeoisie like a sieve permitting the unimpeded flow of militarism through today.

For Japan, perhaps more so than Germany (there is no Japanese Thomas Mann to write Buddenbrooks), this weakness is telling on social-class formation. Historically, the bourgeoisie has been an initial carrier of democracy (e.g., England), even if the influence ultimately hardens and peters out. By comparison, America had been predominantly bourgeois, on the land as well, but, as with all things monolithic, atrophy historically sets in, and the process loses its democratic character. (Not coincidentally, much of the literature on fascism focuses on a frustrated middle class, a harbinger of fascism.) Never mind the brutality of the process when this occurs, a clearing-the-deck of pre-modern phenomena as necessary, justified, indeed, inevitable, in anticipation of a progressive future, that is, capitalist development.

The doctrine was applied to the enclosure movement in seventeenth-century England (Marx’s classic example of “primitive accumulation”), and next, sotto voce, the French Revolution, as though, in both, modernity is carried on the wings of genocide. It has done service too, in perhaps slightly less harsh terms, through much of American history. In the ghettoization and/or removal of Native Americans, one finds a generic, metaphorical peasantry, along with blacks and the white poor, all peasants from the standpoint of an advancing capitalism needing the ideology and free space for shaping a class structure and disciplining a labor force.

1.2 Linear Capitalist Development: Absence of Structural Variegation

Capitalism is not kind to those it finds dispensable. Hartz is correct about the absence of feudalism in America (its remnants, as in the patroon system in New York State, and the institution of plantation slavery, offer partial qualification to his generalization), but what that historically entailed was a linear growth of capitalism lacking the variegation with which a democratic structure is associated. As in France, destroying feudalism becomes a springboard to at least a partial achievement of democracy. America had no clash to speak of, and Japan, nothing to clash about, the friction inhering in the dismantling of an Old Order missing for both. The feudalization of America seems odd-sounding (and literally untrue), yet
descriptively accurate when one takes into account (which Hartz by a different route seems to have done, in saying that capitalism in America was born mature) how close-structured US development has been, its ideological parameters drawing inward, its economic formation more consolidated and concentrated, its foreign policy, more narrowly hegemonic and resistant to social change.

I am struck by how capitalism, even when, as in America, has had its own way and sway, thereby not confronting historical-structural obstacles as in Europe, that is, feudalism, has nonetheless acted as though such obstacles were there to be removed. In other words, the USA also, historically, had, as in Marx’s analysis of seventeenth-century enclosures, its period of primitive accumulation (what I once termed its brutalization phase), only for the USA it was the later nineteenth century. And the American version of the peasantry to be confronted and figuratively to be neutralized and/or cleared out, in addition to the above remarks on primitive accumulation (Native Americans, etc.), was the American worker, treated with an unparalleled brutality befitting the rawness of US capitalism itself. The pathway was clear for the unobstructed course of capitalism—agricultural, industrial—through the mechanism of legitimated violence and an increasing segment of the military factor to support, renew, and find market-advantage for the system in its advanced, mature stage.

1.3 Brutalization: Enforcing Submission to Authority

How else think of the period 1877 through 1894, when strikes, lockouts, and bloody battles ensued in such areas as railroads, steel, mining, manufacturing, and people were being thrown off the land or reduced to farm tenancy and sharecropping as anything but upper social groups’ efforts at domesticating a labor force? The strikebreaker had become the prototypic American worker. This was the deck-clearing operation designed to ensure a compliant, assenting mass base in which class consciousness was to be extirpated—in short, the brutalization process—in favor of a patriotic/war-prone consensus. Only, a favorable attitude toward war was now beside the point; the goal was forcing submission to Authority, whether government or plant management. It did not, of course, fully work, as witness later organizing drives, sit-down strikes, a sporadic, yet awakened, militancy. But the ideological dye was cast: America was to be free from
and of radicalism, which, in the New Deal, still very much surfaced in the less repressive era. In the postwar period, McCarthyism created the basis and atmosphere for Taft-Hartley and other measures to come, sanitizing, with courageous exceptions, the labor movement and work environment.

Thus the steel and auto workers became the Native Americans of their time, as ideological-functional equivalences go. And blacks, especially in the postwar years, lynching a frequent occurrence, having already been ghettoized and forcibly strait-jacketed through segregation, merely were reduced to the same plane of inferior status, power, and wealth, thus confirming the primitive accumulation process which has still not run its course. In America, capitalism takes on revolutionary significance, not as the fundamental changing of the social order, effected through force and violence against an ancien regime. It is the ancien regime fulfilling itself in a state of industrial-financial-military permanence, a freezing of history in what it has hoped is the apical stage of its power. In fact, capitalist revolution in America is the inversion of revolution, inside-out revolution to consolidate its domestic and international hegemony. The reverse revolution for all to stand in awe of is especially declared for those intended to see and fully appreciate its significance, the mass base, which awaits the Nation (as in Japan, Nation having a special meaning for the graduated pacing which eventuates in fascism).

2 THE NATION, A MORAL ENTITY: JAPANESE EMPEROR-WORSHIP

In Japan, the peasantry is retained in concept, demolished in practice, recalled in political mythology as honorific and heroic, essential to the philosophic code of social stratification, disposable in meeting the exigencies of structural-military modernization: the warrior in button-down collar. The evidence is clear. A hierarchical structural-cultural emphasis characterizes Japan perhaps like no other advanced-capitalist industrial nation to this day (the resistance to the argument, as noted, being that industrialism creates democratization and modernity per se). Feudalism sufficiently equates to hierarchy historically that for descriptive purposes—although Japan has carried this further—to find societies hierarchically arranged, especially with both a well-defined class system and a propensity to militarism and war, the term, as in “Modern Feudalism,” is meaningful and useful. Japan, by whatever terminology, would not have it otherwise.
2.1 Nation and Economy: Joined in Reciprocal Service

What I have sketched, when applied to America, may be more accurately categorized as, not fascism, essentials, for example, hierarchy, interpenetration, military power and spirit, notwithstanding, but a prefascist configuration, internal structure and foreign policy already in agreement with my definition, but perhaps lacking further systemic tightening and social awareness on the part of leadership and public alike. Disposition, I believe, is present, but that is not the same as awareness; fascism, if and when it comes full throttle, may still obviate the need for the more sinister aspects of Nazism, and emerge gradually if not altogether painlessly.

There is a lag in the political culture on fascism and its relevance, desirability, or application to America. The term is still studiously avoided, but attitude and praxis are moving steadily forward, fascism still as ethnocentrism, xenophobia, a hostile attitude toward the poor and government-welfare functions, and in foreign policy, a full-scale interventionist mode aligned with the operational doctrine of permanent war. Expansionism per se, as with Germany and Japan, is embedded in the very mindset of such a doctrine. Labels can be scare-words; better that one emphasizes attributes. Although gas chambers are not to be facilely equated with interpenetration, systemic connections may take one there. It is not that the State–capitalism paradigm brooks no opposition, but that, in combination, it yields the worst features in both; power supplements alienation yielding the resultant, desensitization. The gas chamber is a more extreme form of drone assassination, both being on the same continuum of suppressed hatred and inflicting pain.

Japan and America, dancing to the rhythm of Ravel’s “La Valse,” a churning, tempestuous rite, makes of political structure a harbinger of the future (a future of fascism already realized, or partially realized, in both nations). In Japan, because of its extreme feudalization, liberalism has meaning for the society as individual rights (there has been a dissenting strand dating far back, however miniscule); in America, without feudalism, liberalism can be what it actually is—the guardian-articulator of the Property Right, making it Centrist or right of Center. (Actually, Liberal, a party designation, fulfills, on war and peace, business regulation, societal absorption of dissent, much the same underlying behavior and practice found in its American counterpart.)

In Japan, the concept of “people’s rights” is absorbed into/swallowed up by nationalism, itself a specific construction of the State (well beyond Western ideas of nationalism, or possibly even the Reich, as in Germany)
which rests on a feudal base going right up to the Emperor (Leader). Nationalism is the soft covering for State, which is accepted as a moral entity, thus investing the State with higher status over capitalism. In America, it is capitalism over the state, or helps to define its content, contrasted with capitalism in Japan, where the “national polity,” obviously not hostile to capitalism, nevertheless endows the meaning of the state with absolute value. To dwell on the difference, however, in the respective statuses accorded capitalism is to miss their point of intersection, different historical-structural routes to a synthetic core, capitalism/State an integrated whole. In one, capitalism is joined to the service of the nation (Japan), in the other, the nation, joined to the service of capitalism (America). Both conditions are satisfied by Noma Saiji, reflected in the Japanese slogan, “The Road to Success and Prosperity,” in which, the positions reversed between capitalism and the State, the outcome is the same: the unity of structures, interpenetration.

2.2 Concept of National Polity: Moral Legitimation of Structure

Let’s call this Emperor-worship, regardless of transformative changes in emperorship since the war, because social structure is still predicated on infinite gradations of status measured by the distance to the top. This makes private affairs unusually public, because they can only be morally legitimated when they are identified with national affairs, and not alone. Capitalism is not thereby de-legitimated; rather, it may actually be enhanced. It is a derivative of feudalism (industrial base notwithstanding, and cherished as providing hierarchical structure) and Nation, aka, State. Here we are being drawn into the fascist ideological vortex.

The Nation (national polity) is all encompassing. It has, as Maruyama emphasizes, spiritual authority and political power, and therefore its own moral code of right and wrong. Comparing American capitalism on the same dimension, one finds that it has spiritual authority, and leaves political power to the State, not a spoiler, though, because the latter remains informally under the control of ruling groups, and private in all but name. For one, moral standards cannot supersede the Nation (Japan), and the other, moral standards cannot supersede capitalism (America).

These two versions of the relative ranking of capitalism are seemingly opposite, yet together constitute a closed system in which power and moral right shifts from, is ascribable to, one or the other, in which case,
however the allocation, the closed-partnership remains intact. It is also equally expansionist under either auspices, and, in whichever name, opposes dissenting forces. Expansion appears inherent in the capitalism/State matrix. This goes beyond obvious reasons, deflection of people’s awareness (the Nazi formula, divert the gaze of the masses) or disposal of surplus production (the Marxist explanation of imperialism), although still important to the analysis. Rather, expansion is also a deeply felt response to the fear, largely hidden, of *stasis* as integral to capitalist development.

3 A Constant Treadmill: The Expansionist Demiurge

Corporate-political-military power circles refuse to face the internal difficulties of capitalism, whether business-cycle fluctuations, stagnation, falling tendencies in the rate of profit, monopolistic effects on stifling competition, underconsumption, an inequitable distribution of wealth, and more. In these circles, and the media, no one wants to admit to systemic failure (tantamount to disloyalty to the Nation) or generate concerns that become self-fulfilling. It is as though a condition of self-inflicted blindsiding was mandatory to maintaining business confidence. Ideological correctness requires that capitalism be handled with kid-gloves. Structure is its foundation, ideology its façade onto the world (for keeping up appearances and fending off criticism).

3.1 War: A Defining Condition, Nationhood and Capitalism

Instead of addressing these and other underlying concerns, capitalism’s historical path since at least the late nineteenth century has been one of externalization: externalize all issues, problems, fears; propel outward; avoid, stave off, contraction. Capitalism, especially, worried about gluts in inventory, meeting profit expectations, and so on, appears driven, on a constant treadmill to exceed the past, keep up with the present, and create higher value in the future, all of which concerns are less apparent or important in meeting the requirements of socialist production. Possibly not being so driven accounts for a certain lethargy in socialist production, but the trade-off, when socialism reconciles its profession and practice, is a sharp reduction in alienation and depersonalization, if any of either yet
remains, and greater material benefits. More to the point here, there is the matter of externalization (already characterizing mercantilism) in which the outward thrust is less a surrogate, than a precondition, for war, with intervention, forcible market penetration, and the like, steps in that direction.

To continue the aforementioned comparison: The Nation encapsulates its own virtue; capitalism does the same. The moral center in each is that it could do no wrong (the US drone assassination, in service to the nation, where nation is code for, because inseparable from, capitalism). This suggests the parallel rationale for an expansionist foreign policy (no stranger to either), treated as a moral obligation to share the respective good tidings, hierarchical order, democracy: Japan, the “just cause,” America, Exceptionalism, together having in common a peculiar affinity to war. The tacit equation of nation and military, and by extension, capitalism and war, in America, cuts deeper than what I have been calling the militarization of capitalism. It is as though war becomes a defining condition of both nationhood and capitalism, normalized to the extent of becoming an unstated assumption giving it ready cogency in the discussion of public policy and popular acceptance.

3.2 Self-evidence: Acceptance of Moral/Mental Absolutes

In Japan, “just cause” is tied to the organicism of hierarchical structure, starting from ages-old service to the Emperor, and proceeding down the structural chain (class seems somehow inadequate or ill-fitting), deference to those above, dominance over those below, encasement of the whole in the unity of moral values and power, devotion and loyalty focused on the top, the Sovereign Nation the source of both. America, perhaps because of its focus on capitalism, has let Exceptionalism carry the burden of ideological explanation for the source of morality and power. Systematic analysis is not needed because of the mental satisfaction deriving from a belief in self-evidence, self-evident truths sufficient for attesting to the virtues of capitalism. In any case, justificatory reasoning appears more conspicuous and necessary in the USA than in Japan. The spread of democracy has been expressed by Woodrow Wilson down through the present, and implied earlier, perhaps dating back to Winthrop’s “city on a hill.” Self-evidence is a canard (a fabrication) conveniently believed—the Statue of Liberty blindfolded—to silence all questioning by proponents and critics alike, capitalism ascending the heights of the Absolute.
The unity characterizing Japan’s structure and thought resides in the Nation, and in America, in capitalism. In the latter, the interesting point is not the source but the fact of the unity, something capitalism depends on in legitimating a sense of national purpose. In both cases, unity translates into outward action (for example wartime Japan, imperialist America, the marriage of morality and power in each nation a goad to expansion) and to giving Authority the benefit of the doubt, as well as unquestioned loyalty. The Japanese slogan, providing a further goad to action, applicable to America as well, “total mobilization of the people’s spirit,” defines, for the USA, the underlying premise for massive surveillance and a guiding principle both for the political system and the mass media.

Maruyama is a veritable philosophical-historical goldmine, allowing one to think through and expand the analysis further. To paraphrase the title of his lead essay, “Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Capitalism,” rather than “Ultra-Nationalism,” one has the principal variables, for him, Nation and capitalism, for me, State and capitalism, at hand in studying how organic structures have common points of reference. Almost necessarily, they are antidemocratic because of the top-down transmission of authority and values and the expected reciprocal flow, deference cascading upward. The common hierarchical element of structure creates the basis for the equation, national polity = capitalist polity. Each is assigned the source of authority and values in its respective bailiwick.

There is a curious primordial quality at the epistemological level, in this case social knowledge, where expectations are formed about command and obedience without regard to the specificity of societal formation. Despite the differences, there is an underlying, striking similarity; the tendency toward absolutism in each case requires strong Authority to complete the societal process. Neither Japan nor the USA is quite receptive to the democratization of wealth or power.

Whether the State or capitalism makes the more direct connection to fascism is difficult to say, because they are so tied together. In Japan, the State is an initiatory force. In America, this falls to capitalism, although, as an intervening step, the individual, rather than capitalism or the State, begins the movement forward in that direction. But that step, individual rights, is deceptive; they are first filtered through capitalism to be given effect. In neither case, then, is individual conscience or consciousness free to operate unrestrained by external forces, so that source per se as determinative of individual rights is canceled out, leaving a moral void in each case.
4 Abdication of the Moral Sense: Transference to a Higher Power

This leaves the individual helpless before, or susceptible to, what-or whomever promises deliverance in the form of an ersatz (described as real) human autonomy. Here externalization takes on additional meaning, that which is projected from an alienated existence and state of mind when intrinsic gratification and meaning can no longer hold. Fascism promises the world in exchange for the externalized individual soul, an incremental step beyond the normalization of political-cultural repression, what the State and capitalism have done in Japan and America—externalization referring here to abdicating the moral sense, transferring it to an outside body free to act in the individual’s name while performing acts of self-aggrandizement and cruelty.

4.1 Ultimate Values: The Individual’s Proximity to Power

Ordinarily this sounds like the psychodynamics of transference to a Leader, a primary act, no further intervention needed, straightforward in its attachment, as in the Nazi nighttime rallies. But it could also describe the psychodynamics of transference to capitalism, one or two steps removed from primality, given the system’s impersonal character. This would require, for the needed attachment, the full weight of patriotic thundering, an invitation to share in hegemonic aspirations and conquests, and the hint of reserved force to engender fear.

Class, though denied, relegated to murk, or otherwise disposed of—again in both contexts—is actually significant to an understanding of the psychodynamics leading up to, and preparing the way for, fascism. Both Japan and America have supposed hierarchy in the construction of their political frameworks. In both, that is, one finds the notion of hierarchical application to the law, so that for each the proximate distance of the individual to the source of power and moral goodness determines one’s worth to society (and presumably the rewards conferred thereby).

For Japan, the ultimate value is the Emperor, for America, Emperor = America, or specifically, Emperor = capitalism, yet with a statist dimension of power to confirm the totality of state and political economy. This emendation to the last-named is grounded in the reality of capitalist operations and systemic needs. It is what makes business-government interpenetration so important, to provide a monolith for social control, a
structure adequate to supplying the needs for moral values and political power, and a synthesis to unify both business and government if society is to hold together. Their separable identities and spheres of activity are preserved, the better to maximize the power of each. I hear echoes of late-Weimar as I write.

Here liberalism is the structural-ideological midwife or unifying agency representing both the State and capitalism. It signifies an underpinning of commonality between them favoring all the usual suspects, expansion, the property right, rule of law, and so on, yet none in contradiction to, and rather, seeking to strengthen—each interpreted through the lens of the property right—capitalism itself. In this political-structural core, militarism would not be out of place, particularly because the core, like its surrounding body (capitalism), purports to be moral, thus giving the use of moral force moral justification. And force emanating from either source, whether capitalism or the State, whether America or Japan, is already predefined as moral. This is the beauty of Moore’s concept of legitimated violence, a concerted exposure of State-approved and often-conducted force.

4.2 Vertical Social Structure: Splintering Class Consciousness

The analysis is directed to America, but key elements, if not the totality, would apply equally to Japan. As I proceed, the interchangeability of State and capitalism appears closer in meaning, whichever nation one chooses, so that pride in the State is transferred to, or translates into, pride in capitalism, and vice versa. As a result, the psychodynamics of structural legitimation become hardened and periodically reinforced as ideology. I had mentioned Italy and Germany as points of reference for America, but by now I think Japan, subject to more detailed analysis below, is more congruent in structure, ideology, and values with America than the others, and, still placing emphasis on Japan, illumines through comparison features of American structure and ideology less often noticed.

When Maruyama draws a distinction between vertical and horizontal lines in social structure, horizontal, essentially democratically organized, vertical, precisely the hierarchical organization of class, power, and force, it is easy to see how Japan, where the individual identifies with the top (or with the system), falls into the former category. Verticality in social stratification means that at each class-level the individual is always looking upward, and demonstrating contempt for those below, a structural framework which results, by design and/or historical experience, in the fragmentation of class consciousness.
Class becomes its own negation through the arts of repression, when identity rests on one’s upward-downward societal perspective of others. The tighter the intra-class feeling, provided that, as a class, individuals still focus at the top for the source of Nationhood and their own worth, the less class matters as a viable vehicle for protest. Not only do we find that class consciousness splinters in the context of Emperor-worship, but also conditions are propitious for the rise of false consciousness, which is the result of accepting the appeals of hierarchical arrangements in the first place.

**4.3 Invisibility of Class: A Covenantal Inclusiveness**

In all of this, America is not far behind, indeed, possibly ahead, because class could not even be mentioned for social control purposes. The verticality of political-structural-ideological design, or simply convergence, has raised classlessness to a moral height invariably to be equated with Americanism. There are scores of dedications in the USA, as though stepping stones to Heaven, or patriotism broadly construed, as, for example, sports teams, firm/company, Nation, its dimensions of war, expansion, capitalism, anything but class. This is a vertical epistemology, corresponding to the individual’s place in the social system, in which the grounds of knowledge are malleable and bend to the prevailing structure of power. The process of mental screening determining reason and cogency is what keeps America safe, sound, ignorant of socialism, and code for capitalism.

The dedication to the whole system, as though it were reified and stood—above one—for the covenantal framework to which all Americans aspired, and to which they sought to conform, may help to explain the prominence of ethnocentrism and racism in contemporary life. Covenantal inclusiveness, though specifically contradicted by both ethnocentrism and racism, is for that reason maintained in Constitution-worship and Fourth of July celebrations, as reminder of the power of the in-group to exclude others from the full rights and powers of citizenship, a savoring by upper groups of the fruits of political sadism and repression. Two-edged promises are ideal vehicles for social control.

**5 Structural Convergence: Capitalism–State Organicism**

The in-group, a personification of capitalism in terms of its ruling stratum, possesses moral rectitude, superior to, and defensive against, those who do not share in the Nation’s values. Massed in self-protection through the
institutional inseparableness of State and capitalism, the in-group, basking in the moral prestige of those above (if they are not already clearly part of that group), extends its influence lower down the social order, receiving further confirmation of Exceptionalism through rigid adherence to the capacious moral code of capitalist values. The assurance of deference, civility, and compliance of lower social groups confirms the superiority of those above, validates the efficacy and moral dimensions of Exceptionalism, and renews the domineering bent of those in the higher reaches of the social structure.

5.1 Certitude, Immutability, Timelessness: Structural Dynamism, a Static Framework

For Japan and America alike, there is a constancy of inner historical-structural compulsion; the transmission of force from feudalism to modern Japan resonates with the American pattern of transmission of capitalism, spiraling historically upward. In both cases a seeming of one-dimensional certitude, the convergence of force and capitalism, to ensure the dialectic, such as it is, stops here. From several directions comes the idea of the immutability of capitalism and the State, their convergence then also testifying to the integration of structure and function enshrined in a halo of timelessness. A more suitable historical-ideological context for a doctrine of self-evident truths, whether in Japan or America, would be hard to find.

As Maruyama points out, the Imperial Constitution of 1889 stated that it “transmitted the immutable law according to which the land has been governed.” The more capitalism changes, the more it remains the same, because, for both societies, a political-structural dynamism is confined within a static framework, in which history remains frozen in the decisive areas of ideology, politics, and culture. This is the ideal breeding ground for the structural process of fascistization. (Indeed, it is more than structural, as the immediately preceding areas make clear; fascistization is societal in scope, totalitarian in meaning, and functionally complete when it embraces the State for purposes of domination and repression.) National polity and Exceptionalism, reigning concepts underpinned by the rivets of heavy industry (less true today of the USA, now in its finance-capital phase) and the spirit of hierarchical validation, signify perhaps the ultimate convergence, the structural core of morality by which Nation, Individual, and Law are placed outside the rule of law, scruples of international conduct, and the constraints of a philosophy of moral obligation.
Fascistization, as the term implies, is a process, not a coup, nor a revolution. Given its structural-cultural insinuation into traditional political structure, particularly in the case of Japan, upper capitalist groups, aligned with the military, engaged in what proved a gradualist transformation, more ideological than structural. The Old Order was left essentially intact, equally if not more hierarchical in shape, now with greater energizing ideas and justifications for expansion. Germany and Italy suggest different historical experiences, the developmental paradigm of fascism thus not being invariable, with coup and/or revolution an inexact but more useful description than for Japan.

In all three national cases, capitalism—as a unifying historical force—is obviously significant, as is the fear, more often than not artificially stimulated, of “bolshevization” coupled with right-wing antilabor violence. (If one can speak of a negative dialectic, what would the Right have done, without a real or projected Left to scare society out of its wits? A straight-out Rightest putsch would have none of the legitimation customarily reserved under capitalism for putting down the Left.) For Germany and Italy, a legitimation of political thuggery, more so than in Japan, provided transformative energies for a political takeover. Paradoxically, on ideology, Japan seemed more imbued than its European counterparts with the spirit and structure of feudalism, though for all three nations fitting capitalism even, or especially, as it modernized into an hierarchical framework, the military component decisively signified the fascist form.

5.2 Etiquette of Class Relations: Master/Follower, Firm/Worker

Maruyama distinguishes three phases 1919–45 in Japanese fascism, the preparatory period, period of maturity, and consummation period, for present purposes the first of these being the most fruitful for delineating the generic specie, fascism, clarified, unadorned, with possible implications for America as well (not, as I noted, his intent). Groups, such as the “Society to Carry Out Heaven’s Way on Earth,” or here, with its manifesto, deeply imbued with feudalism, the “Great Japan Political Justice Corps,” state, in praise of hierarchy: “The master is like the parent; the follower is like the child. The comradeship of followers is like the brothers in a family. The orders of the master must be obeyed through thick and thin. The brothers are to assist each other in mutual affection and must not forget the rules of courtesy.” The rules of courtesy forbade labor strikes, much less revolutionary violence.
With suitable changes to what may appear (in translation) quaintness to the American ear, the passage could be duplicated readily in Sutton, et al., *The American Business Creed* as commonplace corporate rhetoric outlining the etiquette of class relations. The only corrections from the preceding quote being: *firm* rather than master, *worker* or *employee* rather than follower, although master and follower readily substitute by implication for the other terms; too, comradeship does not extend to labor unions nor brothers to their members; *orders* are *orders*, whichever of the two political cultures one chooses. In the USA, scientific management and industrial relations transmitted the required behavior traits and mindset from above; in Japan, these were absorbed into the everyday understanding of history and culture.

### 5.3 Phases of Fascistization: From Movement to Structure

Both Japan and America had a head-start in antiradicalism immediately following World War I, a period of brutalization making possible, and paving the way for, subsequent gradualism in the movement toward fascism. The USA perhaps did not have the clarified ideological position as did Japan (e.g., Kitta Ikkii, in its formative context of fascist ideology), but did have, to an equal extent, the suppression of radicals, notably the International Workers of the World (IWW). It was only during the New Deal that we see a partial interlude, a blanketing down of extremism, Coughlin, Smith, and so on, in America’s formative period during the interwar years. But with FDR’s death, fascist currents emerged full blown, again the usual pattern, namely, explosion, to future gradualism (McCarthyism successfully absorbed and internalized, boundaries, political and ideological, thereby circumscribed, the alteration then taken for granted). After World War II, in America, anticommunism, originating in stored-up antiradicalism, gradually filters into and shapes the shift of the political-ideological spectrum rightward.

An analogous process is at work in Japan, with fragmentary movements, a proliferation of patriotic societies—seemingly enough to fill a small telephone directory—becoming unified through the active support of the military. This linkage to the military is an important element in translating upper-group and plebeian sources of fascism into a cohesive mainstream force in Japan. In America, this linkage is weaker. The status and role of the US military in the interwar period is still an unanswered question, though suppression of the Bonus Marchers under Gen. MacArthur, and
Supervisory activities of the US Army in the Civilian Conservation Corps, point to some, but not widespread, influence. On the level of rhetoric, Japan, in the second phase, evidences Left-wing pronouncements galore, but their disappearance in the third suggests the incipience of fascism even when using Left rhetoric. In America, Left rhetoric is standard even though not acted on. The USA is a Liberal society (Hartz), with everything transvalued to fit a context of capitalism and property rights.

In the post-Manchuria period, right-wing parties flourish, some even from labor unions (a mobilization from below, but not in such volume and strength as occurs in Germany and Italy) even having National Socialist in their titles, so that fascism from above, mobilization partially accomplished from below, makes for a solidified movement. Maruyama draws the distinction between fascist movement and total structure of Japanese fascism, his emphasis, on the first, mine, on the second. This also indicates the distinction between the early and later phases, and between an emphasis on ideology, and on state structure.

Despite Maruyama’s focus on continuity as critical to Japan’s historical-structural development, capitalism sinks in importance, or is sidetracked, in the analysis far more than is warranted, and not offset by cultural-ideological factors as other than contributory and consonant with the historical and structural. Fascism is not all thought, that is, ideological superstructure, for it has foundations, that is, capitalism, and their interaction, essential to understanding, requires both, with an eye to their reciprocal influence. Ideology may be a powerful instrument (for whatever purpose intended), but it has to be rooted in an appropriate context to elicit action. Words don’t necessarily kill, nor do ideas; persons kill, governments kill, nations kill. Fascism is not now, nor was it ever, an impersonal force, which is why one looks to systemic frameworks and structures of power for location and understanding.

With attention primarily to social movement and ideology, Maruyama treats state structure as somewhat of an intrusion in Japan’s history, which, coming forward in time, gradually takes power and has greater impact on politics and culture. For purposes of discussion, I have used state structure interchangeably with capitalism in our comparative analysis, although of course state structure covers a wide variety of social systems having diverse historical, economic, and ideological characteristics—the point here being, on a functional level the interchangeability holds for Japan and America. Even then, the State is discriminably different from capitalism—because of
historical tradition and political culture—provided State and capitalism, in our study, are recognized to be in modern times interpenetrated structures with mutually supportive ideological and cultural themes.

6 Ideology, Tradition, Conformity: Absence of Variegation

The USA is different, perhaps only slightly, both state structure and capitalism being mainstream, so that historical development becomes a steady movement in the consolidation, adaptation between them unnecessary, because already achieved, of political culture, ideology, capitalism. Contrary to expectations, Japan’s uniformity of growth is less stark, though still extreme, than that of America’s. (Liberal absolutism, whether or not Locke is the sole accredited source, is not an unreasonable thesis, when the full weight of property and the property right on structure and consciousness is taken into account.) None of the structural development toward fascism, whether in Japan or America, unlike Germany and Italy, is dependent on capture of the state structure by marginalized groups coming into being and/or operating outside of authoritative circles. For America, unified Center-Right ruling groups preside simultaneously over monopoly capital, foreign-policy hegemonic goals, and domestic order, enjoying the complicity (or indifference) of the citizenry in these pursuits.

When one looks closely at Japan’s fascist ideology (again courtesy Maruyama, extrapolations my own), we are informally on the epistemological level, here, the fundamental unit of social meaning which underpins the State: the family-system, or State in miniature, in which the Nation (also reflected in the spirit of nationalism) is the aggregation of families, and together, one big Family—the “State as a united body,” Tsuda’s paean to village life (a purposeful effort at retrogradation to glorify presumed rural values of the preyed upon, maligned folk). Nazism used the theme even more savagely, as a mainstay of anti-Semitism and somehow (a feat of great imagination) in defense of Big Industry. Hence a second theme of Japanese fascism is, relatedly, agrarianism, ordinarily or logically in conflict with an ideology favoring the absolute State and a strong industrial base—but not so here. What Maruyama sees as both views “mingled in confusing eclecticism” is not confusing if agrarianism serves, as it did in Japan, to intensify acceptance of the traditional order.
6.1 A One-Dimensional Nation: Encasement in Structural Order

One cannot overstate the cancerous use of a politicized agrarianism to designate Tradition as the embodiment of a folk community of Reaction. This denies at the outset any progressive-liberating tendencies in the rise of industry, usually accompanied, as in eighteenth-century England, by the commercialization of agriculture, perhaps the most important historical advance of modern times. The issuance is still capitalism, but capitalism following a different path from that encased in a structural process of feudalism and a cultural process of traditionalism. In theory, Hartz was correct in his expectation that America, absent European feudalism, would be a democratic nation. Yet by stating that capitalism in America was born mature, he unwittingly short-circuited the historical process through skipping over the significance of conflict, or the lack thereof, in the formation of democracy. Capitalism without historical-structural-cultural variegation yields a one-dimensional Nation, not unlike that claimed by Germany for the Folk, or Japan for the Family.

Tradition is the pernicious encasement of monochromatic societal development, the effective erasing and/or denial of progressive social forces and outcomes, especially when self-evidence is claimed in justification, not only of its content (a revolutionary heritage, which America never had, or deserved in reputation to have had, conceivably could exercise a radical influence when brought into modern times), but also, more important, its process: encasement qua stifling of a democratizing force when industry is free to liberate and expand productive forces. None of the foregoing has exhibited historical viability, precisely because industry has been harnessed to the petrifying ends of stabilization and increased power of ruling groups. Nor has socialism thus far fully emancipated productive forces so that they might reach their potential, whether in China or Russia. Tradition negates variegation, which itself has not been traditionalized in America, its impetus lacking because having no historical-substantive actuality to impart. The result is a disheartening sameness of mental landscape (a principal reason for my arriving at the conclusion, a prefascist configuration characterizing the American present).
6.2 Traditionalizing Capitalism/Industrialism: Militarism, the Folk

This is fascism awaiting the world’s embrace: the traditional order, a framework for capitalist industrial society. Workers are soldiers-in-industry (an idea explicit to Japan and Germany); they are loyal and do not strike. Tradition, almost subliminal and instinctive in the conveying of meaning, carries the structural message of stabilization, hierarchy tracing to a distant past, and organic, non-class, social organization, a grand recipe for elites’ dominance of the social order.

Traditionalize industrialism and, besides enabling, preserving, and enforcing the status quo, one goes a step further, unleashing the military factor as necessary to national self-preservation. The more national heritage is dressed in a distant past (Germany, Italy, Japan, and, less so, America), the more easily the ennoblement of the folk, the virtues of hierarchical ordering of structure, the glorification of Order. America, in light of its comparatively recent origins, has it both ways: mythologizing similar themes adapted to liberal rhetoric, claims of modernity and its putative association with democracy (while industry has been consolidated, wealth concentrated, and foreign policy activated to perhaps unprecedented heights).

If for present-day capitalism in America, if not Japan, the industrial/manufacturing base declines, as now happens, emphasis is being placed on preserving the strength of the national entity via a strong military. (Trade and finance cannot give the assurance that weaponry, intervention, or war can—a feeling finding ample precedent in tradition.) The village-principle may suggest a vein of anti-city, anti-industry, and anti-central authority sentiment, all to the good from a fascist worldview, a propagandistic effort at misdirection to avoid scrutiny of the power-relations between industrialists, generals, and the Nazi party. But the village qua lifeblood of the Nation serves even better in its ideological clarity, particularly the synthesis of the two, by circuitously bringing back the military into view: in Japan, strong village, strong military; large cities are soft, corrupt. The confusion sowed (Tokyo hardly a hamlet; village youth, the ideal conscripts in point of fact) appears contradiction-free when the totality of the political culture is invoked.

Fascism is an essay in cleanliness, the reason being, I suspect, anality in personality structure (or analogous psychosocial development in which fixation plays a part), as in the meticulous way of wreaking havoc, a
seeming bursting out from repression which releases destructive urges. The individual, despite the crowded rallies and the military symbolism, is self-enclosed, purposely by preference, but also structurally, the easier thereby to control and manipulate. Nazism’s effectiveness in culture-molding owes to the effective isolation of the individual, this, combined with the amassing of terrifying power, in symbol and fact, juxtaposed to the isolated person. There is no such thing as going one-on-one with the State; the individual is reduced to an empty vessel within which hateful ideology is poured and constraints imposed on daily life. Xenophobia, fear of the stranger, and ethnocentrism, the we–they dichotomy, both conspicuous features of the fascist mindset, bring structure and alienation together in the harmony of racial (the superior folk) fellowship.

7 Folkish Capitalism: The Industrial Base Etherealized

This offers an alternative set of psychodynamics from that in Marx’s analysis of the significance of commodity production. It is as though a plea for homogeneity, no they, no stranger, just we, we are all we. I am not paraphrasing Gertrude Stein here; this is merely another theme specific to Japan in the interwar years (whether borrowed from, or taught to, Germany, where one finds a similar rationale for the expansion of power), the desire to free Asian countries from European imperialism/colonialism, the idea being homogeneity in Asia: Greater Asia Principle. (I can almost hear the tanks crossing the border into Poland in September 1939.) Homogeneity doesn’t answer fully, however, for Japanese motivation, and rather homogeneity in the service of dominance, as the record in World War II and constant altercations during the interwar years show. Homogeneity at home, in any case, spells trouble for democratic social organization, with the scapegoat waiting at the edges, and appeals to solidarity a convenient means of suffocating political and social dissent.

7.1 Accommodation: Homogeneity and Plebeian Fascism

In light of the 1937–40 period in Japan, the crushing of labor and radical organizations, and rise of still more patriotic societies, one might say that if there had not been a New Deal in America, the USA could have been Japan. That thought is particularly fresh today. Fascism is not all top-heavy
Industrial Junkerdom with accompanying brass. It is also plebeian, for different reasons, in different historical circumstances, a frustrated working class giving vent to its pent-up aggression. So much depends on context. In America, the New Deal created sufficient ideological appeal, policy advancements, and structural inclusion, that working people had valid reason for identification with the purposes enlivening political society and the benefits deriving from welfare and unemployment policies. In America, however, as I write, the working class has verged into plebeian fascism with a vengeance, a reservoir of racism among white workers, along with pro-war vituperation, and a decline in authentic militancy in favor of the recent opioid culture of nihilism. The reason for this extreme case of demoralization and indifference is the lack, unlike the New Deal period, of a supporting culture of class, protest, and radicalism.

A key factor in the incipience of fascism in America is, alternatively, the betrayal of the working class’s own dreams of freedom, languishment instead in self-pity, and capitalism’s success in fostering a spirit of accommodation based on the denial of class, protest, and radicalism. One does not expect the middle classes to be the spearhead for, and custodian of, democratization. That role historically and objectively has been and presumably is to be fulfilled by the working class. This is less likely today than ever in the nation’s history; before the New Deal, the experience of struggle created the spirit and honed the commitment and agitational skills that richly endowed the history of industrial violence. Working people, of course, lost, but they forged a class, which today is no longer present. America could have validated its democratic credentials in such a victory; instead, plebeian fascism is a real prospect (when the right demagogue comes along).

As it is, America’s politicization of the anticommunism issue after the war left it second to none in ferocity concerning the commitment to order, the same intuitive and heartfelt belief as with Japan in homogeneity as the solution to many problems, a glorification of the in-group that had both racial and economic significance. This makes more understandable the contemporary acceptance of the Cold War mindset—all of which has been so successful as to be with us in our structural and psychological DNA, so to speak, at this very moment. Russia and China have replaced World War II Germany and Japan, only, if possible, seen as a greater long-term threat (the Axis we could defeat, present-day adversaries, a looming question mark). This brings me back to fascism and homogeneity.
7.2 Antiradicalism: Manipulating a Sense of Danger

America prides itself on its evenness, no revolution or coup in modern industrial times, or even attempts in these directions; one might turn that around, however, for it suggests weakness of those below, no militant labor or radical organizations. One does not have to endorse coups or revolutions to realize that national polity (an essential principle in Japanese political theory), its unified, non-class features making possible fascism from above, is common to both Japan and America. The clear structural-ideological channel downward, where no resistance has been offered, explains how a fascistic direction, gradual, its direction from above, is possible. The Cold War was an ideal context (encountering Bolsheviks) for the means of strengthening monopoly capital. This was no longer a matter of divert-the-gaze of the masses, but the full-scale mobilization of society in wiping clear the democratic slate—in both Japan and America, anticommunism the means of achieving popular unification and the further structuralization of advanced capitalism.

National polity fits America as well as it does Japan. The fact of there being few communists in, and not a threat to, either society, and yet, in both, an overreaction, perhaps deliberate, speaks to the opportunist character of the political moment. Antiradicalism is the vehicle not only for monopolization, but also for drawing inward, tightening the in-group’s identity in both and, for Japan specifically, the analogous family-principle. Everything points to creating an hierarchical framework based on the Leadership Principle (with America itself its corporeal embodiment). Again in both nations, ersatz radicalism became the whipping boy, the message, conform, supplemented by an invitation to being absorbed. McCarthy was an apt figure (“I have in my hand”) for the age, Kitta and lesser known nationalists his counterpart in Japan. The exploitation of fears was critical to steering both countries rightward.

Maruyama succinctly puts the matter: “There was a powerful inclination to regard as dangerous all trends towards political and ideological diversity that might interfere with the homogeneity of the community (the ‘spirit of harmony’). This tendency becomes strong in direct proportion to the acceleration of a sense that the structure is in danger.” One wants to add, create the sense of danger first to ensure the spirit of harmony follows. For that spirit ensures feelings of classlessness (for those below) and complicity in national policy and business aggrandizement (for the same strata of society). The description applies equally to the USA:
amplify the danger to ensure the homogeneity. And hence, one finds fascist attacks “on marginal ideologies in concrete situations.” One lesson to be learned from the Japanese experience for the historical direction America is taking, is: capitalism without revolution in its life cycle, even a bourgeois revolution, which the American Revolution was not, too much, as with slavery, left intact, historically paves the way for fascism. In sum, capitalism without revolution is fascism. To reduce American history to one sentence, Locke is no Robespierre.

Not merely did the American Revolution leave slavery intact, but it also by definition left capitalism intact. This may seem strange at first sight, because of course it left capitalism intact. But if so, then it was hardly a revolution. The point is, America reproduced itself as capitalistic at every moment of national development, the abolition of slavery clearing the historical boards of one remaining drawback—the fiction being, a bourgeois revolution, yet, led by the railroad sector, a straight-line projection over several decades to monopoly capital and destruction of all fictions, bourgeois or democracy itself. Self-reproducing capitalism affords little to no opportunity for alternative historical paths, except fascism, not because of an intrinsically linear pattern from capitalism to fascism, but because intermediary obstacles to that outcome (e.g., socialism, or possibly, Third Way welfare-oriented capitalism) have been discarded, ruled off the structural agenda, and so on. Here a vital labor movement, within capitalism, might be a useful check, so, too, the decentralization of economic power, and, not least, the rejection of a determination to achieve world hegemony via military power—none of these obstacles, much less all together, were or are emplaced or presented consistently as living options in the nation’s history and/or political development.

8 Non-transformative Social Change: The Old Order Renewed

Absolutism of America (Exceptionalism), joined to monopoly capital, where each reinforces the other, is similar to Japan, where absolutism has a different referent (Emperor, Nation, National Polity), with the same result: a linear historical track, non-transformative social change. Japan did not have a bourgeois revolution; instead, its straight-line historical-ideological projection was encapsulated within pre-modernism as the basis for industrial society. The USA was the bourgeois revolution, but from the
outset this defined the Old Order as well as the New, a continuity, rather than variegated development, an historical constant, as one continuing Old Order. Because it was not transformative, the American Revolution, only confirmatory, gave out to a projection of unrelieved sameness, implying there was no need for revolution, or that separation provided a weak impetus for change. If American capitalism was born mature (Hartz), it was thus already Lockean, a springboard to further consolidation and modernization.

Modernization had been sundered from democratization. The same held true for Japan. The transformation of American history (pace Beard’s interpretation of the Civil War) was never that; additive, not qualitative. I speak of Modern Feudalism, even when feudalism per se was not present. We are fleshing out hierarchy and homogeneity, or better, the superimposition of hierarchy on homogeneity (or perhaps the reverse), a more than adequate working definition of fascism in skeletal form. To that must be added the de-politicization of the masses, thence their reintegration into the Nation, the folk, or simply, an Exceptionalist America. And unlike the British parliamentary system, there would be the raising of the Leader above the political parties, a secular deification as it were. Emperor, President, it doesn’t matter, neither office of course is simon-pure, above the fray, yet the fiction must be preserved, to legitimate the system of political economy and symbolize a unified Nation embarked on a permanent state of war. This fits America to a “t”; whether Japan completes the same journey, time will tell.