

Betrachtungen über „disqualifizierte Minoritäten“ und demokratischen Konsens

Auszüge aus seinen im Schumpeter-Archiv publizierten *Pieces of manuscripts, discarded manuscripts, notes and other material for the socialism book*

Joseph A. Schumpeter

“This makes all the difference. An attempt to enforce the surrender, regardless of its will, of a minority (let alone majority) whose social vitality is as yet unimpaired, is one thing: an attempt to enforce the surrender of an atrophic minority that merely hangs on by virtue of the inertia of social institutions, is quite different another thing: commonsense tells us that meaning as well as chance of success differ fundamentally in both cases.¹ From this standpoint a synthesis becomes possible of Consent und Compulsion which is no mere compromise between fundamentally irreconcilable elements but has a sound meaning of its own. Of course it is very difficult to apply in practice: some people will always hold, other people will never admit that a given minority is disqualified in the sense defined. But this does not affect the principle; we have nevertheless get hold of a rational solution of the conflict which disturbs the minds not only of modern socialists but of non-socialist democrats. In order to show this and also in order to guard against a very natural misunderstanding.

Let us take an aeroplane and “hop off” to France, not to modern France, but to the France of the twelfth century. We observe – disregarding certain elements, especially the towns – a feudal organization. The feudal lord and their henchmen form a minority of the population. But we readily understand that in the circumstances of time and country no other organization of society could be a practical success and that any attempt to do away with it would end in chaos in wholesale destruction of cultural values and even in danger of injury to the survival interest of that society. Now let us choose another plane, one which flies between New York and Paris of 1789. We observe another social structure. It also contains feudal elements. But they are readily seen to be no longer necessary wheels of the social engine which on the contrary could work more efficiently without them. Hence alighting from our plane, we have no difficulty in realizing that abolition of their privileges which had become functionless dead word is now a completely different matter. It was, in historical fact, substantially secured by convent on the famous night

1 Bezogen auf die von Schumpeter schließlich realisierte Gliederung von *Kapitalismus, Sozialismus und Demokratie (KS&D)* sind die nachstehenden Entwürfe dem 23. Kapitel des Werkes und näher dessen III. Abschnitt *Demokratie in der sozialistischen Ordnung* zuzuordnen.

of the forth of August. But if it had not been or if in spite of that convent there had been sectional resistance, compulsion would look to us in a different light.

I have chosen a favorable example. It suffices however to show that our distinction between enforcing the surrender of “vital” and enforcing the surrender of “disqualified” minorities is not otiose or practically futile. Nor is it merely a matter of our subjective preferences. The point to grasp is our recognition of the vitality of a minority group or of the functions such a group fills in a particular national organism – I cannot stay to show why the two will as a rule coincide – is entirely independent of whether or not we sympathize with groups or approve of those functions. Being modern men or women and flying the Stars and Stripes from our plane we should probably like the feudal stratum that we recognized as vital just as little as we should the bathroom arrangements of twelfth century France. And if we traveled to France of 1792 or 1793, we might appreciate those cultural value whose carrier the persecuted aristocratic stratum continued to be and hate from the bottom of our hearts – I for me should – the stupid phrases, the sanguinary brutality, the moral squalor incident to the method by which the institutional deadwood was being eliminated. But neither class of feelings nor personal value-judgements is relevant to our criterion which turns on a question of fact and not on a question of valuation.

In our everyday life however and in our thoughts on social subjects we are in the habit of adopting exactly the opposite criterion. We take our stand on our personal or group-wise valuations and recognize or disqualify other group or interests or ideals precisely according to whether or not we sympathize with or hate them. Whenever some of value is of sufficient moment to us and whenever we hold it with sufficient zest, as at certain junctures we hold religious convictions or at other junctures certain substitutes for them, the other fellow walks in darkness and this darkness, however widely spread, must not be allowed to prevail over the light. For the socialist – as far any “ist”, in fact, prohibitionist or other – the non-socialist is not simply in error but also in sin: this is the test of any belief which lays claim to absolute truth and knows no argument outside of the propaganda for and the exposition of the true faith. This attitude is one of the outstanding facts of our time as with varying connotations it has been one of the outstanding facts of all times; it is practically much more important than the one we have adopted above, we shall keep it steadily in view. Just now however I have merely to advert to the danger of confusion between the two, a danger which is particular great if we speak of a vital minority as “justified” by a social “function” and of an atrophic one as disqualified by the absence of it.

But it should be clear that our criterion of disqualification can only apply to minorities: it supplies a condition which democratic practice requires for deviating from the principle of government by consent and without which it is no part of that practice to override the will of minorities. The other criterion has no reference to whether dissenters are in a majority or in a minority and no place in the theory of democratic practice: on the contrary, it supplies a condition for attitudes and decisions which are, and at all times have been, among the chief sources of antidemocratic tendencies.” (Schumpeter 1934 ff.: 353 ff.)²

2 Online: <https://www.schumpeter.info/schriften/edition%20hedtke.pdf#page=353>, 21.07.2022.