The Lion and Fox Animal Spirits of Machiavelli and Pareto: a framework for organisational micro-politics

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Abstract

Consistent with Vilfredo Pareto's macrosociological work emphasising non-logical conduct, recent psychology and behavioural-economics literatures have looked to affective 'animal spirits' to understand management decision-making and interpersonal interaction. Recent sociological and organisational studies literatures offer further scope for resituating and elaborating Paretian non-logical conduct within management contexts by theorising institutional structures and cultural norms as inculcating behavioural patterns. In seeking a more nuanced grasp of animal spirits that shape micro-political management behaviours viscerally, while locating their emergence within broad socio-cultural contexts, we draw on the 'lion' and 'fox' animal spirits, whose inspiration for Pareto's psychologistic sociological project we clarify from Chapter XVIII of Machiavelli's '*The Prince*'. Our corresponding managerial ideal-types, now considered within particular types of micro-political risk context, are initially explored for their heuristic allegorical potential. How particular organisational risk conditions may inculcate and challenge them is also considered. The psycho-affective tendencies of lions and foxes are then refined and grounded within recent behavioural-psychology research, through which their suitability for various socio-organisational risk contexts, and their dysfunctionality within other settings, is further elaborated. The resulting nuanced framework,

The lion and fox animal spirits of Machiavelli and Pareto: a framework for studying organisational micro-politics

connecting emotional dispositions of leaders to longer term contexts, is held up as viable for focusing academic management and organisational research towards practice-related interventions, while also attesting to the value of the Machiavellian-Paretian realist tradition as living theory for social science.

Keywords

Vilfredo Pareto, micro-political conflict, animal spirits, conservatism, authoritarianism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism.

1. Introduction

The economist-turned-sociologist Vilfredo Pareto has recently been neglected by social science. Scattered impact across management studies ensures that most management academics possess limited familiarity with his work, perhaps most often through simple business applications of the 80/20 proportionality meme deriving from his law of income distribution. Yet, central to the meaning and significance of Pareto's contribution, spanning the early elite theory and the later general sociology, is the study of behavioural patterns which pervade social life. More specifically, Pareto's commentators generally consider distinct 'Lion' and 'Fox' based behavioural patterns key to understanding him as a theorist of 'non-logical conduct', to use the expression which gave Volume One of the (1935) *Treatise on General Sociology* its title and subject matter.

The present paper looks to these patterns' Machiavellian ancestry, centring particular attention upon what Chapter XVIII of Machiavelli's (1531/1961) *The Prince* says and alludes to regarding their natures and adaptivities. This will clarify that politically meaningful behaviour and associated situational challenge have provided the inspiration for Pareto's sociological imagination, thereby justifying the paper's selection of contemporary organisational micro-politics as an application context for Pareto's psychologistic sociological insight. At this point it will become important to recognise that the insight is itself subject to interpretation, having matured within Pareto's sociological corpus throughout the first two decades of the 20th century in a behavioural direction so as to create ambiguity over how best to resolve it into psychological and sociological propositions.

Recognising this ambiguity within Pareto's sociological legacy, the paper will draw upon contemporary academia's appreciation of the importance of *animal spirits*. We will propose this as a conceptual focus for a re-reading of his sociological corpus, offering a distinctive

and simplifying view of key psychological and sociological issues arising when micro-political conflict within and between organisations is taken as the application context.

The micro-politics of organisations has interested management scholars increasingly since the breakdown of fixed managerial role structures began in many large organisations over forty years ago, leading to co-emergence of organisational micro-politics alongside structural and relational fluidity and complexity (Mechanic 1962; Pfeffer 1984; Mintzberg 1985; Willner 2011). Increasingly, since then, issues of power and resistance have become prominent in studies of interpersonal relations between managers (see for example Phillimore and Moffatt 2004; Spicer and Böhm 2007; Zoller and Fairhurst 2007; Fleming and Spicer 2008; Geppert, Becker-Ritterspach, and Mudambi 2016; Christoffersen 2017). Organisations become "frameworks of power" (Clegg 1989) within which 'Machiavellian' strategies of power and resistance may be enacted (Clegg 1989; Fleming and Spicer 2005; Levy and Scully 2007; Marshall and Ojiako 2013).

Psycho-affective management postures for viscerally enacting interpersonal relations during power play have become important too (Carney, Cuddy, and Yap 2010; Anderson and Brion, 2014). Seminal work by Pondy (1967) contends that for intra-organisational conflict involving bargaining over resources, tugs-of-war over bureaucratic power and control, and coordination disagreement over functional relationships, micro-political actors tend to retain simple affective states formed during conflict episodes.

The development of this analytical perspective has arguably been hindered by a tendency to regard emotions of organisational micro-politics as external to core mechanisms shaping outcomes – partly as a legacy of the Druckerian management paradigm emphasising self-control as a management competence. Hence, emotions may be considered resultant effects, or perceptions, of political behaviour in workplaces. This happens in studies linking political behaviour to emotional labour (Hochschild 1983; Sturdy 2003), work-related stress (Whitman, Halbesleben, and Holmes 2014) impression management (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993), promotability (Rosen, Harris, and Kacmar 2009) and employee satisfaction (Vigoda, 2001). Furthermore, it is common to conceive of organisational micro-politics as highly professionalised through commitment to standards of procedural rationality in the pursuit and/or reconciliation of interests, with use of online technologies for dispute resolution also becoming routine. Related emphases on political will and skill sets (Mintzberg 1983; Ferris et al. 2005) have seemingly oriented research towards analysing managers as rational actors, despite literature on decision-making amid uncertainty emphasising the

impossibility of overcoming uncertainty purely through rational-calculative means (Möllering 2006; Zinn 2008).

Work considering how different professionals handle uncertainty – e.g. doctors or bankers – point to the salience of emotions within such decision-making processes; nonetheless, theory relating decisions to emotions requires further development (Lupton 2013). In its invoking of Keynes's (1936, p.163) 'animal spirits' metaphor to consider the 'innate urges' drawn upon when acting amid unknowable futures, the recent behavioural economics literature (see for example Loewenstein and O'Donoghue 2004; Akerlof and Shiller 2009; Loewenstein 2011; Jang and Sacht 2016; Lainé 2017) comprises a range of interesting lines of inquiry. Yet the vagueness of many conceptions of emotional patterns - Akerlof and Shiller (2009) refer to wide-ranging psychological phenomena such as 'confidence' and 'desire for fairness' - help us little in capturing more specific and nuanced tendencies for dealing with micro-political conflict and risk in particular contexts.

To develop more fine-grained understandings of animal spirits shaping managers' conduct and decision-making amidst uncertain futures and micro-political conflict, as well as to connect the development of such specific emotional dispositions to socio-cultural contexts, this article will present a framework for Paretian analysis of organisational micro-politics, around four main analytical considerations. First, we extend Pondy's concern with common affective threads by taking Machiavelli's 'lion' and 'fox' animal spirits as our micro-political conflict denominators that endure across conflict episodes. We view these as simple affective, cognitive and behavioural patterns shaping micro-political actors' conflict dispositions – especially where "zones of uncertainty" concerning the intentions, motives and resources of competitors or adversaries exist (see Crozier and Friedberg 1980) and where optimal dispositions for managing the possibility of conflict are therefore to a significant extent incalculable (Brown, Hashen, and Calnan 2016). Second, the respective emergence and efficacy of leonine (like Machiavelli's 'lions') and vulpine (like Machiavelli's 'foxes') dispositions amidst contrasting micro-political risk contexts, typified as either 'wolves' that lions can frighten away or 'snares' that foxes can evade, are then further developed via Pareto's psychologistic-sociological development of Machiavelli's animal spirits. We explain that, when set within the context of Pareto's work, Machiavelli's animal caricatures and their functional adaptations to 'wolf' and 'snare' environments form the basis of an elaborate sociological theory offering considerable insight into micro-political conflict within and between organisations. Third, we use modern psychological literatures to nuance and validate

these basic animal spirits with reference to what is now known about conservatism-authoritarianism and Machiavellianism-narcissism-psychopathy personality patterns, emphasising that, just as Pareto's sociological works proposed at great length, these patterns seem to intensify and wane with alternating background social conditions. Finally, we offer possible uses for the conceptual framework, emphasising that the explanatory efficiency of these two basic metaphors is its greatest virtue.

2. Machiavelli's Theory: Lions and Foxes

2.1 Setting the analytical scene

As awareness has grown regarding the limits of rational-actor accounts of managers' coping and behaviour in the face of organisational risk (Daniels et al. 2008) and/or micro-political conflict (Pluut and Curşeu 2012), so have economic models – focussing on how political actors employ resource-based reasoning within systems of rules and with regard to institutional constraints and career considerations – been problematised (Zinn 2008). Such models are highly complicated while overlooking underlying dispositional and cultural factors through their cognitivist lens (Walter et al. 2012). In particular, they fail to consider that organisational micro-political behaviour does not just stimulate many affective dynamics - as Treadway et al. (2005) discuss in their study of how different levels of political skill can influence these - but can also be stimulated by powerful affect to take particular forms. It is in this sense that behavioural economics approaches tend to be rather blind to systematic biases and framing effects (Kahneman 2003) and to underlying socio-historical contexts which produce differing modes of seeing and dealing with risk across cultures (Zinn 2008).

In contrast, sociological, political and organisational risk studies have highlighted socio-cultural embeddedness of risk-taking and risk-aversion in relation to group dynamics (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982) and actors' locations within groups and societies (Olofsson and Rashid 2011). Economics-based approaches often denote deviations from rational-cognitive ideals as weaknesses (Zinn 2008), rather than exploring the ecological–rationality of decision dispositions (c.f. Todd and Gigerenzer 2012). Although it is claimed within modern behavioural economics that "visceral" factors within decision-making are often adaptive, corresponding to needs and desires which feed rational choices (Loewenstein 2011,

p.694), it is nonetheless acknowledged that their importance in driving behaviour relative to cognition and rational choice requires more study (Loewenstein 2011, p.696), noting in particular that visceral influences are generally regarded as hard to predict (Loewenstein 2011, p.705).

Pondy's emphasis on different forms of 'hostile affection' as the denominator for micro-political conflict offers a particular focal point for analysis. This idea resonates with Carl Schmitt's (1927/1996) realist view of 'the political' as a sphere which exists only to the extent that social actors use *friend-enemy codings* to orient towards one another. Subsequent organisational conflict literature (e.g. Wall and Callister 1995) cites Pondy widely and has done much to explore disruptive affect (see Medina et al. 2005) but has not so far worked within the realist paradigm to model 'common threads' linking affect, cognition, and behaviour that can convincingly lay claim to tapping the behavioural reality of what moves organisational actors to socially construct and undertake micro-political conflict as they do in circumstances where they perceive themselves to possess competitors or adversaries.

2.2 The emergence of lions and foxes amidst wolves and snares

With the goal of developing such a model of common affective threads, aligned to cognition, behaviour and situation, we first go back to Machiavelli's (1513/1961, Chapter XVIII) guidance to Princely rulers on appropriate animal spiritedness for gaining and maintaining power. The following guidance on why and when Princes should 'knowingly adopt the beast', as Machiavelli put it, provides a very useful starting point for our analysis:

> "*A prince…ought to choose the fox and the lion; because the lion cannot defend himself against snares and the fox cannot defend himself against wolves. Therefore, it is necessary to be a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves*". Machiavelli 1513/1961, Chapter XVIII.

To grasp adaptivities of 'lions' to 'wolf' environments and of 'foxes' to 'snare' environments, it is also helpful to consider these behavioural adaptations as occurring through respective strategies of 'force' and 'fraud' which Machiavelli referred to persistently throughout his historical writings (Book III, §40-42 of the 1517/1996 *Discourses on Livy*). We will also speak ahead, to some introductory extent, to section four's outlining of the

conservative-authoritarian nature of the lion and the dark triadic nature of the fox, here focusing on these as simple affective postures.

Some introductory clarification and micro-political re-contextualisation for 'leonine force' and 'vulpine fraud' is therefore as follows. Consider wolves as creatures which circle and become more dangerous as their desperation grows, particularly during times of resource scarcity like harsh winters. Correspondingly, wolverine micro-political risk environments can make sense as conditions where some organisation is struggling amidst scarcity to pursue its interests and retain its legitimacy, reputation and cohesion. These problems may arise because the organisation is directly threatened by resource scarcity. For example, as a customer base falls away, so too key employees may leave, creditors may dim their view of the organisation's creditworthiness, and trust between supply-chain partners may reduce. Accordingly there may be managerial factionalism fomenting towards internal leadership challenges, alongside external efforts to undermine the organisation and take its resources. The result, inevitably, will be growing feelings of demoralisation, doubt, distrust and insecurity across the organisation.

Now consider how leonine behavioural traits might be theorised as adaptive for these conditions, especially through aggressive posturing towards external threat and amelioration of the negative affect we have just mentioned. When we think of lions we might think firstly of their 'roars' as signifying a harsh conservative-authoritarian interpersonal-behavioural and rhetorical style cementing heroic leadership to submissive, pliable and conformist followership. Working within that conservative-authoritarian psychological paradigm, which we address more fully later on, our leonine roar metaphor invites interpretation as combining friend and enemy coded meanings emphasising enactment of/commitment to/galvanisation of in-group powers, over resistance to out-group ones – especially where out-group powers are perceived as making wolverine incursions into protected in-group power spaces. Clearly, rich affective-motivational conservative-authoritarian denominators for leonine force are at issue here, spanning feelings of obligation to *protect* aligned with feelings of *loyalty towards* and *belonging to* the threatened entity. These feelings can be viewed as creating a distinctive affective organisational climate where leadership and followership can align in common purpose and resolve. For example, Dörrenbächer and Geppert (2013) mention an Opel Subsidiary in Bochum, Germany, which in 2004 resisted factory closure plans through a management and labour force accord to undertake a wildcat strike, whose capacity to severely disrupt the corporate supply chain gave the subsidiary effective political leverage

against headquarters.

Adaptation of foxes to snare environments is, similarly, an efficient metaphor for an important pattern of functional adaptation in organisational micro-politics. This time, however, organisational contexts of growth, innovation and change are at issue. Consider that 'snares' are traps for the unwary, and that the 'fox' caricature has before and since Machiavelli enjoyed a long literary history as a charlatan or confidence trickster who seeks individual advancement through guile and manipulation of others (Rebhorn 1988; Marshall 2007; Brancher 2016). What makes such behaviour possible, as we clarify later when discussing the causes of manipulativeness within dark triadic personality patterns, is the relative absence of that 'leonine' emotionality spanning protectiveness, loyalty and belonging, which we have just mentioned. These are individuals who are, in Machiavelli's terms, perfectly adapted to avoiding the 'snares' that enduring commitments to persons and to socially-bonding ideas can become. This adaptive pattern translates easily into contemporary micro-political organisational contexts during times of rapid change, growth and innovation, in that micro-political astuteness during such times might be defined in part by an ability to avoid ideological, interpersonal and other social commitments that can impede the opportunities for individual promotion and empire building that become more prevalent during such times. Much literature now draws attention to organisational growth and fluidity as creating political arenas wherein such individuals can thrive (e.g. Babiak and Hare, 2007) and calls attention to their disproportionate presence within the higher echelons of global financial firms in particular (e.g. Boddy, 2011).

Here, then, the underlying affective-motivational denominators for vulpine fraud might best be summed up as spanning not just an absence of protectiveness, loyalty and belonging but also a characteristically 'psychologically Machiavellian' drive to achieve gratification through winning in interpersonal interactions conceived as zero sum power games. Linked to this, often, may be a narcissistic preoccupation with individual status and prestige, sometimes reflecting underlying feelings of anxiety, insecurity, isolation and inferiority relating to the sense of self – as we touch further upon later when we suggest that vulpine fraud can be validated using these psychological constructs and related literatures. Here it is also worth noting that differences in the extent to which professional socialisation has given managers secure senses of self, manifesting as deep affective-motivational commitment to the organisation, can certainly help explain differences between our vulpine and leonine micro-political patterns.

This simplifying binary typology has accentuated contrasts at each turn to achieve stark relief. In reality, it seems reasonable to expect that all complex organisational environments will present some combination of 'snares' and 'wolves', entailing that some managerial flexibility for handling both through appropriate affect can be considered a basic management competence. Nonetheless, our simplification also reflects the psychological realism of Machiavelli's (1513/1961, Ch. XXV) despair that whereas *ideal* Princes can descend from man to become lion or fox at will, using both force and fraud as circumstances require, history reveals *real* Princes as usually remaining stuck with the animal spirits that have possessed them; hence Princes face an extremely difficult task in cultivating the mental flexibility they require. Correspondingly, it might be argued that our recontextualised micro-political patterns might indeed often develop and manifest rigidly and persistently via recurring micro-political conflict episodes of either wolf or snare form. Consider, in particular, that simplifying patterns of affect-based social cognition (such as those we have just outlined) offer a combination of consistency, predictability, reassurance and mental efficiency to resolve the chaos of the social world and render its attendant anxieties more bearable (Beer and Ochsner 2006). Accordingly, we think Machiavelli's animal spirits are best viewed as heuristic affective devices which denote fast and frugal decision short-cuts social actors follow when orienting themselves real-time amidst micro-political conflict. These understandings can be further nuanced through sociological insights from Pareto regarding why elites might shift in their preferences for these patterns as times change.

3. Pareto's Theory: Leonine and Vulpine Elites

The psychological realism we have called Machiavelli's *despair,* can also be considered resurgent within the intellectual mood drawing together elements of misanthropy and historical pessimism that persist through Pareto's sociological work. In the early 20th century, Vilfredo Pareto explicitly dedicated himself to 'maxims of Machiavelli which hold as true today as they were in his time' (Pareto 1935, §2410). His work has been read as drawing upon Machiavelli's two animal spirits as the foundation for his entire sociological theory (Marshall 2007, pp.21-25 & pp.116-133). The (1935) *Treatise on General Sociology* in particular, is heavily scientistic in character, proposing behavioural constants to equip social science with the foundational regularities which Pareto believed it needed. Pareto repeatedly

called these behavioural patterns the 'common elements' or the 'residues' that reflect psycho-cultural permanence in human affairs, once all changeable factors are removed from analysis. As Trasacio (1999, pp.378-380) puts it, that people pursue very 'heterogeneous utilities' was fundamental to Pareto's 'sociological model of man'. Notably, this expression implies great diversity and complexity of individual circumstance and experience, hinting also at related diversity and complexity for individual psychological profiles – at the very least in their motivational aspects. The residues, then, were intended to capture broad recurring patterns that persist throughout history despite this.

Pareto named the (class I) behavioural residues of foxes the *'instincts of combination'*. This term played on the Italian word *'combinazione'* which held strong connotations of both guile and creativity. Accordingly, Pareto represented 'foxes' in the political domain as ideologically agile power-seeking opportunists: 'Conservatives today, Liberals tomorrow, and they may be Anarchists the day after as well, if the Anarchists show any sign of getting closer to power' (Pareto 1935, § 2313). This pattern will of course be very familiar to narcissistic leadership scholars.

Lions, on the other hand were represented in terms of the (class II) behavioural residues which Pareto labelled *'the persistence of aggregates'*. This term conveyed intransigence, preference for the status quo, and distrust or hostility towards change and innovation (Finer in Pareto 1966; 224, footnote). Writing about lions and foxes in economic life, Pareto preferred to use the terms '*speculator'* and '*rentier'* to refer to two different types of capitalist investor. Speculators are 'entrepreneurs'. Their 'wide-awakeness in discovering sources of gain' draws them to high risk opportunities in expanding economies (Pareto 1935, §2233). Rentiers, on the other hand, 'do not depend to any great extent upon ingenious combinations that may be conceived by an active mind'. Instead they are often 'gentlemen' content with fixed incomes (Pareto 1935, §2234). Pareto regarded risk-aversion as an important part of this pattern, referring at one point to rentiers as 'mere savers who are often quiet, timorous souls sitting at all times with their ears cocked in apprehension, like rabbits, hoping little and fearing much from any change' (Pareto 1935, §2232). Their long-termist (i.e. high time preference) orientation was deemed important too. These were strategic planners possessing the virtue of '*thrift*' (Pareto 1935, §2228). The sharp point of contrast, the short-termism of the speculator, is of course another behavioural trait highly recognisable to scholars of narcissistic leadership (Lasch 1979; Maccoby 2003) and corporate psychopathy (Schouten and Silver 2012).

In summary, then, this financial investment re-contextualisation helps to enrich the patterns we outlined earlier. In particular it offers further scope for reflection on their nature and significance within organisational micro-politics, only this time raising individual difference issues spanning risk innovation, thrift and time preference which intersect closely with contemporary behavioural finance and economics work on animal spiritedness.

Following Machiavelli, Pareto (1935) argued that it is rare to be both lion and fox. Writing in a context of political sociology where his 'foxes' were cunning and unscrupulous centrist politicians, and his 'lions' were the opposed extremist street fighters of the left and the proto-fascist *arditi,* he commented that 'in the majority of cases people who rely on their wits are or become less fitted to use violence, and *vice versa*' (Pareto 1935, §2190). Here, then, the contrast is particularly stark. Leonine force can be equated with actual physical thuggery; nonetheless all the subtler affective-motivational issues we looked at earlier might still apply in order to better understand what is at issue.

However, Pareto's sociological model of man, to once more use Trasacio's (1999) expression, was concerned not with individual political or economic actors but with a complex social system, whose dynamics he hoped to outline so that more specialised theorists following him might fill in the detail. Therein, shifting-or-sticking behavioural patterns broadly descriptive of entire governing and non-governing elites (comprising zero sum proportionalities of class I to class II residues) are considered in terms of general levels of adaptivity for certain – also very generally conceived - shifting-or-sticking background social conditions. These background conditions were as follows. Pareto theorised slow cyclical alternation between a 'crystallised' social condition (characterised by austerity) where class II residues become adaptive and more prevalent in the financial and political elites, and an 'individualised' social condition (characterised by individualisation, complexity and prosperity) where these are slowly replaced by class I residues. However, class I residues are viewed as always more prevalent in the higher echelons (Marshall 2007, pp.25-31). The result was macrosociology illustrated via broad brush commentary on elite (mal)adaptivities throughout ancient and modern European history (Pareto 1935, §2194; Meisel 1965, p.29).

These crystallised and individualised social forms invite interpretation as a sociological rewrite of Machiavelli's wolves and snares, as we discussed earlier in terms of collective upholding of power structures amidst austerity *contra* individual adaptivity to complexity, change and growth. More fully, however, what Pareto further contributes is a sensitising framework for contextually specific analyses of elite attributes that matter as times change.

We next consider recent psychological research which allows us to validate the basic behavioural patterns at issue, and indeed to better understand how these may emerge from and (mal)adapt to certain contexts.

4. Evidence Base

Contemporary literatures repeatedly demonstrate that 'leonine force' both exists as a general psycho-cultural pattern and intensifies within fundamental social crisis and resource scarcity. 'Vulpine fraud' is also consistently recognised to exist as a general psycho-cultural pattern, while intensifying when the social threats that matter most are no longer fundamental across society but are instead particularised to situations where competitive advancement is threatened in complex and fluid social environments. Here we briefly outline these literatures.

4.1 Validating Leonine tendencies via authoritarian-conservative traits

Marshall (2007) argues that the Machiavellian-Paretian 'lion' equates to today's conservative (Wilson and Patterson 1970) and authoritarian (see Altemeyer 1981) patterns. Wilson and Patterson list pro-establishment politics, punitiveness, pro-militarism, conventionalism, ascetic anti-hedonism, intolerance towards minority groups, religious fundamentalism and superstitiousness as the main conservative traits. Altemeyer (1981) lists aggression, submission and conventionalism as the main authoritarian ones. As Marshall points out, closely overlapping conservative and authoritarian patterns display similar strong positive correlations with measures of dogmatic and rigid thinking, as well as similar strong negative correlations with measures of openness and sensation-seeking. Hence we can conceive of a broader authoritarian-conservatism whilst remaining mindful of sub-typical variations such as those considered by the political psychologist John Ray in many articles (Ray 1972; Ray 1973). Interestingly, this pattern of dogmatically or rigidly held ideological ferocity is often disparaged - and understandably so as its clear relatedness to many kinds of prejudice renders it unsavoury. Yet viewed in Machiavellian-Paretian context as a leonine roar, we can begin to view the pattern more positively and in functionalist-adaptive terms, as psychological

underpinning for micro-political strategies of building ideological cohesion, and thus solidarity, within and across social groups during times when cohesion and solidarity are particularly threatened. Applied to modern micro-political contexts within organisations, it further seems reasonable to regard leonine micro-political strategists as often employing what Giacalone and Promislo (2013) call "potensiphonic" language characterised by norms of domination, power and control.

What also links authoritarian and conservative patterns (besides psychometrics and overlapping latent constructs) is their shared tendency to intensify within general, and more localised, populations during times of fundamental social threat (Duckett and Fisher 2003) where such micro-political strategies are likely to offer greatest adaptive value through their contribution to social cohesion and solidarity.

4.2 Validating Vulpine tendencies via 'dark triad' traits

Marshall (2007) and Marshall and Guidi (2012) argue that the Machiavellian-Paretian 'fox' equates to today's widely researched '*dark triad*' pattern comprising Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism. Just like conservatism and authoritarianism, these three constructs overlap to invite debate as to whether they might - as Paulhus and Williams (2002) argued in their article which coined the 'dark triad' term - each contribute subtly different traits to the same global pattern. In a paper explaining their development of a 12 item measure of the dark triad, based on the best performing items from Machiavellianism, psychopathy and narcissism scales, Jonason and Webster (2010) summarise the traits at issue. Their 'Mach' items tap interpersonal manipulativeness. Their psychopathy items tap lack of empathy. Their narcissism items tap excessive preoccupation with admiration, status and prestige.

Paulhus and Williams conceive of the dark triad pattern as 'socially aversive'. Correspondingly, Spain et al. (2014) mention that most organisational research on this pattern has focused on counterproductive work behaviours. Nonetheless they also discuss various studies suggesting such individuals can be more creative, for example due to the enthusiasm narcissists in particular can bring to the pitching of new ideas (Goncalo et al. 2010). Skill in negotiation and influence tactics also feature prominently amongst dark triad adaptivites. Similarly, Christie and Geis (1970) acknowledge grudging admiration for the Machiavellians

they studied, both for displaying these interpersonal skills and for deriving pleasure from their exercise. Although narcissistic elements within dark triad personality can hamper negotiation because of the exasperating selfishness it can reveal to others (Greenhalgh and Gilkey 1997), it is the willingness to use unethical tactics by all three constituents of the dark triad (Wu 2010) that might ultimately explain what makes dark triad individuals successful negotiators.

Evolutionary studies concerned with 'Machiavellian intelligence' (Wilson et al. 1998) help us to appreciate these skills further. Ricks and Fraedrich (1999) argue that Machiavellianism's self-seeking exploitative individualism could only exist as an evolutionary strategy when supported by the Machiavellian's extraordinary interpersonal manipulative skills because these allow exploitative activities to be undertaken while maintaining social cohesion. The consequence today is that although Machiavellian managers are often unpopular among colleagues, they nevertheless continue to thrive and achieve career ascendency through excellence in corporate roles where most people see mainly their people skills.

Evidence suggests that the dark triad's three constituents are *all* intensifying in parts of the world where social relations are individualising and become more complex and fluid. Lasch (1979) and Twenge and Campbell (2009) have charted the rise of narcissism within mainstream US culture. Maccoby (2003) has famously studied its rise in corporate life in particular. Higgs (2009) draws attention to the explosion of interest in 'narcissistic leadership'. Babiak and Hare (2007) and Boddy (2011) have discussed the rise of psychopathy within the modern corporation.

What emerges from this section, then, is that leonine force and vulpine fraud are based on real adaptive patterns, considerable as political by pertaining to distinct strategies and formats of power contestation. We are now in a position to look more closely at how each can help us flesh out what Pondy (1967) called the 'hostile affections' that he viewed as remaining relatively fixed throughout micro-political conflict episodes.

5. Influences on Managerial Micro-Politics

The Fox's '*people cannot be trusted therefore I must not enter into social bonds with them*' and the Lion's '*people cannot be trusted therefore we must band together to protect ourselves*

from them' are, clearly, highly contrasting socio-affective conditions. Hence they might be expected to entail very different uses of 'relational trust heuristics' (Earle 2010) where beliefs in trustworthiness are used as decision shortcuts amidst uncertainty and complexity.

Some preliminary context for exploring these differences is to recognise that for both patterns, very similar 'world as jungle' beliefs may to some extent operate to hinder relational trust. Nonetheless, for conservative-authoritarian patterns, we might expect significant levels of relational trust to emerge from a distinctive pattern of pliability and subordination to perceived superiors (especially to strong leaders), and more generally between organisational actors for whom the shared culture is homophilically appealing by revealing salient leonine features. Such trust is likely to comprise a strong element of 'uncritical emotional acceptance' (Walls, Pidgeon, Weyman, and Horlick-Jones 2004, p.148) and possess a faith-like (Lewis and Weigert 1985) nature, so as to bind individuals within group power structures – thereby further empowering these structures and 'frightening away the wolves'.

Dark triad patterns, by contrast, might augur more strongly against any use of relational trust. Their private feelings of suspicion and cautious suspension of judgment aimed at all issuers of information and guidance entails a more individualised negotiation of micro-political threat. When trust is given, it is likely to have a more rational and conditional character (see Lewis and Weigert 1985; Walls, Pidgeon, Weyman, and Horlick-Jones 2004), and to be under-aroused reflecting the low levels of interpersonal affect that are the dark triad's hallmark. Taking these factors together we gain a clearer psychological understanding of how foxes 'avoid the snares'.

To better understand the differing hostile affections of our two patterns we can also consider that different types of fear are likely to influence whether or not they internalise the ideologies that bind collective political actors. In the case of the conservative-authoritarian pattern, the 'generalised fear of uncertainty' denominator used by Wilson (1973), and the more complex corresponding set of denominators suggested by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003) (especially 'intolerance of ambiguity', 'low openness to experience', 'low tolerance of uncertainty' and' need for order, structure and closure') are important. These suggest that the affective experiences of conservatives/authoritarians are likely to favour what Luhmann (1979) called 'complexity reduction' – particularly during periods of organisational crisis when demand for simplified sense making is strongest.

For the dark triad pattern, we have already mentioned that a lack of affect (Machiavellian 'encounter blindness') operates in interpersonal situations. In contemporary

dark triad research this is sometimes called 'callous affect' (Williams, Paulhus, and Hare 2007). This might often operate in tandem with the dark triad individual's fear of power wielded by others within competitive social hierarchies (Lee et al. 2013) to produce disengagement from those social psychological processes of complexity reduction favoured by conservative-authoritarian patterns. At the very least we can surmise that the affective patterns of the dark triad are likely to be more tolerant of complexity and therefore more resistant to the simplified sense making that binds collective leonine political actors. There are doubtless intellectual advantages associated with such resistance. Rational-calculative formats of dealing with uncertainty (Zinn 2008) – involving data rather than direct reliance on people – are more likely, while trust in self-judgement and intuition rather than broader consensus approaches may be a more common heuristic tendency amongst such individuals.

The impact of wider societal surroundings and an individual's position within these contexts, functioning across the life course, may also inculcate more leonine or vulpine tendencies as shaped by those relative levels of scarcity or abundance that supply adaptive context for Pareto's grand historical cycle of individualisation and crystallisation. Such influence will, of course, become more nuanced and complex when individual managers have lived across varying contexts with variations between austerity and plenty. Nonetheless clear patterns of adaptive context may often be discernible. Certain managerial careers or even reputations may be marked by enduring experiences of 'fire fighting' amidst scarcity, thus inculcating decision-making and conflict tendencies different to those of managers who have emerged within growing and prosperous departments, companies and/or markets.

We might reasonably expect more extreme versions of authoritarian-conservative lions or dark-triad foxes when the lived experience has involved, respectively, overwhelming scarcity or abundance. Marshall (2007, pp.111-112) finds this aspect of Pareto's theory consistent with various humanist and post-materialist theories emphasising 'formative security' during childhood as a powerful influence on personality and social attitudes throughout later life. Finucane et al. (2000) highlight broader literatures which similarly connect general experiences of relative privilege or marginalisation with different attitudes and tendencies in the face of risk and uncertainty. We also hypothesise that managers whose experiences and career trajectories have involved much more varied contexts may lead to more mixed and balanced approaches to conflict.

Such environmental factors may also be theorised as influencing the micro-political tendencies of organisational managers through a combination of meso and macro level

mechanisms which may reinforce or cancel one another. Meso level influences operate within individualised patterns of professional learning and socialisation within organisational contexts (e.g. Russell 2011; Robertson 2012) where particular experiences of management may be viewed as inculcating one or other of the two pre-existing animal spirits. But there is also an extent to which earlier, pre-organisational social experiences have already generated more leonine or vulpine tendencies on macro levels right across whole societies, and in narrower institutional fields, and where these very tendencies – in their general suitability or otherwise for particular ecological problems faced by the organisation – tend to lead individuals to progress or fail within different organisational management hierarchies. Specific organisational contexts of scarcity or plenty can both help generate, but also implicitly select and reinforce, certain more leonine or vulpine tendencies with reference to broader cultural assumptions concerning which of these patterns should be favoured. As the more localised societal and organisational conditions, with their more specific related management tendencies, become connected through globalised flows of human resources and corporate mergers and acquisitions, so do the higher echelon managerial tendencies amidst conflicts become more varied and contrasting and accordingly pertinent to organisational functioning.

6. Conclusion

As Mense-Petermann (2006) discusses, organisational micro-politics is reducible neither to the discretionary powers and individual psychologies of managers, nor to the cultures or situational pressures within which they operate. Clearly, no explanatory theory can fully capture this complexity. Nonetheless, we have Machiavelli and Pareto to thank for helping us to develop a distinctive sensitising framework in deceptively simple metaphorical terms; specifically, that the bounded rationalities of managers who engage in micro-political conflict only emerge when individual mind and organisational culture (both describable in Leonine or Vulpine terms) are considered for their sometimes adaptive and at other times maladaptive interactions with their micro-political risk environments (describable in 'wolf' and 'snare' terms). Here we recognise, of course, that both leonine and vulpine patterns may often blend in subtle and even complementary ways, as all sorts of threatening political conflicts sweep over organisations. The need to restore or maintain collective order, and to engage in more individualised image maintenance activities, often go hand in hand; yet it is quite simply the

different emphases placed on these two types of activity that may most readily allow us to tell
our two types of manager apart. It seems likely that Pareto, being sensitive to the problem of
heterogeneous utilities, would, were he alive today, quickly recognise the problem of
psychological complexity and variability whereby no individual is wholly reducible to either
lion and fox; nonetheless his sociological model of man, applied to organisational micro-
politics, delivers up a sociology of emotional experience for conflict episodes whose
relevance might be widely reflected upon within organisations.

We conclude this paper by proposing what we will call *'court jester'*
management applications, where such reflection might occur. Machiavelli and Pareto call
attention to unpleasant aspects of human nature that can expose and humiliate the powerful
and may be regarded by many as distasteful and undeserving of any boardroom airing. Yet
there is a way around this obstacle to the theory's application as an aid to critical reflection
upon micro-political experience and related self awareness within organisations. The works
of Shakespeare are filled with fools, clowns and other idiot savants who offer unflattering
psychological profundities on the motives of powerful individuals and yet their social roles
grant them voice and protection. They remain relatively safe because powerful individuals
become more amenable to criticism when scoffing at both the criticisms and at the critic's
credentials can take place as an individual psychological defence and as a social mechanism
to preserve dignity and authority. In Shakespeare's '*As You Like It'*, (V.1.2217) the Court
Jester '*Touchstone'* sums up the irony within such relationships between the critic and the
criticised when he famously says: "*the fool doth think he is wise but the wise man knows
himself to be a fool*". The corresponding question for any academic or manager seeking to
help improve upper echelon leadership and decision-making, then, is how they might
encourage senior managers - who think themselves wise and are under enormous social
pressure to present themselves as such - to become wiser still by acknowledging the foolish
frailties of (their) human nature, particularly in terms of simple affective experiences during
conflict episodes and why these might matter.

Proceeding with the carefully pitched playfulness of a character such as *Touchstone*, it
should be possible to initiate a conversation within any organisation about whether some
recent (or perhaps contemplated) micro-political behaviours allow for the possibility that
Machiavelli's animal spirits might operate as part psychological, part cultural, denominators.
Machiavelli even gives us deceptively simple descriptors – 'lions' and 'foxes' - which can be
used with surface frivolity within such contexts to preserve the dignity of all parties. Hence

senior managers may, if they choose, muse upon their vulpine or leonine predilections while retaining some protective ambiguity around how seriously they take these inquiries. Indeed, growing use of scenario analysis, where important decisions are planned and simulated, sometimes with war gaming, may provide a particularly useful forum where managers may be familiarised with their animal spirits in this way.

Crucially, what makes Machiavelli's 'lion' and 'fox' terminology potent within reflective management contexts is that each type possesses traits that are ethically ambiguous and yet potentially admirable too. More fully, the real genius of Machiavellian-Paretian psychological realism is arguably that it provides two basic descriptive categories for better understanding micro-politically significant behaviours, inviting both positive and negative evaluations depending on adaptive context. To ask what a 'lion' or a 'fox' might do in a particular situation can entail working through a rich spectrum of virtues and vices, as well as possible costs and benefits, thereby inspiring the decision-making imagination. It is easy to miss the key point that these descriptive animal spirit terms are themselves reflective of realist striving towards value free social science – and indeed of Pareto's scientistic sociological imagination. Arguably the contemporary academic authors on conservatism-authoritarianism, and the three dark triad constituents, would do well to reflect more on the relative neutrality of Pareto's terminology, considering in particular that the richness of any human personality cannot be captured within a catalogue of vices.

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