

## THE YALE CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY SERIES

Edited by Jeffrey Alexander and Ronald Eyerman

*Triumph and Trauma*, by Bernhard Giesen (2004)

FORTHCOMING

*Contemporary Societies: Self, Meaning, and Social Structure* by  
Jeffrey Alexander and Kenneth Thompson (Spring 2005)

*American Societal Community* by Talcott Parsons (Fall 2005)

## TRIUMPH AND TRAUMA

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*Bernhard Giesen*



*Paradigm Publishers*  
Boulder • London

REVIZE 2008

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Published in the United States by Paradigm Publishers, 3360 Mitchell Lane Suite C,  
Boulder, Colorado 80301 USA.

Paradigm Publishers is the trade name of Birkenkamp & Company, LLC, Dean Birkenkamp,  
President and Publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data has been applied for.

Printed and bound in the United States of America on acid-free paper that meets the  
standards of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials.

Designed and Typeset by Straight Creek Bookmakers.

09 08 07 06 05 04  
5 4 3 2 1

500-985  
MASARYKOVA UNIVERZITA V BRNĚ  
Fakulta sociálních studií  
Joštova 10  
602 00 BRNO (SA)

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16. Existentialist philosophers like Sartre, Camus or Jaspers regarded this failure as the central avenue for the individual's reflection on himself or herself. Glimpses of this perspective can already be found in Weber; cp. Henrich (1987).

17. In the last few years Charles Taylor has most convincingly elaborated on this specific source of the self (Taylor 1992). While Taylor took his inspiration from Hegel, Jürgen Habermas has in recent years put much more emphasis on the American pragmatist tradition, especially on George Herbert Mead; see especially Habermas (1992). The more recent reception of Mead in Germany started with Hans Joas (1985). Butler (1997) charts the entangled trajectory of desire and the struggle for recognition from the Hegelian and post-Hegelian traditions of dominating French philosophy from Kojève (1947) onwards. Detailed analysis of the post-Kantian idealist concept of intersubjectivity closely sticking to the primary texts of Hegel and Fichte can be found in Williams (1992, 1997). For those who prefer a less philosophically headed, not explicitly post-conventional or post-metaphysical account, see Julian Pitt-Rivers' entry on "honor" in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Pitt-Rivers 1968). For a sympathetic and stimulating discussion of the "struggle for recognition," ranging from Hegel via Marx and Sorel, Mead and Sartre to Habermas and Taylor, see Honneth (1995).

18. Kant refers to this connection in his "Anthropologie" as well as Heidegger does in "*Sein und Zeit*" (1986, pp. 237 ff.). Christiaan L. Hart-Nibbrig charted this terrain as far as philosophy and literature dealt with the issue (Hart-Nibbrig 1995b).

19. The career of the concept of "trauma" in the social sciences started with Freud's and Breuer's analysis of Hysteria. Before, it was used mainly in medical contexts for the neurological responses to bodily injury. In psychology, it became prominent in the debate about posttraumatic disorders. Today it is decoupled from its original reference to bodily experiences and transferred into the domain of cultural history and collective memory; see Neil Smelser (2003); Bronfen et al. (1999); Caruth (1995, 1996); Felman and Laub (1992); Antze (1996); Robben (2000); Farrell (1998); Neal (1998); and Alexander et al. (2004).

20. We will address this Heideggerian turn again at the beginning of the last chapter.

21. See Berger and Luckmann (1967); Garfinkel (1967); Schütz (1962, 1964).

22. While deconstructivists, e.g., Derrida (1982), get entirely absorbed by this seemingly paradoxical endeavor, mundane reasoning usually finds an easy, though sometimes brutal way out, by institutionalizing one specific account; see Melvin Pollner (1974), John Heritage (1984, pp. 212ff.).

23. See Koselleck's essays on the semantics of historical time (1985).

24. There is a vast literature on collective memory ranging from classics like Maurice Halbwachs (1967) to more recent publications like Connerton (1989) or the useful overview of literature in LeGoff (1986); see also Nora (1992), Jan Assmann (1988, 1999b) and Aleida Assmann (1999).

25. See Turner (1969), Giesen (1998) and Soeffner (1997, 2000).

26. See Giesen (1999a), Taylor (1992), Pizzorno (1986, 1991), Williams (1997) and Honneth (1995).

27. The focus on thirdness as a constitutive perspective for social order ranges from Kant's categorical imperative via Peirce's pragmatism (1991) and Simmel's sociology (1922) to Jürgen Habermas's ethics of discourse (1983). For the third perspective in the settlement of feuds, see Gluckmann (1955) and Eckhoff (1966).

28. See Van Gennep (1960), Turner (1967, 1969) and Goffman (1967).

29. See Merton (1968), Blau (1977) and Blau and Merton (1981).

30. See Zukin and DiMaggio (1990), North (1988), March and Olsen (1989) and Drobak and Nye (1997).

31. See Mannheim (1970), Eisenstadt (1956) and Platt and Dabag (1995).

32. See Koselleck (2000) and Davis (1984).

## CHAPTER I

# Triumphant Heroes Between Gods and Humans

### THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HEROES

"No More Heroes" was the title of a famous song of the seventies.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, after the war in Indochina the ideal of the hero was widely questioned because of its association with military bravery and virtue. As is not uncommon in the aftermath of war and defeat, those who had been praised as heroes before, were afterwards considered as victims whose self-sacrifice was devoid of any meaning, or they were regarded as perpetrators, as icons of evil, as embodiments of demonic madness. In death and defeat, heroism exhibits its ambivalences, the fragility of its foundations, the tension between trauma and triumph.

The idea of the "hero" as it originated in ancient Greek or Oriental literature,<sup>2</sup> was, indeed, associated with the extraordinary deed of the warrior who followed the call of adventure, ventured out into the unknown, withstood tests and temptations and returned full of glory to his people (Campbell 1991, p. 151).<sup>3</sup> War represented the fringe of the social order, the challenge of crisis, the frontier against the uncommon and superhuman that could not be dealt with by ordinary means. The heroes Achilles, Hercules and Theseus in ancient Greek mythology were, therefore, imagined as warriors of superhuman force, liminal figures who could cross the boundary between everyday life and the realm of Gods and demons. They were depicted as half-divine, as descendants of a minor Goddess, as tempted by a Goddess in disguise or even as married to a half Goddess.

The idea of the hero, although originally couched in the myth of the warrior, extends, of course, far beyond the battlefields. It is at the core of many charismatic constructions of collective identities. Among the various transformations of the hero described by Joseph Campbell (1971, 1974, 1988), at least one other stands out: the hero as the founder of religion, who retreats from everyday life to meet God in solitude and to bring the new message of salvation back to his people. The Buddha and Moses, Christ and Mohammed are exemplars of these redeeming heroes.

But the idea of the hero has not been confined to warriors or to the founders of religions—the hero has, indeed, “a thousand faces” (Campbell 1974), and the face reflects and expresses a particular cultural foundation of a community. Intellectual heroes like Confucius (Kung fu tse), Plato, Newton and Hegel coined a classical tradition for a community of scholars. Since the eighteenth century, aesthetic heroes like Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Mozart and Goethe have been revered as geniuses whose pathbreaking exceptionalism transcends the level that can be achieved by regular education and common effort—and this cult of the genius responded to the spread of education and enlightenment in the civil society of the eighteenth century. In communities that value compassion and charity, exceptionally altruistic persons like the medieval noblewoman Elizabeth of Thuringia and the contemporary Mother Theresa are considered as saints or angels. Political communities focus on popular leaders or on heroes of resistance like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who were explicitly opposed against military violence, whereas others like the French maiden Jeanne d’Arc, George Washington and Che Guevara, have led military movements against the reigning authorities. Youth movements that oppose mainstream culture heroify stars like James Dean or John Lennon, sport fans remember legendary performers like DiMaggio, Muhammad Ali and Jesse Owens—indeed, to repeat again Campbell’s felicitous phrasing, the hero has a thousand faces.<sup>4</sup>

Heroes embody charisma, they fuse the sacred into the profane world, they establish a mediating level between the humans and the Gods. The myth of the hero ended the original myth in which Gods and humans could meet each other without mediation. In this way, it is a transitory stage located halfway between the direct communication between Gods and humans as represented in magical thinking on the one hand, and the fully developed axial age civilizations on the other. In between the realm of Gods and the realm of humans, affected by the earthly problems and overcoming them with supernatural powers, heroes are double-faced subjects. This position between Gods and humans is reflected in the mythical account of the birth of the hero (Rank 1910). The mythical hero is of divine or royal descent but, as a child, is cast off by his parents into swamps or forests and raised by fishermen, herdsman or even animals, i.e., by people or creatures of low descent. Moses and Christ, Romulus and Perseus, Cyrus and even Sargon of Akkad, the first Sumerian king, are only the most famous examples of this mythical move of the hero from high to low, from Gods to humans (Rank 1910, p. 12). Here heroes represent still the personal embodiment of the sacred, but the gap between both poles is already widening, the tension between the evanescence of the sacred and its local embodiment is already unfolding. It requires constant mediation and remembering. This mode of mediation is deeply affected by the transition to axial age civilizations: axial age civilizations are based on the tension between an impersonal principled transcendental order and a mundane sphere of acting persons and contingent worldly reasoning, of power and money (Schwartz 1975; Eisenstadt 1982, 1986). In axial age civilizations, the sacred center of society is disembodied and finally even depersonalized and conceived of by abstract principles. Hence

the post-axial age hero can no longer be related by kinship and direct encounter to personal Gods; instead, he or she is considered to be the pure embodiment of transcendental principles, of virtue and reason, morality and valor. Societies that emphasize impersonal principles and virtues are, therefore, less fertile grounds for the creation of heroes than societies that put a high premium on a distinctive personal aura of public appearance. Heroes are public figures; they represent the collective identity of a community. In the nineteenth century, when the separation between the public and the private realm was increasingly marked, heroism withdrew from the private virtues and was limited to the public realm or to exceptional situations in which the boundary between the private and the public sphere was blurred (Todorov 1996, p. 52). We will return to this issue at the end of this chapter.

The classical hero (before the axial age tension) has a face, a voice and a place in the center of a social community that reveres him, commemorates him and imagines him. His or her presence marks the charismatic center of society. As Max Weber’s famous definition notes, charisma is constituted by the belief of followers in the extraordinary qualities of an individual.<sup>5</sup> The extent and the mode of this embeddedness in a community of followers may vary and change, but no charismatic hero can exist without it. Therefore, many sociological studies on charisma focused more on the charismatic movement than on the figure of the hero himself.<sup>6</sup> In the following chapter, we will outline this relationship between the hero and his or her community, but we will center less on the internal structure of the charismatic community than on the different modes and rituals of representing and remembering the charisma of the hero. We will not, however, regard charisma as a simple reflection of institutional practices of memory, but instead treat the cultural core of charisma as an independent reference.<sup>7</sup> Neither can the symbolic structure of the myth be reduced to a mere reflection of rituals, nor can the ritual be reduced to the simple performance of the cultural script of a myth.

Relics and rituals, monuments and memorials construe not only close links, but also distance<sup>8</sup> between the community and the hero. Heroism dissolves if looked at from a close range. Hence the reconstruction of this blending of distance and proximity is at the core of many shifts in the cult of the charismatic hero. If it fails and the hero is continuously entangled in ordinary life he will end up in tragic failure—as will be shown in chapter four.

### HEROES AS TRIUMPHANT SUBJECTIVITY

Heroes are the triumphant embodiments of collective identity. As individual figures, they symbolize the community’s ties to the sacred, the possibility of human beings to rise above ordinary and mundane affairs and to partake in divine perfection and immortality (Otto 1917; Durkheim 1991). In between the realm of Gods and the realm of humans, affected by earthly problems and overcoming

them by supernatural powers, heroes are double-faced subjects.<sup>9</sup> Beyond the narrow rules of ordinary life, disdaining routines and breaking conventions, heroes represent the extraordinary and charismatic; they do not perform according to the rules, instead they constitute them. Like the rule that needs the exception to become visible as a rule (Wittgenstein 1980), the social order of mundane life also cannot be constituted without referring to its opposite—the sacred (Durkheim 1991)—and the society cannot construct its collective identity without any form of imagining subjectivity. The charismatic hero embodies this subjectivity in a triumphant way. He stands above the law, he “breaks the crust of a mechanism grown rigid through repetition” (Agamben 1995), he represents the ultimate sovereign who decides about the state of exception. In this respect, the hero lives, indeed, in a constant state of war, in a preconstitutional situation before the regular norms apply, before the social standards of comparison become valid, before the political game among humans begins. The hero is incomparable; his uniqueness as a subject corresponds to the exceptionalism of his situation.

Although they are of divine descent, heroes have a place within a mundane community: they embody the sacred in this world.<sup>10</sup> Yet, because they act in a realm where neither personal advice from others nor self-interested strategies can pattern and support their decisions, heroes are rightly depicted as lonely. Beyond or before the bonds of humaneness, he is crazy, cruel (Nietzsche 1977b) and commands a “divine violence” (Benjamin 1978, p. 59). Heroes can and must disregard strategic advantages and scarcity of resources, and because of this ignorance for mundane contingencies, they can—like the medieval knight Perceval—even appear as the sacred fool or as fallen into temporal madness, like Achilles and Hercules in ancient Greek myths. In contrast to them, ordinary humans are moved by the fear for a mortal body (Arendt 1978, p. 134). This madness of the hero becomes fully visible only from an outside perspective. Crossing the boundary between the inside and outside shows the deep ambivalence of heroism. What insiders revere as the embodiment of the sacred is considered by outsiders as ridiculous, crazy, mad or even horrible and demonic. Viewed from outside, the heroic revolutionary, the martyr, the suicide bomber is a terrorist, a madman, a criminal.

As the Weberian conceptualization of charisma already noted, real persons are not heroes by themselves. Heroes are, in fact, social constructions of particular communities, cultural imaginations of supreme individuality, collective projections of sovereign subjectivity, of the sacred on particular persons and their lives. In constructing the hero, a community overcomes not only profane constraints and mundane contingencies, but also, most importantly, the threat of death. Thus the construction of heroes creates a social bond that transcends the confines of individual life and the limits of strategic reasoning. For the community of followers, the hero who defies pain and disregards death achieves immortality that was the mark of Gods before. Like Gods, heroes do the unprecedented and create a new perspective on the world. By this unique and creative act they constitute themselves as supreme subjects (Fichte 1961) and provoke awe and admiration

among ordinary men and women. Many attempt to follow their example, but nobody will ever be able to reach it; many travel the path they have broken, but nobody will be able to be the pathbreaker again. The very novelty and uniqueness of the heroic act impedes its repetition.

However, heroes are fragile constructions. If there is or has been a real person whose life is heroified, it is often easy to erode—if not to shatter—the monumentality of the hero by presenting the profane and humane details of his or her life. This total dependence on the admiration of the community makes also for the hero’s partial independence from nonfollowers, from outsiders, from the public perspective. The community can, and frequently does, just ignore the evidence presented in order to deconstruct the hero. In contrast to the victim, the hero can be constructed by the community of followers alone.

But this independence from the approval of outsiders engenders also volatility and ambivalence; if the charismatic appeal to followers cannot stand the test of time, if it collapses suddenly or fades away in the routines of ordinary life (Weber’s famous notion of *Veralltäglicbung*), the hero is dethroned and sometimes turned into a perpetrator not just by outsiders but also by what was his own community before. What was considered as a charismatic exceptionalism and divine violence before is discovered afterward as demonic cruelty, as madness and ruthlessness.

One way of preventing the routinization of charisma consists of killing the mortal hero in order to keep the sacred charisma alive. The semidivine kings of ancient African kingdoms had to undergo ritual death or self-sacrifice if they became old or if their charisma was evidently wearing out (Eliade 1959). Dying young is even today regarded as a prime path for being remembered as a hero.

The most important way to save the charisma of the living hero is based on social distance. Successful heroification of living persons is fostered if the members of the community that reveres them are not intimately familiar with the personal life of the heroified person. Whoever knows about the human weaknesses, the petty interests and the miserable moments of a person can no longer consider him or her to be a hero. The hero is turned into a common, everyday human being, into one of us.

But there is also another reason to keep the hero at a distance. It results from the risks of disturbing routines and institutions if a living hero actually enters the arenas of everyday life. The hero’s charismatic presence does not fit into the regular pattern; heroes will by their sovereign subjectivity not observe the rules, they will divert followers from their obligations, they will call for radical changes and even destroy institutions. Therefore, the heroic leaders of a revolutionary uprising are rarely converted into successful administrators of the new established regime—even the peaceful revolutionary Gandhi seemed not to fit into the new government of India after striving and fighting for its independence for decades. Viewed from the perspective of a rule-governed community, the hero has to be regarded as a deviant individual.<sup>11</sup> If the sacred as embodied in the hero comes too close, it becomes frightening and dangerous, it will burn the mundane rules to ashes. There-

fore, it has to be socially encapsulated in particular positions, encountered only in special rituals and kept at a distance.

Although the passing of time does not preserve the charisma of the living hero, it does construct distance and prevents a close look at the mundane weaknesses of the hero.<sup>12</sup> Hence, many heroes exist only as icons of the past, imagined in myth, art and literature, removed to times immemorial. We do not know whether the English King Arthur and Romulus, the mythical founder of ancient Rome, Buddha and Moses, the Spartan king Leonidas and the Gothic chief Teja ever existed as real persons and—if they did—what their lives were like. Others, like the Oriental hero Gilgamesh and the ancient Greeks Achilles, Prometheus, Odysseus and Aeneas, or the medieval heroes Siegfried, Lancelot and Perceval, are purely mythical figures, crucial for collective identity, but unquestionably cultural fictions. Sometimes newly constructed nations deliberately—and even desperately—look for a mythical individual that can be presented as a founding hero.

The debate among German writers in the eighteenth century about Arminius, the Germanic chief, as the founding hero of the Germanic nation pitted against Roman domination (Wiedemann 1988), and the staging of Charles Le Temeraire, the famous Duke of Burgundy ruling in the fifteenth century, as the founder of Belgium (Lope 1991), are cases in point, but so also are the current attempts to present legendary Cossack leaders as the founding heroes of the Ukrainian nation (Sevcenko 1996); to imagine the defenders of Masada, the Jewish uprising against Roman domination, as the founding heroes of Israel; to celebrate the ancient Persian ruler Cyrus as the founder of modern Iran; or to stage Shaka Zulu, the leader of the black African armies against colonial rule, as the father of South Africa. In all these cases, founding heroes are construed who had been forgotten for a long time and could not be connected to the present day by an uninterrupted tradition. And it is exactly the shortlivedness of the present state and the distance of a mythical past that fosters the social construction of heroes.

Historical persons like Washington and Napoleon, de Gaulle and Gandhi, Bismarck and Lenin, fare less well after their death and the collapse of their rule than the mythical heroes. Although their genius as leaders is beyond doubt and their charismatic appeal to their followers is unquestionable, they are discovered as ordinary men or despotic rulers after their death or after the end of their regime; when the archives are opened and documents are read with critical scrutiny, the icon of the superhuman hero, who had fascinated his followers yesterday, is soon dismantled and destroyed. Only from a distance that blurs all traces of humaneness and disregards all entanglement in mundane affairs, does the hero appear as a hero. In the case of Napoleon, this distance was reconstructed after his defeat and exile. The charismatic hero ended his political career as a despotic oppressor, but became again a living legend in his exile on Saint Helena.

This distance is, however, not only a matter of time and space. For those, who do not know the details and are captivated by the legend, even living persons can appear as heroes. Hitler and Stalin, Mao and Mussolini had certainly an extraordinary charismatic appeal to their followers; they were celebrated as redeem-

ers and triumphant leaders of their nations (Bach 1990). After the collapse of their power, when the monstrous results of their rule were presented to their followers, they became icons of evil. This rupture and—mostly enforced—axial shift prevented remembering and counteracted a charisma that was still hauntingly close to the present time (Mitscherlich 1994). The cases of Hitler and Stalin show not only the hero's dependence on his followers but also the fundamental ambivalence of heroism. Deprived of his community of followers and banned from the public realm, the formerly charismatic hero is turned into a demonic perpetrator. What before has been his exemption from the rules is afterward seen as a criminal act of violating them. If this turn occurs suddenly and unexpectedly, the exceptionalism of the hero, his despise for rules and his ruthless cruelty becomes the trauma of those who had been his followers before. Hitler and his German followers are a paradigm case for this ambivalence of triumph and trauma. We will return to this case in the last chapter of this book.

But even an abundance of knowledge about details does not in every case prevent the construction of heroes: historians who describe the life and times of historical leaders rarely escape their hidden inclination to heroify their main figures. They do so not only because the heroification emphasizes the importance of their subject and justifies the amount of research work devoted to it, but also because it is the very structure of historical narration which leads to the identification of heroes. Narrating a story requires main actors who are endowed with the power to determine the events and to propel the action. This empowerment of the main actor can result from divine intervention or—in modern contexts—from the representation of an encompassing collectivity. The hero stands for the community in an exemplary way, he or she is imagined as the formative force of the historical environment, he or she founded a new collective identity or transformed an existing one in a fundamental way.<sup>13</sup>

But the collective identity that is founded or symbolized by the hero reaches out beyond the actors presented in the story; it includes also the storyteller who identifies with the hero's perspective, and, most importantly, it includes the audience—the readers, listeners and spectators who feel sympathetic with the hero. Thus the narrative construction of the hero's triumph merges three positions: the hero, the storyteller and the audience. The bond of identification that embraces the three positions is based on the triumph of the hero over mundane regards and earthly matters. It appeals to a particular imagination of the sacred.

The sacred as embodied by the hero's triumph has a transempirical validity and is not affected by contingent experiences and opportunities. It claims an unconditional certainty. This ultimate certainty is the certainty of being born—an existential certainty that is at the core of the collective identity of all human beings (Heidegger 1986, p. 235; Hart-Nibbrig 1995a). No single human being can remember his or her individual birth. Being born is ultimately certain for any human being, but this certainty cannot be derived from personal experience. It is only by observing the birth of others, and by assuming that these others are alike, that the certainty of being born can be connected to personal experience. The

triumph of the hero translates this common certainty of being born into a collective representation. Similar to the birth of an individual person, it stands for a fundamental passage, a moment of crisis and blood, and a new beginning; it opens up rejoicingly a new horizon of possibilities and experiences; it symbolizes the rise of a community above the toils of everyday life.<sup>14</sup> Thus the triumph of the hero represents a double reference—it hints at the self-constitution of the subject mastering his fate, but it also marks the birth of a community.

Rituals that reenact the birth of individuals as purification and conversion are well known; they range from rituals of passage like marriage, examination and inauguration to religious rituals like baptism and confession (Van Gennepe 1960). Frequently, the person undergoing the ritual also changes his or her name, or receives a special title or an addition to his or her regular name. In the celebration of a hero's triumph, this is reflected in renaming the hero according to his triumph ("the conqueror," "the victor of . . .") or by adding a simple "the Great" instead of marking his or her position in a dynastic sequence. The supreme individuality of the hero is emphasized by disconnecting him or her from the common kinship ties in which ordinary human beings are embedded. In Native American societies this renaming practice extends also to many warriors who are called by mentioning their heroic deeds: Sitting Bull, Seven Bears, Crazy Horse and even Dances with Wolves.

But more important than the ritual reenactment of birth as a practice of individualization is its function for the construction of collective identity (Giesen 1999a). There is no reason for commemorating the triumph of the hero if no collective identity embraces the hero and those who celebrate and remember him or her. No strategic reasoning justifies the expenses for those who gladly spend money, time and emotions to celebrate the past triumphs of a dead hero. It is not only just the joyful reenactment of the community's birth, but also the affirmation of an open space for future collective actions.

Certainly the commemoration of the hero's triumph is not the only way to construct collective identity by rituals. Scapegoating or missionary inclusion and assimilation of outsiders, legal citizenship and local knowledge, kinship and education are other important institutional practices to construct a boundary between inside and outside. In this range of different modes of boundary construction, triumphant heroism occupies a special position: it connects the community to its sacred center by a person who is distant and close at the same time—distant because the hero is superhuman in his triumphant creativity and far out of reach for ordinary human beings, close because the hero results from the projection of the ideal self that is in the mind of the individual persons who admire the hero.

### THE SACRIFICIAL CORE OF HEROISM

The triumph of the hero is an ambivalent one.<sup>15</sup> Just as existential reflections on birth can never ignore its opposite, death, the triumph of the hero can never

escape the risk of its pale and traumatic counterpart. But the hero is a hero because he or she defies the risk of death.<sup>16</sup> His or her triumph is based on this very risk and often even requires the sacrifice of the hero's life for the birth of the community. In order to understand the social meaning of heroism and its ambivalent nature, we have to turn to its sacrificial core.

Since prehistoric times, the construction of collective identity has been closely associated with rituals of sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> Offering something precious to the deity strengthened and tightened the ties between the mundane community and the realm of the sacred. Such sacrifices get their sacral and identity-inspiring power from their very violence and their lack of intrinsic meaning—if the sacrificed item were cheap and the sacrifice useful and even profitable for those who offer it, it would not touch the otherworldly realm. Transcending the boundaries of the ordinary and common suspends the ban on violence and bloodshed and even asks for it; it is by the very violence of the sacrifice that the crossing of boundaries is marked (Burkert 1983). In the violent act of sacrifice, the traumatic and triumphant elements of collective identity are not yet separated. The trauma of killing a member of the community merges with the triumphant construction of a bond between community and deity.

The fundamental innocence of the victims is not an issue that could challenge and undermine this practice in archaic cultures—there is no conception of justice beyond the idea of revenge, reciprocity and retaliation between groups. Ancient myth had no problem ignoring or disguising the innocence of the victim.<sup>18</sup>

Yet there is already a feeling for the ambivalence of the sacred character of the victim. In ancient Roman texts, the sacred represents totem as well as taboo: the sacred victim is regarded as polluted and located outside of the community; killing such a victim is not regarded as homicide (Agamben 1995).

It is only in the Judeo-Christian heritage that this concealment of the barbaric violence is reversed (Girard 1977).<sup>19</sup> Here, the sacrifice can no longer be regarded as just punishment. Instead, the innocence of the victim is fully revealed and the violence is sacrificially reversed by the intervention of God.

Revealing the innocence of the victim not only shifts the location of the victim from the periphery to the center and sacralizes the victim up to the point of deification. In discovering his or her sacral character, the victim is lifted to a superhuman position. Beyond the bonds of reciprocity and retaliation, he or she becomes a hero. The hero appears as the ultimate subject, merging individuality and collectivity when he voluntarily offers himself as a sacrifice for the community.

The myth of Christ as the divinely innocent victim, who by his self-sacrifice saves not only his own followers but humankind, completes this deconstruction of the ancient conception of victims.<sup>20</sup> In the resurrection of Christ from the dead the trauma of self-sacrifice is turned into the ultimate triumph: after three days, the crucified and humiliated victim reemerges as the triumphant hero and savior of the world.

The oriental myth of Christ's resurrection can be traced back to the Mesopotamian cult of Tammuz, the God of fertility whose death was lamented and whose resurrection was celebrated in springtime, as well as to Egyptian and Assyrian myths of the king sacrificing himself (J. Assmann 1999a). From late antiquity onward, it has set the path for the Occidental model of heroism that converts death into life, trauma into triumph. According to Roman ethics, the hero had to sacrifice his own life to save the community, and in doing so he or she achieved unsurpassed individuality and immortality.

Later on, the Christian cult of martyrdom reconstructed the model of the heroic self-sacrifice to save the community: the martyrs were seen as deifying themselves through their voluntary decision for death.<sup>21</sup>

The Judeo-Christian mythology of heroic self-sacrifice not only shows a path to increasing individualization, but it is also based on a strong sense of representation of the sacred. In Christ, God is represented as a human being; the faithful Christian partakes in the glory of God; the priest and, later on, the king is the representative of God, etc. (Frazer 1947, p. 96).

In early modernity, this merging of the sacred and the mundane on the one hand, and of the individual and the community on the other was secularized in the cult of the founding hero who gives birth to a nation or defends it against a threat from outside. It repeats the pattern of Christomimesis with respect to the newly emerging territorial states.<sup>22</sup> The hero is not only seen as the *pater patriae*, as the demiurgical creator of the kingdom or as the ultimate sovereign who constitutes the law, but also as the sacral individual risking his or her life for the defense of the nation. The heroic self-sacrifice became the central mode of ascending to fame and acquiring a monumental individuality.

Its core icon was, of course, the warrior who is ignoring the challenge of death. Originally imagined as the prince or the general leading his troops, the myth of warriors' heroism was democratized in the cult of the unknown soldier as celebrated in the twentieth century (Koselleck 1988). The heroic individual who sacrifices his life by voluntary decision and whose name has ascended to immortality is replaced by the many nameless men who lost their lives by order or by evil incident. In sacrificing their lives, they hope to step forward from the ranks of the ordinary and boring and acquire an individuality denied to them in everyday life. Rising to fight an oppressor, to liberate one's nation or to rebel against an unjust authority was the nineteenth century's call for the heroism of commoners who, by responding to this call, believed they were giving birth or rebirth to their nation. The myth of the people on the barricades as it emerged in the revolutions of 1830 and in particular of 1848 condensed this collective heroism to an icon of emancipation and self-empowerment. Indeed, the revolution established a new state of exception, a state of nature where the old rules were suspended forever and where violence was sacralized (Sorel 1981).

But the voices of common German soldiers heralding the outbreak of the war in 1914 also show this seductive attraction of heroism in a striking way. The admiration of war as the arena of the extraordinary, the enthusiasm of young

British and German students running into their almost certain death at the battle of Langemarck, the postwar cult of the heroism in the trenches are not only the results of fatal ideological blindfoldedness—they were also responses to a widespread thrust to experience the extraordinary, to live through moments of utmost intensity, to encounter the sacred in the danger of death and thereby to achieve immortality.<sup>23</sup> Stauffenberg, the leader of the failed rebellion against Hitler in 1944, facing the execution squad, shouted in the moment of death: "*Es lebe das heilige Deutschland!*"<sup>24</sup> Even modern societies, as secularized as they pretend to be, cannot entirely dispense with the heroic sacrifices of individuals in order to construct a sacred bond of collective identity.<sup>25</sup> Self-sacrificial heroism is, of course, not an exclusive tradition of Western culture. The Muslim tradition of martyrdom is today invoked by Islamist suicide bombers who appear as heroes in their respective communities, whereas to the West they are demonic and criminal terrorists.

From an outside point of view, heroes become perpetrators, martyrs are turned into criminals. The sacrificial core of heroism shows also a deep ambivalence with respect to the other counterpart of the hero, the victim (Smelser 1993, 1998a, p. 111). The hero as well as the victim emerges from the liminal horizons of human society, and the perspective on this horizon can barely hide its fundamental instability. It could also be looked at in another way: as perpetrators can be converted into heroes, victims can be turned into heroes and heroes into victims, the trauma of death can be revealed as the path to triumphant immortality; the sacrifice of the individual hero can be celebrated as the birth of a new community (Smith 1894). This ambivalent shifting between heroes and victims, between the abyss of meaninglessness and the glory of sacredness is increased by the anonymity of modern warfare. In contrast to the military heroes before, the innumerable dead of modern warfare have no names; they are buried under the masses of other unknown soldiers, their immortality is a blunder. This anonymity results in a symbolic barrier against heroism—the heroes become victims again.<sup>26</sup>

### RITUALS OF REMEMBRANCE

There are no private heroes. As lonely as they might be in the moment of heroism, they are carried by a community that defines them, tries to follow their example and commemorates their lives. Even if not all heroes are dead, their heroism lives only in the community's acts to represent and remember them. The immortality of the hero as construed by collective rituals is brought out even more clearly if there is no living person anymore whose entanglements in mundane affairs could call into question the purity of the hero. Not only because of the sacrificial core of heroism—only dead heroes are immortal and their immortality is assured even if they die young; indeed, nothing jeopardizes the fame of the hero so much as aging—the hero represents the promise of immortality and the triumphant feeling of birth. Dying young combines this promise with the tragic intrusion of mortality and hints at the hero's position between Gods and humans.<sup>27</sup>



Rituals of remembering the hero can emphasize three elements: they can mark his *place* in the community, they can recall his *voice* and his story, and they can represent his *face* to insiders and outsiders.<sup>28</sup>

The hero's *place* in the community is marked by the veneration of his or her remains, his or her burial site, his or her relics. Every community that is centered on a hero attempts to mourn the dead hero in places where he or she lived and where he or she performed the extraordinary deed, where he or she was born and where he or she died. If still existing, the remains of his or her dead body will attract followers and his or her grave will become the local center of a particular cult. It stands for the mortal and human part of the hero and links it to his or her sacred and immortal existence.<sup>29</sup>

The hero's *voice* in the community is, in its basic form, recalled by narrating his or her story to the community. Of course, the community knows about the importance of the hero as part of the community's mythology. Therefore, the narration does not simply transport information about the hero's life; most of the basic elements are well known to all but the novices in the community. Instead, it brings the myth again to the attention of the public, it modifies and reinterprets it according to the situation of the day, it adds color and refinements to the basic story, it embodies new elements representing the contemporary challenges to the community, it invents new stories linked to the surroundings of the hero. Although the members of the community vary in their ability to present the story colorfully and convincingly, the myth itself, in its most elementary form, is common and public knowledge available for every member of the community.<sup>30</sup>

The *face* of the hero is represented in its most elementary form by heraldic signs. These heraldic signs range from the totems of the clan to the colors of the nation, from the coat of arms—the eagle, the lion, the lily or the cross—on the shields of knights to the banners and emblems shown on national celebrations, from the heraldic pattern of the seal to the symbols of religious fraternities, from the caps of famous sports clubs to the faces of pop heroes on the shirts of their fans. All these heraldic signs symbolize the collective identity of followers who partake in the charisma of a hero—of warriors and princes, saints and sports heroes.

In distinction to the narration of myth that remembers the hero for the members of the community (Campbell 1971, p. 382), the presentation of heraldic signs indicates membership mainly outside of the community, in the public space or in direct confrontation with outsiders when the boundary between insiders and outsiders, between friend and foe has to be demarcated quickly. Here the pride of followers and the awareness of identity has to be signaled by clearly visible symbols that are even to deter hostile outsiders—like the horrible head of the medusa on the shield of the ancient hero. Thus, heraldic signs represent the face of the hero in its most simple form.<sup>31</sup>

In its most elementary forms—as narration of the myth, as veneration of the mortal remainders and as presentation of the icon—the memory of the hero is accessible for every member of the community. Elaborated rituals that reenact

triumphant heroism, however, have to be limited to special occasions; they must not overwhelm and suffocate the mundane affairs of everyday life.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, differentiation takes over. The ritual remembrance of the heroes is concentrated on special places and times, when the myth is reenacted on stage in dances and plays, when the traditional masks and costumes are put on, when the community celebrates by taking special food and beverages, when the community rallies and presents its statues, heraldic signs, banners and colors—in short, the totems of its heroes—to the outside world (Nora 1992).

But it is not only the effort to open up spaces that are discharged from the burden of memory that fosters the separation between places and times of remembrance on the one hand and everyday life on the other.<sup>33</sup>

A common date of remembrance also allows for the construction of a supralocal community: all members—wherever they are—are united in a simultaneous celebration of memory, but return to their everyday businesses when the day of remembrance has passed. It even gives way to a complex integration of different locally separated communities of remembrance by one embracing principle.<sup>34</sup> Thus the calendar of saints that emerged in the late Middle Ages connected different parishes and fraternities, monasteries and religious orders; each of them was devoted to a particular saint and celebrated his or her day in a special way, but all of them knew about the all-embracing calendar, the times of memory for the others (Cronin 1963). This spread of a common calendar of saints and heroes indicates a new pattern of societal integration: the unconnected diversity of local saints is replaced by an encompassing temporal order that travelers can account for if they move from one local community to the other. Indeed, the rise of the calendar of saints in the eleventh century coincides with an increasing activity of traveling in medieval Europe—pilgrimages and crusades, trade and the exchange between monasteries grew considerably.

Of course, these constructions of collective identity by common days of remembrance are not limited to premodern societies. They are part of the ritual backbone of many contemporary communities. Christmas and Easter customs in Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic communities, the annual celebration of the respective saints in Catholic fraternities and parishes, the celebration of Chanukah and Yom Kippur in Jewish communities and of Ramadan in Muslim societies are central for the construction of the respective religious identities, as are the establishment and observance of national holidays for the national identities (Bell 1997, p. 102). Here, not only are the independence day or the birthday of the ruler or founder celebrated but also the heroes of minorities and movements: Martin Luther King day is a case in point.

In modern democratic communities, these rituals of remembering frequently shift the focus from individual heroes to the heroification of entire groups that, by rising against repressive rulers, give birth to the national demos. It is the heroism of collective action that is remembered in the U.S. Fourth of July, in the *Quatorze Juillet* of the French Republic, in the celebration of the German unity after 1990, in the celebration of the Polish uprising against the Nazi occupation in 1944, etc.

Here, too, in the myth of the revolutionary uprising that broke the continuity of an authoritarian rule, it is a heroic action that opened up a new space of collective action, where the unprecedented could happen and the demos could constitute itself in violent action devoid of the chains and shields of law (Eisenstadt 1978; Koselleck 1984; Sorel 1981).

At least it is remembered that way, as banal as the revolutionary action might have been to the eyes of its contemporaries. When it happened, the Boston Tea Party was not reported as the birth of a new powerful nation, but as a minor act of insubordination in the colonies—not uncommon at the wild margin of large empires. Similarly, the seizure of the Bastille on 14th July 1789 was hardly noticed as the heroic rise of a new republican nation. It was a part of the usual urban riots of the eighteenth century: an agitated mass of people liberated a dozen nonpolitical prisoners and killed their guards, in case they did not join the ranks of the mob (Tilly 1986). Later on, the seizure of the Bastille was remembered as the core event of the French Revolution and as the democratic constitution of the French nation. The storming of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg in 1917, too, did not attract much attention in the contemporary situation of war and unrest. Only later on, mediated by Eisenstein's famous movie, was it regarded as the start of the Russian Revolution, as the rise of the people against the brutal monarchic rule.

If the ritual of remembering constructs the heroes, they can also be deconstructed by a ban on their remembrance. A change in political regime usually also affects the calendar. The founding heroes of the old order vanish and new days of remembrance are institutionalized, sometimes turning the victims of the *ancien régime* into the heroes of the new one. The collapses of the German Nazi regime in 1945 and of the Communist rule in East Germany show these axial reversals of heroes and victims in an exemplary way. The "Führer's" birthday and the celebration of the October Revolution were replaced by memorial days for the victims of Nazism and the uprising of the people against the Communist regime.

### RELICS: THE PLACES OF HEROES

In contrast to calendars, the local specification of collective memory allows for a quite different mode of integration by collective memory; it replaces the idea of a simultaneous and superlocal moment of remembrance with the temporal continuity of memory concentrated on special places where the relics of the dead hero are preserved. In the veneration of relics and remainders the community marks its sacred center as the place of the hero (Nora 1992; François 1996).

The presence of relics commands piety. Whoever enters the tomb or approaches the relics is expected to abstain from mundane affairs; outsiders are requested to be silent and to respect the rituals of remembrance performed by the members of the community. This obligation to piety results, not merely from the awe inspiring presence of the hero's remainders, but also from the awareness that the hero is presented as mortal, as a dead corpse, as decaying bones. His mortal

body is still with us, the mortals. But this obvious mortality of the human part of the hero renders his or her spiritual presence ever more palpable; the true hero is invisible, but powerful. Miracles are attributed to his influence, the members of the community experience a strong sense of collective identity, the pilgrims speak about the encounter with the extraordinary when they return to their homes.<sup>35</sup>

The extension of this community of memory varies. Clans worshiping their ancestors place their relics in a special shrine and take it with them if they change places. For nomadic tribes in particular, the relics of their ancestors mark the sacred center that represents the kinship bond and its continuity wherever they are. The material presence of the dead ancestors cannot be replaced by just the knowledge that they are buried somewhere else. In local communities the sacred has to be locally represented; there is still no strong pattern of social order connecting these different communities whether sedentary or nomadic, and there is no need to represent an embodiment of the sacred on a supralocal level.

Life in the early Middle Ages came close to this situation. Before the turn of the millennium, Western Europe consisted mainly of local communities gathered around a monastery or the castle of the local ruler. Cities were very small and an embracing social order, as represented by the Holy Roman Empire, was extremely weak. Therefore the remembrance of the heroic past focused on the local presence of relics. The diversity of the local saints reflected the scattered map of early medieval society, the wide empty spaces between the local communities and the lack of central powers, whether cultural or political.

In the Carolingian reign of the ninth century, the rapidly spreading cult of the saints' relics was debated as the issue of *translatio*, that is, the transfer of the relics from their original place—mostly in the Mediterranean areas—to new Christian communities in the north of the empire.<sup>36</sup> This transfer of the sacred relics reflected, in turn, the famous *translatio imperii*, the takeover of the ancient Roman Empire by the Frankish chiefs after the crowning of Charlemagne (Karolus Magnus) by the Roman patriarch in 800.

It was not before the central Middle Ages that a hierarchy of universal saints and their relics, most important among them the eucharist himself, emerged, reflecting the increasing power of the pope in Rome. With the rise of superlocal saints and the spread of relics brought by the crusaders to northern Europe, the movement of pilgrimage to the places of famous relics gained additional salience. Crusades that conquered relics, and pilgrimages that revered them, set the Christian community of the central Middle Ages in motion.<sup>37</sup> Collecting relics became a passion for kings like the collection of art five centuries later on, but it reflected also the increasing power of princes over more and more local communities. By collecting the relics of saints, the prince could expand and extend his power, deprive the local communities of their spiritual center and justify his position as a representative of the sacred.<sup>38</sup> But also the new monastic movements needed material centers of devotion to attract pilgrims and to justify their spiritual claims.

After the twelfth century, the cult of the saints' relics lost importance as the structural backbone of Christian society; it was increasingly regarded as a laic

mode of religious devotion, but it never faded away (Reader 1993). Even today, Christian pilgrims travel to Assisi, Torino, Rome, Lourdes or Tschenstochau as they did in medieval times to Santiago de Compostella, Cologne or Canterbury.

And, of course, the pilgrims' movement is not a special Occidental phenomenon, but is central for most translocal religious communities that believe in the embodiment of the sacred: Muslim pilgrims follow their religious duty in the Hadj to Mecca, Buddhists make pilgrimages to the places where the Buddha was born, had his enlightenment, gave his first teaching or died.

Furthermore, the veneration of relics is not limited to religious communities, but can be found in the early modern princely state as well as in the construction of modern nations. The monumental tombs of the rulers in the crypta of churches they sponsored connect the two bodies of the king—his hidden dead corpse and the artful image of the immortal hero (Kantorowicz 1957). Later on, with the rise of the modern nation-state, the rulers and their dynasties are succeeded by the great men of a nation, by the founding fathers, political leaders and cultural heroes. Their relics, too, are sacred places frequently located in churches, temples or mosques like Westminster Cathedral in London or Santa Croce in Florence or the Dome des Invalides in Paris. After adolescents learn at school about the heroism of their founding fathers, they are, as part of their education as citizens, officially escorted and supported to visit the memorial sites of the nation in the capital city, in Paris, London, Washington, Moscow, Beijing, or Tokyo. Global communication networks provide no substitute for the local presence of the sacred as embodied in the remainders of the hero. The visit to the Dome des Invalides in Paris, to the temple wall in Jerusalem and to the Kaaba in Mecca cannot be replaced by their representations on the Internet.

The concentration of memory on particular places and its embodiment in particular objects is, of course, a social construction of the present. As such, it not only represents the social order and collective identity of its carriers, but it is also open to debate and doubts, to contested claims and bloody conflict.

This tendency toward conflict and controversy increases if heroism is represented in material relics or places. It is easier to claim the property of an object and a place than to do this with respect to time, and ownership claims are prone to be challenged, objects can be stolen, land can be occupied. Whoever owns the places of memory has the key to collective identity and, if it is not his own, but rather the collective identity of others, he can humiliate them by preventing access to the sacred places or even by abusing the sacred places for mundane purposes. Destroying the temple of the enemies, erasing their cemeteries, stealing and mocking the relics of the other community are the ultimate ways to defy their collective identity. Debates and feuds between medieval monasteries or cities about the possession of the bones of saints were, therefore, not insane aberrations, but desperate cultural wars about collective identity and the access to the sacred core. The Venetian theft of the relics of Saint Marc from Alexandria in 827 (Geary 1978, p. 107), or the transfer of the relics of Saint Nicholas from Myra to Bari in 1087 are stories of armed robbery and paid treason, of faked documents and distorted justifications (Geary 1978, p. 88).

Of course, there were economic interests at stake. Traders of relics (the most famous one was Deusdona in the ninth century) could make a fortune, organizations of relic merchants emerged, and the theft of relics became a major problem; scholarly expertise could be called upon, soldiers and sailors could offer their services, and, above all, the guardians of the relics, the local traders and innkeepers could profit from the many pilgrims attracted by the sensation and hoping for salvation. More than monuments and public rituals of remembrance, the embodiment of the sacred in relics fosters its commercial and professional exploitation. Profit margins in the business of rarities exceed those in the trade of replica—like, later on, the aura of the original piece of art justified its price in distinction to the reproduction. But all these commercial and professional interests depended on the fact that the relics of the heroes and their local presence were imputed with spiritual power. It was the emanation of the sacred that justified the expenses, toils and inconveniences of the pilgrimage.

In a similar way, we cannot regard the crusaders invading and conquering Palestine just as greedy adventurers in search of new colonies. Certainly, many of them were crude warriors attracted by the lure of conquest, but in venturing out into the unknown, they also tried the path of heroism, driven by the mission to bring the sacred center of their community under their control.

This reference to the spiritual power of relics and remainders is not the mark of an exotic past; it is very much alive. The Jewish claim to Jerusalem and the remains of the Temple Wall on the one side, and the Muslim claim to the same city and the Dome of Rocks on the other are not carried by strategic reasoning, by the calculation of monetary profit and military advantage. They cannot be compensated or negotiated—it is the sacred core of collective identity, it is the place of David and Muhammad, that is at stake. Reconquering the land of the ancestors and bringing the heroes' bones back to their homeland is, therefore, the ultimate ritual of remembering the heroes—regardless if it were Napoleon to Paris, the Prussian kings to Berlin after the unification of Germany or the Russian czar to the Kremlin after the collapse of the Soviet empire. Even the relics of former heroes who have been turned to icons of evil do not cease to fascinate contemporary societies. After Hitler's suicide at the end of the Second World War, his corpse was burned by his bodyguards, but the search for his bones and remainders kept the attention of a global audience for decades. The same holds true for the debate about the skull of Bormann, one of the highest Nazi leaders, who was said to have escaped Berlin in 1945 and to have lived in South America for many years. Once cheered as charismatic heroes, the Nazi leaders were publicly turned into the opposite after 1945. As monstrous demons, they continued to haunt the collective memory of Germany. We will return to this issue in chapter five.

### MONUMENTS: THE FACE OF THE HERO

Even if they have been frequently faked, relics are, by their very nature, rare. Their power is local and fades away if distance increases. The members of the community

have to travel to approach the sacred. With the rise of larger territorial orders and sedentary citizenship, new forms of collective representations of the sacred are required (Hardtwig 1990, p. 13, p. 224). The representation of the dead hero has to be decoupled from material relics that are considered to be a part of him or her and brought to the centers of public life. This is achieved by monuments erected by the living in memory of the dead.<sup>39</sup> Monuments represent the *face* of the dead hero. In contrast to relics, they are less demanding on piety and not particularly sensitive to the presence of outsiders. Like their predecessor, the heraldic sign, they are constructed by the members of the community, but presented also to outsiders; they can penetrate everyday life, but they can also represent the sacred core of the hero if no mortal remainders are available.

Some of the monuments that have been constructed by the rulers themselves during their lifetimes, like the pyramids of ancient Egypt, Hadrian's mausoleum in Rome or Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe in Paris, mark the transition between remainders and true monuments.<sup>40</sup> They hint at remainders and relics, but these are hidden or entirely vanished behind the monumental architecture.

Pure monuments cannot claim anymore a special connection between the symbolic content and the particular place where they were erected. These monuments dispense with the mortal relics of the hero and represent the absent hero by sculptures and images, by architecture and space. By cutting the ties to the mortal remainders, these pure monuments hint directly at the sacred core of collective identity. Yet, the turn toward pure representation engenders new risks: The ties of the sacred to the mortal community are weakened, the hero tends to be entirely out of this world, he can vanish into abstraction. In order to counteract this evanescence of the sacred, the hero has to be presented as a human being; he has to get a face again. The representation of the hero's face is, therefore, at the core of the monument. Most important in the Western transition from relics to monuments is certainly the spread of the image of the crucified Christ. In early medieval art, Christ was presented commonly as the supreme ruler of the world, and even if he was shown on the cross, he was the triumphant hero and king of kings (Kantorowicz 1957). In contrast, late medieval art depicted God as a tortured being, thus emphasizing mortality as symbolized in the relic, but dispensing with the relic itself. This transition was repeated by statues of the universal saints—above all, Mary—which could be found in many churches although they did not dispose of the respective relics (Carroll 1986; Beissel 1972, 1976). These saints linked local patronage and religious fraternities to the universal church.

In a similar way, sculptures showing the prince on a horse in the central place of a city represented the princely power integrating the early modern territorial state even if the prince and his court were far away. The relics of the rulers were still special places, but usually removed from the large cathedrals and located in private chapels. Monuments representing the victorious liberator of the nation—Washington, Bolivar, Napoleon, Garibaldi, Lenin, Marcus Garvey, Kim il Sung—imagine the nation rising against the ancient regime, even if the everyday business of the citizen is well established in legal routines and commercial prac-

tices. Monuments of cultural heroes like Goethe and Dante, Shakespeare and Rembrandt, Myczewicz and Pushkin, represent the rising bourgeoisie that defined itself by reference to culture instead of capital and acquired education instead of inherited titles. In all these cases, an embracing invisible social order, the territorial state or the nation, has to be visualized and represented. Because of the very invisibility of the order, it has to be imagined as a face and a name—as the hero who mediates between the invisible sacred order and the visible mundane locality and creates thus the supralocal community.

This representation of the sacred core is challenged to a certain degree by the impersonal identity of the modern democratic nation. The democratic nation has by its very constitution no personal center anymore. The nation is in all its citizens and the commonality of all its citizens is the nation. Hence the hero has, in a literal sense, thousands of faces. This crisis of representation, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and fully developed after the First World War, led to the monuments for the anonymous fallen soldiers (Koselleck and Jeismann 1994; Koselleck 1997). Here, the representation of the heroic core of the community still has a face, but it has lost its individual name. The nameless heroes are surrounded by a tragic aura, their death is less triumphant than traumatic; finally, the heroes are victims again.

A different, even opposite reaction to this crisis of representation can be found in monuments that have given up any symbolic connection to historical persons—monuments of Germania and Britannia, for example, symbolize the triumphant and victorious nation as an ahistorical Goddess. Here, the ideal and immortal hero still has a name and a face, but is entirely decoupled, not only from the remainders, but also from the memory of a mortal historical person. Only when the impersonal identity of the nation gets a face can it be imagined as heroic.

But because every citizen knows that this face is fiction, it is no longer considered truly sacred. Therefore, the awe, inspired by the presence of the sacred relics or the vivid memory of the hero's life, has to be replaced by the awe provoked by the sheer size of the monument—the figures of the heroes are blown up to gigantic proportions.

Finally, in the attempt to recreate the awe of the sacred, even the human face of the hero is lost (Mosse 1993). Because of its otherworldly nature the sacred itself is regarded as impossible to represent, and this crisis of representation extends also to the image of the hero who was, originally, a mediator between the Gods and the humans. Repeating inadvertently the Protestant critique of figurative art in the churches, the image of the hero is banned from his temple, the monument. What is left are empty spaces, towering columns and huge scales. The national monuments of Vittorio Emanuele in Rome still have figurative decoration, the *Völkerschlachtsdenkmal* in Leipzig is already devoid of it, and the planned Nazi monument of *Großdeutschland* in Berlin was sheer megalomania of empty space, scales and columns. In the attempt to represent and visualize the sacredness of the hero, the face of the hero is lost—the empty space of the monument is ready to be converted into a monument of the victims.

Monuments can be erected at any place where the community of memory wants to mark its center. Because this is usually also the center of urban everyday life, the awe and piety with respect to the sacred is difficult to sustain. Even if they are of gigantic size, monuments are easier to blend into ordinary life than dead corpses. Below the monument the mundane life can continue to flourish. This blending of the hero's monument into the everyday life of citizens is put one step further if the city streets and places are named after the heroes of the community. Here, the hero's name has entirely replaced his face and the citizens' everyday lives can continue without remembering the sacred core of heroism. Thus the monumentalization of the hero also discharges the individuals from the obligation to remember the hero constantly. Monuments are the depositories of collective memory.

Monuments may be difficult to construct, but they are easy to destroy. Changes of political regimes and religious authorities not only affect the calendar but also result in the destruction of monuments (Koselleck and Jeismann 1994). The Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten ordered the statues of the old Gods to be destroyed, Christian missionaries engaged in a destructive war against the pagan statues of devotion, radical Protestantism banned the statues of saints from the churches, the French revolutionaries converted churches into stores for grains and guns, the monuments of Hitler were crushed and blown up in the German cities after 1945, as were the Lenin monuments after 1990. Because these monuments represented the triumphant and sacred core of the past community, the new community could not just reduce them to mere aesthetic objects or pieces of historical interest. If the triumphant hero is turned into a haunting demon, his symbolic representation is destroyed in a collective act of purification. Even the history of street names tells about the destruction of old heroes and the construction of new ones. Monuments are, obviously, not just decorative architecture; they reflect and construct collective identity and their destruction hints at the ambivalence of heroes between triumph and trauma.

### CLASSICS: THE VOICE OF THE HERO

But the imagination of the hero in the monument is not the only way to decouple the remembrance from the material remainders of the hero. A refined and less obvious, but not less powerful, ritual of remembering the heroic core of communities can be found in the citation of the classics.<sup>41</sup> It recalls the name and the voice of the hero—his message, his words, his works—and decouples them from his face and his material remains.

If we consider an author as a classic, if we quote his or her work in order to achieve the consent of others, if we repeat or reinterpret a classical pattern because we regard the aesthetics to be unsurpassed, if we regard a poet, a composer, a painter, a sculptor to be a supremely creative individual, that is, a genius, we are constructing a hero. The Greek sculptors Pheidias and Praxiteles, the Renaissance

painters Michelangelo and Raphael, the Chinese poets Li Tai-po and Lao-tse, the writers Shakespeare, Dante and Ariosto, Corneille and Racine, Goethe and Schiller, the musicians Bach and Handel, Mozart and Beethoven, the thinkers Confucius and Ibn Kaldun, Plato and Augustine, Newton and Voltaire, Kant and Hegel are classical classics. All of these cultural heroes were not only influential for their contemporaries, but, later on, were seen as original lonely geniuses who, beyond the confines of tradition, created a new cultural universe in a Godlike manner. Instead of continuing a tradition, they are seen as the founders of a new one. This demiurgical act creates a new tradition that is, later on, called classic. Even those who deliberately rebelled against any classicism—as did the German romantic poet Novalis or the French Baudelaire, the painters Monet and Picasso, and the philosophers Marx and Nietzsche, Freud and Benjamin—can, later on, be lifted up to the ranks of the immortal genius who blazed the path for a new tradition.

To declare a period to be classic culture and to relate it to a towering genius means not only to exempt it from criticism and any attempt to surpass it, but also to ignore its predecessors. In declaring a period to be classic, we establish a boundary against the infinite track into the past. We do not have to think about what was before the classic, what influenced it and what it depended upon. The classic is not contingent, but sacred. And it is exactly this sacredness of the classic that justifies its being taught to the current generations, its entering textbooks and school curricula, and its being quoted by people who want to emphasize their closeness to the sacred core of cultural communities.

What is true for the political hero holds also for the cultural one. There are neither natural geniuses nor timeless classics. Both are social constructions of the present time, carried by cultural communities that create their collective identity by declaring an artist and his or her period to be classic, unsurpassed, paradigmatic. In the construction of a classic, the sacred core of a cultural community, of a scholarly field or an aesthetic style—as abstract as its symbolic products might be—gets a name and is imagined as an individual person, as inimitable and unique. Thus the classic as a sovereign subject mediates between the transcendental realm of eternal beauty and truth on the one hand and the profane business of normal science and decorative craftsmanship on the other.

Of course, the works that are regarded as classic vary and change. The heroes of today may only rarely be mentioned tomorrow. Apart from the devaluation of the classics of the past, the number of classics in a particular field also varies. Narrowing the range of those authors or works that are listed as classics may hint at a consolidation of an intellectual discipline, an increasing consensus within a community and a normalization of a field, whereas a large variety of contested claims to enthrone a classic indicates a lack of consensus and coherence of the genre.

The construction of a classic continues the line of appeasement of conflicts about heroes. Bloody conflicts about holy lands and sacred relics are quite common, monuments may cause public debates, but rarely bloody feuds, reverence for a classic may not be shared by everyone, but it is rarely contested or put to

revenge.<sup>42</sup> Outsiders can just ignore the devotion to a genius or the quotation of a classic by his or her followers, whereas it is difficult to disregard the obligation to silence and piety in sacred places or in the presence of the hero's relics—the community will take offense. Tourists visiting sacred places without showing the obligatory respect are frequently seen committing such an offense, but readers who question the author's enthusiasm for a classic will only in exceptional cases be publicly noticed. In the construction of a classic, the community of memory is even more decoupled from the mortal existence of the hero than it is in the building of a monument. It is not the entanglement in mundane affairs and mistakes, but his or her works, words and ideas that count and will be remembered and their reinterpretation and adaptation to the present day situation can dispense with the contemporary context. That Aristotle was the ideologue of slavery, Marx an anti-Semite and misogynist, Kant a neurotic pedant, Baudelaire a drug addict, Voltaire a corrupt spy for the French King—all this is easily disregarded and has to be, if we consider them as cultural heroes. Bringing the cultural hero back into his original context risks deconstructing him as a classic.

But if the refinements of historical research may erode the pedestal of the classics, the heroes will survive in popular culture, in novels and schoolbooks. From the nineteenth century, the teaching of the community's past was focused on the great men and, later on, even the great women, the heroes of the mythical tales of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, of the *Nibelungenlied* and of Perceval, the legends of martyrs and saints, the stories about Luther and Washington, Napoleon and Barbarossa, Frederic the Great, Alexander and Caesar. Teaching the collective identity was mainly a presentation of founding heroes, mostly triumphant, sometimes tragic, always programmatic (Giesen 1998a).

If the reference to the classics is shifted down to the level of basic education, some advanced intellectual fields have largely left the reference to the classics behind their vanguard of discourse. They have passed the threshold to normal science and present themselves no longer as a tradition founded in a classical heritage, but as timeless objective knowledge—like the natural sciences that confine the reference to the classic to a small chapter at the beginning of their textbooks; others thrust boldly to crush the tradition in order to create the unprecedented and new on the shambles of yesterday's classics. But even the boldest modernism has its secret heroes whose revolutionary achievement is remembered—modern art and its celebration of Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns, Andy Warhol or Josef Beuys is just one example, the current veneration for Jacques Derrida as the master of deconstructivism is another one. If it is just intertextuality that matters, why are the audiences paying to experience the bodily presence of their intellectual hero?

#### THE HERO'S DRESS FOR EVERYBODY: HISTORICISM

All cultural production—literature, sculpture, painting, music, philosophy, science—is influenced by the already existing patterns, forms and examples, whether

inadvertently or deliberately, whether as repetition or as revolution. But classicism or historicism differs from simple lines of influence. It turns the repetition of the past patterns into an aesthetic program. In contrast to modernism, here the past is sacralized and raised to a level that the present efforts always have to strive for, but will never be able to achieve (Giesen 1999a). The incarnation of this sacralized past is the aesthetic hero, the genius who coined the period he lived in. But the historicist's reference to the past ceases to present the face of the hero. The hero is represented only by his or her traces in history, by imitating his creations, by citing symbols, forms, images and icons. The genius himself is sacralized to a degree that forbids any depiction and representation. Historicism continues the line of increasing depersonalization that started with the cult of monuments in the nineteenth century. The sacredness of the hero is turned into a disposable decoration, into a dress that everybody can put on and exchange for another in the next moment.

Attempts to revive the aesthetics of the past and to teach the classical heritage are frequently associated with the nineteenth century. Indeed, the aesthetics of the nineteenth century showed the marks of historicism and classicism in a striking way: there were neo-Gothic, neo-Romanesque, neobaroque, even neo-classical styles in architecture; the program of the Pre-Raphaelites proclaimed a return to Renaissance art even before Raphael; painters like Makart copied the style of Rubens and Titian (Fillitz 1996); Brahms defended the classical heritage of music against the innovations by Richard Wagner; princes like Ludwig von Bayern constructed new castles in an exaggerated Gothic or neobaroque style; churches and stock exchanges (Kreisel 1954), train stations (Krings 1985) and even public lavatories were built in the style of the past centuries; cathedrals that never had towers before were completed with perfect towers in the style of the past (Cologne); the home of the educated bourgeois boasted furniture in Gothic or Renaissance style (Brönnner 1982, 1987); telephones were disguised as little Gothic cathedrals; historical associations tried to restore ruins and to reconstruct the buildings of the past better than they ever had existed before; history ascended to a core position among the scholarly disciplines—in short, the nineteenth century was at least as fascinated with the past as it was attracted by progress into the future (Giesen 1999a).

Of course, the historicism of the nineteenth century was trapped by its fascination with the classics of the past. It widely ignored that the classics themselves, behind their seemingly autonomous creativity, referred to remote predecessors, that they reinterpreted their own classics. The architecture of classicism in the second half of the eighteenth century revived the model of the Renaissance and Roman patterns; Renaissance art, in turn, was deeply influenced by the rediscovery of Roman antiquity and changed its aesthetics of the male nude profoundly after the discovery of the monumental statue of the Hercules Farnese; and—most importantly perhaps—Roman art itself copied the great masters of Greek sculpture and proclaimed the so-called Hadrianic renaissance.

In periods of historicism and classicism, copies and reinterpretations were not seen as a sin against the requirement of authenticity—to the contrary, they allowed the spiritual core, the "Gestalt," the ideal form of classical beauty, to be

brought out in an even purer way than in the original. Thus the classicists of the early nineteenth century, following Winckelmann's aesthetics, could consider the plaster copy of an antique statue to be the purer and more valuable representation of beauty than the antique original that was hidden under a layer of patina—dirty, truncated and broken.

In historicism, the present community is linked to the past, not by the material continuity of relics and remainders, but by style and form. This insistence on the construction of the past by symbolic patterns and ideas, instead of material embodiments, reflects the shift from the nobility to the bourgeoisie as the main carriers of collective memory (Möckl 1996). Nobility refers to bodily lineage that cannot be copied and imitated—you have it or you do not have it, and any attempt to acquire it by education is doomed to failure. In contrast, the bourgeoisie is based on property and profession, on education and office—in short, on attributes that can be achieved and exchanged. The very mode of constructing the past reflects this shift in the recruitment and constitution of class.

But the nobility with all its pretensions against the rising bourgeoisie has not always been able to look back to an impressive descent. This is not only because many lines of noble descent had been faked and invented, bought and re-written afterwards, but also because they, too, had their own beginnings. The Medici of Florence started as a family of wealthy merchants who rose to be the city's rulers by impressing their co-citizens with princely splendor; they organized spectacular public ceremonies, commissioned art and public buildings and thus turned down their rivals like the Pazzi and Strozzi families (Burckhardt 1988).

But historicism does not only hide the novelty of a group in the center of power, it can also disguise the decay of power. Ludwig II von Bayern, the fabled and crazy king, dressed—according to the occasion—in different historical styles; he appeared as a Germanic warrior or a Baroque prince, he staged parties and theatrical rituals that revived a glorious past in contrast to his actual political powerlessness. In putting on the princely clothes, the ruler can conceal his simple and nude humanity and rise up to the pedestal of the hero. Historicism is, indeed, based on the attempt to hide the newness, insecurity and symbolic nudity of individuals and groups entering the center of society behind the traditional dress of greatness—commoners dressing up as heroes.

Historicism is an aesthetics of the theatre, separating between the mask and the face, between facade and interior, between public appearance and private existence. In this separation, the private is concealed from the public eye, the traditional facade has to conceal the questionable, mundane and even weird mechanism behind it—like the Gothic facade of the train station covers the modern technology that is considered ugly and intimidating for the public eye. The aesthetics of the theatre succeeds, however, only if the public forgets, for a moment at least, that it is just a play, a facade, a mask. It has to be taken for real, it has to ignore the split between the mortal nudity of the individual and the splendid dress of the immortal hero, it has to hail and applaud the hero and to approve his enthronement in public rituals.

Occasionally, the tension between both sides is supremely overridden by special gestures of the hero. When Napoleon was crowned as *l'empereur*, he used the traditional dress of the French kings, but changed the embroidered heraldic signs from the Bourbon lily to the bee; instead of being crowned by the representative of the church, as all French kings were before, he, in a sudden and unexpected gesture, took the crown from the archbishop and crowned himself. The hero could not dispense with the traditional dress, but he insisted on his self-constitution in the ritual.

But it would be misleading to see the historicism of the nineteenth century as a special dress for the ruler whose legitimacy was questionable. To the contrary: historicism fluidified the splendor of the past and made it accessible for every citizen (Pieske 1988; Plumpe 1997). The style of the past could be copied and transferred, even exaggerated and improved—the number of columns, pedestals, ornaments and towers decorating the facade increased, regardless of the function hidden behind the facade. In the end, the reference to the classical form of the past loses all its distinctive value—it runs into a crisis of inflation. Beyond the barriers of privilege and scarcity, everyone could adapt the heraldic signs of the glorious past to his or her own leisure and pleasures. What was once the awe-inspiring embodiment of the sacred was now watered down to an omnipresent and banal commodity. The hero did not have a thousand faces anymore; instead, his dress was copied a million times and sold as a souvenir.

Against this historicist banalization of the past and the neoclassicist trivialization of the hero, Nietzsche pointed his thunderous criticism. Disgusted with the pious repetition of the classical heritage and mocking the naive optimism of those who still believed in progress and utopias, he praised the intensity of life, the triumphant awareness of the present moment, its vitality and ineffability (Nietzsche 1977d). Only in discharging the burden of the past as well as in tearing down the illusions of the future happiness, in destroying the conventions of the present society and in rejecting the guilt of the past, could a triumphant subjectivity be set free and give way to the creative act (Nietzsche 1977c). Only beyond guilt and punishment, after an acid deconstruction of fake morality and hypocrisy, on the shambles of the old statues of heroes who had enslaved humanity, could the pure will and the pure creativity of the triumphant subject emerge—a titanic hero constituting himself and for himself, dependent on nobody's appreciation, without followers and admirers.<sup>43</sup> The Nietzschean attempt to reconstruct the hero as the *Übermensch* (Nietzsche 1977a), who does not represent the sacred, but *is* the sacred himself, is, in itself, an exemplar of groundbreaking intellectual heroism that—finally—required the sacrifice of his own mundane existence as an intellectual. It reestablishes the distance between the hero and the ordinary human being; it overcomes its banalization by radical and frightening determination; it shows that—even if banalization can kill the mundane face of the hero—the idea of heroism itself is immortal. It is a categorical presupposition of culture, a mediation between the sacred center and mundane society—as technology is an indispensable mediation between society and its other frontier, nature.

But the Nietzschean attempt to deconstruct the chains of conventions that had turned humans into intellectual slaves does not pursue its endeavor to the very end and look from the summit of triumphant subjectivity into the abyss without which the summit would not exist. In its powerful attempt to break the chains that tied not only Hegel's servant to his master (Hegel 1980, p. 113), but also the master to the servant in the act of recognition, it replaced Hegel's fundamental insight about distinction and dialectics as the essence of serfdom and domination by the free-floating, bottomless creative moment. Blowing up this elusive moment to the focus of triumphant subjectivity, it disregards that every society has not only a center but also a fringe, that it not only cannot dispense with heroes, but that it also produces victims. Both are the extremes between which collective identity unfolds—as birth and death, triumph and trauma, demarcate the categorical reference points for individual identity and life.

### PLACES WITHOUT HEROES: THE EVANESCENCE OF THE SACRED

As important as the hero might be for the triumphant construction of collective identity, there are, of course, places and times which are, by their very structure, devoid of heroism and the personal embodiment of the sacred.

First of all, social relations can fail to provide the fundamental distance that is indispensable for the construction of heroism. Close friends and relatives rarely regard the respective other as heroes—even if they admire special qualities of the other or love each other. A wife calling her husband “my hero” can hardly mean it. The complex picture of the other which results from intimate personal knowledge impedes the imagination of the sacred as embodied in heroes. Charisma fades away in the attempt to turn it into an everyday practice. Close and continuous interaction cannot avoid establishing informal rules and routines that are inconsistent with the sovereignty and exceptionalism of the hero—he is beyond routines as he is above the law.

At the opposite end of this dimension of intimacy and personal knowledge ranges the object, the embodiment of the profane. Objects are seen as elements of the outside world that are impossible to communicate with, to argue with and to agree with. In contrast to the sacred and its immediate, irrefutable and even frightening calling, in distinction also to the contingencies of personal relationships with other humans, the objects are silent and do not challenge us.<sup>44</sup> They are devoid of any sovereignty. In demarcating ourselves against objects, we can increase our own awareness of being sovereign and autonomous subjects. Cultures which emphasize the subjectivity of individuals tend, therefore, also to objectify the world and to treat even human relationships as if they were objects.

Max Weber's account of rationalization as disenchantment, objectification (*Versachlichung*) and routinization (*Veralltäglichung*) provides a paradigm for this symbolic transformation from the personal into the impersonal, from subjectivity into objectivity, from the sacred to the profane.<sup>45</sup> Reformatory Protestantism con-

sidered—according to Weber—the objects of the world as devoid of any sacral meaning. The profane realm of worldly action was sharply contrasted with the transcendental realm of salvation that alone was the resort of the sacred. Representation of the sacred in objects was considered pagan idolatry. This expulsion of the sacred turned the mundane world into a realm of pure objects. If thus mundane activities become the “objects” of trade and bureaucracy, mediated by money and the impersonal law, there is no place for the personal charisma of heroes anymore. The pioneers who opened up a new market may be invested with a touch of heroism, but, once established, the market has no heroes anymore. Revolutionaries who fought for citizenship rights may be considered as heroes, but the citizen enjoying these rights is no hero anymore. The same holds true for other arenas of routinized objectification—if the charisma of the ruler is turned into bureaucratic administration, if the genius of the classics gives way to normal science, if the wisdom of the judge or shaman is replaced by professional services, if war is turned into work.<sup>46</sup>

Mediation in modern institutional systems has a voice, but no face and no place anymore. The faces of professionals disappear behind their products and services. Law, money, science, and values claim validity beyond the confines of localities, they abstract from the individuality of subjects and allow us to measure and to compare in an “objective” way (Simmel 1987). Heroes are not from this world of objectivity—they are incomparable and extraordinary; they have faces and voices to be remembered; they embody collective identity as triumphant subjects.

But the objectification of the world (Weber's *Versachlichung*), the turn toward impersonal representations of the sacred, and the routinization of charisma (Weber's *Veralltäglichung*) also engender a strong thrust to stress one's subjectivity and personality. The constant pressure toward individualization (Elias 1991), to show a sovereign distance to the rules and to present oneself as unique and inimitable became a key feature of the modern way of life. Sovereign subjectivity ceases to be the exclusive attribute of a few representative individuals in contrast to the many who remain normal and exchangeable. Instead, it is turned into a permanent challenge for everybody. We know the most obvious results of this modern cult of the individual: In the desperate competition for uniqueness, the style and fashion of yesterday are constantly devaluated, distinction is cherished, and the culture of the “masses” is despised. But the thrust for individualization can also lead to the sacralization of deviance and trespassing; the artist who violates the conventional norms of good taste or the criminal who defies the norms of the law, the perpetrator, the eccentric and even crazy person who acts beyond the rules of reason and commonsense, are turned into icons of sovereign subjectivity. In doing the unexpected, in creating ugliness and committing crimes, the Nietzschean defiance of the normal and regular is translated into a modern cult of individualization. Again, the perspective toward the boundaries reveals just flickering instability and ambivalence. The attempt to go beyond the horizon risks shifting perspectives.



In addition, the construction of distance that is constitutive for heroism engenders a special dialectics of evanescence. Heroes are located beyond the realm of the ordinary profane order, but they also attract followers who try to come close to them and to study their lives in detail, and who thereby inevitably bridge the gap that separates the embodiment of the sacred from the social community. The sacred burns down the mundane world if it enters it without mediation, but it, in turn, will disappear if the mundane followers come too close, if imitation takes over, if cheap copies are sold, if the exceptional becomes teachable (Callois 1939), or if the hero's dress is taken over by everybody. In order to reconstruct the constitutive distance to the sacred, it has to be rephrased in ever more inaccessible ways—located in times immemorial, in a transcendental world, finally embodied only in abstract principles and devoid of any subjectivity (Weber 1921; Eisenstadt 1986; Schluchter 1989). Thus, the faces and voices of heroes are widely replaced by impersonal values; the personal calling of past heroism recedes from the obligation to respect the timeless values of a universal community.

Although—as we have stressed above—heroism itself is immortal, the places for heroes are fading away with the expansion of money, law and science. If rationalization drives the modern world, the sacred becomes, indeed, an impersonal order which is less embodied in persons than in principles that have no special place anymore but are everywhere. And the modern conception of individuality embodies the sacred only in a faceless and anonymous way; at the end we all become heroes, but only for ourselves. Thus the triumphant awareness of birth projected to the hero is returning to each single member of the community—as the unalienable rights of human beings by birth, as the citizenship rights by being born in a territory, as the sacredness of the human body.

But in this transformation of the sacred that once had a face, a voice and a place into an anonymous and impersonal, invisible and omnipresent principle, the order of modernity also engenders a hidden elective affinity to the symbolic opposite of the hero: the anonymous victim who has no face, no voice, no place anymore. Thus, it is not blunt euphemism that the victims of September 11 were, later on, referred to as heroes although they did not opt sovereignly for their fate, although they can hardly be regarded as extraordinary personalities, although they pursued their regular professional activities.

## NOTES

1. "No More Heroes" was recorded in 1979 by an English punk group called "The Stranglers."
2. The classical and most influential text here is Carlyle (1967). From a sociological point of view, see Goode (1978), Burkert (1983) and Vernant (1983).
3. Interestingly Weber's original account on charisma refers strongly to the warrior figure. See Weber (1978: vol. 2, chapter 5. 1).
4. However, only the political and the religious hero caught the attention of sociologists under the heading of charismatic leadership. The main inspiration of this literature is of course Max Weber. See Eisenstadt (1992).

5. Although among sociologists Max Weber is commonly regarded as the main reference of the concept he, in fact, never claimed to be its original author. When introducing the concept in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* ("Economy and Society"), Weber referred to Rudolph Sohm (1892) and Karl Holl (1898). The renaissance of the Weberian concept in sociology was mainly mediated by Shils (1965, 1975), Eisenstadt (1968), Bendix and Roth (1971) and Schluchter (1989), whose systematic reconstructions and elaborations of the concept prepared the ground for contemporary debates. See also the different contributions in Gebhardt et al. (1993).

6. See, among others, Camic (1980), Wallis (1982), Lindholm (1990) and Tiryakian (1995).
7. The autonomy of this cultural perspective is powerfully advanced by Philip Smith (2000).
8. J. Assmann (1988, p. 12) uses the words *Alltagsferne* or *Alltagstranszendenz* in order to refer to this character of cultural memory.
9. Weber mentions the institutionalized madness of berserkers in Byzantium. See Weber (1978, vol. 2, chapter 5. 1).
10. For the territorial and local arrangements and the opposition of the sacred and the profane, see Eliade (1959). Comments on the tensions and affinities of order and placement (*Ordnung und Ordnung*) can be found in Carl Schmitt (1988).
11. Within Robert Merton's classical categorization of types of deviance, the hero can be conceptualized as an innovator. For an interesting analysis taking some of its arguments from labeling theory, see Lipp (1977).
12. The connections between tradition, myth and the construction of heroes have been introductorily discussed by Lord Raglan (1975).
13. This phenomenon is even recognized by rational-choice theorists. See, for instance, Coleman (1990, p. 278). However, it is obvious that it doesn't fit their theoretical framework.
14. Otto Rank (1910) has focused the structural similarity between the birth and heroism in a strong and convincing way: Every individual is a hero in the moment of his or her birth.
15. For ambivalence as a sociological category, see: Smelser (1993, 1998a, 1998b), Merton (1976), Callois (1939), Durkheim (1991), Mauss and Hubert (1968), Smith (1894) and Wundt (1913). The classical reference here is Freud (1991).
16. Here, one can object an obvious parallel to Hegel's famous analysis of the dialectic relationship between master and slave (1980).
17. From an anthropological point of view on this aspect, see, among others, Douglas (1978), Eliade (1991) and Van Baal and Van Beek (1985).
18. This theory of scapegoating as the transfer of evil dates back to Frazer (1947); see also Girard (1986) and Weiss (1998).
19. The anthropological presuppositions to Girard's theory of sacrifice have been illuminated by Greisch (1995). For an interdisciplinary outlook on this matter, see Schenk (1995) and Neuhaus (1998).
20. For a comparison of the ancient and Christian notion of sacrifice, see Auffarth (1998) and Rendtorff (1998).
21. This sacrificial conversion of death into life, of trauma into triumph, of victims into heroes, is not only repeated in the Catholic and Orthodox liturgy, but also in the ritual of confession and repentance. In the ritual of confession, the repenting individuals sacrifice their old lives, their old pride and self-esteem in face of the community. But it is by this very self-humiliation that they are reborn and reaccepted as purified and redeemed members of the sacred community. Thus, by rituals of repenting, individuals are not degraded and do not lose the respect of others; instead they achieve a superior individuality as they get rid of their old human egos—they turn their trauma into a triumph.
22. For the idea of Christomimesis in late antiquity, see Feichtinger (1999).
23. For a very sensitive analysis of the pre-World War I atmosphere, see Zweig (1947).
24. "Long live the sacred Germany!"
25. For a recent psychoanalytic explanation of this thesis, see Weatherill (1994, p. 83).
26. As Paul Fussell (1975) has brilliantly shown, this transformative warfare has left a decisive mark on modern memory of warriors and the heroic.

27. Could Evita Perón or James Dean be imagined as old persons? Weber knew that continuity was the Achilles' heel of charisma (Weber 1980, p. 122, p. 541).

28. The relationship between rituals and myth are discussed by Raglan (1975, p. 141), Connerton (1989, p. 53) and Bell (1997, pp. 3–23).

29. We will deal with this cult of the dead hero in greater detail in the chapter on relics.

30. More advanced patterns of recalling the voice of the hero will be examined in the chapter on classics.

31. We will consider more elaborate forms of representing the face of the hero in the chapter on monuments.

32. In Connerton's (1989, p. 64) phrasing: "Under the conditions of modernity the celebration of recurrence can never be anything more than a compensatory strategy, because the very principle of modernity itself denies the idea of life as a structure of celebrated recurrence."

33. See especially the introduction of Pierre Nora (1992).

34. See the too-long-neglected study by Halbwachs (1941).

35. The existence of miracles is still one of the basic presuppositions for sanctification in the Catholic Church. According to the *London Times* (July 26th, 1998, pp. 42–50) the Pope considered seriously the sanctification of Princess Diana in order to provide Great Britain with a contemporary saint who surely would attract masses of devotees. But, unfortunately, there are up until now no miracles—because the British Catholics do not pray powerfully enough, the Pope said.

36. On this topic, there have been explorations by, among others, Herrmann-Mascard (1975), Fichtenau (1952), Geary (1978, p. 31), Le Blant (1887), Hotzelt (1935) and Köting (1965, 1966).

37. See Webb (1999), Davidson/Dunn-Wood (1993), Geary (1978) and Töpfer (1956).

38. The history of the idea of the king or prince figuring as a "typus Christi" has been traced by Kantorowicz (1957).

39. The significance of monuments for the construction of collective memory is explored by von Beyme (forthcoming).

40. For a general perspective on the religious and social role of sacred places, see McLuhan (1996).

41. For the history and development of what is and has been called *classical*, see Scholtz (1987) and Pieper (1987).

42. If, however, the classic was regarded as a dogma in a political community, it may be banned after its collapse. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a case in point. Its publication is outlawed in Germany.

43. Nietzsche himself soon became the center of a cult (Tönnies 1897). See also Nicholls (1958/59).

44. Objectivation of the social world was a major theme in Marx (1990). See also Lukács (1968).

45. For the Weberian concept of objectification of charisma, see Schluchter (1989).

46. Here, the handling of the issues requires an impersonal attitude, a comparison between different objects or efforts, a mundane perspective that treats everything as ordinary and regular.

## CHAPTER 2

# Victims

## Neither Subjects nor Objects

### THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF VICTIMS

Living heroes, in their attempt to rise above the ordinary, disregard mundane reasoning and disdain the voices of caution. Cruel and merciless, their deeds demand sacrifices also from their followers and can even entail the death of those who are not members of the charismatic community. The concentration of the sacred in the person of the triumphant hero comes at the price of desacralizing others. Thus heroes, in the moment of triumph, can, and frequently do, produce victims.

To regard somebody as a victim seems to be a spontaneous self-evident classification that does not need further justification. Indeed, the suffering and the death of victims are obvious facts beyond doubt and question—ultimate certainties about our cohumans, if there are any at all. Death is, like birth, a categorical presupposition of our human existence—ultimately certain and exempted from the contingencies of individual experience (Heidegger 1986, pp. 231–267). In reflecting on our mortality, we are constructing our collective identity as humans. Because mortality is a common certainty linking all members of the human species, it also brings the question of boundaries to the fore and acquires a particular salience if entire groups are concerned. Therefore, the Nazi genocide of the European Jews, Stalin's ethnic cleansing and waves of purge, the killing fields of Cambodia, the death marches of the Armenian people in 1915, the extinction of large numbers of Native Americans under the Spanish and North American conquest, the enslavement of the African black population, as well as the massacres of 800,000 in Rwanda in 1994, the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia, and the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers are commonly acknowledged as paradigms of collective victimization, as icons of innocent suffering. Yet, even this seemingly obvious reaction to the suffering and death of others is based on symbolic codings, presup-