

Durkheim and Halbwachs and the historians influenced by Durkheim—be it Granet on China, Brehier on Byzantium, and above all, of course, Marc Bloch.

He brings together these themes in an incisive discussion of the German case from the nineteenth century up to the Holocaust, of the vicissitudes of the constitution of “different” German identities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with special emphasis on the confrontation of the post-Second World War generation with the Nazi heritage, thus attesting to the fact that such analysis need not be conferred only on “static” comparative studies but also on that of historical dynamics.

In all these ways, *Triumph and Trauma* provides very important indications for the enrichment and reorientation of comparative macrohistorical studies.

Introduction

This is a book about collective memory.¹ It deals with triumphant and tragic heroes, with victims and perpetrators as cultural imaginations of identity. They mark the boundaries between regular and ordinary social life and the realm of the extraordinary beyond it. Heroes, victims and perpetrators are liminal figures that can be imagined only from this side of the boundary, from the point of view of regular social life, from the point of view of a community. We have to refer to their position in the outlands if we want to understand our situation inside the boundary, our social order, our community and history. Changing social ties and crossing social boundaries affect the imagination of the land beyond the horizon—the contour begins to waver, heroes appear as perpetrators, victims as heroes. What is demonic terrorism for one community is revered as heroic martyrdom by another.

In order to unfold a phenomenology of these liminal figures the book refers to a broad range of cultural history, but its central historical focus is the collective memory of Germany after the Holocaust. It attempts to present the national identity of postwar Germany as a collective trauma—as the cultural trauma of perpetrators. In contrast to the trauma of victims, which has been dealt with extensively by historical research and clinical psychology, up till now few publications have addressed the collective trauma of perpetrators. This is hardly surprising since the perpetrators' role is seen in the context of guilt and moral discourse rather than in the frame of a collective trauma.²

Suggesting a change of perspectives has to be rendered plausible.³ Therefore, the presentation of the German trauma will be embedded into a general theoretical model of identity construction that refers to the traumatic origins of collective identity as well as to its opposite—the triumph of the hero.

Though following a broad line of intellectual heritage, this book will not present a reconstruction of its pedigree. In dealing with collective memory, neither its own ancestors from Kant and Nietzsche, Freud, Weber and Durkheim to Heidegger and Campbell, nor its inspirations from contemporary classics like Koselleck, Shils and Eisenstadt will be remembered extensively. Instead, the general questions of why we refer to classics, why we imagine the heroism of the past and why we construct the charisma of the present will be addressed. This book

will also not discover and explore a forgotten intellectual predecessor, but it will deal with the more general question of why we rediscover the forgotten subjectivity of outsiders who had been banned from the margin of human society and treated as objects. In addressing these issues the book will not follow the beaten path of reducing cultural phenomena to power relations or to the economic interests of actors. Yet it will reverse the perspective: The focus will be on identity instead of interests, on the symbolic representation of the sacred instead of on the exchange of commodities.⁴ Thus, it will try to contribute to the exploration of something that can hardly be represented in an easy and straightforward way—the national identity of Germany after the Holocaust.

The chapters of the book will approach the subject in a sequence of increasing historical specificity—starting with some brief conceptual remarks presented in this introduction and ending with an analysis of several stages of German post-war history with respect to the Holocaust. Although partly based on our own historical research, the book does not aim at the discovery of new historical facts or the challenging of a particular sociological thesis based on its main empirical case. Referring to historical detail and sociological data the book follows the paradigm that was set by Weber and Durkheim and continued by Eisenstadt and Shils—a broad comparative perspective that aims more at a structural typology or a historical phenomenology than at a detailed and exhaustive reconstruction of a particular case. Historians may profit from the typological suggestions rather than from the interpretations of documents contained.

In the following short chapter, I will outline the main theoretical presuppositions of the thesis. Those readers who are reluctant to indulge in abstract meta-theoretical reasoning can, of course, rush to the main part of the book without lacking major prerequisites of understanding.

The main part of the book consists of four large chapters. The first deals with the memory of the hero as the triumphant representation of subjectivity and collective identity. The charismatic hero is presented as a mediator between the realm of the sacred and the mundane field of human action; he is imagined as a personal embodiment of the sacred, but he is also exempted from the constraints of regular rules. Instead, his sovereign action creates new rules and lays the ground for a new order. However, the sovereign hero can survive only in the memory of past triumphs—any living hero would risk being questioned by the challenges of everyday life and by the inevitable blurring of the boundaries between the sacred and the profane.

The second chapter addresses the opposite boundary of human societies, the fringe where human beings who have been treated as objects before are remembered as subjects. Victims are the counterpart to triumphant heroes—both are located beyond the limits of the regular social life, but at opposite directions. Whereas the collective memory of triumphant heroism refers to birth as the ultimate limit of the *conditio humana*, the remembrance of the victims' trauma puts death and mortality at the center. In spite of their juxtaposition there is, however, a profound ambivalence in the relationship between victims and heroes, triumph and trauma. Both can change places if the perspective shifts.

The third chapter deals with transfers of political charisma or with the inescapable tragic defeat of the hero. In contrast to the memory of triumphant heroes and traumatized victims, charisma refers to the present. It considers a living hero as an embodiment of the sacred—a quality that we have associated before with the hero of the past. Because charisma sacralizes the present and the living hero, the opposition between the sacred and the mundane is no longer supported by the tension between the present and the past. In the experience of charisma we can try to have a close look at the sacred and to participate in it, but the charismatic moment also risks blurring the boundaries between the sacred and the mundane. As Max Weber previously noted, the attempt to establish charisma as an enduring element of everyday life (*Veralltäglichung*) and the pressure to prove charisma under mundane conditions (*Bewährung*) risk the collapse of the constitutive tension between the sacred and the mundane. In order to restore the tension, charisma has to be volatile and fragile, prone to instability and change, to decay and reconstruction, to transfers and translations. Therefore, in the end, the living hero cannot escape his tragic defeat. In the chapter "The tragic hero: the decapitation of the king" we will try to outline this instability of charisma and the wavering between triumph and trauma that is caused by the defeat of the hero.

Following our typological distinction between triumphant heroes and traumatized victims, tragic heroes and perpetrators, we will, in the last long chapter, investigate a historical case of the trauma of perpetrators—the construction of German national identity after the Holocaust. Nazi Germany is a paradigm case of a society whose members imagined themselves as triumphant heroes but—after the collapse of its rule—had to realize that they had been perpetrators. In this last chapter we will describe different stages of coping with the moral trauma of the perpetrators as well as different social carriers and institutional arenas that patterned the public response to the trauma.

But the public confession of guilt for the victims of the past is no longer a special German phenomenon. Today it can be found in many Western societies (Barkan 2000). It may be regarded as a new turn toward a collective identity that not only refers to remembrance and reinclusion of those who have been treated as objects before, but that is also able to gain recognition beyond the boundaries (Sa'adah 1992).

After the collapse of the great utopias that were at the core of the old missionary universalism of modernity, a new universalism of mourning patterns the public rituals of national identity—the victims assume the position that, before, was the place of heroes.⁵

THE CONSTRUCTION OF BOUNDARIES

When the human mind perceives the world, it distinguishes the similar from the dissimilar; it treats certain phenomena as alike and others as different from each other. We arrive at this distinction between alikes and non-alikes by considering a phenomenon as an exemplar of a certain type, as a case of a certain conceptual

category, and by constructing a boundary between those phenomena that are cases of this category and those that are not.⁶ These distinctions and boundaries are connected and combined to form a grid that transforms the original chaos into order. Boundaries function like watersheds: water that is located on one side is moved to the main stream in the valley, merges with that main stream and becomes indistinguishable from it—even if it originally was closer to the spring on the other side of the watershed. In a similar way, the phenomena of the world are separated by boundaries and assimilated to different mainstream types. Thus, their original diversity is blurred and they merge into phenomena of one kind similar to each other but different from phenomena beyond the boundary.

This construction of boundaries is, of course, questionable, fragile and even arbitrary. It is easier for us to ignore the fragility of boundaries if we see others who demarcate them in the same way, and thereby confirm our separation of inside and outside. Boundaries persist only if they become a shared social construction. But, just as old maps, which are, in fact, highly selective and arbitrary representations of a landscape, have to be taken for true descriptions in order to function as a guide for travelers, the social construction of boundaries has to hide the fact that it is socially constructed and that its demarcation might be different if perspectives change. Therefore, social constructions of boundaries require continuous reaffirmation by those who direct their actions according to the grid of boundaries and distinctions. The constructedness of the social order has to be kept latent, the ambivalence of boundaries has to be ignored and the original chaos has to be turned into a rational structure.⁷ However, the other possibilities that are excluded from this shared social reality persist in a hidden way.⁸ Even if they are banned from the public sphere, even if they are silenced and denied—they are still there, and this latent existence needs to be coped with.⁹ If normal communication hints at them, they are usually located in a different world, a private world of dreams and fantasies, in the hinterlands beyond the margin of civilization, in forbidden paradises imagined by artists and poets, in the private world of those who are considered to be insane and unreasonable.

SUBJECT AND OBJECT

If we perceive the world among us, act with respect to others, deal with the things at hand, we have to presuppose our acting self as being separate from the outside world. In contrast to the ever-changing phenomena of the world outside, we see ourselves as stable and unchanging, as the persisting source of our actions, as the realm of identity. Although our identities seem to be given to us instantly, it is difficult for us to imagine and to describe them. For the very reason that the self is the immediate subject of its own actions, it has to ignore, for the time of action, the puzzling problem of defining its identity. There is a pervasive certainty about our identity, about the origin of our actions, but this identity—as opposed to our actions—does not occur to us, or is not performed by us. Yet, it is given beyond

and before our contingent experiences, it constitutes the order of experiences instead of being derived from them. Early modern philosophy from the “*cogito, ergo sum*” (“I think, therefore I am”) of Descartes to Kant’s transcendental idealism and Fichte’s “*sich selbst setzendem Ich*” (the ego positioning itself) referred to this certainty and regarded it as the foundation of ontology and epistemology. In contrast, late modern philosophy ranging from the neopositivism of the Vienna Circle to deconstructivism questioned this certainty and tried to neutralize or dissolve it (Kraft 1950). Neopositivism considered any subjective perspective impinging on knowledge as a distortion that had to be banned from the realm of true—i.e., objective—knowledge. Deconstructivism, though, reduced subject and object to mere grammatical functions of language that are mistaken for ontological entities (Derrida 1997). Different as they are, neopositivism and deconstructivism both disregard the inescapability of the reference to subject and object. The symbolic representation of the subject, its embeddedness in social relations and its mode of reflecting on itself may vary according to culture, language and historical situation, but no language or culture can entirely dispense with the reference to a speaker or the world that is spoken about. Whether ultimate foundation or contingent construction, the subject *appears* to the actor as an absolute certainty, and it is this perspective of the actor that matters for the following argumentation.

Opposed to the absolute certainty of the existence of the self as the a priori of action stands the intransparency of this self. Although we try ever and ever again to represent this self to us and to others, although we try to narrate our story and to describe our personality, all these attempts to describe our own identity will inevitably fail. They are incomplete and distorted accounts that are dependent on the situation, on the other we are talking to and on the preceding communication, and they will change depending on the situational context.¹⁰

In contrast to subjects, the objects of the world appear to be easier to describe; they are the given matters of perception and distinction. They relate to our action as changeable and contingent conditions, but we do not impute agency to them.¹¹ Still, even if we think of the objects of the world as naturally given matter, we know—after Kant at the latest—that our perceptions and observations should not be taken for the objects as such, but that they are patterned by our conceptual a priori.¹² Neopositivist epistemology that strictly required the reduction of theories to their observational meaning or their empirical content was nevertheless quite aware of the difference between the natural objects and the observational sentences that reported an experience of the senses. The former—the objects “as such”—were considered to be inaccessible whereas the linguistic descriptions of experiences were taken as the empirical rock-bottom of scientific knowledge. If even the objects of the world cannot be grasped by a complete, accurate and exhaustive description, this certainly holds true also for the opposite pole: the knowing subject.

Both subjects as well as objects serve as ultimate reference points for the classification of reality, the perspective on human agents and the things that surround them, and both subjects as well as objects escape any attempt at an

accurate description.¹³ We presuppose these reference points as being absolutely certain, but all symbolic representations of them have to be treated as approximations that are only partially true and irretrievably dependent on a particular perspective and a particular language. Our accounts of actual actors and real things are described in relation to these reference points, but we are tacitly aware that these representations of objects and subjects can be revised and varied.

We impute subjectivity to us and our fellow humans, but this assumption of subjectivity is always a limited one. We, as well as the others, have bodies, and those can be seen and treated as objects; they are dependent on the restrictions of physical existence in space and time.

Therefore, all real human beings are located only in between the poles of perfect subjectivity and perfect objectivity.¹⁴ This ambiguity of real humans between subjects and objects impinges on the boundary between both realms and renders it fragile and volatile, ambivalent and questionable.¹⁵

In spite of, and—in a certain way—also because of their inaccessibility, the poles of subjectivity and objectivity have to be imagined and symbolized, they have to be embodied and represented, and these embodiments and representations of their existence have to be locally affirmed and reconstructed by rituals and practices of communication.

Let us first consider the basic codes or the archetypes whereby these embodiments are represented in symbols, texts or images. If we conceive of human existence as a realm between perfect subjectivity and perfect objectivity, it is, above all, these two boundaries that have to be represented in symbolic archetypes. The boundary toward perfect subjectivity is represented in the figure of the hero, and the opposite boundary, the conversion of human beings into objects, is represented in the figure of the victim. These two archetypical figures take central stage in the first two chapters of the book.

Both the hero as well as the victim are presented as ultimate reference points for the *human constitution* and both are located beyond the profane and mundane everyday activities of the regular social reality. In this respect, the distinction between subjects and objects is closely associated with the distinction between the sacred and the profane (Durkheim 1991). Both the symbolic representation of heroes and the symbolic representation of victims are reaching out across the confines of the everyday world and hinting at a realm beyond it—the sacred, invisible and evanescent, eternal and frightening.

Yet between the perfect and sovereign subjectivity of the hero who creates a new order and the dehumanized victim who is treated as an object, there is a range of positions denoting a subjectivity that is limited and restricted by the adversity of the world or by its own perversion. Using the distinction between the subject and the world as analytical dimensions, we can set up the following matrix:

	Mastering the world:	Adversity of the world:
Subjectivity preserved:	Triumphant Hero	Tragic Hero
Subjectivity damaged:	Perpetrator	Victim

The matrix points to the distinction between tragic and triumphant heroes and relates victims to their counterpart—the perpetrators. The tragic hero tries courageously to live up to his sacred self but fails to turn this self-reference into profane reality. Instead of conquering the world and successfully fighting his enemies, he is defeated himself and turned down by the adversity of this world. The lack of fortune in profane affairs, however, does not affect the sacredness of his subjectivity. To the contrary, the contrast between the sacred subjectivity and the profane misfortune prevents the subjectivity from being polluted and profaned. Outside observers, and sometimes even the heroes' enemies, recognize and admire this special subjectivity of tragic heroes.¹⁶

Distinct from the tragic hero, who, despite his failure, is able to keep his sacred and sovereign subjectivity without a stain, is the perpetrator, who dehumanizes other subjects, extending his control over the world into a realm that should be exempted from such treatment—the subjectivity of others. Deciding about the life and death of others, he assumes a god-like position. The perpetrator has to face a damaged subjectivity not only on the part of the victims but also with respect to his own self. When the perpetrator treats subjects as objects he erodes the basic premises of his own sacredness and voluntarily violates the fundamental reciprocity of subjects: we have to respect the subjectivity of others, because they are the only source of recognition for our own subjectivity.

Our subjectivity “exists” only insofar as it is recognized by a community of other subjects.¹⁷ Whereas the tragic hero's sacred subjectivity is admired by third parties, the perpetrator is denied this recognition. Therefore, the perpetrator who turns subjects into objects also challenges his own sacredness. Instead of being regarded as a sovereign hero who infuses sacred subjectivity into the world, or as a tragic hero who has increased his subjectivity by his failure, he is considered by outside observers as the one who has desecralized the subjectivity of others. These outside observers differ from the bystanders who did not participate actively in the action but watched it being done without intervening or preventing it. The lack of protest and this omission of action put the bystanders in a special position in between the perpetrators who are undoubtedly guilty and the outside observers who had no opportunity to prevent the suffering or rescue the victims.

The distinction between the archetypes of victorious heroes and tragic heroes, perpetrators and victims, can be considered as an ideal typological field. The positions of historical persons within this field are not fixed and immutable—triumphant heroes can become tragic ones, heroes can be turned into perpetrators, and victims can, later on, get the sacral aura that before was the mark of heroes. Thus, the firefighters who were victims of the attack on the World Trade Center were turned into heroes afterward.

The basic typological distinction between triumphant heroes, tragic heroes, victims and perpetrators patterns the structure of the following chapters. It results not only from the fundamental tension between sacred subjectivity and profane objectivity, but it also presupposes the reference to the past as triumphant or traumatic. We will outline this perspective in the following section.

TRIUMPH AND TRAUMA

When, at particular moments, we reflect on our identities, on the unity that embraces our life, we inevitably have to refer to the liminal horizons of our existence, to birth and death. The fundamental certainty about our being born and our being destined to die contrasts strikingly with the inaccessibility of these events for ourselves. We are unable to report about our own death and our own birth, but we know about and can even observe the death and the birth of other human beings. Only by reference to the death and birth of others are we able to imagine our own death. In this respect the categorical assumption of a collective identity of humankind precedes the awareness of an individual person's identity.¹⁸

The fundamental certainty of being born and being destined to die interferes with the self-assured attitude of mundane everyday acting. In our mundane activities, we tend to ignore the horizon of birth and death: if we would constantly be aware of the ultimate limitations of our subjectivity, we would not be able to construct it as the stable reference point for changing actions and events. Birth and death represent ultimate ruptures and breaks in the web of meaning that catches the objects of the world. They are like black holes we are unable to experience directly and to speak about—the unspeakable origin of our human existence.

Sometimes, however, external forces invade violently and unexpectedly the personal realm of our existence and remind us suddenly of our mortality. Later on, after a period of latency, we remember this shocking intrusion again and again, we revive it in our dreams, we talk about it, etc. We call this ruminating memory a "trauma."¹⁹ Remembering a trauma refers to our mortality not merely as a potentiality but as an event that could have happened to us, that was almost real.

In contrast, those moments when we, against all odds, could overcome and master surprisingly the adversity of the world are remembered as triumphs. Triumphs represent the feeling of sovereign life, of crisis and transition, of a new beginning, and thereby they represent the moment of birth. Similar to death, birth is also a central reference point for identity—unalienable and very personal, but nonrepresentational and almost impossible to communicate. Only if we translate the general existential condition of being born and being mortal into a personal event can we conceive of our own identities. Therefore, trauma and triumph are the ways we, as living subjects, refer to our own births and deaths, although we are not able to experience those individually and to report this experience to others.²⁰

The origin and termination of our existence do not occur to us as distinct experiences that can be caught by the web of mundane meaning—they are like blanks that we are unable to speak about, like ruptures that, as such, have no meaning for those who have to endure them. Instead, they provide the frame of reference for the constitution of meaning and the narration of history. Because triumph and trauma represent ultimate breaks and ruptures in the construction of meaning, the sudden events they refer to frequently escape our attention at the moment when they occur—we ignore the risk of death and act as if nothing had

happened. It is not perception, but memory, that provides the core arena for trauma and triumph, for the imagination of heroes and victims. "History can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Caruth 1996, p. 17). Memory is the most important mode of creating a distance without which we are not able to reflect upon and conceive of our identity.

The extension of the temporal horizon by memory is at the core, not only of subjectivity and identity, but also of the objectivity of the world. Here, the incessantly changing phenomena have to be typified by assuming a natural order.²¹ When the human mind constructs the grid of natural classification, it has to assume, in principle, that the pattern of classification remains the same in past, present and future—or to phrase this in a different way: the mind objectifies its present construction of boundaries by looking at it from an assumed position in the past or in the future. The objectivity of boundaries in the present is affirmed only by this decentering of our perspective—whether we see the present as the future of the past or as the past of the future.²²

This extension of the mind's temporal range engenders several problems. They result from the occasional observation that the assumed continuity between past, present and future is, in itself, fragile and questionable, that not only the phenomena, but also the order of things itself is changing and prone to variation. The inconsistency between the assumed order of the past and the order of the present—or the inconsistency between the order of the future and the order of the present—can be overcome by considering the past or the future to be the reference of the ideal and perfect order, whereas the present state of affairs is devaluated as imperfect and contradictory.

THE TURN TOWARD MEMORY

The tension between the imperfection of the present and the ideal order located in the future or in the past—or in other words: the sacralization of the future or the past—can be turned into a strong collective thrust to change the present situation by historical action. Accelerating the present into a utopian future or restoring an ideal past are commonly considered as the prime motives for historical action that transcends the limitations of an individual's life.

The modern mind had devaluated the experiences of the past and focused on the future as the open horizon of history, as the emancipation of the self and as the field of an ideal social order.²³ At the turn of the millennium, however, the perspective on the future is a far more ambivalent one than it ever was before. Some neomodernists continue the straightforward technological progressivism of early modernity and can even revive it with reference to new technological breakthroughs that promise to overcome what previously was considered as inescapable fate. The Human Genome Project, the advances of artificial intelligence, etc., seem to enlarge the prospect of technological progress—they promise to turn what was previously considered as beyond human disposition into a field of human interven-

tion and manipulation. Rarely, however, are these new technologies undisputedly accepted in the Western world. Instead, broad and intense public debates result from a deep ambivalence toward these new technologies and they engender new cultural cleavages in Western societies. For many Western intellectuals, as well as for their audience, the promise of future progress has lost its attractive lure that once forged the collective singulars (Koselleck 1985; Oesterle 1985) of modernity—history, progress, reason, individuality. Instead of disregarding the side effects of progress, the advanced Western discourse in the *fin de siècle* emphasizes risks and unanticipated consequences; instead of representing the field of hope and progress, the future is increasingly regarded as the field of threatening catastrophes and terror. This is not to say that the tragic or even catastrophic perspective on technological progress will prevail forever or that there will be no more carriers of utopian expectations—new generations may turn the tide and non-Western civilizations may still follow the promise of old and new utopias.

The ambivalent attitude toward technological progress is not entirely new. But it has, in various forms and with changing salience, always been an element of the discourse of modernity. Still, today more than ever before, the future as a grand collective singular has become worn out as the source of a grand transcendence that keeps the present under tension. For centuries, the modern mind was able to consider the present condition to be a barrier impeding progress—that is, the realization of new ideas. Today the time lag between having an idea and its realization is constantly decreasing. Imagination is immediately translated into virtual reality. The future has ceased to be a distant horizon people long for; moreover, it has been turned into a part of our mundane reality. Attempts to reconstruct the inevitable tension between the sacred and the profane turn, therefore, to the past again. Memory and remembering seem to replace progress and revolution as the master metaphors of history—at least for large parts of the Western public sphere.

This extends also to the imagination of the sacred: it is collective memory that constructs heroes and victims, and it is collective memory that remembers them as the triumphant or traumatic embodiments of collective identity. Today, collective trauma is one of the major driving forces of international politics. The terrorist attack on the Twin Towers was such a traumatic event that it transformed collective identities, reshuffled international relations and inspired wars. After the triumphant celebration of the millennium, America and the West had to face the sudden and shocking experience of their vulnerability and even mortality. As many commentators stated: nothing was like it was before, the world had changed.²⁴

RITUAL PRACTICES AND INSTITUTIONAL ARENAS

Symbolic representations of the sacred are not just free-floating ideas, texts, semantic structures, myths, narratives and images—elements of a platonic world. These symbolic structures have to be enacted, instead, in particular social prac-

tices; they have to be communicated between actors, the stories have to be narrated, the myths have to be mimetically reproduced by rituals, the images have to be shown to others, the cultural script has to be performed in particular institutional arenas. The same myth of heroism can be represented by different practices and rituals; it can be presented as oral narration, as a monument, as a novel, as a memorial day, as a movie, as an anthem, as a display in a museum. In participation in local rituals and practices the feeling of likeness and the strong mutual attachment are constructed that we call collective identity.²⁵ Rituals exist because they exist—whoever asks for explanation, presents criticism, or suggests improvement reveals himself as an outsider. If the presence of outsiders cannot be prevented or ignored, it risks being treated as an offense. The construction of a boundary between those who participate and those who do not is at the core of local ritual practices.

The construction of translocal communities, however, challenges this boundary. The presence of outsiders, of strangers, of those who are not familiar with the local practices, but watch their performance, can hardly be avoided here. Hence rituals increasingly have to stand the view from outside and communities have to claim external recognition for symbolic representations and ritual performances of their collective identity. Ego needs Alter's recognition for his self-representation and this recognition can be denied and debated.²⁶ Particular institutional arenas are required in order to cope with the presence of outsiders and the claim for recognition. Most of these institutional arenas establish a public perspective on the boundaries between inside and outside. This public perspective becomes increasingly salient for the—always fragile—construction of boundaries, because it can claim to represent the third-party perspective that is involved neither in feuds and conflicts between opposing groups nor in the personal charismatic bond between the heroes and their followers.²⁷ Therefore, the construction of boundaries and the reference to the past is in most cases linked to institutional arenas that represent the public perspective—the charismatic rule of the king and the public administration of the law, professional services and the public discourse of civil society, public rituals of remembrance and modern media of broadcasting. We will, therefore, not only focus on the ritual practices whereby the symbolic representation of a boundary is performed among insiders, but we will also present a typology of different institutional arenas in which the boundaries are represented and debated in public. Thus we hope to connect a phenomenology of symbolic representations that is at the core of the book to a focus on ritual practices,²⁸ to social structural²⁹ and to more recent neoinstitutionalist models of explanation.³⁰

But we do not only have to account for the difference between symbolic representations as narratives, myths or texts on the one hand and the local practices, ritual performances and public institutions on the other. Local practices and rituals are, in turn, embedded in particular social situations, in particular histories and in particular social relationships; these situational conditions impinge on the meaning of the ritual and the symbolic representation. It matters, for example, whether those who sing an anthem in public are in a minority or in a majority

situation, whether they have known each other for a long time or not, whether they are observed by powerful outsiders or not, etc. A reference to this embeddedness in a particular historical situation certainly requires a detailed and accurate account of the case in question—and we will hardly be able to provide this for most of the historical illustrations that are mentioned in the next chapters. However, as we proceed from general conceptual considerations—as presented above—via a phenomenology of heroes and victims to the historical case study in the last chapter, the references to historical material become richer and the embeddedness of rituals in particular social relationships becomes more clearly visible.

In this last chapter, we focus especially on the change of generations as an important structural cleavage associated with collective memory. Marxist as well as Weberian sociology tried to relate symbolic representations to particular social carriers, and such carriers were mainly identified with, and investigated as, social classes or political camps. However, the turn toward memory, as well as the turn toward utopia, brings about a certain temporalization of the perspective on social carriers—“avant-garde” and “generation” tend to replace “class” as the key concept for social carrier and collective agency.³¹ Generations may even be defined by the experience of a particular triumph or a trauma that devaluates the experiences of the preceding generation.³²

All three levels of analysis—symbolic representations, rituals and institutional practices, social relations and historical situations—are structured by their own principles and any attempt to conflate and reduce them to one level risks the fallacy of simplification. Like language, speech act and the indexical world to which they refer, myth, ritual and social relations are also connected to each other. But these relationships of presupposition, intention and reference cannot be grasped by a straightforward attempt to identify cause and effect. Myth, ritual and social situation are the semantic, the performative and the referential dimension of collective identity rather than causally linked events.

NOTES

1. For the most complete single authored accounts, seemingly covering all the relevant historical and contemporary literature, see especially Jan Assmann (1988, 1999b), Aleida Assmann (1999), and Harald Weinrich (1997). For a short overview by a sociologist see Connerton (1989). For their innovative conception, cp. the essays of Koselleck (1977, 1999, 2000) and Ricoeur (1995).

2. Although a huge number of articles and books have been and still continue to be written on this issue, Karl Jaspers' famous lecture “*Die Schuldfrage*” (“The Question of Guilt”), already published in 1946, can be seen as having set the analytical frame of the public debates that were to follow it many years later. For a new general theoretical perspective on collective guilt—linking arguments developed within the Durkheimian tradition to arguments from the heritage of analytic philosophy—see Gilbert (1996).

3. Among those who have been inspiring for our own endeavor we should mention Rene Girard's conception of the transformation of the scapegoat into a sacrifice (1977), Joseph Amato's (1990) and Wolfgang Lipp's (1977) essays on the different uses of suffering, but above all the many discussions of Jeffrey Alexander and Neil Smelser on the issue of cultural trauma. See Alexander et al. 2004.

4. Here we will basically follow the still too much neglected theoretical proposals made by Alessandro Pizzorno (1986, 1991).

5. Thus Habermas's sophisticated philosophical endeavor to save universalist reasoning from deconstruction (Habermas 1985) could possibly be sociologically substantiated by an analysis of this new universalism of public mourning. By an irony of history, the lament on the crisis of representation and the repeatedly announced dissolution of all metanarratives (Lyotard 1984) has become one of our most fascinating master narratives.

6. The construction of a system of differences is the classical issue of the structuralist tradition ranging from Durkheim and Mauss (1963) to Lévi-Strauss (1962) and Derrida (1967). A distinct approach to differences is presented by the radical constructivism of Niklas Luhmann (1995) and by the logician Spencer-Brown (1969). The classic reference for typification is Alfred Schütz (1932).

7. According to the terminology of phenomenological sociology this is the core of the “natural attitude of every day acting” (Schütz 1932). We will defer the detailed analysis of the possible correlations between the cognitive and the social order to later chapters (for some classic sociological accounts in the structuralist vein arguing for a particularly strong correlation see: Durkheim and Mauss (1963), Sahlins (1976), Douglas (1970, 1986). For the time being we rely on the phenomenological account of every day life as outlined especially by Alfred Schütz (1932, 1962, 1964) and Thomas Luckmann (Schütz and Luckmann 1974). For a once vanguard and still unsurpassed introduction to the broader field of interpretative sociology see Berger and Luckmann (1967).

8. The exclusion of *the Other* was the classical theme of M. Foucault; see, for instance, Foucault (1965, 1981). In a certain respect, deconstructivism and poststructuralist analysis address this issue just as psychoanalysis does.

9. In his famous “breaching experiments,” Harold Garfinkel showed that there is a specific morality in cognition, i.e., that cognition is not simply a cognitive problem, but is dealt with socially as a normative problem (Garfinkel 1963, 1967); see also Heritage (1984, pp. 78ff.). Luchmann tried to deal with moral discourse as a special “species” of communication in his “*Moral im Alltag*” (1998).

10. See Strauss (1959), Goffman (1959), and Hahn (2000).

11. This might be changing right now, as has been argued by Latour (1993) and Knorr-Cetina (1999).

12. This does not necessarily imply that these concepts have to be attributed to human nature. Following the neo-Kantian movement, several domain-specific and culture-dependent a priori have been discovered by the humanities and social sciences and this multiplication of different a priori schemes by now seems to run the risk of becoming inflationary. Facing the Scylla of radical cultural relativism and the Charybdis of what might account for a universal human nature, the work of Ernst Cassirer still seems a good guide. For a short American introduction, written by himself, see Cassirer (1944). For a more recent and much more provocative critique of hermeneutic relativism—taking its stance with Heidegger, rather than with Kant—see Koselleck (1987).

13. We may question the universality of the distinction between subject and object and regard both concepts as particular products of Occidental or Western philosophy. The specific meaning of both concepts varies certainly according to its cultural context, but it is hard to imagine any account of the world that can entirely dispense with the distinction between the source of action and the objects of action—whatever its linguistic phrasing might be.

14. Here the reference to Nietzsche's idea of the human existence as “*Seil zwischen Tier und Übermensch*” (“the rope between animal and superhuman”) can hardly be avoided (Nietzsche 1977b, p. 281). William James pointed already to the partial “blindness” involved here (James 1962, pp. 113ff). This puzzle of the entanglement between the visible and the invisible became also the central concern of the late Maurice Merleau-Ponty. See especially his “The Visible and the Invisible” (1969). What we are aiming at is a shift in focus from the human individual to the social collectivity, where collective identity can be characterized by a precise structural analogy to what has been pointed out within the different paradigms of the philosophy of mind.

15. With a quite different empirical problem in mind, but from a similar theoretical perspective, this problem has recently been put to the fore again by Latour; see especially Latour (1993).

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.¹ 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,² 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).³ 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.