

Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

Historical Sources and Modern
Resonances in the Work of Max Weber

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for the gifts of his learning and friendship

Contents

Preface	ix
1. Introduction	1
Part 1: From Caesarism to Charisma	
2. Political Republicanism and the Advent of Caesarism	11
3. Caesarism and Charisma: From German Politics to Universal Sociology	59
Part 2: Fate and Fate Communities	
4. Fate	117
5. Communities of Fate and the SARS Emergency in Hong Kong	139
6. Concluding Remarks	185
Appendix: Caesar in America	187
Bibliography	213
Index	241

Preface

In 1998, Transaction published a book with an obscure and pretentious title. It was called *Caesar and the Fading of the Roman World: A Study in Republicanism and Caesarism*. I was the author. The title—chosen by me against all sensible advice—was oblique because the book seemed to be about the demise of Republican Rome. In fact, it explored three related themes: the demonic reputation of Caesar in political republican thought; the emergence of the concept of Caesarism in the nineteenth century and its decline during the twentieth; and the role played by Max Weber in reshaping the language of Caesarism in his theory of modern politics. Social scientists and students of Max Weber, misled by the title, ignored the book.

Part 1 of *Caesarism, Charisma and Fate* reprises that earlier study, though in a streamlined and updated form. I am grateful to Irving Louis Horowitz, chairman of the board of Transaction, for giving me another chance to present my arguments. They center on Weber's creative reshaping of the social and political vocabulary of his day, in particular the language of leadership. Part 1 of this book—the larger part of it—is mostly historical in character, transporting readers back to the era when, and before, Weber wrote. It seeks to explain Weber's rhetorical strategies within the contexts of his own age. Part 2 has a different goal. It employs and develops Weber's ideas in order to understand our own time. My subject is the idea of "fate," a notion that Weber characteristically employed in a nuanced and multi-leveled way. Risk and trust are, today, the subjects of major debate in the social sciences. Fate is an unfashionable term. I believe that some of its implications are worth preserving. "Fate" offers a sense of human pathos, predicament and tragedy that most social science concepts are singularly ill-suited to evoke. And, as I will show in my discussion of "community of fate," it is fully capable of being applied sociologically to certain kinds of social disaster.

Parts 1 and 2, it will be plain, are distinct and autonomous studies. As such, they can be read separately according to the reader's predilection. Yet while divergent in orientation, both components of the book do

thematically overlap. Weber's notion of fate (traced and adapted in part 2) also plays out in his theory of politics (the subject of part 1) when he argues that only two basic shapes are possible in a mass polity. A nation can either institute parliamentary institutions that encourage responsible leadership, or it can dispense with such arrangements and, by design or default, promote reckless authoritarianism. The choice ultimately is ours. But the choice itself is situated in the nature of the society and polity we inhabit, our obdurate present, the fate of the times. Equally, if Weber's ideas about fate resound throughout this book, so too does the issue of political and social language. To grasp the dynamism of Weber's social and political thought entails paying close attention to the vocabulary he employed. By the same token, to understand the emotions unleashed by a social disaster – such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis in Hong Kong during 2003—requires taking seriously the tropes and metaphors it generates. One especially significant idiom to describe disease epidemics is battle imagery. Many have criticized it as demeaning and callous. A Weberian account offers a very different perspective, furnishing a way of understanding, rather than excoriating, the codes through which social action is articulated in conditions of distress.

No attempt is made here to provide a comprehensive survey of Weber's ideas, even his ideas of charisma and fate. Notably, I desist from providing yet one more account of charisma within Weber's sociology of religion. My focus is on charisma within Weber's sociology of *Herrschaft* (rulership, domination); and, more especially, some of its roots in the political idea of Caesarism. The book's purview is thus limited to selected themes that have been either overlooked or deserve further elucidation.

Weber scholars will notice, and some will be irritated by the fact, that I have relied principally on textual sources that predate the German critical edition of Weber's work, the *Max Weber- Gesamtausgabe* (MWG). These are the sources I had closest to hand, marked-up as a result of three decades of use. I did, as the footnotes attest, consult the MWG on many occasions (Gordon Wells and I worked extensively with it in our edition of *Max Weber: The Russian Revolutions*). For the discussion of Caesarism and *Herrschaft*, however, the older sources are perfectly adequate, with some supplementation. The Edith Hanke edition of *Economy and Society* (Weber [1922] 2005a) that deals with my topic has an informative introduction, examining relevant debates of Weber's time, and a useful apparatus of notes. But the texts themselves are, in the main, the same ones I found in earlier German editions of Weber's work.

I have benefited greatly from the comments, suggestions, and criticisms—some vehement!—of Peter Breiner, Peter Ghosh, Daniel Gordon, David Kettler, Richard Freadman, Volker Meja, Gary Wickham, and Gordon C. Wells. I am also indebted to Doris Pai’s assistance with the Chinese-language sources. Chapter 5 draws on two previous articles. The first appeared in the *Archives européennes de sociologie* XLVI (2) 2005, pp. 179-211 under the title “Social Extremity, Communities of Fate, and the Sociology of SARS.” The second was published in *Economy and Society* 35 (1) 2006, pp. 42-64 as “Susan Sontag, Battle Language and the Hong Kong SARS Outbreak of 2003.” Use of material from these articles is gratefully acknowledged.

Hong Kong, June 2008

1

Introduction

How do writers, marginalized by the authoritarian state in which they live, intervene in the political process? They cannot do so directly because they are not politicians. Other modes of engagement are possible, however. A writer may take up arms and become a revolutionary. Or, as Max Weber (1864-1920) did, he may try to influence politics by playing the role of constitutional advisor, or by seeking to shape the dominant language in which his contemporaries think. Weber's attempts to switch the tracks of German governance by devising a new constitution for it are already well documented (by, *inter alia*, Beetham [1974] 1985; and Mommsen [1959] 1984). We know far less about the way that Weber, disgusted with the regime of Kaiser Wilhelm II, sought to reconstitute the political and social vocabulary of his day. Part 1 of this book examines a great writer's political passions and the linguistic creativity they generated. Specifically, it is an analysis of the manner in which Weber grasped the nineteenth-century idea of "Caesarism," reformulated it, and, in his sociology of charisma, camouflaged its most contentious claims. Why should this interest us today?

Alasdair MacIntyre ([1981] 1984:109) once observed that "the contemporary vision of the world is predominantly, although not perhaps always in detail, Weberian." This is because "in our culture we know of no organized movement towards power which is not bureaucratic and managerial in mode and we know of no justifications for authority which are not Weberian in form." The remark is obviously a simplification, but its main point is warranted: Weber developed a way of thinking about the world, and bequeathed a conceptual and lexical framework to do this thinking, that has proved extraordinarily durable. During his lifetime, and up until the end of the Second World War, Weber's intellectual impact was muted both in Germany and elsewhere. His project of constructing a new set of categories for the human sciences, however, was of greater moment

2 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

in the longer term, playing its part in the formation of a distinctively modern way of viewing rule, authority, and political participation.

Part 1 of *Caesarism, Charisma and Fate* clarifies aspects of the cultural background to Weber's famous typology of legitimate domination. It explains the political stakes of his arguments about plebiscitary democracy or "Caesarism." The word "Caesarism" means little to a modern audience. Yet in Weber's age Caesarism was as much a part of the political vernacular as totalitarianism became later. By reconstructing its meanings we are able to illuminate the background to Weber's far more famous discussion of charisma. We are able to show how Weber's political arguments morphed into a sociology of charisma that claimed to be free of value-judgments. These tasks demand history more than sociology. Properly accomplished, they require that we revisit a long-forgotten debate, or rather series of debates, in which the name of Julius Caesar figured prominently. Unearthing these debates allows us to locate the conceptual matrices in which Weber acted, reacted and broke with older ways of thinking.

Chapter 2 begins by sketching part of the pre-history of the nineteenth-century Caesarism dispute. It examines the tradition of political "republicanism" in which Julius Caesar was an historical symbol for some of the most dangerous tendencies a polity could experience. Caesar was habitually depicted as the man who presided over, and contributed decisively to, the ruin of the Roman Republic. His defense of Catiline the conspirator; his demagogic manipulation of the common people; his opportunist alliances with thugs and warlords; his usurpation by force of arms of senatorial authority; his design to become a monarch—this is how Caesar is typically indicted by republican writers such as Cicero, Machiavelli, Milton, and Montesquieu. Yet while Caesar was repeatedly summoned as the negation of republicanism, there was always a paradoxical sense in which he was being employed to uphold and reaffirm it. By symbolizing a cluster of behaviors and inclinations which decent people were urged to renounce, Caesar's example provided an anti-model against which genuine political virtue could be measured.

Within republican thinking, moreover, Caesar's name frequently operated in two striking ways. First, it possessed what might be called "polarity," that is, the ability of a term to generate its antithesis. To depict Caesar as a demonic figure, in other words, invited a contrast with individuals who embodied all that he so singularly lacked, and who could be as lionized as Caesar was condemned: men like Junius Brutus,

the legendary founder of the Roman Republic who put his country even above his own family; or Fabius Maximus Verrucosus, the “Shield of Rome,” who wore down Hannibal’s forces and helped to save Rome in one of its darkest hours; or Cato the Younger, the very paradigm of unflinching republican rigorism. Second, the use of Caesar’s name in republican discourse is remarkable for its recursive properties, for its power to make itself virtually identical with concepts it then comes to enshrine. Accordingly, Caesar is treated in republican discourse not just as an example of, for instance, “usurpation,” but as its very quintessence; and this to such a degree that when republican writers mention the word “usurpation,” they typically do so to mean something like “the illegitimate seizure of power as epitomized by Julius Caesar;” while when they invoke Caesar, they want us to understand the horrors of “usurpation.” Each term functions almost as a reflex of the other, so that even when Caesar is not specifically mentioned, a term like “usurpation” can summon him up to the republican mind.

Exploring the republican depiction of Caesar enables us to contextualize and contrast the nineteenth-century Caesarism dispute that Max Weber adapted. Rehearsed in the parliaments, salons, clubs, lodges, cafes, reading rooms, journals, and newspaper columns of Europe during the second half of the century, the Caesarism controversy typically referred to the career of Louis Napoleon who, following “l’opération Rubicon”—a coup d’état in 1851 against the Second Republic of which he was president—became, in December 1852, Napoleon III, emperor of France for the next eighteen and a half years. Interest in his regime was intense in Europe, not only because of its unusual longevity, but because it appeared to constitute a novel, hybrid political formation: economically progressive (bourgeois) and socially conservative, popular but harshly authoritarian and hierarchical. Like Caesar, people said, Napoleon III was a democratic monarch, a proletarian king, a military demagogue.

Was Napoleon III’s regime an historical idiosyncrasy, a product of unique national conditions? Or was it the prototype of a new political order towards which all the European nations were heading? The questions were often asked and variously answered. Contention was also evident wherever the merits of Caesarism were discussed. Critics feared the emergence of a new kind of tyranny, but one more invasive than anything known hitherto. Supporters praised Caesarism for being a type of regime capable of commanding popular support while ensuring order, securing property, and establishing empire.

4 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

Max Weber's approach to Caesarism—the subject of chapter 3—was complex, dynamic and, in vital ways, original. In his correspondence and political writings—notably, in the critique of the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck—Weber made use of standard nineteenth-century motifs and echoed the negative connotations that mostly attached to them. Largely coeval with this older usage, however, he gradually reworked the concept of Caesarism in a significantly new way via the lexicon and “ideal-types” fashioned for the science of sociology. In the process, three changes are apparent. First, Caesarism is demoted as a concept and becomes gradually absorbed into the much more expansive notion of “charisma.” Second, Caesarism is renamed as “plebiscitary” or “leader democracy,” one version of which—parliamentary Caesarism—Weber actively embraces. And third, and most importantly, the traditional problem of Caesarism, and the much older republican argument attending the Caesar-question, is radically re-described in the ostensibly value-free language of sociology. What was once seen as a highly dangerous phenomenon becomes normalized as the inevitable accompaniment of modern democracy. Peter Ghosh (2005: 406) has likened Weber's penchant “in matters of terminology” to that of a “thieving magpie.” Similarly, Stephen Turner and Regis Factor (1994: 7-8), discussing the issue of Weber's originality, note that

Unlike Nietzsche, who inverted and undermined the intellectual forms and prejudices he inherited, Weber was primarily a reconceptualizer of material that had been worked up by others. A typical Weberian text is based on a small number of specialist authorities, whose topics are presented in a new relation to other topics in a structure of headings and categories of Weber's own devising.

That judgment is broadly correct, even if it underestimates the extent to which a certain kind of re-conceptualization is itself an attack on inherited “intellectual forms and prejudices” and, in that manner, an original intervention. Weber's analysis of Caesarism, and his reshaping of it in the concept of charisma, was both a scientific and an ideological innovation; indeed, the ideological part of it was formulated as if it were purely scientific. Weber took a lexicon, suffused with disapproval, and associated with some of the most perplexing political problems of his day, and transmuted it into a conceptual ore that was either neutral or positive (cf. Skinner 2002: 151).¹ The coup de grace of this alchemy was to make Caesarism, a highly contested political idea, reappear as charisma, a concept that appeared beyond dispute, burnished by the mandate of value-free sociology.

The above considerations might lead one to say that, from Weber's standpoint, plesbiscitary leadership—authoritarian or parliamentary—is the fate of modern democracies. That is true but glib because “fate” assumes a range of meanings in Weber's work. Over millennia, humans have produced a range of words and concepts to lend history meaning (Löwith 1949). Providence, destiny, fortune, progress, dialectic, eternal return, secularization are all examples of this tendency. One thinks of Tocqueville's assertion that to forestall democracy is tantamount to fighting God's providence. Or, further back, one recalls the very human qualities that Machiavelli ascribed to the goddess *fortuna*. Because *fortuna* is an Italian feminine noun (*destino* is a masculine one), Machiavelli was able to play on the idea that “fortune is a woman” who can be beguiled, seduced and occasionally overpowered by the man (particularly the younger man) of *virtú*. As for “fate” or “destiny,” the German language has at least two terms for it. The first, *Verhängnis* resonates with a sense of foreboding, downfall, and even doom. (Think of the Sword of Damocles “hanging” over a person's head.²) We see one aspect of this ill-omened menace in the lugubrious climax to *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism* where Weber writes:

In Baxter's view, concern for outward possessions should sit lightly on the shoulders of his saints “like a thin cloak which can be thrown off at any time.” But fate (*Verhängnis*) decreed that the cloak should become a shell as hard as steel. (Weber [1905] 2002: 121 = 1920: 203-4)

People intend one thing, but the net sum of human actions produces something antithetical to their wishes. Thus the early Puritans worked to create a godly society, but contributed unwittingly to a capitalist cosmos with strongly secular and hedonistic features. It is this historical perversity that encourages Bryan Turner (1981: 10-12, 102, 368) and others (e.g., Stark 1967:261; Marianne Weber [1926] 1988/1975: 337) to underscore Weber's sense of an “evil logic,” a negative heteronomy of purposes, that works against human will. Other writers – notably Wilhelm Hennis ([1987] 2000: 168) and Lawrence Scaff (1989: 88-89) – have discerned a Nietzschean compression of fate, fatality, and disaster in Weber's allusion to *Verhängnis*. Yet this hardly exhausts Weber's remarks on fate. Even in *The Protestant Ethic*, fate appears in many different guises (Weber [1905]: 2002: 32, 35, 54 etc.) as its author explores the doctrine of predestination and the notion of the calling. Nor should we assume that fate, in Weber's idiom, amounts to the conviction that historical processes are ineluctable or calamitous. Granted, he made great play of the tendency

of human initiatives to degenerate into institutional rigidity. Yet Weber also emphasized the capacity of conscious and willful human beings to make genuine choices among genuine alternatives.³ Indeed once we clarify the multiple contexts in which *Weber himself* discusses fate, a more complex picture emerges.

The second German term for fate is *Schicksal*, a noun that can be employed positively, negatively or neutrally. Weber summons it to convey a range of ideas.⁴ Some of these are relatively prosaic: fate is tantamount to the future, or conversely, the consequential past with its ballast of tradition. Or, with greater pathos, *Schicksal* refers to the lives of individual people and the *daimōn* that accompanies them and their vocation; or to a social predicament, such as that faced by the Jews of the Diaspora (Weber [1919] 1970b: 156 = 1951b: 613); or to the burden of being a modern person obliged to bear the fate of the times with dignity. Nations, too, had a fate to acknowledge. Weber remarked that he was “grateful to fate for being German” (Weber [1918] 1978a: 1383 = 1958: 297) even if a continental power hedged-in by predatory neighbors and bereft of leadership could hardly describe itself as “favored by fate” (Weber [1895] 1958: 18).

Chapter 4 of this book examines the most important contexts in which Weber evokes *Schicksal*: the historical conditions of choice, the political meaning of death, and the formation of national solidarity. To describe, and in part in to explain, the nature of political belonging and nationhood Weber invoked *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, which translates into English as “community of fate.” I explore the multiple meanings of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* in chapter 4 before proceeding, in chapter 5, to apply the notion of “community of fate” to situations of mass emergency response. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis in Hong Kong of 2003 is my prime example. Communities of fate, in my sense of the term, are embattled social sites in which people face the prospect of collective death. Not all emergencies produce such communities. Special conditions are required to do so. Communities of fate cohere because of an intense and broadly shared focus of attention on a common plight. Of short duration, communities of fate are episodic and fugitive affairs, leaving few traces to remind us of their existence. They are easy to miss and to misunderstand. Employing Weber’s work will help us grasp some of the dimensions of communities of fate, the mechanisms that produce them, and, not least, their dramatic consequences. But I will argue that we cannot rely on Weber alone. We must recruit Durkheim, among oth-

ers, if we are really to understand how communities of fate emerge and the rituals that briefly sustain them.

Caesarism, Charisma and Fate thus combines markedly contrasting approaches to the study of Max Weber. Part 1 is concerned above all with the historical Weber. It deciphers his statements and the rhetorical moves he made. Part 2 augments Weber's concepts for the age we live in. Taking liberties with his ideas is, from this latter standpoint, a tribute to their provocative fertility. I am fully aware that the main thrust of Weber Studies today is historicist and, as such, indifferent or hostile to the kind of sociological appropriation I offer in my discussion of communities of fate. I console myself with the thought that Max Weber, a thinker saturated in historical knowledge, spent much of his life explaining quintessentially modern problems and produced a trans-historical vocabulary to do so.

Notes

1. On the techniques of re-description, see Skinner 1996: 138-180. Cf. Palonen 2003: 133-172.
2. Gordon Wells suggested this image to me.
3. See Ghosh 2005: 376, Weiss 1987: 154, and Liebersohn 1988: 125.
4. On the distinction between *Schicksal* and *Verhängnis*, see Buber ([1923] 1970:102-103). Discussions of *Schicksal* are a staple of German philosophy. Hegel ([1798-99] 1948:182, 228-42) employed it to clarify the limits of moral autonomy. Heidegger ([1927] 1962 §§ 72-77) differentiated it from heritage and destiny. Spengler ([1918/1928] 2003: 152-209) contrasted it with causality.

Part 1

From Caesarism to Charisma

2

Political Republicanism and the Advent of Caesarism

Introduction

This chapter explores a neglected backdrop to Max Weber's analysis of "Caesarism." Employing that term, Weber described the consequences of the entry of a mass electorate into modern politics, warned of the dangers of unrestrained demagoguery, and explained the requirements of responsible, energetic leadership. Simultaneously, he advised his German contemporaries to embark on constitutional changes designed to make the nation internally dynamic and regionally powerful. To be persuasive, Weber was compelled to enter into debates, play on their ambiguity, and nudge them in a particular direction. Persuasion in turn required that he deploy a set of standard motifs, and then rework them in a way that, though daring, still made sense to his contemporaries.

Most sociological accounts of Weber's writings on *Herrschaft* (rulership/domination) in general, and on Caesarism in particular, are flat and unhistorical. They elide Weber's sociological and political writings. And taking little or no interest in political language, or political theory, they fail to recognize what Weber was doing with the terms he invoked.¹ But "Caesarism" was always more than a term that Weber casually bandied about. It was a resource rich in cultural associations, a weapon to be employed against adversaries, a tactic to attract allies. During the nineteenth century, "Caesarism" was what Reinhart Koselleck (1996: 64) calls a "basic concept." Controversial and contested, it was "an inescapable, irreplaceable part of the political and social vocabulary" much in the same way that "tyranny," "despotism," and "usurpation" were fundamental to the discourses of previous centuries. Basic concepts, as distinct from peripheral ones, demarcate fundamental axes of disagreement about the nature of liberty, democracy, security, legitimacy, and their antitheses.

Carrying no single indisputable meaning, they are passionately invoked by a variety of conflicting constituencies—theorists, publicists, propagandists, and others—struggling to make their definitions of reality authoritative and compelling (Richter 2005: 227).

Documenting Weber's work on Caesarism, and its relationship to the concept of charisma, is the task of the next chapter. This one prepares the ground for that analysis, examining the nature of the nineteenth century debate on Caesarism that Weber adapted to his own purposes. Once we grasp the dimensions of that debate, the thematic axes on which it turned, we will be in a position to calibrate the originality of Weber's own usage: how his reformulation was coupled to the establishment of a new lexicon for sociology that erased highly contentious political arguments. First, however, we must step back even further in time to understand the polemical resonance attached to Caesar's name in the tradition of political republicanism. Caesar's aesthetic rehabilitation during the nineteenth century, and the parallel *Caesarism* dispute that Weber joined, offers us a rich illustration of republicanism's weakness and woes. Equally, Weber's own judgment on Caesarism furnishes a benchmark to judge his own heterodox political stance—neither liberal nor republican.

I am aware that this chapter's excursion into the republican pre-history of Caesarism, and the history of Caesarism itself, will appear arcane and irrelevant to a majority of readers. I can only remind them that Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, the exponents of what we now call classical sociology, were all intimately familiar with the ancient world and the debates it generated. While they rebelled against classical atavism, and while they sought to understand what was distinctive about modern times, they remained steeped in, and continued to rely on, classical learning and competences. Marx's doctoral thesis contrasted Democritus's and Epicurus's philosophy of nature; later he read Aeschylus and Thucydides in Greek for recreation (Prawer 1976).² Though Durkheim's main dissertation was "The Division of Labor in Society" (1893), he was also required to compose his second, shorter thesis on Montesquieu in Latin, a stipulation of French universities in the nineteenth century. Carrying the title *Quid Secundatus Politicae Scientiae Instituendae Contulerit* (1892)—"What Secundatus [i.e., Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu] Contributed to the Founding of Political Science"—it had to wait till 1937 to be translated into his own native tongue. Weber's *Habilitationsschrift*—the second thesis German scholars were obliged to complete to be eligible as university teaching faculty—was on Roman

agrarian history.³ Two terms that are crucial for this book—charisma and fate—are of ancient provenance (Eliaeson 2000: 140). And Caesarism, of course, alludes to ancient Rome’s most renowned dictator. If we really wish to follow Weber into his conceptual lair, we must momentarily leave our own century and return to epochs and thought-worlds strange to us but thoroughly familiar to him. To that extent my project has some similarities to Mohammad Nafissi’s (2005) exhumation of the *oikos* debate in Wilhelmine Germany, though he is more concerned with Greece and I with Rome. Both of us believe that the social scientific understanding of Weber has for too long been innocent of his engagement with the ancient world: its institutions, values, and representations. To retrieve aspects of that world—mediated by its appropriation in classical republicanism and the nineteenth-century Caesarism debate—is one task of this book.

Political Republicanism

From the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, Julius Caesar’s name was repeatedly invoked by European and American “republican” thinkers as an object of vilification. A political idiom of some complexity, republicanism received its most potent and influential (post-Roman) expression in the Florentine Renaissance—its *locus classicus* is Machiavelli’s *Discourses*—and was thereafter appropriated by English “Commonwealthmen” such as Henry Neville, John Milton, and James Harrington. Adapted by Montesquieu and Rousseau in the eighteenth century, republicanism became, in a plurality of mediations, an integral element in the discourse of the American revolutionaries and constitution-builders, and of their counterparts in France. Typically, republicans opposed hereditary monarchy. They insisted that the fundamental source of political authority lay in the consent of the citizen body or “the people.”⁴ And they emphasized the collective political obligations citizens owed to their city or commonwealth. Those obligations entailed active involvement in, and responsibility for, the affairs of public life; for instance, citizens were expected to defend their own country, not hire mercenaries to defend it for them. The chief political mechanism for managing a healthy polity was considered to be a “mixed” constitution; that is, one that incorporated into the commonwealth all its various social and political forces, an achievement that was held to be one cause of the Roman Republic’s greatness during its zenith. Another cause of its exalted position was the ethos the paradigmatic Roman citizen was claimed to carry in his heart. That ethos, which later republicans enjoined

their fellow citizens to cultivate, was “virtue,” or *virtù*, as the Florentine republicans called it, (from the Latin *virtus*) that is, manly patriotic commitment, courage, and devotion. These were qualities necessary to subdue the tempestuous goddess Fortune without whose support honor, glory, and greatness were unlikely ever to be acquired. Dedication to the *res publica*, to a polity that belongs to all its member citizens, was supposed to transcend or override every other earthly consideration, domestic and instrumental. It was to be the prime source of one’s identity and the center of one’s loyalties. And it was also commonly argued that devotion to the commonwealth, especially through the provision of public service, was itself a condition of both collective *and* individual freedom. For without a viable, healthy, and secure body politic, every citizen’s liberty is potentially in danger from external enemies or civil conspiracy, calamities which imperil private as much as public life. It is hard to protect one’s family or property if the walls of one’s city are being knocked down, or if one’s country is being invaded. At the same time, republicans were the first to acknowledge that such devotion to the commonwealth was by the nature of things precarious and unstable. The achievement and preservation of civic greatness is inevitably a strenuous activity, yet humans are not inherently virtuous or altruistic beings. Or even if, as Cicero remarked in the *Tusculan Disputations*, the “seeds of virtue are inborn in our dispositions” they soon fall on the stony ground of social deception and prejudice. Citizens, because they are also human, have pronounced tendencies to forget their own wider and common interests. They are all too quick to confuse the commendable quest for renown and preeminence with vain ambition, to reduce the search for greatness to petty gain; and to become sated and complacent. In short, citizens are dangerously predisposed towards moral and physical “corruption.” For this reason, it was necessary to fashion laws which coerced people to recognize and carry out their political duties, and to foster leaders of outstanding merit. Such leaders, exemplars of political virtue, were important not only in their capacity as active lawgivers, charged with the monumental task of building the foundations or framework of political life. They were also vital as agents capable of reconstructing these foundations and returning the state to first principles wherever civic torpor had become established. In contrast, the worst kind of laws were those which, while purporting to express republican liberty, were simply a sham to cover the naked fact that a people had delivered itself into bondage and tyranny; while the most heinous kinds of individuals were those who fuelled human corruption,

and who promoted negative and factious dissension which drained the vigor of republican mores and manners.

This is a simplified portrait of republicanism. Admixtures with other doctrines—contractual, liberal, Christian—were common. My objective in what follows, however, is not to write a history of republican thought. It is to document how republican ideas were formed, delineated, or dramatized in a confrontation with Caesar’s reputation; to show, in other words, what republican thought did with Caesar’s name and to what purpose. This will provide us with a richer historical framework to consider the complexity of the nineteenth-century Caesarism debate than is usually offered by commentators on Max Weber. Of course, writers inspired by republican arguments—and later analysts of Caesarism—were not generally interested in the “real,” flesh-and-blood Caesar; they were not especially concerned, that is, to retrieve and reconstruct the person as “he actually was.” Instead, Caesar was employed for symbolic and allegorical purposes: to instruct, to admonish, to tell a story, to exhort the virtues of republican heroes through denigration of their antipode. The point was to appropriate Caesar for a particular project, to which, in effect, he became subordinated. My strategy in what follows is to show how this worked. Inevitably, I will have to be selective. To expedite it, I will concentrate on the “classical republicanism” associated with Machiavelli, and on its amendments in Montesquieu. The choice is easily justified. If Machiavelli’s indebtedness to precursor traditions is no longer in doubt (Kristeller 1961; Skinner 1978 Vol I:23-112; Viroli: 1990), neither—following the major studies of Caroline Robbins (1959), Felix Raab (1964) and J. G. A. Pocock (1975)—is his status as the principal theorist of “classical republicanism” and the decisive intellectual influence on many later versions of republicanism. Montesquieu, too, played a salient role. In America between 1760 and 1805, no European author was cited more often than he was; further, such citation was more or less evenly distributed between those who supported, and those who opposed, the constitution of 1787 (see the tables in Lutz 1984:194, 195). The story in revolutionary France was similar. According to Harold Parker’s tabulation of the records of debates in the National (or the “Constituent”) Assembly (1789-1791), the Legislative Assembly (1791-1792), the National Convention (1792-1795), and of a sample of revolutionary newspapers, Montesquieu’s works were more frequently invoked than any other eighteenth-century figure, and indeed almost twice as often as Rousseau’s (Parker [1937] 1965: 18-19). I shall also draw on those

writers of the ancient world to whom later republicans so often appealed: men with a deep aversion to the loss of senatorial power—Cicero is the key source—or who, like Sallust, Livy, Plutarch, and Tacitus – “a good writer, and firm opponent of tyrants,” Milton called him ([1658] 1991: 167)—documented both the ethos and decline of republican virtue; or who, like Polybius, were read as cardinal authorities in explaining “by what means and by virtue of what political institutions almost the whole world fell under the rule of one power, that of Rome, an event which is absolutely without parallel in earlier history” (*Histories* VI/2).

Caesar in Republican Demonology

I have already remarked on the obloquy that attaches to Caesar’s name in republican thought. But what was its purpose as a narrative token within republican discourse? Caesarian demonology served, first, to shore up key republican values, second to furnish important distinctions regarding highly prized human attributes, and, third, to offer cautionary tales or markers about social and political tendencies which Caesar’s career exemplified. That Caesar could be a vehicle for all these matters should not surprise us. Before the twentieth century, moral and political instruction was a vital objective of historical study, indeed, probably its main objective.

Values

To begin with, Caesar’s name was recurrently employed to dramatize the contrast between his actions and those motivated by republican values. Among the most cherished of these values was a commitment to political liberty, typically envisaged both as freedom from “external aggression and tyranny” and as freedom to “take an active part in the running of the commonwealth,” to contribute, in other words, to its internal, self-regulating vitality (Skinner 1978: 157, 77). It is true that republican thinkers differed among themselves when they came to consider how this liberty was best to be translated into actual governance. Some writers recommended vesting authority in a well-educated and wealthy elite. Others embraced a more inclusive vision in which citizens of all ranks were to be encouraged to participate in the life of the commonwealth in some defined capacity. In either case, Caesar was pilloried as the destroyer of republican liberty and political institutions. Thus for all the differences between Francesco Guicciardini and Machiavelli, both could basically concur that “Those who set up a tyranny are no less blameworthy than

are the founders of a republic or a kingdom praiseworthy,” (Machiavelli [1550] 1970: 134) and both could invoke the “detestable and monstrous” Caesar (Guicciardini [1537-1540] 1965: 77) as a prime example of the former.

For republican liberty and government to thrive, however, it was not enough that cities establish workable institutions. Citizens must also share a specific kind of energizing sensibility. The ethos to which classical republican thinkers most often returned was *virtù*, a term that enjoyed multiple connotations in republican thought: virility, courage, prudence, intelligence, frugality, and the dedication of all these capacities to the public good, which meant above all the good of commonwealth and country. *Virtù* in these senses had nothing to do with humility or self-effacement. Rather it valorized the kind of heroic sacrifice in which the self, far from being obliterated, is elevated to glory through the achievement of great deeds, of which war,⁵ speech and the acts of founding and restoring, immortalized through remembrance, are the principal expressions.

The greatest glory of all was to serve and protect the homeland (Machiavelli [1550] 1970: 515). Yet this was not to suggest that only brilliant deeds counted as evidence of political virtue. On the contrary, a republic was at its healthiest when virtue was an integral part of the maxims and reflexes of everyday life and governance. Nor was political virtue a property of rank or a function of learning. In principle, it was something open and amenable to everyone of whatever station, however elevated or lowly, because at root, said Montesquieu, it is something very simple, “love of the republic,” and as such “a feeling and not a result of knowledge” (Montesquieu [1748] 1989:42). In its turn, Montesquieu continued, love of the republic is love of equality, an emotion predicated on the conviction that while people cannot render their homeland equal services, they can and should “equally render it services” (43). Alas, this principle of equality is inherently unstable, subject to a dual malaise. On the one hand, it can simply fade away, leading to aristocracy or monarchy. On the other, it is prone to degenerate into a parody of itself: “extreme equality.” But, Montesquieu continued, as “far as the sky is from the earth, so far is the true spirit of equality from the spirit of extreme equality. The former consists neither in making everyone command nor in making no one command, but in obeying and commanding one’s equals” (114). Where the latter conditions prevail, a republic opens itself up to all kinds of demagogue—the allusion to Caesar and his precursors is unmistakable—who “speak only of the people’s greatness,” (113) thereby concealing the tawdry fact of their corruption and avarice.

Looking ahead, Montesquieu's emphasis on virtue as a feeling of love is echoed by Rousseau in his essay *Political Economy* ([1755] 1993b: 139-43) albeit with a more coercive emphasis: "Make men, therefore, if you would command men: if you would have them obedient to the laws, make them love the laws, and then they will need only to know what is their duty to do it." Looking backwards, Montesquieu himself is drawing on a long tradition of thought. A striking example of this comes in an indignant riposte to those who had misunderstood what he had meant by "virtue." In the foreword to the 1757 edition of *The Spirit of the Laws*—published two years after his death, and six years after his treatise had been put on the Index—Montesquieu insists that the value and capacity of which he speaks is not religious ("Christian") but political virtue. And this prompts him to make the corresponding distinction between the "Christian good man," who is not his concern in *Spirit*, and "the political good man" who, in part, is his subject: the man who possesses "political virtue," that is, who loves his homeland, true equality and who acts accordingly (xli-ii).

Now the expression "political good man" had a venerable lineage, going back to the thirteenth century, but particularly to adaptations in fourteenth and fifteenth century Italy of Cicero's doctrine of moderation (Viroli 1990: 163-66). In this tradition, the *bonus vir* or the *uomo buono* is the man who is judicious, wise, and disciplined; the man who knows how to act appropriately for the good of his city, to which he is utterly committed, and who seeks to mobilize all forces, and find a place for all ranks, in its preservation. The talents of this good man are especially evident in his powers "to speak, persuade and deliberate with prudence"; and they are called for most urgently in those cases where a city requires to be reconstructed and revitalized. It was this tradition that influenced humanists like Leonardo Bruni. It also affected Machiavelli, even as he sought to make the further, unorthodox, argument that there are times of extremity in which the good man must know how to be bad without, however, losing his essential goodness, that is, his commitment to the noble goal of a thriving and free commonwealth.⁶

This brings us back to Montesquieu—and to Caesar, the very antithesis of the political good man "who loves the laws of his country and who acts from love of the laws of his country" (Montesquieu [1748] 1989: xli-xlii). J. G. A. Pocock (1975: 529) has described Catiline as a "figure one shade darker than Caesar's in the spectrum of republican demonology," but this is doubtful. Catiline's conspiracy failed; Caesar's succeeded.⁷

And in that success, it was the Roman “usurper,” who helped animate the concept of *uomo buono* by incarnating its opposite. For confirmation of Caesar’s wickedness, republican advocates had to go no further than the third book of Cicero’s *De Officiis* (“On Duties”):

Here you have a man who longed to be king of the Roman people and master of every nation; and he achieved it! If anyone says that such greed is honorable, he is out of his mind: for he is approving the death of laws and liberty, and counting their oppression—a foul and hateful thing—as something glorious. But if anyone admits that it is not honorable to reign in a city that has been free and ought to be so, but says that it is beneficial to the man who can do it—what reproach, or rather what abuse, can I use to try to tear him from so great an error? Immortal gods! Can the most disgusting, the foulest of parricides, that of one’s fatherland, be beneficial to anyone? Can it be so, even if the man who took it upon himself is named “father” by the citizens he has oppressed? (III/83).

It followed that the action of Caesar’s assassins, in resisting someone “not merely aiming at monarchy, but actually reigning as monarch,” was “superhumanly noble in itself” and destined for “immortality” (*Philippic* II/44)—a conclusion that Milton took up enthusiastically in his defense of regicide: “From this it is clear that all the most outstanding men among the Romans not only killed tyrants in whatever way and whenever they could, but that, like the Greeks formerly, they held that deed as worthy of the greatest praise” (Milton [1651] 1991: 170-1).

Moreover, while few republicans could doubt Caesar’s courage, fortitude, and military genius – amply documented in even the most hostile sources—it was easy to paint other ostensibly admirable qualities as dissimulations. For instance, Caesar’s famous liberality and munificence—the sumptuous banquets and spectacular games he hosted—could be interpreted not as evidence of generosity but as a device to solidify alliances, create or indebt clients, buy votes (Plutarch II *Caesar*: 214, 218-9; cf. Plutarch I *Coriolanus*: 300). Worse, by stimulating men’s insatiable appetites for wealth and luxury, Caesar’s practices gravely offended the value of republican frugality, typically seen as a vital bulwark against corruption. Even Caesar’s habit of forgiving his enemies, many said, was tactical or feigned, irrelevant or humiliating. It was not necessary to stoop to the lurid character assassination that takes place in Lucan’s *Civil War* (IX), in which we witness Caesar gloating over the carnage of the battle field at Pharsalia, and weeping crocodile tears at the spectacle of Pompey’s severed, mummified head. Montesquieu’s view, though more restrained, was ultimately just as damning: “Caesar,” Montesquieu remarked in *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* ([1734] 1965:108-9) “pardoned everyone,

but it seems to me that moderation shown after usurping everything does not deserve great praise.” Basically, Caesar’s “clemency...was insulting,” indicating the “almost ridiculous” loss of senatorial power. Under these undignified conditions Caesar did not pardon so much as he “disdained to punish” (cf. Syme 1964:119).⁸

Distinctions

So far I have examined the way in which the character of Julius Caesar could be adapted as a foil to the republican values of liberty, virtue, and equality. In order for republican values to become vivid and lifelike, however, it was never enough simply to recite or preach them and their antitheses abstractly. They required bearers to exemplify their significance. Here again Caesar could play an important role either through being elided with figures that republicans deemed contemptible—Cromwell is the ubiquitous case for later republican thought—or contrasted with republican heroes. Let me concentrate on the latter.

In republican mythology, the paragons of republican virtue are simple but extraordinary men and, more rarely, women⁹; simple, in their austerity, sometimes in their poverty, in the unsullied strength of their conviction; extraordinary in their courage, their skill and their outstanding contribution to republican life. As such, they represent the opposite of Caesarean extravagance and corruption. While they are capable of practicing stratagems of deceit where necessary, such guile is neither self-serving nor mendacious but always oriented to a higher purpose: the life of the republic itself. More specifically, they are *founders* not destroyers of republics, men like Lucius Junius Brutus “the father of Rome’s liberties” (Machiavelli [1550] 1970: 390; 155, 530-1) who having expelled the Tarquin kings from Rome and established the Republic, found himself as consul in 509 B.C. faced by a conspiracy of his own sons which he met by ordering, and superintending, their execution (Livy II/1-5). Republican icons are thus the supreme embodiments of patriotism, willing to subordinate every private and domestic consideration to the good of the commonwealth. Exemplary republicanism also reveals itself in those *saviors* of republics at moments of extreme peril, men like Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus who, legend has it, answered his country’s call to defend it against the Aequi, assumed the dictatorship in 458 B.C., and after prevailing over Rome’s enemies resigned his office, and returned to his four and a half acre farm (Machiavelli: [1550] 1970: 475; cf. Livy III/26-29).¹⁰ Third, republican heroism is evident among those *restorers*

and revivers of virtue, who return the republic to first principles, men like “Horatius Cocles, Scaevola, Fabricius, the two Decii, Regulus Attilius, and several others, whose rare and virtuous examples wrought the same effects in Rome as laws and institutions would have done” (Machiavelli [1550] 1970: 388). And finally, if fortune has decided that they can be neither founders, saviors nor restorers of republics, they can at least be their heroic champions, defenders of republican rigorism and conservatism, like Cato the Younger, even as they fall magnificently to defeat (Machiavelli [1550] 1970: 389).

It is true that discussion of republican titans often takes place at a remove from any direct reference to Caesar. Nonetheless, writers sympathetic to the republic at its pre-Gracchan zenith (few were sympathetic to the republic in its final phase) all knew how the story was to end—in its destruction—so that Caesar, and precursors like Marius and the Gracchi, are an imaginative presence in republican writing and hero-construction even where they are not explicitly mentioned. In any event, examples of direct character juxtaposition are easy to find. Here we have the “polarity” I mentioned in chapter 1: the ability of Caesar’s name to evoke persons who stand for his complete negation. The latter need not always be republican. Caesar could be forcefully contrasted with Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.), precisely because he had so much wanted to be like him. Montesquieu highlighted the singular divergence between the Macedonian king and the Roman usurper. While Caesar sought monarchy as an ornament of ostentation, wishing to “imitate the kings of Asia,” and while the Romans “conquered all in order to destroy all,” Alexander “wanted to conquer in order to preserve all, and in every country he entered, his first ideas, his first designs, were always to do something to increase its prosperity and power” (Montesquieu [1748] 1989:150-51).

All the same, it is more usual to find Caesar contrasted not with kings—it was, after all, his aspiration to kingship or his de facto achievement of it which most often offended republican sensibilities—but with their most fervent enemies: for instance, Scipio and Cincinnatus (Machiavelli [1550] 1970: 135, 474-5); Cato the Elder (“compared with Caesar and Pompey, Cato seems a god among mortals,” Rousseau [1755]: 1993b:143); and especially Cato the Younger. Of him, Cicero would eulogize: “what strength there is in character, in integrity, in greatness of soul, and in that virtue which remains unshaken by violent storms; which shines in darkness; which...is radiant always by its own light and

is never sullied by the baseness of others” (*Pro Sestio* XXVIII/60). The opposition between Marcus Cato and Caesar—personal and paradigmatic—is also touched on in Tacitus (*Annals*: IV/34, XVI/22), snakes its way throughout Plutarch’s lives of Caesar and Cato the Younger, and is the pivot of Book IX of Lucan’s *Civil War* in which “Cato and Caesar are presented as contrasting personifications of the Stoic idea of virtue and vice, or liberty and tyranny” (Taylor 1949:181). Later this polarity became a commonplace even if it meant contradicting a key documentary source: Sallust’s admiring comparison of both figures—“They had the same nobility of soul, and equal, though quite different, reputations”—in the *Conspiracy of Catiline* (LIV/1).¹¹ The typical response to Sallust, who added insult to injury by seeming to deprecate Cicero’s contribution to Catiline’s rout, was to brush aside his account as idiosyncratic and perverse; Cicero and Cato hagiography simply left little room for an even-handed approach to their great rival (Ward 1964: 416).

Such character juxtaposition—Caesar pitted against Cicero, Cato, Brutus, or Cincinnatus—had immense historical resonance, not only in England, but also in France, and in America at the time of its revolution and constitution-building. Yet republican critiques of Caesar were confronted with a peculiar, and very revealing, quandary which arose from the very values republicans espoused. The more ferocious attacks on Caesar became, and the more he was conspicuously singled out as a destroyer of the republic, the more extraordinary, remarkable and fantastic he might appear to history. In other words, there was a danger that such assaults on Caesar—by their very prominence and tenacity—would increase his fame, a highly prized human attribute in classical culture. The danger was compounded by an ambiguity in the concept of fame itself.

In the ancient world, and in many later appropriations of its language, “fame” did not mean, as it does today, anything that is massively appreciated, however ephemeral or manufactured. Instead it assumed at least three meanings. From one angle, “fame” (*fama*) was one of a cluster of terms—cognates included glory, reputation, renown, distinction, conspicuousness—employed to refer to achievements so monumental, praiseworthy, and deserving of human emulation, that they were destined to outlast their epoch. Here, then, “fame” belongs to a long tradition of terms and ideas that denote accomplishments of the highest order. A precedent for the Roman preoccupation with fame is readily noticeable in Pericles’s funeral oration, in which the assembled Athenians are reminded that those who formed the character of the city “won praises

that never grow old, the most splendid of sepulchers—not the sepulcher in which their bodies are laid, but where their glory remains eternal in men’s minds, always there on the right occasion to stir others to speech or to action. For famous [*epiphanes*] men have the whole earth as their memorial” (*Peloponnesian War* II/43). Or, as Sallust put it in a Roman context, “The truth is that no man really lives or gets any satisfaction out of life, unless he devotes all his energies to some task and seeks fame by some notable achievement or by the cultivation of some admirable gift” (*Catiline* II/9). Moreover, because fame or renown was itself dependent upon historical record for its immortalization—dependent, that is, on the arduous task of finding “words worthy of your subject” (*Catiline* III/2)—it followed for both Greeks and Romans alike that he who documented such renown also thereby participated in it.

From another angle, however, “fame” was something dangerous or diabolical, which accounts for such English-language derivations as “infamy” or “defamation.” In the *Aeneid* (IV/173-197), *fama* is personified as the force of rumor, which “is of all pests the swiftest” – (*Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullum*). It is she who “strikes dread throughout great cities, for she is as retentive of news which is false and wicked as she is ready to tell what is true.”¹² This background explains why Francis Bacon, in his unfinished fragment “Of Fame” ([1625] 1909b:140-42), could say that while “The poets make Fame a monster,” he would speak of “What are false fames; and what are true fames;” and why Goethe, in the early erotic poem-cycle, the *Roman Elegies*, could observe that “between Love who commands me/And the goddess *fama* there is, I know, bitter strife” (Goethe [1795] 1988:89).

Finally, “fame” might be defined as neither honorable nor pestilential, but as simply equivalent to great renown, to a person’s success in being remembered, irrespective of the grounds of that success (Adair [1967] 1974a:11). Here, then, fame is not equated with particular outcomes, but rather with any outcome that transforms a man into a colossus and thereby allows him to rise above the “silent obscurity” (Sallust) induced by our own animal appetites, to transcend the oblivion that otherwise follows man’s fleeting presence on the earth. The reason that both good and bad deeds found asylum under a single concept lies deep within classical ontology where ambition and the quest for preeminence were seen as entirely natural human attributes (cf. Syme 1964:117). Ambition, Sallust explains, may be a fault under some circumstances, but it is a fault that comes close to being a virtue. For “distinction, preferment, and power

are the desire of good and bad alike—only, the one strives to reach his goal by honorable means, while the other being destitute of good qualities, falls back on craft and deceit” (*Catiline* XI/1-2).¹³

How, then, was Caesar to be treated in republican-minded literature? His military achievements could hardly be gainsaid, nor could his popularity with his soldiers and the common people. Similarly, Caesar’s command of language—as orator-advocate and as the author of the Commentaries—often found commendation even among those who in other respects were his enemies or critics. In short, Caesar was simply too cultivated and talented to be depicted as a simple thug. However, if his renown could not be denied, it could certainly be circumscribed in such a way as to preserve its bearer’s reputation for wickedness and folly. And this stratagem was secured in a number of ways. First, and most evidently, it was always feasible to distinguish between aspects of Caesar’s character and career that were meritorious, and those that deserved censure. This is the treatment Caesar receives in Plutarch, who offers a much more rounded and complex picture of his subject than most of the secondary literature on the Greek writer would lead one to suppose. Indeed, it is the extent of the praise for Caesar that is remarkable. We get a sense of it in a passage in which Plutarch describes Caesar’s feats in the Gallic Wars: “For if we compare him with the Fabii, the Metelli, the Scipios, and with those who were his contemporaries, or not long before him, Sylla, Marius, the Luculli, or even Pompey himself, whose glory, it may be said, went up at that time to heaven for every excellence in war, we shall find Caesar’s actions to have surpassed them all” (Plutarch II: 209; cf. 210, 215). Alongside this portrait, however, Plutarch flatly portrays Caesar as the man whose “ambition for absolute power” resulted in “the altering of the whole constitution” of Rome and thereby the destruction of the republic (201). Another example of this kind of narrative stratagem is provided in the course of Cicero’s ironized contrast of Antony with Caesar:

In him [Caesar] there was genius, calculation, memory, letters, industry, thought, diligence; he had done in war things, however calamitous to the State, yet at least great; having for many years aimed at a throne, he had by great labor, great dangers, achieved his object; by shows, buildings, largesse, banquets he had conciliated the ignorant crowd; his own followers he had bound to him by rewards, his adversaries by a show of clemency: in brief, he had already brought to a free community—partly by fear, partly by endurance—a habit of servitude. (*Philippic* II/45)

Second, it was always possible for republican partisans to distinguish between types of renown, reserving the most important for republican

heroes, and assigning the most dubious to the miscreants of Rome. This was what Cicero sought to convey in his distinction between “true glory” and the mere “shadowy phantom of glory” of the kind Caesar managed to achieve (*Tusculan Disputations* III/1/3-4). It was also the strategy that Machiavelli adopted in *The Art of War* ([1521] 1965:17) when he put into the mouth of Fabrizio Colonna the observation that while Caesar and Pompey acquired fame as skilful men, they were not good men i.e. good citizens. In contrast, those who had flourished before and during the Second Punic War when *virtù* was at its zenith, “won glory by being both civic-minded and skillful” (cf. Violi 1990:168-69). However, it is in the *Discourses* that Machiavelli’s views about Caesar’s reputation become particularly translucent.

Unlike Guicciardini who is willing at least to distinguish between Caesar’s “good qualities,” even “great” ones and his ruinous ambition, Machiavelli is unrelenting and total in his hostility.¹⁴ Even Caesar’s fame, he makes clear, was badly compromised by what he did. People “deceived by the false semblance of good and the false semblance of renown,” should understand “what fame, what glory” attaches to those who “might have founded a republic or a kingdom to their immortal honor” and what “infamy, scorn, abhorrence, danger and disquiet” comes to those who destroy a polity.

Nor should anyone be deceived by Caesar’s renown when he finds writers extolling him before others, for those who praise him have either been corrupted by his fortune or overawed by the long continuance of the empire which, since it was ruled under that name, did not permit writers to speak freely of him (Machiavelli [1550] 1970:135-36).

A perspective that cuts through all idealization and sycophancy

will see Rome burnt, its Capitol demolished by its own citizens, ancient temples lying desolate, religious rites grown corrupt, adultery rampant throughout the city. He will find the sea covered with exiles and the rocks stained with blood. In Rome he will see countless atrocities perpetrated; rank, riches, the honors men have won, and, above all, virtue, looked upon as a capital crime. He will find calumniators rewarded, servants suborned to turn against their masters, freed men to turn against their patrons, and those who lack enemies attacked by their friends. He will thus happily learn how much Rome, Italy, and the world owed to Caesar (Machiavelli [1550] 1970:137-38).¹⁵

Machiavelli’s many allusions to incidents that post-dated Julius Caesar’s death indicate that Caesar is here being employed as an historical symbol to evoke the horrors of post-republican turmoil; or, more precisely, those periods lacking the wisdom and skill of a Nerva. But Caesar is also used

by Machiavelli as a symptom of the republic's structural malaise; we are told that Caesar "complete[d] its spoliation" (138) rather than being himself responsible for its destruction. The effect of such a remark, and similar ones, is to deflate Caesar's fame by absorbing it into its dire preconditions; and this is the third way that his fame can be handled. According to Machiavelli, there were two major, underlying causes of the republic's eclipse; both of them established the essential circumstances under which Caesar's ambition had its devastating impact. The first arose from disputes arising between plebs and patricians over the Agrarian Law (486 B.C.), an attempt at land redistribution that specified the maximum amount of land a person could own, and that provided for grants of conquered land to the Roman people. The plebs, egged on by their tribunes, supported such a law; the nobles cursed and resisted it, finding it an unwelcome impediment to the accumulation of wealth and power. The result was class conflict, initially checked by the fact, among other things, that the land expropriated through conquest tended to be far from Rome, often resistant to successful cultivation, and thus less attractive to the plebs than closer, more fertile land would be. However, after lying "dormant until the time of the Gracchi," the conflict flared up again with increased bitterness and eventually "spelt the complete destruction of Rome's liberty" (Machiavelli [1550]1970: 202).

Second, republican Rome became increasingly subject to the unintended consequences of its own success. In particular, imperial expansion had the effect of protracting military command. Armies fighting at distances more and more remote from Rome were difficult to control from the centre and required ever greater periods in the field. In consequence, the pool of men actually able to attain military experience and reputation diminished; and with extended tenure of military command, and its growing exclusivity, soldiers became clients of their generals, as distinct from being the arm of the senate.¹⁶ Marius and Sulla saw the possibilities for grandeur and acted on them; in earlier times "they would have been crushed at the very outset of their careers." But it was Caesar, "Rome's first tyrant" who showed himself able "to reduce his country to subjection."¹⁷

Machiavelli's analysis of Caesar, when considered carefully, is more subtle than its vituperative prose would suggest. On the one hand, Caesar is depicted to be a unique figure for it is he, as we have just seen, who is considered to be "Rome's first tyrant." (That is a departure from Tacitus, for whom "despotism" was established by the time of Marius and Sulla.

It was they who “destroyed the republican constitution by force of arms,” *Histories* I/37). On the other hand, by embedding Caesar’s career in what today we would call structural conditions, Machiavelli ensures that Caesar does not appear too heroic. Caesar’s alleged greatness is punctured by showing him to be the culmination of causes and consequences—corruption, prodigality, class hatred—whose product he was.

Social and Political Tendencies

We have just seen that one way of managing Caesar’s fame was to portray it as the outgrowth of conditions for which he was not directly responsible but which he typified and accentuated nonetheless. This conveniently brings me to the final modality in which Caesar functioned within republican-oriented discourse. Machiavelli was by no means the only thinker to treat Caesar as an historical symptom, an abbreviation of social and political tendencies or transformations. On the contrary, the practice was widespread among writers sympathetic to the republican tradition. One thinks of James Harrington’s extension of Donato Giannotti’s division of Italian government into a universal schema. The “whole series of government” is divisible, Harrington claims, “into two times or periods”:

The one ending with the liberty of Rome, which was the course of empire, as I may call it, of ancient prudence, first discovered unto mankind by God himself in the fabric of the commonwealth of Israel, and afterward picked out of his footsteps in nature and unanimously followed by the Greeks and Romans. The other beginning with the arms of Caesar which, extinguishing liberty, were the transition of ancient into modern prudence, introduced by those inundations of Huns, Goths, Vandals, Lombards, Saxons which, breaking the Roman Empire, deformed the whole face of the world with those ill features of government which at this time are become far worse in these western parts, except Venice... ([1656] 1992:8; cf. 43)

However, in republican traditions Caesar did far more than simply mark a transformation of types of “government”; he also represented a variety of syndromes to which all republican political formations were subject. In order to understand this point more clearly, it is worth looking briefly at its context in classical thought—particularly, the trinitarian formula and the cyclical theory of social and political change which attended it.

The trinitarian formula, a child of Greek political theory, refers to a division of political “constitutions” into three elemental types, each of which has a strong internal tendency to degenerate into perversions (*parechbaseis*) of its true nature. Herodotus, Plato, and Aristotle all espoused versions of this formula. But it is Polybius’s popularization and

amendment of it that proved especially influential, and for that reason I shall concentrate on it here.

Polybius followed his forebears in distinguishing among kingship (preceded by “monarchy,” the original, most primitive form of rule which develops into kingship), aristocracy, and democracy (Aristotle, had said “polity”—*politeia*), for which the corresponding deviations were tyranny, oligarchy and ochlocracy (mob rule). In addition, Polybius argued not just that each of these three principal forms of constitution degenerated “through an inevitable law of nature” (*Histories* VI/10), but that all six of them followed each other in historical succession. This political cycle or *anacyclosis* could not be permanently avoided; but it could be forestalled through human ingenuity, meritorious deeds, and the playful, and ultimately unfathomable, workings of Fortune (*Tyche*) which tie all human threads into one organic pattern, and which it is the job of the “universal” historian to decipher. The glory of the Roman constitution lay in the fact that it had proved able to suspend history’s anacyclotic course, an achievement that Polybius reckoned to have reached its zenith by the time of the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.). The crux of this accomplishment was Rome’s ability to “mix” monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, normally divergent forms, into one integrated constitution by assigning the three principles of rule to a different element of the state: respectively, the consuls, senate, and the plebs. This was a wonder, but given “the cycle of political revolution, the law of nature according to which constitutions change, are transformed, and finally revert to their original form” (VI/9), it was one that not even Rome could perform forever.

An additional motif of Polybius’s cyclical theory is the predisposition of humans to forget why their current constitution was established, to forget the trials that had originally accompanied it, to forget its value. This social amnesia occurs, Polybius argues, as the beneficiaries of a legitimate polity become increasingly removed from the original act of liberation. So long as the contemporaries of a shift from say, tyranny to aristocracy, are alive, the constitution remains stable and vibrant: both the aristocracy that assumes authority, and the people at large who support it, play their role in the smooth functioning of the new legitimate order. In contrast, the rulers of later generations, pampered and privileged, gradually forsake their duties and begin to govern arbitrarily and licentiously; in short, oligarchically. The upshot is a rebellion that deposes them, and sets up a democracy—that itself then degenerates because of

complacency, forgetfulness and corruption, and is overthrown—and so the cycle continues.

All republican writers of any stature knew by heart the trinitarian theory. We find it espoused at length in Books I and II of Cicero's *De Re Publica* which Romanizes the Greek distinctions, in Machiavelli and Montesquieu, indeed, in all the major currents of republican thought up to the end of the eighteenth century. Its emphasis on the perishability of political constitutions¹⁸ was not its only contribution. Polybius and his Greek predecessors offered a way of locating individual action in a fairly rigid set of political categories, a device that was simultaneously organizational and temporal. Figures like Caesar were envisaged as examples of syndromes to which all societies were prone. It was just this formulation that Max Weber radically and ingeniously reshaped in his analysis of Caesarism.

Political republicans such as Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the American founders combined contemporary analysis with a deep immersion in the classical world. Original thinking about new problems was framed within and against the template of antiquity. That template retained its resonance during the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century. But an important shift of emphasis is apparent. Increasingly, the point behind the "great parallel" (Groh 1972) between the modern and the ancient worlds was not the celebration of virtue and self-governing political activity, the mark of republican thought since Machiavelli's time. Nor was it, to put the matter in a different way, an attempt to summon up the memory of Rome during its prime. On the contrary, the Roman Republic was now more often evoked as a warning, as something to be feared, rather than emulated; accordingly, its demise and aftermath, not its zenith, is emphasized. Traces of this negative great parallel figure conspicuously in the dire political predictions of Diderot, Friedrich II, and von Moser; their reading of the Roman Republic's collapse, together with their understanding of Cromwell as "the first modern usurper of hereditary monarchy," made them pessimistic about the future (Groh 1972:732). For decades afterwards, spurred by the French Revolution, major currents of political theory and polemic across the ideological spectrum attempted to make sense of contemporary events with the example of Rome as paradigmatic.¹⁹ Recurring elements included: the masses as the new barbarians; civil war; the military warlord as *bête noire* or savior. Caesar's name was once more enlisted in political argument. But new times breathed new life into it.

Exoneration

The Victorian Age, it has justly been said, was an era of redefinitions. “Sins became crimes; crimes, diseases; diseases, social problems” (Gay 1993:213). What, then, did the Caesar-question become?

Aesthetically, Caesar emerges against the backdrop of the Romantic, pantheistic affirmation of earthly life, and the revolt against bourgeois and Christian morality. Depicted as the man free of one-sidedness, the man of word and deed, the man willing to suffer and risk everything for personal transcendence over the banal, this is the Caesar who caught Byron’s attention even before the Victorian Age began. Byron’s troubled ambivalence towards the dictator ensured that his enthusiasm could never match that of Thomas de Quincey, for whom Caesar’s “reforms, even before his Pompeian struggle, were the greatest ever made by an individual...and during that brief term which his murderers allowed him, transcended by much all that in any one century had been accomplished by the collective patriotism of Rome” ([1832] 1877:312; cf. 50-64). Byron, conversely, knew that Caesar’s “substance left graves enough, and woes enough, and fame more than enough to track his memory”: this is how the Mephistopheles-like Stranger describes Caesar to Arnold the hunchback in *The Deformed Transformed* (1824) just before himself assuming the name of the eponymous Roman. Yet elsewhere, contrasting Napoleon with Caesar, Byron depicts the Roman’s mind as “modell’d in a less terrestrial mould / With passions fiercer, yet a judgement cold / And an immortal instinct which redeem’d / The frailties of a heart so soft, yet bold / Alcides with the distaff now he seem’d / At Cleopatra’s feet—and how himself he beam’d / And came—and saw—and conquer’d!” (*Childe Harold IV*/90/805-11). It was almost as if what Joseph Mazzini ([1839] 1908a:68) celebrated in Byron’s distinct type of egoism—the “pride of power, freedom and desire...inhaling existence at every pore, eager to seize ‘the life of life’”—was what Byron found himself compelled to see in Caesar.

He was not alone, as Friedrich Gundolf (1904; 1928; [1926] 1968) pointed out in his probing analysis of nineteenth-century literary, artistic, and historicist appropriations of Caesar. Taking us on a tour of personalities so otherwise diverse as Gioberti, Victor Hugo, Stendhal, Heine, Quinet, Balzac, Delacroix, Gautier, Sue, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve, Baudelaire, Anatole France, Mommsen, Merivale, among many others, Gundolf showed how each found in Caesar what he sought to idealize of past achievements or lacerate in modern times. The apogee of this

revaluation came from Friedrich Nietzsche. The Caesar Nietzsche loved was the master of Latin style and composition. But most of all he was the man of titanic inner strength, discipline, and plenitude: Caesar who, shunning the sedative of happiness, embodied “irreconcilable drives”; Caesar the genius of “self-control, self-outwitting” ([1886] 1973:103; [1889] 1968:84, 93), exemplar of Roman aristocratic warrior values, antithesis of the priestly, plebeian, life-abnegating values of Jewishness which, after the life of Christ, had vanquished and tamed the Roman world. Periodically, Nietzsche remarked, the glory of the Roman world and its brightest light had reasserted itself. When the French Revolution “collapsed under the weight of vindictive popular instincts,” when, that is, plebeianism seemed once more triumphant

something wholly unexpected happened: the ancient classical ideal appeared incarnate and in unprecedented splendor before the eyes and conscience of mankind. Once again, stronger, simpler, more insistent than ever, over against the lying shibboleth of the rights of the majority, against the furious tendency toward leveling out and debasement, sounded the terrible yet exhilarating shibboleth of the “prerogative of the few.” Like a last signpost to an alternative route Napoleon appeared, most isolated and anachronistic of men, the embodiment of the noble ideal...Napoleon, that synthesis of the brutish with the more than human [*diese Synthesis von Unmensch und Übermensch*] (Nietzsche [1887] 1956:186-7 = Nietzsche 1966 2:796-7).

By the time Nietzsche wrote these lines, the identification of Napoleon with Caesar had been a platitude for at least fifty years. Conversely, so powerful was that association that the “aesthetic and literary image of Caesar” himself “was dominated by the impression of Napoleon” (Gundolf [1926] 1968:292). The Napoleonic interpretation of Caesar penetrated historical writing as well. “Napoleon’s halt to the bickering of the corrupt French Directory, his imposition of efficient laws and administration on France, his expansion of the French Empire, and his overturning of the old regime across much of the Continent” invited “the drawing of parallels between himself and Caesar”(Turner 1986:589-90).

Yet if many now celebrated Napoleon I as a Caesar-like figure, others abhorred the Corsican for roughly the same reason. And this controversy became accentuated when, in a remarkable political extrapolation, the Caesarean mantle of Napoleon fell on the shoulders of his nephew, Louis Bonaparte, with the coinage of the word “Caesarism.” Louis Bonaparte did not invent this term, but between 1851 and 1870 no one was believed to exemplify Caesarism more than him. And even those who deliberately refused to use this classical-sounding appellation, and who cautioned against the imposition of old terms on a new reality, still

found themselves caught up in an imaginative cosmos bound up with the “the great parallel.” In *Democracy in America* ([1835, 1840] 1969) Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out repeatedly that the conditions his French contemporaries faced were novel, and that previous categories of thought were outdated (12, 691, 703). Authority could no longer be based on privilege or tradition. The French must embrace democracy in their own way before the inexorable tide of equality and leveling eventuated in the rule of one man and a new kind of servitude. Yet even Tocqueville, searching for coordinates to make sense of the new, was occasionally compelled to fall back on a familiar model. In a passage that he later rejected as misguided and clichéd, Tocqueville observed:

To find anything analogous to what might happen now with us, it is not in our own history that we must seek. Perhaps it is better to delve into the memorials of antiquity and carry our minds back to the terrible centuries of Roman tyranny, when mores had been corrupted, memories obliterated, customs destroyed; when opinions become changeable and freedom, driven out from the laws, was uncertain where it could find asylum; when nothing protected the citizens and when the citizens no longer protected themselves; when men made sport of human nature and princes exhausted heaven’s mercy before their subjects’ patience.... I find those very blind who think to rediscover the monarchy of Henry IV or Louis XIV. For my part, when I consider the state already reached by several European nations and that toward which all are tending, I am led to believe that there will soon be no room except for either democratic freedom or the tyranny of the Caesars ([1835]] 1969:314).

Caesarism²⁰

Although the group of words to which Caesarism belongs has a complex history, the term itself only became publicly available in the nineteenth century.²¹ Many have stated or assumed that it was originally a French creation.²² In fact, the first documented appearance of “Caesarism” (in 1846) came from a German pen, that of Johann Friedrich Böhmer (in Janssen 1868:278-9), a conservative historian with Roman Catholic leanings, who employed the word to criticize the tendency of the state to subordinate Church authority to its domination.²³ Böhmer’s usage, however, was casual rather than theoretical, an aside in a private letter to a “military friend” rather than a manifesto or a political declaration. A more ambitious and systematic usage arrived in 1850 in a book by Auguste Romieu entitled *L’ère des Césars*. Never translated into English, it appeared in German a year after its French publication entitled “Caesarism, or the Necessity of the Rule of the Sword, Represented by Historical Examples from the time of Caesar to the Present Day” (Groh 1972: 749).

Romieu defined “Caesarism” as the “age of force” – the rule of military warlords—that was about to be unleashed now that legitimism was dead. Its collective murderer was the modern bourgeoisie, the legatees of the Enlightenment *philosophes* and their radical progenitors in the European Reformation. The bourgeoisie’s capital crime, Romieu argued, was to insinuate the liberal principle into the French body politic and European civilization more generally. From its ranks sprang the secular intelligentsia, propagating, even more so after 1814, “the cult of the university,” while absurdly imagining that it was the inheritor of the old Roman assembly tradition. The bourgeoisie conveniently forgot that people like Cicero were simultaneously men of action. By opposing legitimist governance after Napoleon’s fall, by mocking tradition, and by cultivating dissatisfaction by means of the book, the pamphlet, and the newspaper, the bourgeois class has prepared the ground for the insurrection of the masses. Those “inner barbarians” now stood poised to devour the creature that gave them birth (Romieu 1850: 6, 77). The reason was obvious.

A population in front of whom one has laughed at God, from whom one has taken away belief, will never be resigned to its laborious poverty in the presence of idle luxury. A population to whom one has preached equality as a dogma...will never admit the lords of yesterday, born of the bank and the gaming houses. This population will be a perpetual rebel, one hundred times more logical than those who formed it... (92)

In short the custodians of the liberal principle have brought society to a state of civil war which can only temporarily be calmed.

Why is the rule of force the natural outcome of this decadent state of affairs? A minor point is that military dictatorships are the natural consequence of the geographical expansion of states per se (3-4, 35). But the full weight of Romieu’s argument falls on the familiar proposition that democracy brings in its train such bickering and disorder that the army, feeling keenly the humiliation experienced within society as a whole, turns its eyes “toward the order and unity incarnated in its chief” (36; cf. 39-40). Two features underwrite the army’s ability to seize power. For one thing, its martial training, its discipline (“the army will obey he who knows how to command it”), its relative distance from the dissensions of civil society, lend it an institutional coherence supremely adapted to survive the general social disintegration (158). For another, the soldiery has learned, since the 1848 June Days, a new and invigorating political axiom: “an army determined to fight always dominates an insurrection” (91). Nonetheless, Romieu does not believe that, for the foreseeable future, one commander will be able to establish a stable and durable dynasty.

On the contrary, the modern age of Caesars is an age of vicissitude, of habitual violence, where a “succession of masters” (196) will battle for hegemony.²⁴ This is because the modern era is essentially antithetical to any traditional idea of legitimacy. Legitimacy is capable of flourishing only in a climate of faith. It cannot thrive in the soulless ice age heralded by liberalism. As for Caesarism, it requires no prettying or comforting justification. Force is its only rationale, and with it will come a violent new order, the regime of military commanders, and a quasi-permanent state of civil war as the normal form of future society.

Following Romieu’s polemic, “Caesarism” quickly gained vogue status (Nicolet [2003] 2006: 138-207). The *Oxford English Dictionary* records an American use of the word in Orestes Brownson’s (1857) equation of Caesarism with “monarchical absolutism.” A year later, the *O.E.D.* also informs us, the term attracted the ire of a contributor to the *Westminster Review* who complained of the “clumsy eulogies of Caesarism as incarnate in the dynasty of Bonaparte.” Somewhat more surprisingly, “Caesarism” had to wait even longer in Italy to be taken up by political commentators (De Giorgi 1984:325).²⁵ It emerged as an explicit topic of discussion in a pamphlet, printed in 1862, by the Italian member of parliament Giuseppe Lazzaro. Concerned with Napoleon III’s meddling in Italian affairs (Nice and Savoy had recently been ceded to France) and with the insidious influence of the “Napoleonic idea,” Lazzaro admonished *Cesarismo* for its fraudulence and debilitating properties. Posing as the executor of the people’s wishes, the modern Caesar was in fact no more than their elected master (*padrone*). If under absolutism the people as body were, so to speak, politically murdered, under French Caesarism they had collectively committed suicide. For the real exemplars of Italian liberty, whatever the quarrels between them, it was to Cavour and Garibaldi that one must look: Cavour, the consummate and influential diplomat; Garibaldi, whose “energy of heart,” “divine intuition,” and grandeur made him the very epitome of Italian patriotism (Lazzaro 1862: 6-7, 23-4).

Lazzaro’s analysis of Caesarism is of particular interest because of the varied definitions it provides (among other things, Caesarism is “monarchical hypocrisy,” a “hybrid” of absolutism and universal suffrage) and also because it contains an early mention of Bismarck as a Caesarist figure; like Napoleon III, the Prussian is an autocrat masquerading as the people’s benefactor and paying sham homage to “progressive ideas” (Lazzaro 1862:17). However it was only after the publication in France of Napoleon III’s biography of Caesar in 1865 that Italian writers turned to

the concept of Caesarism with any real focus or attention. The reception of both the biography and the concept was overwhelmingly negative.²⁶ For Mazzini, Napoleon III's "mediocre" book on Julius Caesar misrepresented German historical criticism, and ignored English scholarship altogether. It also lent authority to a view of progress and leadership that was basically untenable. Mazzini, like Napoleon III himself, believed in progress. But the Italian patriot warned that while progress can be slowed down or accelerated by men, its tidal movement is essentially under the rule of God. The cult of the individual leader—Alexander, Caesar or Napoleon I—was objectionable because it failed to understand what true leadership requires: humility in the face of the Creator. Real leaders serve God and people; they serve the ideals of Truth and Morality, media of God's purpose for man. In contrast, warriors like Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon misspent their genius by becoming egoists. Each of them closed an epoch, rather than initiating one, and for this reason all attempts to idolize them are mistaken (Mazzini [1865] 1939:791-2, 798, 803-4). Napoleon III's biography also stirred Giosué Carducci in September 1868 to pen two sonnets on "Caesarism." And while his idiom was more oblique than Mazzini's, the contrast between Caesar the *dit-tatore universo* and *Santo Cato* leaves the reader in little doubt where the poet's commitments lay (Carducci 1939: 24-5).

Many other writers shared such views, but it is the volatile nature of Caesarism that makes it such a fascinating term to observe. Capable of assuming numerous mutations, no constituency or ideology proved able definitively to colonize it. For example, it could be used as a term of praise or, and more usually, censure; seen as an accelerator of, or obstacle to, revolution;²⁷ envisaged as a peculiarly French affair (the view of Treitschke and Bagehot) or a European-wide phenomenon (as Droysen insisted).²⁸ An accompanying debate turned on the word's utility. Some found Caesarism an empirically fruitful coinage; Burckhardt ([1852] 1929:32, n.2) said he was "at a loss to know why the world of learning should prove so recalcitrant to this expression employed by Romieu since it describes a particular thing very well."²⁹ Others, like Marx ([1869] 1973a) and Mommsen, thought it execrable and anachronistic, piling fad upon historical obfuscation.³⁰ Initially, to a lesser extent as time wore on, Caesarism was bound up with a group of other words, its semantic field, that included Napoleonism, Bonapartism and Imperialism—which originally meant a regime (populist, authoritarian, and expansionist) typified by Napoleon III. However Caesarism had a peculiar linguistic advantage for some writers that its cognates lacked. Bonapartism and Napoleonism

smacked of a specific national location: France. Accordingly, such words seemed to suggest that the kind of regime Napoleon III represented was merely regional in character. But this is exactly what many people disputed as they sought to delineate the global tendencies of Caesarism. Such opinion was given added weight after Napoleon III's eclipse in 1870, the replacement of the Second Empire by the Third Republic, and hence the evaporation of the Napoleonic dynasty. Then Caesarism began to be extended to new targets, Disraeli's imperial program and the regime of Bismarck chief among them. The currency of this term, then, cannot be gainsaid. Nor can the complexity of its usages and trajectory: if by 1866 "Everybody is now talking of Caesarism," as Ludwig Bamberger claimed,³¹ they were clearly not all talking about it in the same way. Two themes, evident as early as Auguste Romieu's squib, were, however, especially resonant throughout the remaining century: Caesarism's basis in the "masses" and its association with a crisis of legitimacy. Both would reappear in Max Weber's political theory.

Caesarism and Illegitimacy

The French Revolution, the decapitation of Louis XVI and his wife, and the rise of Napoleon, made the question of legitimacy central to political discussion.³² It was not simply that the Bourbon family, a noble house of Europe, was the object of revolutionary attack. Once Napoleon became First Consul, his own monarchical proclivities quickly manifested themselves; his habit of wearing a red coat—a badge of court society dress—the Regent diamond which sparkled from his sword, and his preference for the "Tuileries of the kings to the Luxembourg of the Directors" (Bergeron [1972] 1981:13) all presaged the promulgation of the hereditary empire in May 1804, the promotion of his brothers Joseph and Louis to the status of Princes shortly thereafter, and the coronation that followed in December 1804. And while the ceremony at Notre-Dame invested Napoleon "with the ritual emblems of the early-medieval French monarchy: orb and scepter, and sword" (Barnett 1978: 91), there was nothing medieval about Napoleon's resort to mass legitimation to solemnize his decisions. The plebiscite of 1804 that confirmed the hereditary empire—3,572,329 for, 2,569 against!—repeated the earlier endorsement he had received for the Constitution of 1800 in which 3,011,007 had voted in support, and only 1,562 against (Cobban [1961] 1965:13; Gay 1993:566, n. 4).³³ Later, in exile, Napoleon would ridicule Brutus for assimilating Caesar to the ranks of "those obscure tyrants of the Peloponnesus who, with the help of a few schemers, usurped the au-

thority over their cities. Brutus refused to realize that Caesar's authority was legitimate because it was a necessary safeguard, because it assured the preservation of all the interests of Rome, because it was in fact the result of the popular opinion and will..." (Herold 1955:59). It was an appropriate comment from a man who became not a medieval monarch but, as Chateaubriand nicely put it, a "proletarian king" who "mounting the throne...seated the common people beside him" ([1848] 1965:329) and who, with an eye to his classical ancestor, chose the Roman Legion's eagle as the motif for the French army's Imperial colors. All the same, it was exactly Napoleon's legitimacy and, even more, the legitimacy of the kind of regime he personified, that was the key point for his critics, both liberal and legitimist, and that formed an important bridge to the later discussions about the Caesarism of Louis Bonaparte. No one has demonstrated this linkage more persuasively than the American political theorist Melvin Richter (1981, 1982, 1988, 2005).

Richter regards "Caesarism" as part of a "negative model" or, alternatively, as one of a "family of concepts" (1981: 63, 71)—encompassing "tyranny," "despotism," "absolute monarchy," "usurpation" and "totalitarianism"—that political thinkers have employed since antiquity to "designate a relationship between rulers and ruled strictly analogous to that of master over slave, or to some other form of servitude at least as severe" (1981:72; 2005: 225). "Bonapartism" or "Caesarism" or "plebiscitary dictatorship" (1982:186, 191, 202) were the nineteenth-century counterparts to earlier (and later) categories of illegitimate rule, typifying regimes thought to exemplify "the most dangerous potentialities of politics in the modern age" (1981: 63). "Bonapartism" for a while "could mean either supporters of Napoleon or the regime he created." Caesarism, on the other hand "came into general use to refer to a regime type only after 1851, when Louis Napoleon repeated the sequence of taking over, by military coup d'état, a republic established by revolution. Like his uncle, he sought legitimacy through plebiscites, established an empire, and lost it by military defeat" (1982:186). Replication suggested the emergence of a political syndrome. After Louis's coup, "Bonapartism" and "Caesarism" tended progressively to merge such that nineteenth-century thinkers came to treat them as virtually synonymous. A key attraction of these terms for contemporary political actors lay in their novelty.

Often it was argued that under such dictatorships [as Louis Napoleon's], subjects were put under greater constraints than under tyranny, despotism, or absolute monarchy. The modern age was the first to use such effective psychological manipulation, mass mobilization, the organization of enthusiasm by nationalistic appeals, and effective

all-encompassing bureaucratic controls. And a single man was the focus of such loyalties. (Richter 1981:73)

In contrast, the older lexicon (tyranny, usurpation, etc.) carried associations that political theorists increasingly sensed to be inadequate. Recognizing that a chasm had opened up between the language they had inherited and the situation they currently faced, a group of thinkers in the first half of the nineteenth century sought new terminological coordinates: the result, eventually, was the birth of “Bonapartism” and, later, “Caesarism.”

This suggestive analysis prompts us to distinguish among three dimensions of Caesarism: it exists as word, as an idea, and as a member of a family of concepts. The *word*, we established, has its origins in the mid-to-late 1840s. With Louis Napoleon’s coup, the illegitimate connotations around the term hardened even further. Proudhon called Caesarism an “unpardonable” (*irrémissible*) “crime” because it substituted “arbitrary, violent, corrupt and murderous rule for the instinctive, spontaneous and free movement of society itself” (1883:40).³⁴ Victor Hugo employed similar terminology in his literary assault on *Napoléon le Petit* (1852).³⁵ And while Karl Marx ([1861] 1984:82) accused the *Times* of rampant inconsistency in its response to Louis Napoleon’s “imperialism,” he too could not resist quoting an editorial from that “Leviathan of the English press” of November 18, 1861 that poured scorn on the emperor’s legal credentials: “We will leave to others the task of congratulating Caesar on his admission that he is a finite and fallible being, and that, indisputably reigning by the power of the sword, he does not pretend to rule by virtue of Divine right. We had rather inquire what have been the financial results of ten years of Imperial sway...” Moreover, the association of Caesarism or Napoleonism with “the embalmed air of rancid legitimacy,” as Marx had earlier declaimed ([1856] 1980:617), was one that proved to have considerable longevity.

Consider the German case. In the thirteenth edition (1883: 38) of the *Brockhaus Conversations-Lexikon* we read:

Caesarism has come into use mainly to characterize the Napoleonic system. In this sense it means a particular kind of monarchy, which is different from the absolute as well as the constitutional ones because of its democratic basis and lack of legitimacy. Its essence, however, is a personal autocratic regime which is based on the predominance of administration and the ruthless enforcement of state power. The constitutional authority of the legislative bodies is used for its disguise and it tries to surround itself with the dubious glamour of a self-created aristocracy

True, not everyone agreed with the details of such a formulation. Heinrich von Treitschke ([1897-1898] 1916 II: 222-3), for instance, argued that precisely because “Caesarship was never a matter of legitimate inheritance” it was a tyranny not a monarchy. This fact was demonstrated he said by a simple point: Caesarism bore the name of a man, not a dynasty. Nonetheless, though Treitschke’s interpretation differed from *Brockhaus* in this respect, it agreed with it on the crucial issue that the Caesarist ruler holds his position “by no established right” and that “Roman Caesarism has found its modern counterpart in the Bonapartism of France.” Similarly, as late as 1917, Ferdinand Tönnies (1917: 210), in the notes-cum-glossary appended to his book on the English and German political systems, wrote that “Caesarism (after Julius Caesar) is a form of state in which a leader of the people (usually a leader of the army) sets himself up as a sole ruler (*Alleinherrscher*),” adding immediately afterwards in parenthesis: “Illegitimate or irregular monarchy.”³⁶

The *idea* of Caesarism, however—or at least elements of it—has a longer lineage.³⁷ Benjamin Constant’s ([1814] 1988) theory of usurpation anticipated it. Edmund Burke, in 1790, was predicting in phrases that uncannily resemble some later theorizations of “Caesarism,” that popular revolution in France (and, by extension, elsewhere) would result in a military takeover: “In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of an army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general...shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself” (Burke [1790] 1968:342). Maistre and Bonald said something similar. Finally, the *family of concepts* expressing illegitimate governance, of which Caesarism (in some renditions) is but one, is as old as Western political theory itself—the lineage of the word “tyranny,” for example, stretches back, in its Greek usage, to at least the mid-seventh century B.C. (Ste. Croix 1981: 279). All the same, one should note an important asymmetry between Caesarism and other terms denoting illegitimate rule. Tyranny, usurpation and despotism have pejorative undertones that are nigh universal in political theory. Political writers might define these terms in various ways, but all modulations have sought to convey forms of rule deemed highly dangerous and undesirable.³⁸ With Caesarism, on the other hand, the matter is more complex because the term could flag both condemnation and approval. For that very reason, Max Weber was later able to refashion Caesarism in his advocacy of parliamentary – as distinct from authoritarian – democracy. (By contrast, Weber could never have proposed, without inviting open ridicule, a system of parliamentary “tyranny” or “despotism” or “usurpa-

tion.) Granted, Caesarism was employed as a label of disparagement in the vast majority of cases, in England, Italy, and of course France itself. The same is true of Germany, as Heinz Gollwitzer's ([1952] 1987) pioneering study illustrates. Yet Gollwitzer also summons a number of people of diverse intellectual backgrounds and political persuasions who envisaged the "Caesarism of Napoleon III" in ways quite different from what one might have expected from Richter's analysis. Consider German conservative thought of the period: overwhelmingly anti-Napoleonic it certainly was, but there remained plenty of space for recusancy. Hence conservative thinkers such as Radowitz, Riehl, Manteuffel, Quehl, and Segesser—a heterogeneous group in themselves—congratulated Napoleon III's "Caesarism" for confronting the red menace, checking revolution, reaffirming the sanctity of private property and restoring "order."³⁹ Nor were liberal and socialist thinkers utterly immune to admiring Napoleon III, as the stances of Heine, Fröbel, Hillebrand, Mundt, and Schweitzer reveal plainly enough. And in France Caesarism was by no means unambiguously derided. Auguste Romieu preferred legitimism to Caesarism but he favored Caesarism over contemporary liberalism. A similar ambivalence is evident in various French lexicons of the day. Littré's *Dictionnaire* (1873: 534), for instance, renders Caesarism as "domination of the Caesars, that is, princes brought to government by democracy but invested with absolute power." Nonetheless it goes on to add that Caesarism is the "[t]heory of those who think that this form of government is best." Furthermore, while the author of the entry on Caesarism for Larousse's *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* (1867: 812) makes no attempt to hide his own antipathy to the phenomenon it is his task to define, he still records the view that "Caesarism implies necessarily the idea of a government either good or bad according to the person who will exercise it.... It is one of the progressive forms of despotism, fitting to those peoples who cannot or do not know how to govern themselves"⁴⁰

Democracy without Liberty: Caesarism and the Rise of the "Masses"

From Romieu to Weber and Oswald Spengler ([1918/1928]: 431-465), and thence to Amaury de Riencourt (1958: 329ff.), no linguistic association is more enduring, no gravitational pull between concepts so strong, as that between Caesarism and the masses. From 1850 to 1920 in particular, their symbiosis was a topos of political discussion. As Mosse recounts, "Caesarism became involved with the new importance

given to the masses as a political force in the post revolutionary age.” More precisely,

Caesarism as a concept is important in modern times because it became shorthand for a new political constellation arising during the nineteenth century. As a result of the French revolution, political theorists began to distinguish between two kinds of democracy: the rule of representatives, and the rule of the masses.... A discussion of Caesarism leads necessarily to an analysis of the rise of mass democracy: if not yet within the reality of historical development, then, certainly, as either a fear or hope in the minds of men concerned with the trend of the politics of their time. (Mosse 1971:167-8)

And it was fear more than hope that predominated whenever the question of the masses was raised in liberal and conservative circles. To liberals and conservatives alike, the emergence of a modern industrial proletariat, that is, of a class bereft of independent means of production, suggested an “amorphous and indistinguishable” (Williams 1976:159) multitude unconstrained by the collective obligations that full-membership of a body politic imposes on its propertied citizens. The advent of a restive working class also suggested something potentially explosive and unpredictable, in a word, “irrational.” For these reasons it is understandable that the term “mass”—which carried the dual associations of formlessness and instability—came to designate the new thing. Today, labor historians and social scientists ponder the crowd’s “moral economy” and the “collective action” of social movements. Such notions were, however, utterly foreign to most strands of nineteenth century opinion. The social psychology of the times, often jumbling mass, crowd and mob into one category, beheld a different spectacle—atavistic, homogenous, mercurial—and it is significant that even those, like Scipio Sighele and Gabriel Tarde, who sought to go beyond such simplifications, came to their subject matter from the angle of criminology (McClelland 1989:155ff). Within such a conceptual framework, the cultivation of “virtue” beloved by classical and other republicans simply made no sense. Nor did a polity permeated by the ethos of self-governing liberty. A mass, by definition, is an entity neither disposed nor able to rule. It is something to be shaped and controlled. For liberals and conservatives alike, the term “mass” flagged the problem of order and stability rather than the values of freedom and obligation. It evoked what Romieu called “*le spectre rouge*,” the red menace, the threatening and intimidating rule of the street.

As always, however, national conditions affected the perception of crisis. The British, for instance, worried less than the French about Cae-

sarism because they deemed it principally to be a Continental phenomenon arising out of Continental conditions (yet see Betts 1971). If the French will be French, fortunately this had little to do with the English. As Lord Malmesbury put it:

we should not measure his [Louis Napoleon's] acts by an English standard, or ask ourselves how we should like to see our Parliament shut up, the press abolished, and everybody imprisoned at pleasure; for we must remember that the French are more or less accustomed to such proceedings, and that Louis Napoleon put an end to a system that everybody knew was a fraud and could not last. (Quoted in Thompson [1955] 1983:126)

Britain suffered no equivalent of the February 1848 Revolution and the slaughter of the June days; no equivalent either of Louis Bonaparte's putsch and the repression that followed it: the mass arrests, censorship, prohibitions on assembly, purges of 3000-4000 teachers, and deportations: as late as 1859, 1,200 of the original 9,600 deportees were still languishing in Algeria (Goldstein 1983: 204). Indeed, the 1850s—the decade that spawned the Caesarism debate—was a relatively tranquil time in British domestic politics. Chartism was to all effects over by 1848, and the Young Ireland movement had collapsed. Britain also faced nothing comparable to the longevity of Louis Napoleon's uninterrupted rule as president and then emperor: twenty one years in all. And most evidently there was no parallel to the way that the franchise was granted, and then employed, in French elections and plebiscites during the period between 1848 and 1871. In Britain, electoral reform was a gradual process whose development is marked by the milestone Acts of Parliament of 1832, 1867, 1884, and 1885. Inclusion of the male members of the "masses" came incrementally and the first strides towards franchise extension were, in quantitative terms, the shortest: the Reform Act of 1832 increased the electorate by only 2 percent (from 5 to 7 percent of the adult population). The Reform Act of 1867, following three decades of political education, roughly doubled the number of those entitled to vote, while the Act of 1884 further increased the British electorate but only to five million. To be sure, these dates and figures notoriously conceal the arguments, hopes, and torments that animated debates among the propertied classes. To say the electoral process in Britain was "gradual" does not mean that it was smooth and unproblematic; nor should it imply a consensus on how, and at what pace, the workingman was to be integrated into the parliamentary system. Even so, British conditions contrasted starkly with the wild leaps and oscillations that characterized franchise reform in France. Before the February revolution of 1848, less than 250,000 electors existed. By March

this figure had swollen to over 8,000,000. In 1849 the electorate increased by almost two million more. But then in 1850, alarmed by workers' support for republican and socialist candidates, the government rendered a sizeable bloc of mobile workers electorally impotent by imposing a three-year residence qualification on the right to vote. At a stroke, roughly three million of the ten million electors were effectively disenfranchised (Cole and Campbell 1989: 18, 45). The plebiscite, too, was a device untried in Britain. As such, the parliamentary "representative" system, in which electors are subjects of the Crown, could be invidiously contrasted with the direct "democracy" of French Caesarist ventriloquism that chose to speak in the name of the French "people."

It was largely taken for granted that the people were unable to speak wisely and prudently for themselves, an assumption shown with particular clarity whenever the relationship between Caesarism and the ignorant or irrational masses was discussed. Cutting across liberal as well as conservative thought, the formulation was available in both a weak and a strong version. In the first variant, Caesarism was envisaged as resting upon, or actively promoting, the ignorance of the "untaught masses."⁴¹ Walter Bagehot offers its most sardonic expression. In an essay entitled "Caesareanism as it now exists" first published in the *Economist* in March 1865, Bagehot pondered on a regime that "stops the effectual inculcation of important thought upon the mass of mankind." Under the government of Napoleon III, Bagehot argued, high brow culture thrives and respect is still accorded to the achievements of scholarship. But outside of cultivated circles, a populace has been created that is totally unschooled politically—a consequence of the Second Empire's draconian censorship policy. Bagehot ([1865] 1968a IV: 113) observed that for "the crude mass of men...there are but two instruments penetrative enough to reach their opaque minds—the newspaper article and the popular speech, and both of these are forbidden."⁴² Almost five and a half years later, as Napoleon III's government tottered on the brink of defeat, Bagehot returned to this theme in a formulation notable both for its elaboration of his earlier view and for a definition of Caesarism that lassoes many of the meanings that, by 1870, that term had acquired. After declaring that it is not "personal government" per se that had failed in France—for the "personal government" of the Prussian crown was steaming to victory—Bagehot ([1870] 1968b IV: 155-6) proceeds, in serpentine prose, to identify the miscreant. It is

Caesarism that has utterly failed in France,—meaning by Caesarism, that peculiar system of which Louis Napoleon—still, we suppose, nominally the Emperor of the

French—is the great exponent, which tries to win directly from a *plebiscite* i.e. the vote of the people, a power for the throne to override the popular will as expressed in regular representative assemblies, and to place in the monarch an indefinite “responsibility” to the nation, by virtue of which he may hold in severe check the intellectual criticism of the more educated classes and even the votes of the people’s own delegates. That is what we really mean by Caesarism,—the abuse of the confidence reposed by the most ignorant in a great name to hold at bay the reasoned arguments of men who both know the popular wish and also are sufficiently educated to discuss the best means of gratifying those wishes. A virtually irresponsible power obtained by one man from the vague preference of the masses for a particular name—that is Caesarism...the absence of all intermediate links of moral responsibility and cooperation, which such a system necessarily leaves between the throne and the people. It is the very object of the plebiscite to give the Emperor an authority which reduces all intermediate powers to comparative insignificance if they come into collision with his own. Consequently everything must depend on him, and if he be not practically omniscient there is no substantial check at all on the creatures whom he sets up to execute his will.⁴³

Because all power and patronage are ultimately concentrated in the hands of one man, Bagehot continues, the errors, miscalculations and inefficiencies of that person have all-encompassing repercussions for his system. A more devolved order of governance, on the other hand, such as that which existed within the Prussian military caste, where the king rules through his nobility, provides a mechanism of damage limitation: “a thousand checks against the dishonesty and corruption which seem to have undermined the French military system.”

Even where the reference to “masses” gave way to that of “electors” and “citizens,” the linkage between Caesarism and ignorance remained remarkably durable. We see it reappearing, for example, as late as 1904 in Joseph Ferrand’s book on Caesarism and democracy. Ferrand’s central argument was that Caesarist state centralization had produced a situation of political and administrative debility in France. Since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte, the central government had assumed responsibility for a plethora of local concerns—right down to the level of sanitation and cemeteries—without being able to discharge this responsibility efficiently and equitably. In consequence, municipal government was often weak, financially insecure, and a creature of patronage—in short, administratively emasculated. Moreover, since the days of the First Consul, two pernicious ideas dominated French political life. First, that to deliberate is the responsibility of the many, but that action is the responsibility of a single individual. Second, that since government represents the sovereign people, it is impossible that the people could oppose it, for to do so would be to contradict themselves. It was little wonder, laments Ferrand, that France has virtually institutionalized the coup d’état. For

while the first idea legitimized a feeble and demoralized parliamentary system, the second produced an electorate ill equipped to think—and provided with few educational instruments to do so. The consequence was not a “sovereign” people but an alienated and apathetic one wielding the mass suffrage in merely a show of participation. Napoleon III made matters decidedly worse. Though he established a close relationship with the “masses,” the latter were both “inconsistent in their new role, and inattentive in exercising it.” Besides, universal suffrage offered precious little restraint on the *erreurs de l’ignorance et de la passion* that the plural vote and the representation of minorities might have afforded (Ferrand 1904:1-15, 62-4).⁴⁴

We have seen that, from one point of view, Caesarism has a particularly close affinity with a mass whose lack of education makes it dangerously amenable to demagoguery, irresponsibility and token participation. Caesarism both promotes and feeds off such a state of affairs. The implication of such a depiction is that without Caesarism, political education could begin or move forward; or at least that the masses have the capacity, given time, leadership, and more propitious conditions, to take their place on the political stage. Such a conviction is to be distinguished from the second, more brutal, version of the mass irrationality theme which contends that there is something about the mass *as such* that renders it imbecilic. Bismarck’s musings on the relationship between Caesarism and the masses offers one window on this perspective.⁴⁵ But it is in the political writings of Heinrich von Treitschke that it emerges in an undiluted form. Warmly endorsing Schiller’s assertion that “Majorities are folly and reason has always lodged among the few,” Treitschke warned that democratic government (that is, the masses in power), “must totally lack certain finer attributes of political intelligence, and more especially the gift of foresight;” it is always subject to “that terrible demoniacal and base passion—envy.” People in democracies are “peculiarly responsive to direct and simple sensations, good or bad alike and easily roused by a skilful demagogue” (Treitschke [1897-8] 1916 II: 282-3, 289).⁴⁶ Moreover, while majorities are “folly,” the Caesarist ruler is himself prone to a kind of madness which explains his tendency to pursue policies, especially in regard to foreign affairs, that are plainly “contrary to reason” (Treitschke 1916 II: 208, 221, 223). For Bagehot and Ferrand, Caesarism was at root a political condition inviting a political solution. For Treitschke it was essentially a problem of democratic social psychology. The lesson was that democracy, and not just Caesarism, was to be avoided at all costs.

Republicanism Overwhelmed

The discussion in European educated circles about Caesarism and the masses is an index of anxiety among many witnesses of the nascent democracies. It sheds light also on the intellectual paucity of the republican tradition itself once confronted with a situation for which its concepts were singularly ill-adapted to deal. The essential domestic problem of all European nineteenth-century states—how to respond to the growing demands of the unpropertied for political inclusion and citizenship—had never been adequately worked out by European (or American) republican theorists. Accordingly, critics of Napoleon III had few specifically republican conceptual resources to fall back on as they sought to address alternatives to the Caesarist model. Republican political theory was conceived in different times; and these were not times of democracy as we think of it today: representative, plebiscitarian or otherwise. On the contrary, “representation” was often contrasted with democracy, and the latter was typically envisaged as both unworkable and demagogic.⁴⁷ Commonwealthmen like Neville, Sydney, and Harrington, for instance, certainly championed the expansion and entrenchment of civil and religious freedoms. But they never dreamt of proposing universal manhood suffrage. Political representation was not a matter of numbers—the alternative notion of Napoleonic “representation”⁴⁸ would have been barely comprehensible to them—but of ensuring that all members of the propertied, literate, and independent classes possessed a public voice. “That servants, fishermen, labouring men and ‘rabble’ should exercise such a privilege was never conceived by them” (Robbins 1969:49). Rousseau ([1762] 1993a:239-40) made the point in a different way but just as bluntly: “If we take the term in the strict sense,” he remarked, “there never has been a real democracy, and there never will be. It is against the natural order for the many to govern and the few to be governed. It is unimaginable that the people should remain continually assembled to devote their time to public affairs,” just as it was unthinkable that democratic-like conditions—simplicity of manners, equality in rank, the absence of luxury—could be recreated in a modern polity. So-called “pure democracies” were also criticized in the *Federalist*. The argument for a republic, rather than a “democracy” was an argument for delegated powers. “Nothing can be more fallacious than to found our political calculations on arithmetical principles,” Madison wrote in *Federalist* 55. “In all very numerous assemblies, of whatever characters composed, passion never fails to wrest the scepter from reason. Had

every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob.”

Madison was here affirming the principle of representation that Rousseau sharply attacked. But in both cases “democracy” was not a part of their rhetorical armory. And by the middle of the nineteenth century, the term republican itself had become exceedingly broad and vague. Hence while Proudhon ([1840] 1969:88) could say that of course he was a republican, he also felt bound to add that “this word has no precise meaning. *Res publica*, that is, the public good. Now whoever desires the public good, under whatever form of government, can call himself a republican. Kings too are republicans.” Exactly a decade later, in recollections that would only be published towards the end of the century, Tocqueville was identifying “the republican form of government” with an “ill-balanced form of government” dominated by “an elected executive branch.” He contrasted it with the greater liberty allowed under constitutional monarchy ([1893] 1970: 200-1). Marx and Engels’s views on republicanism were even more complex.⁴⁹ Writing on the *Class Struggles in France: 1848-50*, Marx noted that while republicanism was associated with the revolutionary politics of the workers’ leadership—the “democratic republicanism” of Auguste Blanqui and Armand Barbès—it was just as capable of receiving a petty bourgeois and bourgeois appropriation.⁵⁰ Indeed, even Legitimists and Orleanists occasionally realized that the battle against the revolutionary proletariat “could only be joined in the name of the republic” (Marx [1850] 1973b: 56; cf. 41, 44, 62). The term “republican,” Marx suggests repeatedly is largely a bourgeois label for bourgeois rule. Engels agreed with him. Moreover, while the founders of Marxism were willing to acknowledge that, in developmental terms, the “bourgeois republic” would typically need to precede, and prepare the conditions for, a post-capitalist society, this was simply another way of saying that republicanism was a transitional form of political association leading eventually to “revolutionary socialism.”⁵¹

Even where, as in France, “republicanism” continued to attract supporters as a self-professed designation and creed, it had only superficial resemblances to its classical predecessors. Thus the republicanism of the Third Republic was predominantly a social, Kantian liberalism with the commitments to pursue educational reform along secular lines, promote social solidarity and mutual aid, reduce the excesses of competitive individualism, woo the workers from revolutionary Marxism and syndicalism, and establish a peaceful and just society (Bellamy 1992: 58-74). It is true that such a project shared the anti-clericalism of its republican

namesake, as well as the Rousseauian desire to create a “civic religion.” There the similarity ends, however. Indeed such attitudes, and the policies that flowed from them, led Third Republican reformers to be accused by Catholic critics, like Eugène Villedieu, of Caesarism! From such a perspective, Caesarism denoted not the negation of republicanism, but—in the metamorphosis of “Jacobin Caesarism”—its apotheosis.⁵² According to Villedieu, “Caesarism is the self-expression and the inevitable result of the Revolution’s doctrines,” and the execution of such doctrines encourage war, internal tumult, and the violation of the rights of citizens. In particular, Jacobin Caesarism robs citizens of their most precious institutional attachment: the Church. Whereas Napoleon’s Concordat had at least moved towards some rapprochement with the Church, the new Jacobins of the Third Republic were busy undoing even that compromise. The rights of the Church to exist, to develop to its full potential, and its right to teach and establish new schools were all under assault. As such, the regime was attacking not just the Church as an institution, but God Himself (Villedieu 1880:1-17).⁵³

This association of Caesarism with Jacobinism, and Jacobinism with the Third Republic is more evidence of the growing confusion surrounding the republican idea. For one thing, French social liberals of the Third Republic, like their forebears, were self-consciously *anti*-Jacobin, yet here they were being tarred with the same brush on account of their policies towards the Church. For another, the more conventional view that Caesarism was exemplified in Napoleon I and III—figures who moved to *crush* Jacobinism and republicanism alike—is here replaced by the contention that Caesarism and Jacobinism are integrally linked. Moreover, the idea that Jacobinism was alive and well in the structures of the Third Republic was not restricted to domestic critics of the regime or to Catholic apologists. Towards the end of the century, the position was recapitulated and refined by the Italian historian and political commentator Guglielmo Ferrero ([1898] 1972).

I have been commenting on the growing opacity of the republican idea in the nineteenth century and the conceptual limitations of the older republican tradition to deal creatively with the challenges associated with modern democracy. It remains for me to add that even where “democracy” and “the masses” enjoyed more favorable connotations, notably in socialist or anarchist thought, this had little to do with a republican conception of politics in spite of flourishes in that direction.⁵⁴ Republicans of my earlier description typically valued politics as something valuable in its own right: a space for the articulation of public goals; a nexus of rights

and obligations; a stage for greatness and glory. Man's greatest dignity lay in his capacity for political action, in his ability to love, defend and participate in the commonwealth. In contrast, the dominant strands of nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialist thought were predominantly laborist in character. For twentieth-century social democrats, politics was thought of mainly in distributive and instrumentalist terms, as a state mechanism honed to deliver social resources and to engage in projects of social engineering. In the nineteenth century, "social democracy" meant Marxism but for classical Marxism the point of engaging in politics was ostensibly to end it, so as to introduce a society without exploitation and inequality. It has been said that when Marx and Engels spoke of the dictatorship of the proletariat, "they were using the term 'dictatorship' in its ancient Roman sense" (Medvedev 1981:41). That assertion is garbled. Granted, the founders of Marxism conceived of dictatorship as a crisis form of rule, employing extraordinary powers for a limited duration, the purpose of which was to superintend the transition from a late capitalist mode of production to at least the first stages of a socialist and classless society. However, the analogy with Rome is, more closely considered, quite superficial. In Roman constitutional theory, and in early republican practice,⁵⁵ the dictatorship was an office of an already established government (the senate) empowered to take drastic action in order to re-establish normal political conditions. The dictatorship entailed the juridical *transfer* of power from the senate to one of its magistracies. For classical Marxists, to the contrary, the dictatorship of the proletariat was supposed to emerge from a *seizure* of power spearheaded by a revolutionary organization; it was in a very real sense the first legitimate government. Moreover, the dictatorship of the proletariat was no interregnum designed to re-establish the political status quo ante. It was but the first stage in a process the end result of which was the termination of the state itself.⁵⁶

In addition, the idea of law, as crucial for republicans as for liberals, was openly attacked in the classical Marxist tradition, as were legitimacy and love of country. Law was an ideological charade masking the repression of bourgeois rule. Debates about legitimacy and patriotism were irrelevant cant so long as one class or one national bourgeoisie dominated another. "Brotherhood," rather than "citizenship,"⁵⁷ internationalism rather than virtue, were the keynotes of Marxist praxis and just for this reason the term "masses"—now suggesting solidarity born of classless homogeneity—could take on positive associations. Classical republicanism, conversely, was a doctrine of political equality *and distinction*. That man's essential being lay in his activity as *homo faber*;

that liberty must entail a fundamental rupture with traditional notions of legal obligation and the rule of law; that one's primary loyalty was owed to a class rather to a commonwealth; such ideas would have made as little sense to classical republicans as the anarchist preference for a society without a state.⁵⁸

However, if opinion across the ideological spectrum read into the "masses" its own peculiar agenda, we have seen that it was mainly, though by no means exclusively, liberal and conservative thought that tied the term to Caesarism. While he who says Caesarism says the masses, the inverse relationship does not necessarily hold. Liberals and conservatives tended to see Caesarism as a reflex of mass behavior and intrusion; each appeared to entail the other. For this they had the impeccable source of Louis Napoleon himself. In the *Extinction of Pauperism* ([1844] 1856c: 122), he announced: "Today, the rule of castes is over: one can only govern with the masses. They should therefore be organized so that they can express their will, and disciplined so that they can be guided and enlightened as to [what constitutes] their own interests." The statement reformulated Louis's remark that "the Napoleonic idea"—the idea that Caesarism came in one prominent version to enshrine—"would use the influence it exercises over the masses, not in upsetting, but in calming and reorganizing society. The Napoleonic idea is in itself peaceful rather than warlike, and it is an idea more in favor of reconstruction than of upheaval" (Louis Napoleon [1840] 1856a: 12-13). Liberals and conservatives may, or may not, have seen such a program as bogus; but when they thought of the "masses," that is, when they thought of people *as* masses, the Caesar figure—Napoleon III, Bismarck—was never very far from their thoughts. For Marxism, in contrast, the relationship between Caesarism and "the masses" was much more open ended, not least because of the positive valence that the latter notion enjoyed in Marxist doctrine. Moreover, while Caesarism may have been a problem for some socialists and Marxists,⁵⁹ there was always the hope—virtually impossible in the thought-worlds of liberals and conservatives—that through education and leadership the masses would eventually be a problem *for Caesarism*.⁶⁰

Conclusion

We saw above how writers influenced by republican arguments employed Julius Caesar as a potent symbol of danger and decay. Invoking Caesar enabled republican thinkers to dramatize such issues as political liberty, human character, and the symptoms of virtue and corruption. In the nineteenth century, new problems towered over the political and aes-

thetic landscape. With them came a fundamental reappraisal of Caesar's qualities, and an urgent debate about politics that bore his name. The experience of revolution, the attack on established ideas of legitimacy, and the intrusion into political life of the "masses" prompted thinkers from across the spectrum to either welcome dictatorship or, and more usually, to deplore it. Increasingly, however, republican discourse looked remote and irrelevant. How were the masses to be controlled – or unleashed? What kind of legitimacy, if any, was appropriate to the modern age? What was the future of liberty, representation and democracy in an environment receptive to demagogic leaders? These were all questions that the Caesarism dispute abbreviated. No one provided more flexible and inventive answers to them than Max Weber, the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. A notable exception among sociologists is Breuer 1994: 202-208. For important historical treatments see the papers in Hanke and Mommsen 2001, and Hanke's introduction and notes to Weber 2005a. Cf. Becker 1988: 125-40. Unfortunately, none of this material is yet available in English.
2. On Marx as a classical scholar, and on his particularly high regard for Aristotle, see Geoffrey de Ste. Croix 1981:23-25, and George E. McCarthy 1990:57-119; also McCarthy (ed.) 1992.
3. No biography of Weber can afford to ignore the impact upon him of such classicists as Immanuel Bekker, August Meitzen, Carl Julius Beloch, Eduard Meyer, and Weber's mentor and family friend, Theodor Mommsen. See, inter alia, Hennis 2006, Nippel 2000a, Ste. Croix 1981, Finley 1977, and Momigliano 1977.
4. Cicero has Scipio say that "a commonwealth is the property of a people [*res publica res populi*]. But a people is not any collection of human beings brought together in any sort of way, but an assemblage of people in large numbers associated in an agreement with respect to justice and a partnership for the common good." As Cicero makes plain, it is the act of "mutual agreement" that transforms "a scattered and wandering multitude" into "a body of citizens" (*De Re Publica I/25*).
5. On the close relationship in Machiavelli's writings between political and military *virtù*, see Price 1973:326-335.
6. Machiavelli also broke with Ciceronian doctrine in not accepting the *concordia ordinum*—the ideal of social harmony and concord—as the basis of a secure and great republic. To the contrary, he envisioned internal strife, discord, conflict as "a prime *cause* of freedom and greatness" (Skinner 1990:130, 136).
7. Machiavelli ([1550] 1970:136) wrote: "Caesar is the more blameworthy of the two, in that he who has done wrong is more blameworthy than he who has but desired to do wrong."
8. The word "clemency" (*clementia*) acquired "an invidious connotation. Caesar is himself careful not to use it in the books on the Civil War" (Syme (1964: 119).
9. Women play a strong role as defenders of republican virtue in Plutarch's *Coriolanus*, where the protagonist's mother, Volumnia, gives her country priority over her treacherous son. In the main, however, women are players within the sphere most distant from republican life: the household. Their primary role is to take care

- of everyday needs, to provide domestic order, not to enter the light of the polis as equal citizens with men and acquire fame. One recalls Pericles' admonition to the mothers of the dead Athenians: "Your glory will be great if you show no more than the infirmities of your nature, a glory that consists in being least the subjects of report among men, for good or evil" *Peloponnesian War* II/46; I am using, for this extract, the Benjamin Jowett translation, revised by P.A. Brunt, in Knox 1993a). See also Knox 1993b:49ff.
10. Livy (III/26) says a three-acre farm.
 11. Ronald Syme (1964: 115) points out that even in the *Conspiracy of Catiline*, Cato is depicted as the more honorable and practical figure of the two.
 12. Compare with Ovid, *Metamorphoses* XII/39-63.
 13. Not all republicans shared this enthusiasm for glory, preeminence, ambition. James Harrington's ambivalence towards them is nicely described in Rahe 1992:417.
 14. I re-emphasize that this is the Machiavelli of the *Discourses*—the "philosopher of liberty," as Quentin Skinner dubs him (1981:48). In *The Prince* ([1532] 1972:99), on the other hand, Machiavelli is more than willing to describe Caesar as one of those "excellent men" who was willing prudently to imitate those most "praised and honored" before him (notably, Alexander the Great). Similarly, in *The Art of War* ([1521] 1965:55-6, 111, 120, 178-9, 211) Caesar's military skill is highly praised.
 15. The passage is taken almost verbatim from Tacitus' *Histories* I/2. Machiavelli and Tacitus are describing not the Caesarean interlude, but the period 69 A.D. to the end of the Flavian dynasty in 96 A.D., that is, the period that spans Galba's assumption of imperial authority (and murder) to Domitian's death.
 16. Guicciardini (op. cit: 123-24) argued, against Machiavelli, that it was not the prolongation of command that was a principal cause of the republic's collapse, so much as its context: the widespread corruption of Rome. "Hence I conclude that while Rome was not corrupted, the prolongation of commands and the continuation of the consulship which they resorted to frequently in times of great difficulty were useful and virtuous measures. But once the city was corrupted, civil discord began and the seeds of tyranny, even without the prolongation of the command. And so one can conclude that even if there had not been the extensions as well, neither Caesar nor the others who usurped the republic would have lacked the idea or the opportunity of seizing power by some other means."
 17. The quotations come, respectively, from Machiavelli [1550] 1970:428, 203 (cf. 193), 474.
 18. On this phenomenon, see Rousseau [1762] 1993a: 257-60; and Montesquieu [1748] 1989: 166.
 19. See Groh (1972):738-9 (on Constant and Vollgraff), and 741-3 (on Heine).
 20. The following section does not pretend to be a full account of Caesarism. Such a project would require national histories of the concept analogous to Claude Nicolet's ([2003] 2006) investigation of the French case, or Heinz Gollwitzer's ([1952] 1987) and Dieter Groh's (1972) examination of the German. (Strangely, we are still awaiting a major history of Caesarism in Italy.) In this chapter, I seek only to isolate themes that are pertinent to my later discussion of Weber. I focus on the relationship between Caesarism and (a) the masses; (b) legitimacy. More on both in chapter 3.
 21. Linguistically, the word depended on the prior development of the "ism" suffix (from the Greek *ismos*). "Originally it referred to actions which are at the same time denoted by the cognate suffix *izein* making a verb; the suffix *istes* denoting a person active in the appropriate ismos." In time, however, this "ism" formation

- came “to denote not so much the action in progress (as it did in the Greek words like *ostracismos* and *baptismos*) as principles of action or intentions. In this meaning it makes the word to which it is attached understood far beyond the country of its birth, the more so because in most cases the root of the word, like this suffix, is of classical origin” (Koebner and Schmidt 1965: xiv). The authors also note that the “ism” suffix “developed in two directions”: the first, designated an ideology of a specific group of people (e.g., liberalism, socialism, communism); while the second “added a note of derogation to the words to which it is attached”—a fate to which Caesarism would largely succumb. Also, see Groh 1972:726, who makes the point that “Caesarism” and “Bonapartism” were not social-constitutional concepts pointing in a certain political direction—like “liberalism” or “socialism”—but were more often treated as concepts of domination.
22. The *Grand Larousse de la langue française*, Vol. I (1971:652), pins it down firmly to 1850 and the pen of M. A. Romieu. It defines “Césarisme” as the “method of government of Julius Caesar” and “by extension, the form of government which is very authoritarian, in which a single person unites all the forms of power, but this is however founded upon popular consent.” (This was not Romieu’s own definition of Caesarism.) Two pioneering essays by Momigliano (1956:231; 1962:369) also suggested that the word was coined in France by Romieu.
 23. “Only the power of the Church can secure justice and freedom in the storms which threaten us. All those who strive for a non-religious state and who therefore stamp upon everything religious....[and] who always babble about freedom and progress, deserve nothing better than that the iron hand of a military dictatorship....The state needs the Church and the time will come when it will plead for help; however the Church can manage without the help of the state as it now is and will inevitably develop in its absolutism, which must absorb even the very last of the Church’s remaining rights. We are heading for a time of a new Caesarism; thank God that at least the old Church has never submitted to Caesarism and has always been victorious in its fight against it” (Böhmer, in Janssen 1868:278-9). Groh (1972:744) dates this comment at 1847 but examination of the Janssen source suggests that 1846, or even 1845, is the more likely date.
 24. Romieu took up this theme again in *Le spectre rouge de 1852* (1851: 68) which predicted, in lurid terms, the destruction of bourgeois power. In the coming duel between chaos and order, that is, between “le délire furieux des masses et la discipline vigoureuse de l’armée,” the bourgeoisie would find themselves utterly smashed. The reference to 1852 is an allusion to May 1852 the date in which elections were due to take place for the presidential office and for members of the legislative assembly.
 25. Although this is a particularly useful and interesting source, much work remains to be done to trace the historical trajectory of the term in Italy. The *Dizionario di politica*, edited by Norberto Bobbio and his collaborators, has only a slim entry on “Cesarismo” (by Carlo Guarnieri [1983:155-7]). Concentrating on Gramsci’s employment of the term, it has very little to say about nineteenth-century usage.
 26. Cf. Gramsci [1951] 1966:189.
 27. Groh 1972:735, 748, 759-60.
 28. Details in Groh 1972: 754-5, 762; cf. 727, 752, 765.
 29. Arnaldo Momigliano (1962:369) believed this might be the first usage of *Cäsarismus* in German—or at least that no one had found an earlier one. Thanks to Dieter Groh, we now know that the term was used as early as 1846. (The English translation of Buckhardt’s *The Age of Constantine the Great* omits the footnote to Romieu, but does include a reference to Caesarism in the main text: see Burck-

- hardt 1949:44.). Burckhardt returned to the term, albeit in a different context, in November 1867. To students attending his lectures on the French Revolutionary epoch, delivered at the University of Basel, he declared confidently that Napoleon Bonaparte “is the most instructive type of Caesarism. He is, at the same time, the savior of the new French society and a world conqueror” (Burckhardt 1959:212). Also, see 34 where the Swiss historian refers to Julius Caesar as “the greatest of mortals.” On the concept of Caesarism in conservative Swiss social and political thought, see Meyer 1975, which considers in detail the work of Philipp Anton von Segesser, Heinrich Gelzer, Johann Jacob Bachofen and Jacob Burckhardt.
30. Yet see Marx [1858] 1986.
 31. Bamberger’s comment, which continues with the words “and God only knows what thousands of people imagine it to be,” is quoted by Otto Ladendorf (1906:41).
 32. Burke described the first Revolutionary government (the National Constituent Assembly, July 1789-September 1791) as “illegitimate and usurped” and against which another revolution “would of course be perfectly justifiable, if not absolutely necessary” ([1790] 1968:147). See also Constant’s remark ([1814] 1988, 146) on Napoleon the “usurper” who “sits with fear on an illegitimate throne, as on a solitary pyramid.”
 33. Another plebiscite in 1802 confirmed Napoleon’s position of Consul for life. As with the other two cases, the “figures are truly overwhelming and wholly unbelievable”—3,600,000 for, 8,374 against (Gay 1993:566, n.34).
 34. This two-volume work was originally composed between 1852-4. Proudhon was writing of the Roman Caesars, not Napoleon III. But this kind of language was easily transferable, not least by Proudhon himself: see Proudhon 1969:165,192 from correspondence penned in 1852 and 1861 respectively.
 35. Hugo does not use the term Caesarism in *Napoléon le petit*, but he does emphasize that the coup was illegal: see ([1852] n.d. 1:101-189), and, for a longer version, his *Histoire d’un crime* (begun in 1852 but not published until 1877). The former contains a number of sardonic comparisons between Julius Caesar and Louis Bonaparte, but it is the concepts “dictator” and “despot” that the novelist falls back on. For Hugo ([1852], n.d. 1:74-5), Louis is a combination of both, backed up by a spy-network.
 36. Most of Tönnies’s discussion of Caesarism, however, relates not to a military leader but to the office of the British prime minister. Suffice it to note Tönnies’s observations of the “similarities between the British and ancient Roman empires,” a parallel he discerns in both title (“the name Prime Minister reminds one of the Principate”) and in the formidable extent of the Premier’s powers to change laws, initiate taxation and generally harness state power to his own ends: Tönnies 1917:50. Max Weber also described the British Prime Minister as “Caesarist” as we shall see in the next chapter.
 37. Though not as long as some say. When Hasso Hofmann (1977:93) writes of “the Caesarist model of Thomas Hobbes,” I sense an air of unreality.
 38. Even if sometimes necessary. Stendhal’s *Life of Napoleon*, written in 1817-18 as a refutation of Madame de Staël’s portrait of the First Consul in her *Considérations*, defended the “military despotism” that was installed by the Eighteenth Brumaire. Without it “France would have had in 1800 the events of 1814, or else the Terror” (1956:35; cf. 37).
 39. Even where Bonapartism is criticized by conservative thinkers, this need not mean that Caesarism is similarly condemned: the trick is to distinguish between them. For instance, Leopold von Gerlach, the champion of legitimism, had little taste for Louis Bonaparte, a man who, like his uncle, represents revolution in its distilled

- form and with it “perjury and treachery.” If Gerlach shared the project of conservatives everywhere to smash liberalism and socialism, this did not mean that he wanted a Napoleon to do it. At the same time Gerlach did not equate Bonapartism with Caesarism. “Bonapartism,” he insisted, “is not absolutism, not even Caesarism; the former may found itself on a *jus divinum*, as in Russia and in the East, and therefore does not affect those who do not recognize this *jus divinum*, for whom, in fact, it does not exist...Caesarism is the arrogation of an imperium in a lawful republic and is justified by urgent necessity; to a Bonaparte, however, whether he like it or no, the Revolution—that is, the sovereignty of the people—represents an internal, and in any conflict or exigency also an external, legal title” (in Bismarck 1898 I:206). For Gollwitzer (1952:28-31), the correspondence between Gerlach and Bismarck in 1857 constitutes “the classic example of the argument between legitimist policy and *Realpolitik*.”
40. This is a particularly valuable lexicographical source, quoting Proudhon and J. Simon (“Caesarism is democracy without liberty”), and while dilating on Napoleon Bonaparte, carefully avoids mention of Napoleon III. Yet the author remarks: “Without entering for the moment into the discussion of the various judgments that have been made about it, we declare here that, in our view, absolute power, whatever name one gives it, and by whatever means it is established, is irrevocably condemned by philosophy and history alike, by law and also by reason; it is a form which belongs to barbaric times, which may well be born again in times of crisis, but like a sort of political monstrosity has nothing to do with the conditions of life and can only stop for the moment the march of progress” (Larousse 1867:812).
 41. The phrase belongs to John Stuart Mill—no theorist of Caesarism—but Mill had a more catholic understanding of the masses than most of his contemporaries. “Masses” meant the sway of “collective mediocrity” in both public life and personal relations, the supremacy of “public opinion.” Masses do not take their views “from dignitaries in Church or State, from ostensible leaders, or from books,” but on the contrary, “from men like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers.” Yet Mill is categorical that the “mass” embraces more than the working or poorer class: in England it is chiefly the “middle class” he refers to, in America “the whole white population” (Mill [1859] 1971:314).
 42. In the same article, Bagehot compares Napoleons I and III with Julius Caesar “the first instance of a democratic despot” who “overthrew an aristocracy...by the help of the people, of the unorganised people.” Moreover, whereas the old monarchies of feudal origin claimed obedience from the people on the grounds of duty, “Louis Napoleon is a Benthamite despot. He is for the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number.’ He says, ‘I am where I am, because I know better than anyone else what is good for the French people, and they know that I know better.’ He is not the Lord’s anointed; he is the people’s agent” (Bagehot [1865] 1968a IV: 111).
 43. Bagehot ([1870]1968b IV: 157) asserts that the army is “the great physical basis of Caesarism.”
 44. Ferrand’s (1904: 1) book opens with a quotation from Michelet: “Quelle est la première partie de la politique? L’éducation. Quelle est la seconde? L’éducation. Quelle est la troisième? L’éducation.”
 45. Bismarck contended that, without “the restraining influence of the propertied class,” a state would be destroyed by “the unreasoning masses.” Even so, order would soon reassert itself because it corresponds to a need the masses feel keenly: “if they do not recognize this need a priori, they always realize it eventually after manifold arguments ad hominem and in order to purchase order from a dictatorship

56 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

- and Caesarism they cheerfully sacrifice that justifiable amount of freedom which ought to be maintained, and which the political society of Europe can endure without ill-health.” (Bismarck 1898:II 65-6)
46. These comments, it is true, do not derive from Treitschke’s chapter on Caesarism, but they do bear an indirect relationship to it because Caesarism, we are informed, is the archetype of “democratic tyranny.”
47. The contrast persisted for some time. As Mazzini observed ([1847] 1908b:102): “The union of the democratic principle with representative government is an entirely modern fact, which throws out of court all precedents that might be appealed to.” The essay from which these lines are drawn contains a revealing mid-century European snapshot of the meanings and types of “democracy” then extant.
48. “Napoleon is the supreme head (*chef*) of state; the elected of the people; the representative of the nation. In his public acts, the Emperor always gloried [in the fact] that he owed everything to the French people alone,” etc (Louis Napoleon [1839] 1856b I:102).
49. Cf. Hannah Arendt [1954] 1993:17-40; and Arendt 1958.
50. On the three major varieties of “republicanism” in France between 1848 and 1851—utopian republicanism (epitomized by Alphonse de Lamartine), “red republicanism,” and the republicanism of the notables—see Zeldin ([1973] 1979:120-139), who writes: “Republicanism thus represented three contradictory things: a belief in an ideal government which could not exist, a popular opposition to all government, and a new establishment party, accepting responsibility, honors and compromise” (130-1).
51. The expressions in quotation come from a letter of Engels to Eduard Bernstein, dated August 27, 1883 (Marx and Engels [1955] 1975:342-3). Engels adds that just as the successful struggle by the bourgeoisie against feudalism could only take place under a constitutional monarchy (as distinct from an absolute monarchy), so a decisive resolution of the struggle by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie “can only be fought out in a republic.”
52. Note the resonance here with a pre-1848 French usage of “republican” which evoked “militarism, the passion for glory and foreign adventures” and of which Louis Napoleon (before 1851) was considered to be a proponent. For details on Bonapartism as a “variety of republicanism” see Zeldin ([1973] 1979:144). On Napoleon III’s political system, see Zeldin 1958.
53. This was also a charge leveled by Catholic critics at “state socialism,” a tendency, it was claimed, to which the Third Republic was clearly succumbing. The connection between state-socialism and Caesarism, participants at the Catholic Jurists’ Congress of 1884 declared, was that both entailed the worship of the state (either construed as a collective set of institutions or as embodied in a single person); both promoted the centralization of power; both, in consequence, invaded the private domain and sought to control the minds of children through secular education; and both failed to recognize the proper distinction between the obligations due to fellow humans and those due to God. See respectively the comments of l’abbé Crozat and of Mgr. de Kernaeret, in *Congrès de Jurisconsultes Catholiques* 1885:19-33, 33-39).

The view that “socialism must inevitably end in Caesarism” was also expressed by Joseph Conrad (1927 I: 84) in a letter to Spiridion Kliszczewski of 19 December 1885, though by Caesarism Conrad meant “a militarism despotism.” (Cf. Groh 1972:749, 754 on the equation of Caesarism with communism.) Later, however, Conrad offered a different definition in his novel *Nostromo* ([1904] 1963:335). He has Pedrito Montero say “that the highest expression of democracy was Caesarism:

the imperial rule based upon the direct popular vote. Caesarism was conservative. It was strong. It recognized the legitimate needs of democracy which requires orders, titles, and distinctions. They would be showered upon deserving men. Caesarism was peace. It was progressive. It secured the prosperity of a country.”

- Sociologists might also wish to recall the slash-and-burn Introduction by George E.G. Catlin to the 1938 translation of *The Rules of Sociological Method*, which comes close to accusing Emile Durkheim—one of the Third Republic’s chief advocates—of Caesarist tendencies. Catlin interprets Durkheim’s theory of religion, his wish to promote “a purely lay education,” and his notion of the *conscience collective* as inducements to state leviathanism. Linking Durkheim with Sorel, and Sorel with Mussolini, Catlin remarks: “By his ill-considered and scientifically pretentious psycho-mysticism Durkheim has contributed to give the color of justification to the new religion of the altar of *divus Augustus* and to the neopagan philosophy of Caesar-worship” (Durkheim [1895] 1938/1950: xxviii). Also xxxv-vi on Durkheim’s contribution to “popular dictatorship”!
54. Disappointment with the masses was a perennial theme of anarchist thought. See George Woodcock ([1956] 1987:166-7) on Proudhon and Emma Goldman’s ([1917] 1969:69-70) bitter assessment. The failure of the American people to defend liberty against government depredation was a clear sign of the victory of the “mass spirit.” “...the majority cannot reason, it has no judgment. Lacking utterly in originality and moral courage, the majority has always placed its destiny in the hands of others....Without ambition or initiative, the compact mass hates nothing so much as innovation. It has always opposed, condemned, and hounded the innovator, the pioneer or a new truth.”
 55. And this must be the referent of Medvedev’s discussion, for a comparison of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” with the “dictatorships” of the Late Republic—those of Sulla and Caesar—would be to equate the revolutionary party with tyranny or monarchy.
 56. See Carl Schmitt’s distinction between “commissarial” and “sovereign” dictatorships ([1928] 1978): especially 1-79, 97-152).
 57. This is not to deny, of course, that “citizen” was a common form of address among Marxist and other revolutionaries. However its interchangeability with “brother”—denoting kinship solidarity rather than citizen equality—reveals its very limited republican substance. On “Citizen Marx,” see Engels [1850] 1978:353-369. On “brothers,” Marx and Engels [1850] 1978:371. Also Antonio Gramsci, in a passage [1919] celebrating the factory councils. “The factory council is the model of the proletarian State. All the problems which are inherent in the organization of the proletarian State, are inherent in the organization of the Council. In the one and in the other the concept of citizen decays, and is replaced by the concept of comrade; collaboration to produce well and usefully develops solidarity, multiplies the bonds of affection and brotherhood” (cited in Bellamy 1987:118).
 58. Revolutionary syndicalism represents a more complex case, as Christopher Lasch (1991:304-16) points out. Georges Sorel’s defense of the military virtues of heroism and glory, his belief in proprietorship, and his sense of social entropy, have many resemblances with antique republicanism. See Sorel [1906] 1950, which also contains as Appendix 3 a defense of Lenin. On the capitalist democracies as “Carthage” and the proletarian soviet republics as “Rome,” see 285.
 59. Writing for the *Allgemeine Deutsche Arbeiterzeitung*, in December 1864, a Marxist journalist quoted by Dieter Groh (1972:760) remarked that while he and the people he represented were “fighting for full political and civil rights for the workers and for the universal franchise” they were nonetheless “mindful that only education can really liberate; we don’t want this precious right in the hands of the

58 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

uneducated masses to be used as a lever in the setting up of a Caesarship hostile to liberty.” On Caesarism’s dissemination across the political spectrum as a political term see 726,732.

60. Cf. Eduard Bernstein’s ([1899] 1961:144) comment that “Universal suffrage in Germany could serve Bismarck temporarily as a tool, but finally it compelled Bismarck to serve it as a tool.”

3

Caesarism and Charisma: From German Politics to Universal Sociology

Introduction

Max Weber's writings furnish a unique vantage point from which to glimpse the transformation of the Caesarism debate and the development of his own sociology. Weber, like Marx, was a man whose ideas crystallized the most acute tensions of his age. And like Marx too, he was a bold, willful, and prodigiously gifted innovator. Any satisfactory examination of his intellectual contribution must convey these twin aspects; it must, in other words, seek both to locate Weber's work in contemporary debates and show how he subscribed to or, more usually, deviated from them. However such a task is complicated, at least so far as Caesarism is concerned, by the fact that Weber addressed that question in two overlapping, but nonetheless analytically distinct, contexts.

First, Weber employs the term Caesarism in his early correspondence, his political journalism, and his public lectures to attack the legacy of Otto von Bismarck, the great architect of the German Second Empire. In these directly political interventions, Caesarism is portrayed as a deeply damaging phenomenon; accordingly, the tone Weber adopts is one of regret and denigration. Bismarckian Caesarism, in brief, is adduced as evidence of Germany's failure to modernize its institutions along the parliamentary lines so successfully established in the Anglophone world. Yet once Weber sketches his own alternative to the Bismarckian state we see that it is not Caesarism per se that he is rejecting.¹ On the contrary, Caesarism—now presented in the guise of modern plebiscitary leadership, situated within a vibrant parliamentary structure—is considered by Weber to be the political secret of the remarkable imperial and civil successes of Britain and America. Germany, he says, should follow suit.

It transpires from this first general context of Weberian analysis, that Caesarism (in one modality or another) is the inevitable accompaniment to electoral democracy, a corollary of modern party politics. The point is not to get rid of Caesarism as such—a quixotic goal—but to cultivate its most politically energetic form. Nineteenth-century debates around Caesarism, as we saw in the last chapter, were polarized between those for and against it. Positive or negative attributions were nothing new. Weber's account was original precisely in its discriminating and flexible character. All the same, it is a second depiction of Caesarism that shows the greatest shift from nineteenth-century preoccupations.

The narrative context in this case is Weber's didactic, sociological writings, more especially the "ideal-types" he adumbrated in the sociology of religion and in the various drafts of work from 1909 onwards that comprise the posthumously published *Economy and Society* (Weber [1922] 1978b). In this more pointedly scholarly and academic setting in which Weber seeks to develop categories for social scientific investigation, Caesarism emerges as neither positive nor negative, ascriptions that share the common feature of being highly charged and ethically resonant. Instead of being a basic political concept Caesarism now takes its place as a relatively minor *technical* term in the vocabulary and classification of "legitimate *Herrschaft*"² a treatment that purports to be nothing more than descriptive and analytical. Simultaneously, the perplexing inflections surrounding the question of illegitimate domination or rulership recede and are deflated by redefining "legitimacy" to embrace any form of obedience provided it is voluntarily accepted by those within its sphere of jurisdiction. Legitimate *Herrschaft* is a pleonasm. Melvin Richter is thus quite right to contrast the highly sanitized notion of Caesarism that one finds re-described in Weber's *sociology* (though not in his political writings) with the earlier nineteenth-century emphasis on Caesarism's arbitrary and despotic qualities. More than this, Caesarism is not only redefined in a way that would have appeared oxymoronic or downright contradictory to a previous generation of thinkers. It is also reformulated in such a way as to render it less visible, and thereby less problematic, a strategy that helps explain why the concept has received so little explicit attention among Weber scholars. For in successive versions of Weber's sociology of legitimate *Herrschaft*, Caesarism becomes translated into, and interchangeable with, the jargon of "plebiscitary leadership" and "plebiscitary leader democracy." Simultaneously it becomes absorbed into the concept of charisma. And it is charisma, not Caesarism, for which Weber

is today remembered; charisma that has spawned hundreds of studies and interpretations; charisma that has seeped into lay discussion.

Of course the diminutive stature of Caesarism when measured against charisma is understandable and, to a large extent, is rightly conceived—if one focuses on Weber’s sociological work alone.³ Charisma, after all, is the term Weber defines precisely and at length in a number of prominent and now famous texts. It is finely tuned to his purposes, explicitly set to work and elaborated upon in his sociology of religion and domination, self-consciously stamped with his authority. By contrast, Caesarism as a specific term is largely absent from the sociological texts, and even in the political writings is never defined systematically. It did not have to be because the term was part of a political vernacular Weber shared with his contemporaries. Even so, Caesarism as a leadership concept has much more claim on our attention than hitherto it has received. For it was “Caesarism” that Weber used first and continued to use from early maturity to the end of his life—it thus has a career continuity lacking in its partner term; Caesarism that far more than the word he adopted from Rudolf Sohm and the Bible connects Weber to a storehouse of nineteenth-century arguments and preoccupations; Caesarism the word with which Weber issued his censure of Bismarck, lacerated the literati and theorized key aspects of modern democracy.⁴

Part 2 of this book, being concerned with Weber in “our time,” takes his concepts of fate and community of fate and applies them in ways he never thought of. It is Weberian in spirit—tackling contemporary, empirical problems in a scientific manner, and seeking to understand social action—without confining itself to Weber’s own priorities or methods. The present chapter, conversely, deals with Weber in his time, not ours. Accordingly, my approach to Caesarism, plebiscitary leadership, and charisma is different from that of some scholars who desire to tidy up Weber’s analysis (notably, Breuer 1998; cf. Breuer 1994) or who understand the distinction among Weber’s leadership terms as principally substantive in nature. For instance, Sven Eliaeson (2000: 140) writes that whereas charisma is a “relational concept,” Caesarism refers to a “method” of governance. As for plebiscitary rule, it is “populist” (e.g., Huey P. Long) without necessarily being “Caesarist” (e.g., Napoleon III). That distinction may or may not be empirically cogent. *But it is not what Weber says.* In his investigation, all three of these concepts (Caesarism, plebiscitary rule, charisma) are relational. Similarly, all in some measure are populist. In contrast to the improvers of Weber’s analysis,

my emphasis here is on the shifting rhetorical contexts of Weber's leadership terminology: the frameworks into which he inserted Caesarism, plebiscitary leadership, and charisma and that allocate to them their particular meaning and function. I wish to account for his theoretical moves. We need to explain, for instance, why, with the exception of "Politics as a Vocation," charisma does not appear as a word in any of Weber's political writings and why Caesarism has such a lowly status, as a word, in his sociological writings.

We must also be careful not to exaggerate the prominence of any one term when we consider the more general semantic field in which it is located. Attention to balance, as well as to the individual descriptors themselves, is imperative. Yet it is often lacking, even in the work of normally meticulous scholars. Consider the expression *plebiszitäre Führerdemokratie* as it appears in one of Wolfgang Mommsen's (1963) most cited articles on Weber's theory of leadership. Mommsen invokes *plebiszitäre Führerdemokratie* over a dozen times in the essay to which I am referring. The effect of such repetition on the unsuspecting reader, reinforced by Mommsen's habit of invariably placing either part or all of the expression in quotation marks, is to assume that Weber himself chose often to employ it. Yet I have been able to locate only one written occasion when he does so (Weber [1922] 1964:199 [rendered in the English translation simply as "plebiscitary democracy"] = Weber 1978b:269).

Presently I shall seek to both describe and explain the asymmetry of Weber's treatment of charisma and Caesarism. Before that, let us unravel Weber's notions of Caesarism as they appear in his analysis of Bismarck, the American and British parliamentary system, and the potential position of a German Reich president. I summarize these topics principally for the benefit of non-specialists. Weber scholars, already familiar with this territory, will find nothing new in this part of the discussion and may wish to move directly to the sections that begin with *Interim Reflection*. There I offer some summary considerations on the forgoing before providing a detailed and systematic analysis of the Caesarism-charisma connection.

Bismarckian Caesarism

Weber never doubted the value of German unification or Bismarck's genius in establishing the new state. He objected to Bismarck's management of the subsequent "peace," the grievous injuries inflicted on the fledgling Reich in both domestic and foreign arenas by a regime so self-

serving as to mistake its own parochial interests for that of an emergent great power. Worse still, that system of governance proved capable of enduring in the absence of its original architect.

When Weber refers to Bismarck, the charge of “Caesarism” is never far away and the word is typically inflected with animus. Three features of Bismarck’s statecraft comprise its Caesarist and reprehensible character. First was Bismarck’s electoral manipulation: his initiative in introducing, or, to be exact, reintroducing universal manhood suffrage, now extended to encompass the whole of the Reich.⁵ Reflecting on the implications for the German polity of the 1884 Reichstag election, the young Max Weber penned a revealing letter to his uncle and confidant Hermann Baumgarten. The National Liberals’ rightward shift under Johannes Miquel at the eleventh hour of the campaign and the failure of a union with the German Free Conservatives to materialize eventuated in a “pathetic result” for the forces of liberalism. That “was predictable.” “Interesting,” on the other hand, was the success of the Social Democrats in increasing their proportion of the votes cast from 6.1 (1881) to 9.7 percent and as a consequence doubling their seats in the National Parliament from twelve to twenty-four.⁶ Evidently Bismarck’s anti-socialist legislation had failed to turn the tide of Social Democratic support. After then remarking that a case could conceivably be made to support the anti-socialist laws on the grounds that Social Democratic agitation threatened to bring about a general curtailment of civil liberties by the state—better the few repressed than the many—Weber delivered his indictment: “The capital mistake seems to be the Greek gift of Bismarckian Caesarism, universal suffrage, which is sheer murder of equal rights for all in the true sense of the word.”⁷

This statement was not as an objection to universal manhood suffrage per se. Weber simply distrusted the motives behind its implementation and timing, believing that Bismarck planned “to use universal suffrage...to keep liberalism in check” (Marianne Weber [1926] 1988:118). In the Freiburg Inaugural lecture ([1895] 1980), Weber’s acceptance of the electoral presence of the proletariat is clear (it is their political “immaturity” and “philistinism” that he decries) as is his scorn for those obsessed with the “red peril.” And during the Great War he was robust in demanding that all remaining impediments to the suffrage in Prussia be removed. For Weber it was outrageous that men who had fought for the fatherland might return to find themselves in the lowest of the Prussian three-class system.⁸ His earlier reservation was something quite different: Weber simply believed that the ideal of national parliamentary respon-

sibility would be better served by a gradualist, evolutionary approach to democratization—like Britain’s—that first embraced the economically privileged and culturally educated before ushering the masses onto the political stage (Weber [1917] 1958:233-4; Weber [1918] 1978a: 1442 = 1958: 370-1). Bismarck, however, had chosen to sacrifice the interests of the nation to his own “Caesarism.”

Weber’s second rebuke to Bismarckian Caesarism is closely related to the first. It concerns the chancellor’s towering stature and the shadow it cast over the Second Empire, enthralling supporters, intimidating opponents and, subsequently, awing the epigones. Bismarck’s deeds only partially explain the elevation he enjoyed. Just as important was the historical setting in which the man became hero: a Reich newly forged, vigorously particularist, and bereft of a collective identity. In Bismarck, the Empire found its cohesive surrogate. Across the whole spectrum of German culture of the 1870s and 1880s and beyond, the Bismarck myth was propagated—for instance, in the historical work of Treitschke, in the painting of Arnold Böcklin, Franz von Lenbach, and Anselm Feuerbach, in the stories of Paul Heyse, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the sculpture of Reinhold Begas, Hugo Lederer and Emil Schaudt.⁹ And while the attempt to transform Emperor William I “into a popularly accepted founding father of a united Germany” was somewhat of a failure, Bismarck’s death in 1898 prompted 470 municipalities to erect columns in his memory (Hobsbawm 1983: 264).

Weber, too, found much in Bismarck to admire: his political adroitness, mental acuity, and sheer lack of humbug in matters of power politics. At the same time, Bismarck’s monomania and the political excesses it encouraged left Germany with the deepest scars. Bismarck bequeathed to his successors “a nation without any political sophistication, far below the level which in this regard it had reached twenty years before” (i.e., in 1870); “a nation without any political will of its own, accustomed to the idea that the great statesman at the helm would make the necessary political decisions”; “a nation accustomed to fatalistic sufferance of all decisions made in the name of ‘monarchic government,’ because he had misused monarchic sentiments as a cover for his power interests in the struggle of the parties”; “a nation unprepared to look critically at the qualification of those who settled down in his empty chair.” Furthermore:

The great statesman did not leave behind any political tradition. He neither attracted nor even suffered independent political minds, not to speak of strong political personalities. On top of all this, it was the nation’s misfortune that he harbored...intense mistrust toward all even vaguely possible successors.... A completely powerless

parliament was the purely negative result of his tremendous prestige. (Weber [1918] 1978a:1392 = 1958:307-8; I have omitted many emphases)

Bismarck—"that Caesar-like figure hewn out of quite other than bourgeois timber" (Weber [1895] 1980:444 = 1958:20-21), architect of German unification and de facto ruler of the German Empire until his departure from office in 1890—was no longer in charge when Weber spoke these words. But his deeds and example had stamped their indelible imprint on an impressionable Reich to such a degree that the middle class, accustomed to prostration before a Titan, had lost the will, perhaps even the ability, to get off its knees: "One section of the haute bourgeoisie longs all too shamelessly for the coming of a new Caesar, who will protect them in two directions: from beneath against the rising masses of the people, from above against the socio-political impulses they suspect the German dynasties of harboring" (ibid: 445 = 1958:21). Weber ([1917] 1958: 233) remembered a time when Bismarck had forced "his Caesarism" on a "reluctant bourgeoisie." Then, increasingly terrorized by their own insecurity, they had come to accept willingly their own subaltern status within the Reich, reconciled to a regime "half 'Caesarist,' half 'patriarchal'" (Weber [1898] 1971:31) whose existence was severely detrimental to the nation's political education.

When, many years later, Weber returned to the relationship between Bismarck and the bourgeoisie his treatment was noticeably different in emphasis. Musing on the prime period of German liberalism, the bourgeoisie's political leadership is dealt with sympathetically, in sharp contrast to the lambasting the bourgeois class received in the earlier Freiburg lecture. This leadership, predominantly National Liberal in affiliation, was candid enough to admit Bismarck's "tremendous intellectual superiority" without thereby abdicating political responsibility. They considered "Caesarism—government by a genius—the best political organization for Germany, if there would always be a new Bismarck" (Weber [1918] 1978a:1387 = 1958:302-3). But knowing this to be impossible, they attempted to secure a strong parliamentary and party system capable of "attracting great political talents." Moreover, many of the most vibrant Reich institutions, such as the office of the imperial chancellor, and the most imaginative innovations, such as the creation of the *Reichsbank* and the unification of the civil code, were liberal parliamentary initiatives (Weber [1918] 1978a:1387-8 = 1958:302-3). That they failed to achieve more was in good measure because Bismarck successfully stymied every attempt to involve parliament in government.¹⁰ It was time for the nation

to grow up. The depressing alternative was a posturing literati, a histrionic kaiser intoxicated by his own vanity, and an arthritic parliament incapable of exercising real power and responsible leadership.

I come now to the third reproach that Weber leveled against Bismarck's Caesarism, namely, that it was illegitimate. We might recall Weber's earlier comment that Bismarck "misused monarchic sentiments as a cover for his power interests in the struggle of the parties." Or, if that statement is not explicit enough in binding together the elements of Bismarckian governance, illegitimacy and Caesarism, then consider Weber's comment that "one of the worst legacies of Bismarck's rule has been the fact that he considered it necessary to seek cover for his Caesarist regime *behind the legitimacy of the monarch*" (Weber [1918] 1978a:1413 = 1958:335, Weber's emphasis).¹¹

The observation that Caesarism involves an illegitimate form of rule was, as we saw in the previous chapter, hardly an original insight. By Weber's day, however, it was possible to delineate such rule not only in relation to the two Napoleons but Bismarck as well. What was the connection between these men and their regimes? We are given some clues in "Parliament and Government." Because of the importance of this passage, notable for the plethora of references to Caesarism it contains, I propose to quote it at length. The context of Weber's discussion is the issue of "the relationship between democracy and parliamentarism."

Active mass democratization means that the political leader is no longer proclaimed a candidate because he has proved himself in a circle of *honoratiore*s, then becoming a leader because of his parliamentary accomplishments, but that he gains the trust and the faith of the masses in him and his power with the means of *mass* demagogy. In substance, this means a shift toward the *Caesarist* mode of selection. Indeed, every democracy tends in this direction. After all, the specifically Caesarist technique is the plebiscite. It is not an ordinary vote or election, but a profession of faith in the calling of him who demands these acclamations. The Caesarist leader rises either in a military fashion, as a military dictator like Napoleon I, who had his position affirmed through a plebiscite; or he rises in the bourgeois fashion: through plebiscitary affirmation, acquiesced in by the army, of a claim to power on the part of a non-military politician, such as Napoleon III. Both avenues are as antagonistic to the parliamentary principle as they are (of course) to the legitimism of the hereditary monarchy. Every kind of direct *popular election* of the supreme ruler and, beyond that, every kind of political power that rests on the confidence of the masses and not of parliament—this includes also the position of a popular military hero like Hindenburg—lies on the road to these "pure" forms of Caesarist acclamation. In particular, this is true of the position of the President of the United States, whose superiority over parliament derives from his (formally) democratic nomination and election. The hopes that a Caesarist figure like Bismarck attached to universal suffrage and the manner of his antiparliamentary demagogy also point in the same direction, although they were adapted, in formulation and phraseology, to the given legitimist conditions

of his ministerial position. The circumstances of Bismarck's departure from office demonstrate the manner in which hereditary legitimism reacts against these Caesarist powers. Every parliamentary democracy eagerly seeks to eliminate, as dangerous to parliament's power, the plebiscitary methods of leadership selection. (Weber [1918] 1978a:1451-2 = 1958:381-2)¹²

From these comments we learn about the genus of Caesarism, modeled on the Napoleonic experience, and its Bismarckian species. The genus of Caesarism might be represented thus:

- a. Mode of selection (i.e., leadership route): military *or* civil ("bourgeois")
- b. Mode of acclamation: plebiscitary
- c. Relation to parliament: antagonistic
- d. Relation to hereditary legitimism: antagonistic
- e. Conditions of existence: political democratization.

What, then, of Bismarck? His mode of selection is "civil" (he is called on by his monarch to become minister president, and though a strategist is not a general).¹³ His mode of acclamation is plebiscitary: he is a "demagogue" willing and able to dissolve parliament and appeal to the people for support of his policies. His relation to parliament is antagonistic, particularly when it will not succumb to his commands (at which point Bismarck countenances coups d'état).¹⁴ His relation to the Hohenzollerns is uneasy in that despite constitutional authority ultimately residing in the emperor, it is Bismarck himself, ostensible agent of the sovereign, who de facto rules the Reich (a situation Wilhelm II would rudely correct).¹⁵ And, finally, Bismarck's political orchestration takes place within a society which though far from socially democratic sanctions universal manhood suffrage.

So it is that Bismarck can be reckoned the embodiment of a Caesarist ruler. Yet one ambiguity remains to be clarified. In *Economy and Society*, Weber deals with the two Bonapartes under the rubric of charisma, and also presents the idea of Caesarism as a sociological sub-type of his famous leadership concept. And charisma, of course, is one of Weber's trinity of legitimate *Herrschaft*. How it is possible for Caesarism to be designated as illegitimate in one context (the discussion of the Bonapartes in "Parliament and Government") and yet, tacitly related to charismatic legitimacy in another?¹⁶ The answer is that Weber is using the concept of legitimacy to mean different things. Caesarism is illegitimate only in the constitutional sense that it is a type of rule devoid of a hereditary, dynastic foundation. A Bourbon, Habsburg, or Hohenzollern monarch could never, without *lèse majesté*, be publicly labeled Caesarist, nor could

any other monarchy of venerable lineage.¹⁷ (Some writers, admittedly, were more daring. Ludwig Quidde's [1894] satire entitled *Caligula: A Study in Roman Caesarean Insanity* was a thinly veiled allusion to Wilhelm II and his court.) By contrast, Caesarism necessarily assumes the stamp of legitimacy if we look at it from Weber's sociological angle: here it is legitimate to the extent that it elicits voluntary compliance from a group of people who believes in the moral authority of the Caesarist leader's mission; Weber says as much in his remark that "active mass democratization means that the political leader...gains the trust and the faith of the masses in him."

Bismarck was not the only person to be called "Caesarist" by Weber—the two Bonapartes, Pericles, Cleon, Gladstone, Ferdinand Lassalle, and David Lloyd George were all to enjoy that dubious honor.¹⁸ Yet it is the Iron Chancellor who supremely holds this title. No one is referred to as Caesarist more often than he is. I leave to others the task of deciding how far the regimes of the Bonapartes and the governance of Bismarck were in fact comparable political formations.¹⁹ Instead, let us turn to the second, and much more positive way, that Weber interpreted modern Caesarism.

Parliamentary Caesarism

Nineteenth-century political argument frequently drew on a double distinction, both of which Weber ingeniously subverted. The first was between parliament and Caesarism; F.W. Rüstow (1879: 3), for instance, noted that "in recent political literature, especially in the daily press, we often encounter the terms 'Caesarism' and 'Parliamentarism' which are always used in a certain opposition to one another." The second distinction was between parliament and "democracy," a term that for much of the nineteenth century still carried menacing associations. For the modern reader, habituated to a notion of "parliamentary democracy," the second distinction will appear somewhat strange. But to our forbears democracy and parliament denoted very different, typically incompatible, political entities. On the one hand, "democracy" conjured up mob rule or, later, a mass electorate dangerously capable of ceding power to a Caesarist demagogue. On the other hand, educated people were well aware that representative assemblies of privileged orders and classes had in Europe long existed without any trace of extensive, popular involvement. The Spanish Cortes, the French Estates General, the German Landtag, the Polish Sejm, the Swedish Riksdag, the Serbian Sabor, and the British parliament itself are all examples of pre-democratic assemblies.

In contrast, Max Weber sought to marry Caesarism and parliament, and parliament and democratization. He argued that the “existence and formal power position of the parliaments [were] not threatened by democratic suffrage” (Weber [1918] 1978a:1442-3 = 1958:371), and that the institutions of parliament and democracy were capable of functioning symbiotically – as the United States and Great Britain attested. If government in Germany had failed in recent decades this was not due to the influence of parliamentary democracy as such. It was instead the result of national institutional pathologies that rendered parliament an impotent talking shop repugnant to men of will, ability and responsibility. Moreover, instead of defensively denying that democracy results in Caesarism, Weber stridently reaffirmed the equation, simultaneously imparting to it his own peculiar twist. Caesarism offered Germany an opportunity for its own parliamentary revitalization, Weber insisted, provided it assumed forms analogous to those of the British prime minister or the American president, and eschewed the Bismarckian example. The point, then, was not to bemoan Caesarism but to learn how to cultivate it; not to reject it in toto, but to mobilize its possibilities for national leadership and mass mobilization. If Caesarism were institutionally connected to a vibrant, watchful parliamentary electoral system, its tendency to erode fundamental civil liberties would be impeded. In addition, the Caesarist leader would remain ultimately accountable to the voting public who might, or might not, choose to reelect him. In such a way did the overwhelmingly negative association of Caesarism with Bismarck’s governance *coincide* with a much more constructive view of Caesarism within a robust parliamentary-democratic order. But how, then, was democracy itself to be properly understood?

Though Weber sometimes depicted modern democracy as a product of the French Revolution and its aftermath, his discussion of Caesarism was concerned with a much more specific process: the extension of the suffrage to the little-propertied and to the working class. Politically, democracy “means simply that no formal inequality of political rights exists between the individual classes of the population” (Weber [1918] 1972:194 = 1924a:494); and the supreme expression of political inequality is the prohibition on the general right to vote. Conversely, the movement towards universal suffrage signaled the gradual removal of this interdiction and, with it, the growth of modern mass party system on which parliamentary Caesarism depends. Modern mass parties are the “the children of democracy, of mass franchise, of the necessity to woo and organize the masses, and develop the utmost unity of direction and

the strictest discipline” (Weber [1919] 1970a:102-3 = 1958:520-1). And this requires a “machine” of career professionals, rather than amateurs.

Previously, under the British notable system, for instance, parliament itself was the definitive locus of political authority and patronage. It was *within* parliament that a member’s advancement was decided, a career contingent not upon his demagogic or plebiscitary qualities but upon parliamentary skill and the support of the party leader (Weber 1970a: [1919] 100-2 = 1958:518-20; [1922] 1978b:290-2 = 1964:215-7). The “advent of plebiscitarian democracy”—that is, the democratization of the suffrage—shattered this arrangement. Officials outside parliament increasingly asserted control over it. Organized around the extra-parliamentary caucus (established in the U.S. by the 1840s, developed in Britain towards the end of the 1860s), primed and regulated by its characteristic figure, “the American boss and the English election agent,” the party machine is dedicated fulltime to the activity of grooming the demagogic candidate and of winning elections. To this end, party coffers must receive the steady flow of subscriptions, contributions, and affiliation fees necessary to run a campaign and pay the staff. Newspapers, advertising bureau and schools must be established to propagate the party wisdom and to train political agitators in the skills of public speaking and persuasion. And, of course, the electors themselves must be mobilized and corralled into the polling booths so to translate their preferences into votes (Weber [1918]1978a:1443-5 = 1958: 372-4). The paradox of political (as distinct from social) democratization is unmistakable. Formally, power is vested in the party membership, the active among whom fashion and superintend policy at conferences which parliamentary representatives then ostensibly execute. More distantly it might be said that parliament carries out the will of the people at large. But the reality is very different. Effective “power rests in the hands of those who, within the organization, handle the work *continuously*”—the machine—and those who provide the organization with financial backing and personal assistance (Weber [1919] 1970a:103 = 1958:520). It is invariably a hard core of professionals that drafts the party program, plans tactics and selects candidates, even in the most professedly democratic parties. As for the voters the parties seek to attract, they “exert influence only to the extent that programs and candidates are adapted and selected according to their chances of receiving electoral support” (Weber [1919]1978a:1396 = 1958:312). Near the apex of the power pyramid, this machine itself, willingly or in the last resort, falls into line behind a leader whose demagogic ability to attain the highest parliamentary office will ensure its own continued

existence or growth. The machine follows the leader because of a fluid combination of inspired devotion to his unique qualities and calculated want-satisfaction. Taking the English case Weber declares:

the parties are forced by the “Caesarist” feature of mass democracy to submit to men with political temperament and talent as soon as these prove that they can win the confidence of the masses. The chance for a potential leader to get to the top is a function, as it turns out time and again, of the parties’ *power chances*. Neither the parties’ Caesarist character and mass demagoguery nor their bureaucratization and stereotyped public image are in themselves a rigid barrier for the rise of leaders. Especially the well organized parties that really want to exercise state power must *subordinate* themselves to those who hold the confidence of the masses, *if they are men with leadership abilities*. (Weber [1919] 1978a:1459 = 1958:391; emphases in the original)

Parliamentary deputies, too, know that

the survival of the party and of all the interests which bind him to it depends upon its subordination to qualified leaders. Nowhere in the world, not even in England, can the parliamentary body as such govern and determine policies. The broad mass of deputies functions *only* as a following for the leader or the cabinet who form the government, and it blindly follows them *as long as* they are successful. *This is the way it should be*. Political action is always determined by the “principle of small numbers,” that means, the superior political maneuverability of small leading groups. In *mass states* this impact of Caesarism is ineradicable. (Weber [1919] 1978a:1414 = 1958:336)²⁰

Inexorably, then, the mass vote cedes power to the officialdom of the party machine, while the machine and the back-benchers are themselves beholden to the party leader. Everything turns on the ability of that leader to capture the imagination of the masses, as Gladstone showed so brilliantly. In this case, the machine’s victory over the notables was due to “the fascination of Gladstone’s ‘grand’ demagoguery, the firm belief of the masses in the ethical substance of his policy, and above all, their belief in the ethical character of his personality. It soon became obvious that a Caesarist plebiscitarian element in politics—the dictator of the battlefield of elections—had appeared on the plain” (Weber [1919] 1970a:106 = 1958:523).²¹

Weber applies this perspective to national leaders such as the British prime minister and the American president, and equally to the election of leaders of much smaller political units such as the American city mayor. Granted, in a “democratized hereditary” monarchical system such as Britain’s the “Caesarist-plebiscitarian element is always much attenuated,” particularly when contrasted to “the President of the United States, whose superiority over parliament derives from his (formally) democratic nomination and election.” It is certainly “not absent” however, a conclusion Weber illustrated by invoking another British example. Lloyd

George's position during the Great War, Weber maintained, was based above all on "the masses in the country and of the army in the field. Parliament acquiesces (with considerable reluctance)" (Weber 1978a:1452 = 1958:382-3).²² Finally, the designation "Caesarism" implies, together with direct election, a determinate recruitment and executive stance—in a word, administration—in which the leader himself independently appoints his officials, selecting them "freely and personally without regard to tradition or to any other impediments" and ruling over them as "the unrestrained master" (Weber [1922] 1978b:961 = 1964:707).

Hence the power-base of the demagogue lies in the country at large, rather than in parliament first and foremost; and it is above parliament the leader stands when in government as a "plebiscitarian dictator" (Weber [1919] 1970a:107 = 1958:524). Ostrogorski ([1902] 1970), on whose account of Caesarism Weber leans heavily in *Politics as a Vocation*, was appalled by this fact.²³ Weber felt differently, resigned to a situation it was impossible to change in any fundamental way. "Caesarism," he abbreviates in "Suffrage and Democracy in Germany" is quite simply "the election of the leader" ([1917] 1958:279) and under modern conditions it cannot be evaded. The role of the masses is to acclaim the leader. With that imprimatur their political function is more or less exhausted. Even the "choice" of leader is largely foisted upon them because "it is not the politically passive 'mass' that produces the leader from its midst, but the political leader [who] recruits his following and wins the mass through 'demagogy'" (Weber [1918] 1978a:1457 = 1958:389). Mass politics is, accordingly, democratic in name only (Weber [1919] 1970a:105 = 1958:523). That "the great political decisions, even and especially in a democracy, are unavoidably made by a few men," Weber accepted as a datum only the intellectually dogmatic could fail to acknowledge (Weber [1918] 1978a:1452 = 1958:383).

Is parliament redundant in such a system? On the contrary, it is vital. To be sure, the individual deputy is, when compared with a previous age, diminished by the party leader's prominence. His mediatory and representative functions are enfeebled. And to the extent that parliament resembles the assembly of the German Second Empire—constitutionally reduced to a talking-shop; stripped of all powers save that of the legislative veto; politically displaced by the authoritarian state bureaucracy—it is little more than a "mere drag-chain, an assembly of impotent fault-finders and know-it-alls" (Weber [1918] 1978a:1408 = 1958:327-8). The constitutional arrangements of the *Kaiserreich* ensured that those people with the instinct for power and the capacity for independent judg-

ment were funneled by “negative selection” into vocations other than the parliamentary one.²⁴ Germany still had Caesarism, but it was of the Bismarckian type. Yet parliament need not be restricted to this subaltern role, and the Caesarism it coexists with need not be of this debilitating kind. Britain and America proved it. As an *institution*, armed with the constitutional powers necessary to engage in “positive” politics, parliament is as an essential means of Caesarist selection and control, a locus for establishing the budget and “reaching compromises among parties” (Weber [1918] 1978a:1457 = 1958:388).²⁵ An effervescent parliament is also in a position to produce the responsible Caesarist figure from its midst, his personality forged in the heat of party struggle, his political metal tested by his colleagues and proven on the floor of the assembly (and not just at the hustings), his native wit and ambition supplemented by an education derived from the stringent standards demanded in parliamentary committees.

A strong parliamentary system in the British mold provided the conditions which best conduced to such effective political leadership. Notably, it furnished “a suitable political proving ground of the politicians wooing the confidence of the masses,” while lessening the possibility that leaders would be selected on merely “emotional” grounds (Weber 1978a:1452, 1459 = 1958:383, 391). Equally, an energetic parliament helps to ensure that leadership succession—“the Achilles heel of purely Caesarist domination”—proceeds without major disruption, preserving continuity and civil liberties (Weber [1918] 1978a:1457 = 1958:389; cf. Weber 1978a:1452, 1459 = 1958:383, 391).

Such were the advantages that accrued to a virile parliamentary system. They constituted both a sum of constitutional mechanisms to empower political dynamism at home, and the pursuit of an assertive policy abroad. They furnished a set of conditions in which genuine statesmen, rather than bureaucrats and placemen, could find a home. A token parliament encouraged token leaders, opportunism, and ideological posturing. A strong parliament conduced to the selection and enculturation of those qualities (besides the will to power) that Weber believed crucial for the politician worthy of his vocation: passionate devotion to a cause; realism and a sense of proportion; responsibility for the results of his actions; emotional distance so as to “let realities work upon him with inner concentration and calmness” (Weber [1919] 1970a:115 = 1958:533-4). Of course this ideal combination of qualities, whose essence is perspective and inner discipline, is as rare as the individual who is able to bear the tensions it imposes. But some systems repulse those qualities, while others call them forth.

The Reich President

In the period during and immediately after the First World War, Weber's political interventions reached their crescendo. The time was agonizing for him. An intemperate emperor unrestrained by the national parliament fanned the flames of pan-German agitation when he should have doused them. Unlimited submarine warfare and the machinations of the Supreme Command were almost calculated to end in disaster. The Bolshevik coup of 1917 was ominous for Germany as well as for the Russian people. And then there was the great defeat itself and its aftermath: Wilson's humiliating cat-and-mouse diplomacy, naval mutiny at Kiel and at other ports in north Germany, insurrection in Berlin and Bavaria. Faced with all of this, Weber ventilated opinions with a frankness that impressed most who knew of them. But his sphere of action was limited. As a scholar by vocation Weber was obliged to engage in politics through the media intellectuals customarily use: the public lecture, the congress speech and report, the memorandum to persons of influence, the newspaper article (in November-December 1918 he was living in Frankfurt as the political advisor for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*). He could only hope that policymakers would listen to his arguments and be persuaded by their logic. But in December 1918, Weber was given the opportunity to do more than air his political preference for Germany's constitutional future in the ebullient atmosphere of a public debating hall or in the columns of a prestigious daily paper. At the instigation of Hugo Preuss (the secretary of state for the interior), he was invited to join the committee charged with the responsibility for drafting what would become known as the Weimar Constitution.

Directly preceding and following his cloistered involvement in Preuss's committee, Weber wrote a series of constitutionally oriented articles in which he publicly campaigned for a plebiscitarian Reich president. Weber, as we saw above, had previously argued that a vigorous parliamentary democracy of the British type was the model system for Germany to adopt if it were to produce the leaders of energetic intelligence necessary for national reconstruction. His postwar writings, in contrast, entertain few hopes that parliamentary government could furnish the political conditions imperative for dynamic leadership in Germany. The reasons for what would prove to be an irrevocable disenchantment are the reverse side of the coin that impelled Weber to argue for a Reich president elected not by Parliament (as happened, to Weber's consternation, on 11 February 1919, when Friedrich Ebert was exalted to the Republic's highest executive office) but by the people as a whole.

To begin with, only a president so chosen would be able to affirm the unity of the infant Republic in the teeth of those divisive interests that threatened to asphyxiate it at birth. The resurrection of the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council) or its equivalent would come at the expense of the *Reichstag* whose ability to select and promote national leaders would be commensurately reduced (Weber [1919] 1970a:113-4 = 1958:532; Weber [1919]1986a:128, 131 = 1958:486, 488-9). Regionally based parties would continue to fragment the political process in Germany. So too would proportional representation which would transport the quest for economic advancement directly into the political arena. Where interest groups constrain political parties to place the former's preferred candidates at the head of the party list, parliament becomes a body of "philistines—incapable of being in any sense a place where political leaders are selected (Weber [1919]1986a:130 = 1958: 487-8).²⁶ Only a president elected "in a plebiscitarian way and not by parliament," could become "the safety-valve of the demand for leadership."²⁷ Only through a "headship of state which indubitably rests on the will of the whole people without intermediaries" (Weber [1919]1986a:128 = 1958: 486) could centrifugal politics be averted.

The second reason Weber campaigned for a Reich president elected by the whole people hinged on his assessment of Germany's economic plight. Economic restructuring, including a dose of "socialization," would be essential for Germany's postwar financial and manufacturing recovery. It was vital that such transformation be endowed with the authority and legitimacy that a president chosen in Weber's preferred manner alone could provide. Third, Weber envisaged in a plebiscitarian president the institutional prerequisite, though not the guarantee, of strong, creative, personal leadership. Bound to parliament in the selection of government ministers, the President would nonetheless remain free to formulate his own initiatives, and as the focus and representative of millions "would often be superior to the respective party majority in parliament, all the more superior the longer his period of office" (Weber [1918] 1958:458). Recent elections had shown, Weber declared, that the German parliamentary party response to a strong personality was overwhelmingly negative, manifesting a combination of plain "very petty-bourgeois hostility...to leaders," and fierce resistance among entrenched party veterans to the specter of "socialization" (Weber [1919] 1970a:114 = 1958:532; [1918] 1958:458).²⁸ Parliament could thus not be expected to supply the leaders Germany so urgently needed. The alternative was clear:

Previously, in the authoritarian state, it was necessary to advocate the increase of the power of the parliamentary majority, so that eventually the significance and thus the standing of parliament would be enhanced. Today the situation is that all constitutional plans have fallen victim to an almost blind faith in the infallibility and omnipotence of the majority—not the majority of the people but of the parliamentarians, which is the opposite, but equally undemocratic, extreme. We must restrict the power of the popularly elected President as always.... But let him be given firm ground under his feet by means of the popular election. Otherwise every time there is a parliamentary crisis—and where there are four or five parties involved these will not be infrequent—the whole edifice of the Reich will totter. (Weber [1919] 1986a:131—1958:488)

Moreover Weber was certain that a parliamentary election of the Reich president, say, on the model of the French Third Republic, or a rotating presidential system analogous to the Swiss collegial case would only aggravate an already dire situation. Both options were incompatible with firm, coherent and creative leadership because both (but especially the latter) militated against that ingredient that Weber returned to again and again: “the responsible *personality*.” The right to the direct election of the leader was, Weber insisted, the “Magna Carta of democracy.” A popularly elected President “as head of the executive, head of office patronage, and perhaps possessor of a delaying veto and of the authority to dissolve parliament and to call referenda, is the guarantor of true democracy, which means not feeble surrender to cliques, but subjection to leaders chosen by the people themselves” (Weber [1919] 1986a: 132 = 1958: 489).

The impact of Weber’s proposals on subsequent German history is endlessly debated and can only be a subject of speculation. Easier to establish are the proposals’ “Caesarist” motifs (though the term itself is never employed in the texts on the Reich president). The president, we have seen, is to be a leader of robust personal authority, “supported by the revolutionary legitimacy of popular election,” chosen “without intermediaries.”²⁹ The president’s powers to dissolve parliament and resort to referenda display the familiar Caesarist mechanism of legitimation. He is also a “dictator,” an expression Weber elsewhere employs in relation to the Caesarist leader.³⁰ So it was that the earlier synthesis Weber had proposed between leader and parliament crumbled under the duress of post-war German conditions. Since Weber was convinced that modern “democracy” entailed the subjection of the masses to leaders chosen by them, he was inescapably pushed towards an authoritarian solution to Germany’s problems once his view of parliament had soured. Weber did suggest the referendum as a means of disposing of a tyrannical president, subject to a determinate majority agreement of the Reichstag. Yet the

“masses” who are to be given the final role in deciding who is to rule over them are a curious entity. Weber consistently portrayed them (I return to this point) as credulous and emotional. Yet here they are becoming the arbiters of a supreme leader and of a nation’s destiny. As Moses Finley (1985:96-7) observed: “How do the people who are incapable of judging the issues on their merits nevertheless choose in the contest for leadership a victor whose political program then turns out to be the best?” The hopes Weber attached to a vigorous parliamentary system in Germany lay momentarily suspended. His death in June 1920 meant there was no time left to revive them.

Interim Reflection

As a general description of the way things actually run in liberal-democratic polities, Weber’s account of Caesarism is still immensely illuminating of both British conditions (Whimster 2007: 245-6) and American ones (Casper 2007). However, Weber offered more to his German contemporaries than sober political analysis or the injunction to face hard facts. Simultaneously, he recommended a model of Caesarism along Anglo-American lines that was deeply congruent with his own values. Operating within a lively parliamentary framework, Caesarism promised not only to make Germany a modern world power in which national greatness would be balanced with civil liberty. It also bestowed the necessary scope for those supremely willful and gifted individuals to realize their values in history. This conflation of descriptive and normative elements in Weber’s account is by no means a trivial issue. Because the model Weber examines is the same one that he wishes to see imitated, there is no substantial attempt to criticize it, or to think about a more expansive sense of politics and democracy. On the contrary, Weber’s readers are essentially invited to make a choice between a Caesarism that is debilitating—the Bismarckian variety and its bungling continuation in the “personal rule” of Wilhelm II—and a Caesarism of productive disposition typical of Britain and America. The point is that we get some sort of Caesarism either way. That there is something claustrophobic about such an alternative will be evident to anyone whose conception of politics and its compass is less restrictive than Weber’s.

Wilhelm Hennis (2006: 302; [1987] 2000: 208-9) forcefully argues that Weber is best understood as a legatee of a political science tradition—realist, bracing, disconsolate yet bold—that includes Thucydides and Hobbes, as well as Machiavelli, Montesquieu, and Tocqueville. Kari Palonen (1998) spies Machiavellian traces in Weber’s concern with

contingency—a reworking of the Florentine idea of *fortuna*—while Claus Offe ([2004] 2005: 53-4) describes Weber’s theory of political leadership as “a Nietzschean version of Machiavelli’s *virtù*.” Offe also emphasizes the kinship of Weber’s analysis of America to Tocqueville’s. And Eliaeson and Palonen (2004: 140-141) remark that the “republican and rhetorical interpretations of Machiavelli have even strengthened the affinities between him and Weber.” Doubtless, Weber can be compared fruitfully to all these classical figures in one way or another. Yet his distance from political republicanism—a tradition that, as we saw, also counts Machiavelli and Montesquieu among its brightest lights—is striking. The contrast goes way beyond the positive connotations that now attach to a name that for republicans conjured up the most heinous aspects of political corruption. Nor should the heroic cast assumed by the Caesarist leader in Weber’s work be thought comparable to the republican quest for glory. The parliamentary Caesarist leader is Weber’s political answer not simply to Germany’s travails, but to conditions absent from the republican experience. Modern people, Weber noted, were implicated in organizations that demanded order, routine and standardization from their incumbents. Long gone was the “practical, world-shaping individualism that had characterized the bourgeoisie in its period of ascendancy” (Beetham 1989:321). Responsible, parliamentary Caesarism, with its combination of discipline and autonomous leadership, offered the best bet for a world becoming increasingly rigid, conformist and philistine. If Caesarism involved “demagogy,” then so be it. That was a price well worth paying to stave off bureaucratic stultification.

In contrast, wherever republicans invoked demagogy they had normally done so either as an insult or as a warning. Classical and other republicans may not have been radical democrats, but nor did they envisage politics as a largely acclamatory process in which a passive and incredulous mass endorsed a charismatic figure. Nor was “dictatorship” envisaged as a normal mode of political leadership. The devotion or sacrifice inspired in the followers of the Caesarist leader, Weber argued, is for the *person* of that leader as he seeks singularly to project and realize his values. Republicans, on the other hand, were more likely to see service and duty owed first and foremost to the polity itself. Leaders were glorious and entitled to respect to the degree that they exemplified, and sacrificed themselves to, the greater interest of the commonwealth. Political self-governance enshrined a collective sense of liberty; it did not harbor the Weberian equation of autonomy and freedom, the view that there is something admirable about individual independence as the locus of value-creation.

Presently we will turn to examine Weber's sociological re-description of Caesarism. By way of preparation for this task, and for the purpose, again, of stressing Weber's conceptual originality, it is worth briefly contrasting his analysis of Caesarism with that of three major contemporaries: Theodor Mommsen, Albert Schäffle, and Wilhelm Roscher. I begin with Mommsen's sour judgment on "Caesareanism" (sic) in the *History of Rome* ([1854-6] 1911), a work that Weber knew intimately.³¹

Competing Interpretations and Typologies: Mommsen, Schäffle, and Roscher

A liberal who welcomed German unification, but who became a staunch critic of Bismarck's authoritarian domestic policy, Mommsen combined the strongest admiration for Julius Caesar with the deepest suspicion of all would-be modern imitators. Granted, "the first ruler over the whole domain of Romano-Hellenic civilization" was a monarch, his state an "absolute military monarchy" (Mommsen ([1854-6] 1911:424, 440). But Caesar never "resorted to outrages such as that of the eighteenth Brumaire," and was "never seized with the giddiness of the tyrant" (429). Caesar began his career not as a warlord but as a demagogue. The very embodiment of "republican ideals," (430), he was the leader of the popular party, the culmination of the democratic project launched by Gaius Gracchus. Accordingly, Caesar "displayed the bitterest, even personal, hatred of the aristocracy" and "retained unchanged the essential ideas of Roman democracy, viz. alleviation of the burdens of debtors, transmarine colonization, gradual equalization of the difference of rights among the classes belonging to the state, emancipation of the executive power from the senate." Indeed:

his monarchy was so little at variance with democracy, that democracy on the contrary only attained its completion and fulfillment by means of that monarchy. For this monarchy was not the Oriental despotism of divine right, but a monarchy such as Gaius Gracchus wished to found, such as Pericles and Cromwell founded—the representation of the nation by the man in whom it puts supreme and unlimited confidence. (438-9)

This quotation crisply indicates the chasm between Mommsen's notion of republicanism and that of its classical predecessors for whom the Gracchi brothers and Cromwell were diabolical figures. Mommsen's acidic appraisal of Cato and Cicero, shared by Max Weber, also flew in the face of classical republican sympathies. Even though he dies with honor, Cato is "a fool," notable for his "perversity" and "spurious phases." Cicero is a "statesman without insight, opinion, or purpose," a "short-sighted

egotist.” Where he “exhibited the appearance of action, the questions to which his action applied had, as a rule, just reached their solution” (422-3, 574)! Yet the impact of Mommsen’s arguments on contemporary opinion was profound and instantaneous. The *History of Rome*’s brilliant stylistic qualities—W. Warde Fowler ([1904] 1920:259) joined many others in judging it “the greatest feat of German literature in the middle of the nineteenth century”—ensured it a wide public readership. Soon available in English, French, Italian, and Russian translations, it played its part in earning Mommsen the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1902. Equally, the brilliant scholarship of the work, combined with its many inflammatory verdicts on Caesar’s republican opponents, guaranteed that no historian of the late Republic could henceforth ignore it. Even those like Eduard Meyer who later taxed the *Römische Geschichte* for its failure to grant the full importance of Pompey or the Principate of Augustus, its anachronistic language, and its completely unreal construction of a man fully aware of his destiny, conceded Mommsen’s immense authority: everyone who followed, however vigorously they might fight his interpretation, was still dependent on the details and categories of Mommsen’s “magnificent” portrayal (Meyer [1918] 1978:324-5; cf. Nicolet [2003] 2006: 189-207).³²

Mommsen’s *laudatio* to Caesar, however, did not extend to the contemporary concept and phenomenon of “Caesarianism” (*Caesarianismus*), a point he was at pains to make clear after some construed the first (1854-6) edition of his work as a panegyric to modern despotism. Mommsen’s championship of Caesar came in the aftermath of the defeat of German liberalism in 1848. The corrupt and reactionary senatorial oligarchy of Rome, the object of Caesar’s attack, was, in Mommsen’s allegory, the ancient analogue of the Prussian squirearchy and state he so detested, the great impediment to the liberalization and modernization of Germany. Caesar represented the antithesis of the cowards and fanatics that Mommsen attacked. In an uncanny anticipation of Weber’s portrait of the statesman in “Politics as a Vocation,” Mommsen describes Caesar as a man who stands “aloof from all ideology and everything fanciful.” He is a “man of passion” but his passion is never “stronger than he [can] control.” On the contrary, he is a thorough “realist” marked by “cool sobriety,” “collected vigor,” “clarity of judgment” never forming “illusions regarding the power of fate and the ability of man.” Here was a human type “where the great contrasts of existence meet and balance each other.”

None of this was code for the approval of Caesarism or Bonapartism as those terms were commonly construed – even if Napoleon III was one of Mommsen’s most enthusiastic admirers; the two actually met in 1863 (Momigliano 1956: 237-8). Indeed, both the concept and the phenomenon of Caesarianism are specifically castigated by the German writer. The *concept* Mommsen criticizes for its clumsy and vulgar use of analogy³³ because although past centuries should instruct the present, it is absurd to believe that they can furnish contemporary “political diagnosis and the specifics for a prescription” (439). Similarly inappropriate is the *phenomenon* of Caesareanism, if this means an attempt to impose Caesar’s type of rule on present-day European conditions:

Caesar’s work was necessary and salutary, not because it was or could be fraught with blessing in itself, but because—with the national organization of antiquity, which was based on slavery and was utterly a stranger to republican-constitutional representation, and in presence of the legitimate civic constitution which in the course of five hundred years had ripened into oligarchic absolutism—absolute military monarchy was the keystone logically necessary and the least of evils (440).

In contrast, where Caesareanism appears “under other conditions of development, it is at once a caricature and a usurpation.” Europe of Mommsen’s day was not a slave-owning society in which an enlightened absolute military monarchy was the least of evils. It was an increasingly commercial, urban and industrial society that required its own distinctive constitutional, liberal-democratic state. The attempt to graft onto the modern age a type of rule that belonged organically to another epoch was hence a monstrous mockery of a great man, a fundamental misunderstanding of history itself, and a dangerous rationalization for modern autocracy.

Mommsen’s personality evinces some striking parallels with that of his protégé (Marianne Weber [1926] 1988:113-4). Both men possessed strong patriotic instincts and intimidating intellects. Both displayed integrity and courage in the political stands they adopted (Mommsen, as well as losing his chair in civil law at the University of Leipzig for his part in the May 1849 Saxony uprising, came within a whisker of being sent to prison for his radical activities there). Both were staunch critics of Bismarck though at the same time appreciative of his role in German unification. And both recoiled from the sycophancy that bowed so many middle-class heads in the *Kaiserreich*. Friedrich Naumann ([1903] 1964: 326), in his affectionate obituary tribute to Mommsen, portrayed him “as the voice of principle in the middle of Caesarism.” Mommsen became and remained a bourgeois rebel, a defiant champion of his liberal creed—in

1882 an election speech led him to be charged for an alleged slander of Bismarck; he was tried and acquitted—a man, he once famously said, “who wished to be a citizen” in a state that was only willing to tolerate subjects (Mommsen [1899] 1952:71). Finally, both Weber and Mommsen agreed on the supreme qualities necessary for the able political leader: devotion to a cause, married to a sober appraisal of historical possibility and of the uniqueness of contemporary conditions.

Yet with respect to the concept of Caesarism the differences between Mommsen and Weber are more obvious than the similarities. If Mommsen cautioned against invoking it, Weber seemed happy enough to do so, not only with an informality that must have alarmed his teacher but even, without qualification, in ancient historical settings.³⁴ And what about the phenomenon that Caesarism is supposed to have denoted? Here, too, one finds discrepancies. In Weber’s discussion of Bismarck, as we saw, Caesarism is deemed reprehensible. Conversely, where Caesarism is envisaged as the natural corollary of the extension of the franchise, Weber’s tone is resigned, even approving. Finally, if one interprets Weber’s Reich president proposals as those of Caesarism in code, we are there faced with nothing less than urgent recommendation.

Mommsen’s *métier* was history. The two authors who now merit our attention are the organicist thinker and social reformer Albert Schäffle—Weber ([1922] 1978b:14 = 1964:11) called his *Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers* ([1875-6] 1896) a “brilliant work”—and the historical economist Wilhelm Roscher whom Weber subjected to a merciless methodological critique in an article first published in 1903, nine years after Roscher’s death. (Weber never developed a commensurately sustained critique of Roscher’s political writings, though he does mention in passing the *locus classicus* of Roscher’s theory of Caesarism in the article mentioned above).³⁵ Common to the perspective of Schäffle and Roscher was a broadly cyclical, Aristotelian-Polybian view of political transformation, and a related interest in the conditions of legitimate rule. Each politico-constitutional structure or stage—Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy—had its season. Each had its immanent principle of emergence and principle of decline. “Caesarism” formed a subtype of the triad.

I begin with Schäffle’s abbreviated treatment. He prefaces his remarks on Caesarism with a quote from Aristotle where the latter is describing how “kingship” (or what Schäffle [1896 II: 486] calls “legitimate monarchy,”) becomes debased from within, a victim of either dissension among members of the ruling dynasty or of the ambition of a king determined to

expand his power beyond its lawful boundaries, or of both. As kingship disintegrates, Schäffle glosses, society is thrown into crisis: the eventual result is tyranny or, another word for the same thing, Caesarism, “the product of a long and tiring battle between aristocrats and democrats, the rich and the poor.” Out of the “anarchy of civil war comes as the ‘saviour of society’ and democratic at the same time, the ancient Greek tyranny, the Roman emperor system, modern Caesarship.”

The tyrant’s power base, Schäffle continues, rests on a combination of brute force and popular incitement. He protects his regime by the deployment of a mercenary army, body guards and “praetorians,” and by a divide-and-rule policy in which the poor are pitted against the educated and propertied classes. More generally:

In a superb manner, and as if he had portrayed the most modern Napoleonism, Aristotle draws the basic characteristics of a policy by which alone the tyranny can survive. Its arts are: imitation of genuine monarchy; condemnation, destruction, slander, criminal pursuit of all brilliant independent men; attraction of all the weak characters amongst the rich and noble; corruption in every shape and form; repression of associations and open discussion; the stirring-up of estates, classes and friendships; enormous public extravagance, the feeding and entertaining of the mob; instigation of wars in order to divert internal opposition; police terror and a system of informers. (Schäffle 1896 II:486)

Thus, in Schäffle’s schema, Caesarism is portrayed as identical to tyranny. Its origins lie in the internal collapse of kingship; its rule is simultaneously divisive, despotic and bellicose; its connection to democracy tenuous; its recent manifestation “the most modern Napoleonism,” by which Schäffle meant the rule of Napoleon III.³⁶

Wilhelm Roscher, in his *Politik* (1892) agreed with Schäffle that Napoleon III (and his uncle even more so) was a prime example of the Caesarist phenomenon, and that “tyranny” was a suitable term with which to designate it. In other respects, however, Roscher took a different view. Not only does he define Caesarism with more precision as a “military tyranny” (Roscher 1892: 588). He also argues that Caesarism arises out of conditions in which *democracy* (as opposed to kingship) has degenerated into chaos. This is a situation in which rich and poor live in a state of mutual hatred, in which the rivalry of demagogues and the parties they lead has become increasingly irresponsible, in which the masses have become utterly capricious, and in which the educated suspect that the extant system allows too much freedom. As a consequence, people in general long for order at any cost, and no group is better placed to satisfy this yearning than the military. In periods of tumult it is the army and its commander that provide the only source of social anchorage.

Furthermore, the military virtues such as courage and obedience, the ones that are in a sense politically primordial, survive the common decadence, enabling those who possess these virtues to rise to a position of almost natural superiority. Caesarism, therefore, is a product of a society on the wane, just as it is that society's coup de grâce.

The mass of the people, moreover, are entirely unsentimental about Caesarism. They submit to it not out of love but because in a situation where the "best" have withdrawn from the political arena, and where confusion reigns, the attitude emerges "that it is better to be oppressed by one lion, rather than ten wolves, a hundred jackals or even a thousand rats." To put an end to "anarchy," people trade their liberty for Caesarism, "the graveyard of general bondage." The tyrant, who once in power assumes a monarchical guise, is bitterly conscious of the people's pragmatism. Aware that he has become their choice not by winning hearts and minds but as the lesser of two evils, cognizant that he lacks that halo of legitimacy and may even in fact be hated, the tyrant becomes ever more suspicious and his rule increasingly severe. Not surprisingly, then, the monarchy that emanates from democracy's crisis "is as a rule despotic" (Roscher 1892: 589-90).

The regimes and persons that Roscher calls Caesarist are enormously varied and his general discussion is many sided. For our purposes, it will suffice to note what he says about Caesarism's relationship to democracy and what he supposed to flow from that relationship.

Two of Roscher's observations are especially pertinent. The first is his contention that democracy paves the way for Caesarism, not just because of the turmoil that issues from its death-throes, but because democracy's tendency to centralize, a consequence of its equalitarian, levelling aspect, has removed potential loci of resistance to the tyrant from status-groups of various sorts. Moreover, as a consequence of democracy's obsession with novelty and because of its overall agnostic mood, old values that might have restrained the tyrant, together with old religious and moral truths that might have guided the masses, have eroded. Hence democratic centralisation and banality prepare the Caesarist takeover.

Roscher's second observation turns on the peculiarities of the Caesarist leader's administration once installed in power. Essentially, Caesarism is a heteroclite formation because the strong egalitarian current it inherits from democracy is in constant tension with the monarchical system it seeks to build. This accounts both for the strengths of Caesarism and its liabilities. As an example of the former, consider Caesarism's "Janus-faced" nature, its combination of monarchical and democratic

governance. That enables the Caesarist ruler to encompass, and claim to represent, the most diverse social interests. Napoleon I illustrates the point. Here was someone who attempted with some success to appeal to everyone across the political spectrum of his day from the old-guard nobility, at one extreme, to disenchanted Jacobins at the other. Thus Napoleon flaunted himself as a traditionalist—one of his first acts on becoming emperor was to abolish the celebration of Louis XVI's execution—while simultaneously claiming that if he occupied a lofty position this was because he was the living embodiment of the sovereign people (Roscher 1892: 590-1, 600).

And what of Caesarism's liabilities? They are many. There is the onus on the leader who exists in an egalitarian culture to prove through public displays—acts of war, dazzling diplomacy, patronage of the arts—his right to occupy a position of superiority. There is the perplexing uncertainty that should the tyrant's powers fail him, and expectations of success be dashed, his rule will be short lived, a predicament that reminds us of charisma's fate in similar circumstances. There is the impossibility of a secure abdication, of a quiet and dignified retirement because the Caesarist leader must always fear the revenge of those whose hatred he has earned; besides, to his successor he will forever remain a potential source of competition (Roscher 1892: 592-3, 603-6). Most of all, the Caesarist leader is plagued by insoluble problems of legitimation. His striving to found a dynasty, his wish to confer on his progeny or chosen successor some modicum of respectability, rarely succeeds, and when it does, rarely succeeds for long. His political edifice, tarred by its violent origins, is an artificial juxtaposition of elements that can never possess the solidity, the vibrancy, of something organic. And while, like Edmund in *King Lear*, he may live in hope that "the base shall top the legitimate," that "now gods stand up for bastards!" (1/2: 20-3), his hope will be to no avail if his subjects do not stand up for the bastard as well.

One of Roscher's own examples nicely illustrates the contrast between Caesarism's inevitable discomfiture, and the far more relaxed demeanour afforded to the occupant of a hereditary monarchy. A paradox of Caesarism, Roscher says, is its military weakness. True, it rises to power through the achievements of a commander of the armed forces. But precisely because so much of its stature is focused on military qualities, the Caesarist leader must always beware the general more able than himself. The emperor Domitian, for instance, recalled Agricola in A.D. 84 after the latter's victories in Britain, in order to let him languish at court, and later had him poisoned at a time when imperial defeats in foreign places might

have commended such a man to the people. By contrast it is said about Wilhelm I that when, in October 1870, one of his generals requested an extra division of troops, the Kaiser replied that it was up to Field-Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, chief of the Prussian General Staff, to decide; as for Wilhelm's own protection it was sufficient that he be left in control of his personal guards. Roscher cites this incident as a testament to the confidence and security a legitimate, hereditary monarch can enjoy who need not be afraid of even his most brilliant commander. An analogous response by the Caesarist leader would have placed him in the utmost peril and for that reason is unthinkable (Roscher 1892:608).

* * *

The accounts of Roscher and Schäffle clearly belong to an older tradition of political theory. The traces of Aristotle and Polybius, of Benjamin Constant and the mainstream nineteenth-century debate on Caesarism examined in chapter 2, are everywhere. It has long been recognised that Weber's own typology of legitimate *Herrschaft* broke with this tradition in several ways. Notably, while Weber shared the ambition of many of his peers to build global and comprehensive taxonomies, he jettisoned the organicist model, and the phase-teleology it entailed, typical of their endeavours.³⁷ However, the contrasts go much deeper than this.

Like Roscher, though in contrast with Schäffle, Weber views Caesarism as intrinsically connected to democracy: "every democracy" tends "toward the Caesarist mode of selection" ([1918] 1978a:1451 = 1958:381-2). However, this Caesarism is not cancerous for the democratic body politic, heralding its protracted or imminent demise into military tyranny (*pace* Roscher) but the natural complement of mass democracy's existence. On Weber's account, furthermore, democracy is a normal, not a crisis, form of rule; a state in which the civil, as distinct from the military, arm of government is the dominant one; and a political formation in which civil liberties (entirely obliterated in Schäffle's and Roscher's versions of Caesarism) are capable of preservation by a robust parliament equipped with real constitutional power.

Schäffle and Roscher, like Auguste Romieu and most other thinkers in the mainstream of the nineteenth-century debate, depicted Caesarism as an essentially "illegitimate" political system. For Weber, by contrast, Caesarism may be deemed legitimate, *sociologically speaking*, to the extent that people living under its jurisdiction believe in its authority and voluntarily comply with its orders. Hence, the normative, condemnatory connotation of illegitimacy is erased from Weber's forensic (praise or

disapprobation he deems inappropriate in a scientific discussion); the dynastic theme considered irrelevant as the sociological criterion of legitimacy; and the rule of force (first arrestingly asserted by Romieu, endorsed in modified form in the theories of Schäffle and Roscher) conceptually subordinated to the rule of consent: the Caesarist leader's fate in the modern mass suffrage party system is dependent, both initially and ultimately, on his ability to inspire devotion to his person and, secondarily, to the policies he is capable of executing.

Weberian Sociology

Weber was always keen to insist that "scientific" work, of which his sociology was part, was distinctive from political engagement in a number of ways. Respectively, each possessed its own characteristic emphasis (explanation; intervention), its own criterion of validation (verisimilitude; effectiveness); and each addressed a different audience or the same audience in different roles (the scholar specialist; the citizen) through specific media (typically, the technical book and periodical; the newspaper, the public address). In practice, this meant appreciating the contrasting logics governing social science and political partisanship. Whereas partisanship, or what today we would call social advocacy, tends to make research ancillary and subordinate to a political program, scientific research proper is experimental, independent, and skeptical. Because these distinctions are ones that Weber returned to persistently and emphatically, they cannot simply be ignored or evaded if we are to take his expressed intentions seriously. Yet, needless to say, the issue is not so easily settled.

That the difference between the political and the scholarly writings is confounded in reality is nowhere more evident than in the work of Weber himself. Thus while the pugnacious "Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany" (1917-1918) is a clear example of political advocacy, and the stark formalism of Part I of *Economy and Society* (written between 1918 and 1920) an example of *wissenschaftlich* analysis, where is one to place a document like "Politics as a Vocation" (1919)? As we know it in its published form (for it began life as a lecture delivered in Munich on 28 January 1919), academic and political elements sit in the closest proximity. We witness Weber as sociology teacher (the outline of the three types of legitimate domination, the summary of the principal ideas of Ostrogorski, etc.); as critic (of the German parliamentary system, of those who espouse absolutist ethical principles); as advocate and partisan (of a president of the Reich elected by the whole people); and as

prophet of, at least in the short term, a “polar night.” Moreover, the status of “Politics as a Vocation” is hardly tangential for this chapter because it contains one of Weber’s most important discussions of Caesarism.³⁸

What are we to conclude from this attempt at narrative discrimination? On the one hand, the unavoidable artificiality of conceptual distinctions is no reason to avoid employing them. It is only grounds to treat their formulation with care. In Weber’s case this means being mindful of the tasks for which his writings were intended. For that reason, I devoted previous sections of this chapter to Weber’s adversarial and polemical interventions designed to shape state policy. Now I turn to discuss the concept of Caesarism as it was framed within those more deliberately scholarly treatises concerned with the sociology of *Herrschaft*. On the other hand, we should not be deterred from seeking systematic relationships *among* texts and genres wherever it appears to be relevant and historically credible to do so. Many of what I am here calling Weber’s political writings were composed during the same period in which he was constructing the categories of Weberian sociology. Quite often, one sees evidence of ideas formulated in a political context being reformulated in a sociological one. Just as often, a sociological investigation or train of thought will help inform his political judgments. Short of narrative schizophrenia, this is exactly what one would expect. In consequence, I shall have no hesitation in drawing on both kinds of text where the subject matter seems to invite it. And of course we have to avoid operating with an artificially restricted notion of “politics” and the “political;” Sheldon Wolin (1981) argues that Weber’s scientific work encompassed both. The *politics* of Weber’s program for the human sciences consisted in strategic and tactical arguments intended to defeat rival theoretical claims. Equally, Weber’s program was *political* in its attempt to constitute a new discursive domain: to establish, that is, a framework of concepts, methodological procedures and protocols contrived to win assent from other practitioners and be imitated in subsequent inquiry. Once established, the political aspects of theory tend to become muted because naturalized—until, that is, the founder’s colonization of theoretical space is challenged successfully from other points of view (Baehr 2002: 25-31). Weber was in no doubt of the foundational status of his own “well-knit sociological theory.” To his publisher friend Paul Siebeck he boasted: “I venture to assert that there has been *nothing* like it yet, not even a ‘precedent’ for it.”³⁹ And when he called (what we now know as) *Economy and Society* “my ‘Sociology,’” it is the possessive pronoun that Weber wished most to emphasize.⁴⁰ His sociological language drained Caesarism, previously a basic political

concept, of its normative content. In the process, the nature of democracy and legitimacy are themselves radically re-described.

Caesarism: The Sociological Re-description

In earlier sections of this chapter, I showed that Weber's *political writings* were the source of a uniquely mercurial and dynamic theory of Caesarism. According to the rhetorical context and purpose of his arguments, Caesarism functioned variously as an instrument of criticism or of endorsement and recommendation. The uses Weber found for the concept may have been diverse—that is part of their originality—but they were at least quite salient. By contrast, Caesarism's place in Weber's sociology is far harder to discern and track. This is essentially because in the switch from one idiom to another (that is, from the political to the scientific), Caesarism is overtaken by two narrative developments that render it opaque. First, Caesarism in Weber's sociology is increasingly displaced by a set of cognate expressions with which it becomes more or less interchangeable; the new terminology includes: "plebiscitary rulership/ domination" (*plebiszitäre Herrschaft*),⁴¹ "leadership democracy with a 'machine,'" "plebiscitarian leadership,"⁴² "leader-democracy,"⁴³ and "plebiscitarian leader-democracy."⁴⁴ Second, Caesarism, and this new terminology as a whole, is demoted to a sub-type of Weber's master concept of charisma. I turn now to show how this transformation occurs.

That "Caesarism," or "plebiscitary *Herrschaft*," or "leader-democracy," is a variant of charisma is a fact swiftly established: Weber is explicit about the matter in *Economy and Society*⁴⁵ and, with more brevity, in a piece written in 1913 as the introduction to the series "The Economic Ethic of the World Religions."⁴⁶ But if Caesarism is a modality of charisma, of what sort exactly?

Compare the discussion of charisma in "Politics as a Vocation," with those portions from the analyses of "legitimate *Herrschaft*" in *Economy and Society* where charisma receives systematic and (in two cases) sustained examination, to wit: chapter XIV of part two composed around 1913 and called "Charisma and its Transformation;" the bit on charisma from the posthumously published "The Three Pure Types of Legitimate Domination" (Weber 1922) composed around 1918;⁴⁷ and sections iv, v and vii, chapter III of part one, probably drafted around 1919. The overlap between what I shall feel free henceforth to call the 1913, 1918, and 1919 treatments of charisma in *Economy and Society* is considerable though differences are evident in length—the 1913 treatment is a little more than twice as long as its 1919 counterpart, while both dwarf

the 1918 version—and in substance: for instance the 1919 discussion expressly develops the “anti-authoritarian” aspect of Weber’s idea of charisma which is muted in the 1913 analysis and only briefly mentioned in the 1918 draft.

In “Politics as a Vocation,” Weber’s argument is straightforward enough. Having sketched the general character of charisma, and observed that it “has emerged in all places and in all historical epochs” he adds:

Most importantly in the past, it has emerged in the two figures of the magician and the prophet on the one hand, and in the elected war lord, the gang leader and the *condotierre* on the other hand. *Political* leadership in the form of the free “demagogue” who grew from the soil of the city state is of greater concern to us; like the city state, the demagogue is peculiar to the Occident and especially to Mediterranean culture. Furthermore political leadership in the form of the parliamentary “party leader” has grown on the soil of the constitutional state, which is also indigenous only to the Occident. (Weber [1919] 1970a:80 = 1958:496; cf. Weber 1922:556)

These comments suggest a universal, tripartite division of charisma into religious, military and political dimensions; its political manifestation in the shape of the city-state demagogue and the parliamentary party leader, however, is unique to the west. A little earlier in the same essay, however, Weber presented us with what was more akin to a bifurcation of his concept: we read there of charismatic *Herrschaft* “as exercised by the prophet or—in the field of politics—by the elected warlord, the plebiscitarian ruler, the great demagogue, or the political party leader” (Weber [1919] 1970a:79 = 1958:495). Still, whether charisma is tripartite or dualistic, it seems clear that Caesarism is a component of its political guise. True, the word “Caesarism” is missing from both these contexts, but it emerges explicitly when Weber subsequently cites Gladstone’s “‘grand’ demagogy” and its success in wooing the mass vote, as irrefutable evidence that a “Caesarist plebiscitary element” had transformed the prime minister into a “plebiscitarian dictator” who “stands above Parliament.”⁴⁸ However, while Weber’s discussion of Caesarism and plebiscitarianism in “Politics as a Vocation” is direct and transparent, in *Economy and Society* it is much more tortuous. Once again “plebiscitary *Herrschaft*” is portrayed as a type of Occidental political charisma; only this time it is the paradoxical nature of the phenomenon that Weber now chooses to emphasise. To understand the nature of this paradox it is necessary to consider briefly what Weber considered charisma in its most pristine manifestation to be.

Pure or “genuine” charisma, Weber maintained, is doubly extraordinary: its bearer is “treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman,

or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities” (Weber [1922] 1978b:241 = 1964:178); its life-blood, at least initially, is a psychological condition of human excitement, enthusiasm or distress that may or may not be related to a wider social crisis. In the intense personal devotion to the master that it inspires, and its irreverence for tradition and legality for their own sake, “charismatic belief revolutionises men ‘from within’ and shapes material and social conditions according to its revolutionary will” (Weber [1922] 1978b:1116 = 1964:836). Nonetheless, the fealty of both close associates and the rank-and-file is neither unconditional nor uncritical. The leader must bring forth the requisite material and emotional satisfactions to keep the following committed to his mission. Charisma, to retain its spell over heart and mind, must continually display its powers. Should triumphs succumb to disaster and the promised well-being for all believers fail to come about, the leader will find himself deserted, ridiculed and, worst of all, ordinary. In the final analysis, therefore, the charismatic figure is the captive of others’ devotion. When that devotion turns to indifference or hostility, the gift of grace vaporizes (Weber [1922] 1978b:242, 1114 = 1964:179, 834-5).

Though the ability to perform miracles of various kinds is, thus, a condition of charisma’s longevity, it is not the ground of its claim to legitimacy. This rests upon the “conception that it is the duty of those subject to charismatic authority to recognise its genuineness and to act accordingly.” It is this moral imperative, this demand of allegiance on behalf of a leader convinced that he is the vessel of some deity or of providence, that constitutes charisma’s “authoritarian principle” of legitimacy (Weber [1922] 1978b:242, 266 = 1964:179, 198). By contrast, *plebiszitäre Herrschaft* (Caesarism, etc.) reflects a situation in which charisma has strayed such a long way down the road of rationalisation that the premises of its original claim to legitimacy have been inverted; in short, charismatic legitimacy is subjected “to an anti-authoritarian interpretation” (Weber [1922] 1978b:266 = 1964:198; Weber 1922:558). Instead of the leader’s authority being founded upon a mission which the following, to the extent that it recognises him, is duty-bound to acknowledge (charisma in its purest revelation), legitimacy is now *formally* derived from the will of the following itself, whom the charismatic (political) leader professes to embody. Legitimacy in this way assumes a “democratic” coloration.⁴⁹ As Weber remarks:

The personally legitimated charismatic leader becomes leader by the grace of those who follow him since the latter are formally free to elect and even to depose him—just as the loss of charisma and its efficacy had involved the loss of genuine legitimacy.

Now he is the freely elected leader. Correspondingly, the recognition of charismatic decrees and judicial decisions on the part of the community shifts to the belief that the group has a right to enact, recognise or repeal laws, according to its own free will, both in general and for an individual case. (Weber 1978b:267 = 1964:198)

Any reader who takes these lines literally will conclude that the core meaning of charisma has been changed in them. The leader who once led by virtue of his own qualities to which the masses (or a section of them) submitted in awe has become reduced to a mere cipher of popular sovereignty. How it is possible for Weber to argue that the “democratic” leader is, despite his apparent abasement, a *charismatic* figure? The answer becomes apparent once we understand Weber’s view of the election and the plebiscite, and his related perception of the demos that exercises them.

A number of commentators (e.g., Breuer 1998; Schroeder 1998) have called attention to the fact that, towards the end of his life, Weber ([1917] 2005a: 752-756) considered outlining a fourth type of legitimacy derived “officially” from “the will of the ruled.” It is significant that he discarded this idea. He did so, one can conjecture, because the will of the ruled is an ethereal notion. More significant still is another fact: that, in *Economy and Society*, Weber classifies plebiscitary democracy under leader-democracy—and not the other way round. And while he makes great play of the distinction between an election and a plebiscite, in the end it amounts substantively to very little. The plebiscite, Weber explains, is an acclamatory technique peculiar to democracy. Through it voters give expression of their endorsement of a leader or policy.⁵⁰ A plebiscite, strictly speaking, is not politically identical to an “election” if by that word we are implying “a real choice between candidates” (Weber [1922] 1978b:1129 = 1964:848). Rather, a plebiscite “is the first or the renewed recognition of a pretender as a personally qualified, charismatic ruler; an example of the latter case is the French plebiscite of 1870.”⁵¹ And yet there is, the previous comments notwithstanding, an essential link between the plebiscite and election after all,⁵² a connection that becomes plain when Weber describes the social and semantic provenance of the latter. Originally, the election was an acknowledgement by a following—faced with the problems of charismatic succession—of the grace of a charismatic aspirant. There was only one “correct” choice of, say, a feudal king; to choose “wrongly” was tantamount to a sacrilegious error. And the majority principle had absolutely nothing to do with this election process because “a minority, no matter how small, might be right in its recognition of genuine charisma, just as the largest majority might be in

error” (Weber [1922] 1978a:1126 = 1964:846; Weber 1922:557-8)—a quandary that spawned in the case of the papacy the practice of unanimous election. Weber adds that the kind of election he has just described is not one “in the modern sense of a presidential or parliamentary election” (Weber [1922] 1978b:1126—1964:845) but this is a remark that requires some care in its interpretation. For it is clear that in one key respect the older and modern senses of election are indeed similar where the issue of charismatic leadership is concerned: both are essentially practices of acclamation, affirmations of the master’s mission. With that endorsement, the key purpose of the demos in the “election”—and the plebiscite—is largely exhausted.⁵³

But why is it exhausted? Weber scholars have variously traced Weber’s theory of charismatic leadership to a compound of sources, both characterological and doctrinal: the “aristocratic” pathos of Nietzsche’s *Übermensch*, Kantian individualism, early Protestantism and so on (see Becker 1988). However, every theory of political leadership supposes both a depiction of those who wield authority and a sense of the agency and the capacities of the led. Not until we uncover this agency (or lack of it) I now want to suggest, are we able to understand the deepest anti-democratic implications of Weber’s line of argument. The point will bear some elaboration.

The Irrationality of the Masses

The nineteenth-century debate on Caesarism, as I described it in the previous chapter, was characterized by two fundamental motifs. The first turned on the lack of “legitimacy” of Caesarism, a concern that could itself be rendered in various ways: the end of tradition, the attack on God, the dread of political “usurpation” or “despotism.” Weber’s sociological framework conceptually swept away such concerns when it redefined “legitimacy” to mean either a report on the nature of people’s beliefs about a power-relationship, or a series of “legitimations”—traditional, rational-legal, charismatic—projected by those in power. In both cases, the older strains of legitimacy became *sociologically* irrelevant. On the one hand, belief in the rightness of an authority claim now becomes sufficient grounds for its legitimacy irrespective of content. On the other, legitimacy itself appears to dissolve into claims that the powerful make about themselves and their ability to persuade others of their right to rule. More than this, Weber defined “domination” or “rulership” (*Herrschaft*) in such a way as to make it exceedingly difficult to untangle from “legitimacy” or “legitimations” (Beetham 1991: 6-14, 23-35; Parkin 1982: 74-80). It is true that, as a kind of “power”—“the authoritarian power

of command”—*Herrschaft* comprises a relationship between ruler and ruled, between those who command and obey. But Weber adds that, in his sense, *Herrschaft*⁵⁴ means “the situation in which the manifested will (command) of the ruler or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (the ruled) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake.” Or, in other words, the “merely external fact of the order being obeyed is not sufficient to signify domination in our sense; we cannot overlook the meaning of the fact that the command is accepted as a ‘valid’ norm” (Weber 1978b: 946 = 1964: 695).

The second theme of the older Caesarism debate concerned the political character of the “masses.” The majority of commentators believed these masses to be demonstrably unfit to participate in the political process, either because of their lack of education or because there was something about the social nature of “masses” as such that made them politically irrational. Weber developed a variant of the latter position. Of itself, this would be noteworthy but, given nineteenth-century attitudes, conventions, and theories of crowd psychology, not especially remarkable (Bellamy 2003; cf. Williams [1958] 1963: 287-300, and Briggs 1979). Articulated to Weber’s concept of legitimacy, however, it has major theoretical consequences. For if legitimacy rests in the final analysis on the beliefs of the governed, and if the governed themselves are in the main an irrational mass, then no rational *democratic* politics is possible in modern society. As in Weber’s political writings, Caesarism or “plebiscitary leadership” is, again, inevitable in one form or another; but this time Weber’s conclusion is predicated on more than a conjunctural analysis of his times, on more, in other words, than the arguments of a citizen concerned to demonstrate what political arrangements are best for his country. Weber’s conclusion is inscribed within the very structure of his theory of social relationships. That conclusion may be startling, but it is not hard to find evidence for it. Before I adduce that evidence I should, however, clarify a possible misunderstanding. Weber never objected to irrationality as such. Passion, after all, is central to his idea of science. Value-judgments, on which everything meaningful is based, are at root visceral. In the context of Weber’s political analysis of the “masses,” on the other hand, “irrationality” does have a negative connotation. Mass irrationality contrasts with the significance he attributes to political sobriety, perspective, and discipline.

Weber's commitment to "democracy" was always heavily qualified by the view that extensive public participation in politics—the Machiavelian ideal—was an impossibility in densely populated, technologically complex, and socially heterogeneous nation-states. In part this conviction derived from his study of modern political parties that seemed amply to corroborate the "law of the small number"—Weber's counterpart to Robert Michels's iron law of oligarchy. But another part to Weber's thinking must be grasped if we are to comprehend his position. This concerns his understanding of the social psychology of the "mass" or "masses," terms used by Weber in different, though complementary and overlapping, senses. First is the idea of mass as a simple social aggregate that in its amorphousness cuts across all other social divisions (of class, status-group, occupation, etc). This is the mass "as such," "irrespective of the social strata which it comprises in any given case" (Weber [1918] 1978a:1459 = 1958:392). In this sense, all persons, whatever their level of intelligence, their disposition or their social background are potentially or in fact members of a mass. A designation for an indeterminate body of people, "mass" may be devoid of any notion of assembly—a notion revealed in such expressions as the mass of the electorate or mass administration (Weber [1922]1978b:285, 951 = 1964:212, 700).

Second a mass suggests what Gustave Le Bon ([1895] 1960: 23-4) once dubbed a "psychological crowd" by which he meant a combination of people the density of which engenders a sort of collective personality. Broadly speaking, a crowd is a distinct sort of mass in that it involves some spatial location, some social intercourse, some congregation. Typically, crowds are heterogeneous in composition, and our contact with fellow crowd members is brief and unarticulated by formal relations of authority. The study of how membership in a crowd affects human conduct is the subject matter of "crowd psychology" which may or may not be approached in the Le Bonian mode (Weber [1922] 1978b:23 = 1964:175).

Finally, for our purposes, "mass" may shade into notion of "the masses" or "the mob" (Guenther Roth's translation of *Strassenherrschaft*)⁵⁵ evoking a variety of allusions. One theme is simply subordinate groups or classes. Another is specific groups within subordinate classes that have resisted political integration or whose behavior exposes a breakdown in the structure of political integration: that is to say, groups that remain politically unorganized and undisciplined by professional politicians or trade union leaders. Mass in the sense of mob refers particularly to those among the unpropertied whose insurgent spontaneous street activity, no-

tably characteristic of “neo-Latin forms of life,” makes them dangerously amenable to the demagogue of, say, syndicalist predilection.⁵⁶

Weber’s references to mass and masses are, thus, varied and complex. Yet common to all his depictions is a theme that binds them together in a broadly coherent framework and that is the key to understanding why, for Weber, “democratic” politics is synonymous with oligarchy. According to Weber, the mass is handicapped by an inherent and crippling disability: it is “irrational.” By this term *in the political writings* Weber typically means behavior that is myopic, amorphous, imitative, but especially “emotional,” (the term he most often uses to characterize mass behavior) oscillating between passivity and explosive spontaneity, and causally determined rather than meaningfully oriented.⁵⁷ Problematic about such a view is not the concepts of “masses” or “mob” themselves, notions that with analytical care might be justifiably imputed in some circumstances to collective behavior. Nor need one dogmatically deny that, under some description, and under some conditions, mass conduct can be irrational, even if to describe it as such today usually attracts the ire of historians and social scientists. The really serious problem is that, on Weber’s account, we have no way to distinguish mass behavior from any other kind of collective action; indeed, given Weber’s methodological individualism the very idea of collective “action” is strictly speaking a misnomer. Similarly Weber fails sociologically (analytically) to disaggregate emotional “mass” intrusions into political life from collective civic interventions or social movements. It is thus quite understandable that with the reduction of a public to a mass, Weber is left with a definition of politics itself as “any kind of autonomous leadership” activity or direction (Weber [1919] 1958:493 = 1970a:77). Because masses are evidently destitute of all characteristics that could make them autonomous, it follows that self-governing liberty on an extended scale, and the taxing responsibilities that go with it, is a *categorical and stipulative* impossibility within Weber’s schema. As Weber put it:

one must always remember that the term “democratisation” can be misleading. The demos itself, in the sense of a shapeless mass, never “governs” larger associations, but rather is governed. What changes is only the way in which the executive leaders are selected and the measure of influence which the demos, or better, which social circles from its midst are able to exert upon the content and the direction of administrative activities by means of “public opinion.” “Democratisation,” in the sense here intended, does not necessarily mean an increasingly active share of the subjects in government. This may be a result of democratisation, but it is not necessarily the case.⁵⁸

So it is that though the legitimacy of “plebiscitary democracy” is “*formally* derived from the will of the governed” (Weber [1922] 1978b:268 =

1964:199) and in that sense anti-authoritarian, the leader in fact remains the source of devotion and duty—and thus authoritarian after all. All talk of popular sovereignty is an empty slogan.⁵⁹ Modern democracy or “plebiscitary domination” is anti-authoritarian only in its “claim” to legitimacy, rather than its substance, and that claim only tells us how the charismatic democratic leader, and the society of which he is a part, justifies his mission, as opposed to why people actually support him. As with all other kinds of charisma, the democratic leader wins allegiances on the basis of what he does, or on the basis of what people perceive him to do, or on the basis of what they perceive he is capable of doing; in short, because of his powers and their actual or potential realization. Insofar as a democratic leader can prove his ability and win a devoted constituency through extraordinary feats, his domination is thus essentially charismatic and authoritarian, never mind the pious phrases concerning mass participation that surround it.

To sum up: Weber’s sociological re-modelling of Caesarism as “plebiscitary domination” and other cognate expressions depicts it as a social relationship involving a modern variant of charisma—Occidental, political, demagogic—founded on the democratization of the suffrage and its corollary, the mass party system, in which the masses vote for the person they find most exemplary. Caesarism—or “plebiscitary domination”—is anti-authoritarian in rhetoric, but acclamatory in practice. A plebiscitary model of politics in some shape or form is inevitable under modern conditions, because of the character of party politics and because of the nature of the masses. Where nineteenth-century critics of Caesarism feared or regretted such a situation, Weber accepted it as a fact of life. But there was still one twist left in his argument.

Most previous thinkers examined in chapter 2 sought to distinguish the military, command mode of governance typical of Caesarism, from the kind of politics in which law and representation are respected and form the bedrock of political life. Weber also often followed such a distinction, notably in his defence of parliament against Bismarck’s constitutional system. But in other places, particularly where the question of “democracy” is at issue, and where Weber seeks to expose what he considers to be the sociological truth behind the ideological veil, he extends his categorical framework of “plebiscitary domination” to incorporate both military and civilian relationships. For example, in a passage from *Economy and Society* ([1922] 1978b:961-2 = 1964:707) on the means by which elected mayors of some American cities have effected their reforms “in a ‘Caesarist’ fashion,” he goes on to observe:

Viewed technically, as an organised form of domination, the efficiency of “Caesarism,” which often grows out of democracy, rests in general upon the position of the “Caesar” as a free trustee of the masses (of the army or of the citizenry), who is unfettered by tradition. The “Caesar” is thus the unrestrained master of a body of highly qualified military officers and officials whom he selects freely and personally without regard to tradition or to any other impediments. Such “rule of the personal genius,” however, stands in conflict with the formally “democratic” principle of a generally elected officialdom.

Again, in discussing *plebiszitäre Herrschaft* Weber informs his readers that while its “most common examples are the modern party leaders,” it “is always present in cases where the chief feels himself to be acting on behalf of the masses and is indeed recognised by them. Both the Napoleons are classical examples, in spite of the fact that legitimation by plebiscite took place only after they seized power by force” (Weber [1922] 1978b:267 = 1964:198, emphasis omitted). The meaning of Caesarism here seems to be uncommonly strained because one would think that “modern party leaders” such as Gladstone or Lloyd George embodied a form of rule fundamentally different from that of the two Bonapartes who “seized power by force.” What can the “Caesarian rule [*Herrschaft*] of the sword of military parvenus”⁶⁰ have in common with the likes of these British statesmen?

Considered from the perspective of Weber’s universalistic ideal-type approach, three features appear fundamental. First, party leaders (or city mayors) of the modern day represent a continuation, a rationalization, of a process of political democratization presaged by Cromwell, by the leaders of the French Revolution, and by the Bonapartes. Second, the military and civilian power-relationships that fall under the rubric of Caesarism can be typified as rhetorically “anti-authoritarian” and plebiscitary: both systems derive “the legitimacy of authority from the confidence of the ruled, even though the voluntary nature of such confidence is only formal or fictitious” (Weber [1922] 1978b:267 = 1964:198); both also conflict to a greater or lesser extent with crown or parliament. Third, Caesarism, be it military or incarnated in the form of the modern party leader is akin to a kind of “dictatorship.” We have seen Weber use this term in a number of places including Gladstone’s leadership of the Liberal Party, and the office of the German reich president. Weber’s perception of democratic dictatorship was also doubtless sharpened by the behavior of Allied leaders during the First World War.⁶¹ That military rule and Caesarism sprang out of democracy was not of course a new idea; for generations, thinkers had condemned democracy precisely for that reason. That, under modern conditions,

military rule and the rule of civilians are—in some fundamental respects—mirror images of each other was a rather different notion.⁶² Again, the “anti-authoritarian” claims of plebiscitary *Herrschaft* are exposed as a charade.

Charisma and Caesarism: Their Systematic Relationship Considered

Up to this point I have shown how Caesarism is doubly re-described in Weber’s sociology. From being a prominent term in the political writings devoted to Bismarck and the Anglophone parliamentary alternative to the *Kaiserreich*, Caesarism is first reformulated under the lexicon of “plebiscitary domination” and simultaneously absorbed within the general concept of charisma. To meet the predictable objection that I have been quoting Weber selectively and prejudicially, I now want to show in a more systematic way how and why this transformation occurred. My starting point is the observation that Weber’s work as a whole reveals a clear textual asymmetry in his discussion of Caesarism and charisma. In what I have been calling the “political” writings, Caesarism is Weber’s preferred term for political leadership and charisma is a word rarely employed. Conversely, in the academic-sociological treaties, charisma is paramount and obtrusive, while Caesarism is demoted as a *term* to virtual insignificance. Why is this? A satisfactory answer to this puzzle, I suggest, depends on a scrutiny of four kinds of linguistic relationship.

1. *Charisma in the sociological and political writings.* Weber developed the concept of charisma in two distinctive frameworks: the sociology of *Herrschaft* and the sociology of religion. In the former, charisma is the product of an analytical cocktail in which Weber mixes—and shakes—Rudolf Sohm’s history of early Christianity; the Caesarism dispute (my focus in this book); and a related understanding of mass behaviour (which I have also considered). Charisma within Weber’s sociology of religion is indebted less to Sohm than it is to contemporary anthropological debates in which writers such as Konrad Preuss, Wilhelm Wundt, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Robert Marett sought to decipher the origins of primitive, and more especially, pre-animist, religion (Riesebrodt 1999). Although “charisma” made a brief appearance towards the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism* ([1905] 2002: 119—Weber 1920 I: 200), it was not until around 1913 that the concept really came to prominence in Weber’s sociology, a position it would retain to the end.⁶³ As David Beetham (1989:321) reminds us, in its first formulation charisma “is a gift possessed by all believers; in

Weber's later sociology it becomes a special attribute of leadership. In like manner the individualism which was a general characteristic of the 'heroic age of capitalism' as Weber terms it, becomes in the bureaucratic age a special quality of heroes."⁶⁴ Insofar as the term appears at all in political writings, it merely serves the function of repeating, summarising or reinforcing what Weber has said at much greater length, and with much greater precision, in his sociological texts. Indeed, the only usages of the term charisma in the political writings known to me come from the lecture "Politics as a Vocation,"⁶⁵ a document that, as I indicated earlier, enjoys a special position in the Weberian corpus because it so evidently straddles a number of idioms.

2. *The relationship between charisma and Caesarism in the sociological writings.* In the sociological writings such as *Economy and Society* and the studies of the world religions, charisma is Weber's most salient term to describe individual leadership, the ardour and sense of duty it inspires on behalf of the following, and the routinization of wonder. Caesarism, on the other hand, is Lilliputian by comparison, and is explicitly mentioned as a word only rarely.⁶⁶ Furthermore, if one concentrates on the chapters specifically devoted to the analysis of charisma in *Economy and Society* it becomes clear that while "Caesarism" emerges twice in the 1913 draft of the typology of legitimate *Herrschaft*,⁶⁷ it is completely absent from its 1918 and 1919 counterparts; in those cases, Caesarism has been entirely expunged by the cognate expressions *Führer-Demokratie*, *plebiszitäre Führerdemokratie*, and *plebiszitäre Herrschaft*.⁶⁸ These words, and Caesarism itself in the 1913 version (in which the one reference to *plebiszitäre Herrschaft* is specifically linked to Caesarism)⁶⁹ possess little independent status in the sociological texts; as Weber explains them, they seem to be mere derivatives or adjuncts of the master term charisma. Accordingly, they share the most significant properties of charisma, even in contexts where charisma is not specifically mentioned. Thus, in Weber's chapter on Bureaucracy in Part II of *Economy and Society* we read that Caesarism amounts to the "'rule of the personal genius' who is unfettered by tradition" (Weber [1922] 1978b:961-2 = 1964:707), a comment reminiscent of the qualities possessed by the bearer of the gift of grace.

3. *The relationship between charisma in the sociological writings and Caesarism in the political writings.* In the political writings, too, Caesarism is projected in such a way as to remind us constantly of what Weber says about charisma in his sociological discussions: we are told of Caesarism's succession problem;⁷⁰ a number of men named Caesarist

also appear as embodiments of charisma in Weber's formal sociology, including Gladstone,⁷¹ Napoleons I and III,⁷² and Pericles;⁷³ Caesarism, like charisma, is depicted as a highly personalised form of *Herrschaft* resting on mass emotionality;⁷⁴ and both are designated acclamatory.⁷⁵ However, contrasts are also evident. First, Caesarism is overwhelmingly Weber's favoured leadership term in the political writings; with the exception of "Politics as a Vocation," charisma is never mentioned in them. Second, the theme of illegitimacy that arises in the political texts that deal with Caesarism is an issue of no real substance in the context of charisma. Moreover, even where Weber raises the question of Caesarism's illegitimacy in *Economy and Society*, he does so only in the most casual way.⁷⁶ Third, while Weber's wartime polemics against Bismarck repeatedly castigate him as Caesarist, Bismarck is the one figure conspicuously excluded from Weber's list of charismatic personages. The only allusion to charisma in Bismarck's case is the reference to his "rule of genius," an expression Weber also uses of the charismatic Napoleon I⁷⁷ and which in both the sociological and political works is said to characterize Caesarism also.⁷⁸

4. *The relationship between Caesarism in the sociological writings and Caesarism in the political writings, and some questions answered.* The most prominent aspect of this relationship has already been considered: Caesarism, the term that Weber uses as early as November 1884, and continues to use until virtually the end of his life in his political writings has, by 1919, become supplanted in the sociological-academic texts (never of great prominence there in any case) both by the terminology of *plebiszitäre Herrschaft* and its correlates, and simultaneously digested as an idea into the wider notion of charisma. How, then, is one to explain this discrepancy between Caesarism's relatively high standing in the political writings, and its inferior status in the sociological ones? What happened to make Caesarism dematerialize in the 1918 and 1919 versions of the three types of legitimate domination? Why, if Caesarism had become redundant as a sociological term, should Weber have chosen to retain its services as a political foil? Why, if charisma is Weber's preferred sociological terms for the leader-follower bond is its employment, outside the sociological texts, restricted to "Politics as a Vocation?"

The absence of "Caesarism" from the 1918 and 1919 typologies of *legitimate Herrschaft* has to be put, I suggest, in a methodological context. Weber's objective in the sociological writings was not simply to inform his specialist audience about the social character of the world but also to provide it with a model of how social information should be presented

and comprehended. For him, sociology was to eschew value-judgement and be scientific in Weber's understanding of that term: dispassionate in its formulations; saturated in empirical knowledge; modest in its claim and its conclusions; driven by a demonic passion to learn yet able to discipline that passion once the choice of subject matter for research had been decided on; and generally prudent and controlled. That Weber often breached his own rules is well known, but not relevant here. More to the point is Weber's sociological design, clearly apparent in part I of *Economy and Society*, the "Conceptual Exposition" (*Soziologische Kategorienlehre*),⁷⁹ the part that contains the 1919 version of the analysis of charisma. And in that part Weber marks out, as nowhere else in his work,⁸⁰ the ground of sociology as an orientation and the methodological approach it should adopt. Part I is the closest Weber ever got to articulating a manifesto for sociology, and under the turgidity of its prose and its interminable model-building pulsed a crusading purpose. Admittedly, as manifestos go, it is at times reticent and even self-deprecatory. Does Weber not disclaim, in the preface to chapter 1, methodological novelty for the terms and concepts he is about to use in that chapter and by extension in the whole of part I? Does he not declare that he has simplified his language in order to make it more comprehensible and accessible? Yet while the modesty of the first remark is undermined by the sentence that immediately follows it ("The method...attempts only to formulate what all empirical sociology really means when it deals with the same problems"), the second stands qualified by Weber's own concession that his account may seem "pedantic," that "the most precise formulation cannot always be reconciled with a form which can readily be popularized. In such cases the latter aim has had to be sacrificed" (Weber [1922] 1978b: 3 = 1964: 3).

Now Caesarism, being a word so protean and politically combustible, was not the sort of term suitable for a work like *Economy and Society*, part I, which required instead a more anodyne language to do the sort of work Weber wished it to perform. Moreover, Caesarism's unsuitability as a technical term was compounded by the fact of its inclusion nonetheless in other treatises with scientific aspirations (Roscher's *Politik*; Schäffle's *Bau und Leben*) that Weber would have been compelled to rebut in conformity with his professed goal of formulating "what all empirical sociology really means when it deals with the same problems." Sometimes a word or distinction is so fundamental that Weber cannot avoid confronting opposing formulations, as he does with Rudolf Stammler's concept of "order," Georg Friedrich Knapp's notion of money, or, indirectly, with

Marx's category of class. In other cases, Weber is able to bypass extended critique through coining or adapting notions such as *plebiszitäre Herrschaft* or "leader democracy" and its equivalents, expressions less anachronistic and pejorative than "Caesarism," and specifically honed to the modern conditions it is the sociologist's task to investigate.

The virtue of *charisma* as a term, meanwhile, was that it was a word with no polemical overtones. Affording ample scope for *wissenschaftlich* definition and elaboration, it provided Weber with both a blank check, and a route of escape from the unruly preconceptions tenanted in the house of Caesarism. Naturally, this was not charisma's only merit. Caesarism (as distinct from Caesaro-papism) was invariably linked to the political realm: the council or state. Its orbit of meaning was hence commensurately circumscribed, a restriction that could only be reinforced by the marriage of the term to a particular historical person or group of persons. By dint of this semantic confinement, Caesarism could never have furnished the more general, more abstract, tool Weber required to theorize his third mode of *Herrschaft*. His ideal-type trinity needed a concept that could accommodate all that was known as Caesarism but much more besides. And this was to be charisma's role. Charisma was able to traverse a vast territory of devotional relationships, from state leadership over a mass of people at one extreme, to the artistic leadership exercised over an aesthetic coterie at the other. It thus possessed the versatility lacking in Caesarism to bestride universal forms and local situations. Moreover, the religious dimension of leadership, mostly absent from "Caesarism," in fact often squarely opposed to it, could be conveyed generously in a term like charisma which, through its Biblical origins, came equipped with its own numinousity.

"Charisma," in sum, presented itself as an attractive alternative to "Caesarism" because it was not bowed down under the weight of previous political controversy; because it allowed elbow room, as Weber saw it, for scientific formulation; and because it was capable of encapsulating the plurality of relationships between leaders and followers that Weber was keen to depict. Insofar as Weber wrote as a founder of a distinctive mode of scientific analysis, engaged in the formative process of creating a comparative orientation or "discipline" free from value-judgments, it is natural that Caesarism is, in his sociology, generally demoted as too polemical and too narrow a term for his technical purposes. Equally, it is significant that in the 1919 *Kategorienlehre* (and the 1918 section on "The Three Pure Types of Legitimate *Herrschaft*"), where Weber is setting out the lexicon and basic concepts of sociology, Caesarism disap-

pears altogether as a word, supplanted by the vocabulary of *plebiszitäre Herrschaft*, and absorbed into charisma. By contrast, insofar as Weber wrote as a nationalist partisan, as a person determined to take a stand in public affairs, it is just as natural that Caesarism, a common term in the political vernacular of his day, should have been retained, and charisma—esoteric as it then was—omitted from discussion. It figures, too, that a hybrid piece like “Politics as a Vocation,” simultaneously pedagogical and polemical in intention, should have employed virtually the whole gamut of terms considered in this chapter—Caesarism, charisma, plebiscitary democracy, plebiscitary *Herrschaft*, leader-democracy—that in other texts are quite rigorously separated.

Conclusion

By the time of Weber’s death in 1920, the Caesarism debate was already losing the considerable vitality it had enjoyed in the nineteenth century. Thereafter, with some notable exceptions (e.g., Spengler [1918/1928: 431-465; cf. Riencourt 1958), Caesarism became increasingly remote from public discussion, a once vibrant and visceral term giving way inexorably to specialist usage in political theory and political sociology (e.g., Gerth and Mills 1954: 210; Neumann [1953] 1964: 233-56).⁸¹ To be sure, the popular novel, the theatre, the cinema and the study of literature all served to keep Caesar’s name alive during the remainder of the twentieth century (Lenihan 1992). And Caesar proved a durable allegorical resource, too, in the hands of artists and intellectuals concerned to illuminate contemporary events and crises. During the dark years of fascism and National Socialism, in particular, the Roman dictator and his Caesarism offered revived symbolic opportunities both for propagandists of the new regimes and their enemies (contrast Oswald Mosley [1933] 1968: 323-324 with Antonio Gramsci [1929-35] 1971: 219-223; on Charles Maurras’ *De demos à César* [1930], see Nicolet [2003] 2006: 184-5).⁸² We have only to recall Kurt Weill’s “Caesar’s Death” from *Der Silbersee* (premiered simultaneously in Leipzig, Magdeburg, and Erfurt on 18 February 1933 just days before the Reichstag fire), Alfred Neumann’s *Der neue Cäsar* (1934); Bertolt Brecht’s unfinished Caesar novel, begun in 1937, but only published twenty years later;⁸³ and Thornton Wilder’s *The Ides of March* (1948). The thirties, too, saw the longest ever run of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*: Orson Welles’s anti-fascist production in New York in 1937 which clocked-up 157 performances.

Moreover, it is obviously important not to treat a complex and traumatic century as if it were monolithic. Between 1918 and 1945, an interest

in Greece and Rome remained lively among self-improving readers to an extent that caught even contemporaries off-guard. No-one, for instance, was more “astonished” than H.G. Wells (1961: 1-10) and his publisher at the “extraordinary reception” and “enormous sale” that greeted the many editions of his *Outline of History* (1920), volume 1 of which is largely devoted to the prehistoric and ancient world. In addition, analogies with antiquity remained common right through the years of the Depression, the New Deal and the Second World War. Since 1945, by contrast, the reception of Caesar in particular, and antiquity in general, has been markedly weaker than in any other period sketched in this book – despite the current fad for the concept of empire. I will be told that historians of antiquity have continued to probe, in fact more abundantly than ever before, the nature of Caesar and his times.⁸⁴ Yet such scholarly productivity cannot conceal the limited nature of its consumption, even in the academy itself. Most students of the human sciences know next to nothing about Graeco-Roman civilization. We live today in a post-classical, rather than a post-modern, world.

As for the analysis of Caesarism in the nineteenth and the twentieth century, none was more complex, more transitional, more Janus-faced, as Wilhelm Roscher might have put it, than Weber's. On the one hand, it looked back to an older tradition in which demagoguery and populism were viewed with distrust and dismay. This is how, in the main, Weber depicts the effects of Bismarck's governance on the German state. On the other hand, it anticipated and served to delineate a view of democracy as a competition among leaders or élites for the popular vote. Such are the implications of Weber's defence of the British parliamentary system, his championing of a plebiscitarian reich president for the postwar German Republic, and his sociological treatises on the nature of *Herrschaft* and democracy. The concept of Caesarism is correspondingly subject to an unprecedented volatility: damned *and* exonerated in the political writings, depending on the context; erased through the invention of a new sociological language which can no longer speak its name. That such theoretical turbulence reflected major social and political changes is obvious. New times required new concepts. The modern world has spawned developments—industrial capitalism and mass democracy chief among them—about which classical and later republican thought was mostly silent. At the same time, the republican idea waned because of a lack of commitment to its fundamental values: political *virtù*, a “mixed” constitution, self-governing liberty. On this at least, the consensus between Weberian competitive elitism (Held 1987: 143-185) and classical Marx-

ism was clear. For both, the republican ideal of a responsible community of citizens, each having his salutary role to play in the *res publica* was absurd, and gave way to plebiscitary or vanguard models of rule. The notion that politics is an activity valuable *sui generis*—a space for human creativity and accommodation in pursuit of diverse public goals—was also artificially circumscribed or flatly rejected. For writers like Weber, the notion of oligarchy was no longer to be understood, as it had been for classical republicans, as a tendency to be resisted in political relations, or even a stage in a political cycle that would itself be superseded, but as an iron and universal law. Similarly, for Marxists, political democracy under modern conditions was a sham: little more than a rhetorical device of party managers, or a fraudulent instrument employed to win consent and continue the uninterrupted business of bourgeois rule. Stefan Breuer (1998: 2) remarks that the goal of Weber's sociological theory of legitimacy "was to establish a value-neutral conceptual structure, to construct ideal-types that would serve as instruments for empirical research in the fields of sociology, political science and history." Yet in Weber's sociology Caesarism suffers a double eclipse. Not only is a once highly charged idea placed under a new and sanitized vocabulary; it also virtually disappears into a concept—charisma—that now becomes, in some shape or form, *the source of all authority*. Caesarism's previous overtones of illegitimacy and oppressiveness are accordingly neutralized, its contentiousness erased in a sociology aspiring to universal application.

Notes

1. Cf. Goldman 1992: 193. Whimster (2007: 244), in contrast, appears to think that Caesarism has an exclusively negative connotation in Weber's writings.
2. I employ the German term throughout because of its ambiguity. *Herrschaft* has various renderings in English translations of Weber's work; the most common of them are "domination" and "rulership." Important analyses of *Herrschaft* in general can be found in Hilger 1982, and in Richter 1995, chapter 3. On Weber's use of the term, especially in the context of contemporary discussions by Robert Michels, Georg Simmel and Georg Jellinek, see Hanke 19-46, in Hanke and Mommsen 2001. Ghosh (2005: 400-405; and in his remarks in Weber [1906] 2005b: 357) notes the longevity of Weber's usage of this term and concept.
3. On the charisma debate of Weber's time among religious scholars, see Kroll 2001, esp. 55-70, and Riesebrodt 1999 (who argues that Weber's general concept of charisma—within the sociology of religion—was indebted to the work of the British anthropologist Robert R. Marrett.) I fully accept that this debate informed Weber's own concept of charisma. My point, in what follows, is that we need also to show the political background to Weber's idea of charisma. And in that background Caesarism was a vital component.
4. Employing a distinction of Camic (1986: 1042-1043), one might say that Caesarism is a "background" rather than a "foreground" concept in Weber's sociology

- (though not, as I have remarked, in his political discourse). Locating such a background concept enables us to identify the “developmental process” that occurs in an author’s work as a whole, and measure changes in its “underlying conceptual structure.”
5. Universal manhood suffrage suffered a checked career in Prussia. Established in April 1848 only to be superseded in May 1849 by the notorious three-class system, itself a product of reaction, Bismarck made the institution a central plank of the North German Confederation constitution, ratified in April 1867.
 6. I take the figures from table 4 of Koch 1984: 384-5.
 7. Letter to H. Baumgarten, dated 8 November 1884, in Weber 1936: 139-48, at 143. A slightly different translation appears in Marianne Weber [1926] 1988: 118 with an added emphasis that is absent in *Jugendbriefe*. Weber reaffirmed the link between universal suffrage and Caesarism in “Parliament and Government in a Reconstructed Germany” (1918), a revised and extended version of articles published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in May and June 1917. See his comments on “the hopes that a Caesarist figure like Bismarck attached to universal suffrage,” in Weber 1978a: 1452 = 1958: 382.
 8. See Weber [1917; “Suffrage and Democracy in Germany”] 1958: 235, and the parallel discussion in Weber [1918] 1978a 1382-3 = 1958: 296.
 9. Craig 1981: 58-60. See also Hofmann 1977: 96; Mosse 1971: 175-6; Eley 1976: 284-5.
 10. Note the telescoping of causality that occurs between the Freiburg lecture and “Parliament and Government.” In the former, Germany’s travails are attributed to “a missing century of political education;” in the latter they are adduced to the “legacy of Prince Bismarck.” The ambivalence actually seems to have been present as early as 1894, on which see Mommsen 1984: 86.
 11. Also Weber [1918] 1978a: 1452 = 1958: 382 (“The circumstances of Bismarck’s departure from office demonstrate the manner in which hereditary legitimacy reacts against ... Caesarist powers”) and Weber [1922] 1978b: 986 = 1964: 726, where “legitimate” and “Caesarist” political power are presented as antinomies. Weber implied a similar antithesis between Caesarism and legitimacy as early as 3rd January 1891 in correspondence with Hermann Baumgarten. Weber remarked that after Bismarck’s “resignation” on 20 March 1890, five days after a stormy confrontation with Wilhelm II over parliamentary and foreign affairs, “one could make the most interesting observations on his previous admirers, from the opportunists who had discovered shortly afterwards that Bismarck basically ‘had not grasped his time,’ to some eager disciples of Treitschke, young historians, who declared that they would only very reluctantly tip their hats before the emperor after he had covered the tribe of the Hohenzollern with the ‘ignominy of ungratefulness and petty ambition’ like nobody before him. The latter were not able to contradict our response that now it would become clear that, as we have always claimed, their ostensible monarchistic loyalty had been nothing else than hidden Caesarism” (Weber 1936: 327-8).
 12. I have retained all the emphases of the German original. On Bismarck’s “low estimation of legitimacy” and the manner in which the “‘Bonapartist’ character of Bismarckian politics is concealed by the monarchist, traditional cloak of the royal servant and imperial chancellor, by the heritage of the conservative Junkers” see Gollwitzer 1952: 65-6. Also Stürmer, 1977b: 115 who quotes Ranke’s crisp judgment of Bismarck: “Indispensable for the state, but intolerable for the dynasties” (1877).
 13. In fact Bismarck was forced constantly to assert the civil arm of government to restrain military enthusiasm and encroachment, as after the battles of Königgrätz

- and Sedan, and again during the Bulgarian crisis of 1887: details in Craig, 1981: 2-7, 31-3, 133-4.
14. Bismarck's coup d'état plans were prosecuted in the early spring of 1890 when the old pugilist felt the parliamentary ground collapsing beneath him, and as he also witnessed a new Kaiser attempting to assert his own personal rule. However, as later events were to show, scheming of this sort was endemic to the whole Wilhelmine system. The plans were resurrected, for instance, by Count Philipp Eulenburg in the summer of 1894 and by Wilhelm II himself in the winter of 1896-7. On all this Röhl 1967: 50-5, 110-17, 217-22, is excellent.
 15. One of Bismarck's objectives in planning his coup against the Reichstag was actually to increase Wilhelm's dependency on him.
 16. For instance, and under the characterization of *Führerdemokratie*, Weber [1922] 1978b: 268-9, 1126 = 1964: 199-200, 846.
 17. Weber does refer to Wilhelm II as "Bonapartist" (if one wishes to equate that charge with "Caesarist") and also calls him a Caesar, though this may be a pun on the German word Kaiser. See, respectively, statements to Hermann Baumgarten of 31 December 1889 and 3 January 1891, in Weber 1936: 323, 328.
 18. Pericles, Cleon and Lassalle: Weber [1922] 1978b: 1130 = 1964: 849; Gladstone: Weber [1919] 1970a: 106 = 1958: 523-4; Lloyd George: Weber [1918] 1978a: 1452 = 1958: 383. Weber also likened Trotsky to a Caesar, on which see Mommsen 1984: 279, n.333.
 19. See Mitchell's (1977) devastating critique of "Bonapartism as a Model for Bismarckian Politics." For an attempt, of which Mitchell is highly critical, to employ Caesarism in this context, see Stürmer 1977a and, for much greater detail, Stürmer 1974, especially 322-333 on Bismarck as a "Caesaristic statesman." Stürmer's position is defended and elaborated upon by Gay 1993: 252-265, 628-9.

Other historians have been much less critical of the Bonapartist analogy than Mitchell. See, for example, Eyck 1968: 116-7; Eley, in Blackburn and Eley, 1984: 150-1, who takes issue with Mitchell (on Eley's assessment of the concept of Caesarism see his *Reshaping the German Right* 1980: 206 ff.); Wehler 1970 esp. 122-3, 140, 142; Kitchen 1976 where the notion undergoes and unapologetic elastication ("The characteristic form of government in Germany from Bismarck to Hitler was ... bonapartism," 10; cf. 11-24); Crankshaw, 1981: 233-4 who endorses Engels's portrait of the Bismarck regime as a "Bonapartist semi-dictatorship;" and Taylor 1945: 138.
 20. I have slightly modified the translation and restored all the original emphases. On the "law of the small number," see also Weber [1922] 1978b: 952 = 1964: 700.
 21. By the early twentieth century, the portrayal of the British prime minister as a "dictator" was fairly common. It could be found in the writings of A. L. Lowell, M. Ostrogorski, Sidney Low and J. A. Hobson, and was by no means unknown within Germany itself. Otto Hintze (1975: 266), in an article first published in 1908, wrote that, in England, "the parliamentary ministry is developing further and further into a popular dictatorship of the Prime Minister," while Tönnies (1917: 52) could confidently declare: "the Prime Minister of England has a great future, and this future is Caesaristic." See also the instructive discussion in Birch 1964: 72-81. Lord Hailsham's 1976 Dimbleby Lecture, which caused quite a stir at the time of its delivery, extended the idea of dictatorship to the whole House of Commons. However, since Hailsham quickly establishes that the House is itself dominated and directed by the Prime Minister's office, the analysis he presents is far less original than he supposes it to be.

22. Consider also Weber's ([1918] 1978a: 1415 = 1958: 337) comment that "In the United States, equal suffrage has resulted time and again in the election, as lord mayor, of a popular trustee who was largely free to create his own municipal administration. The English parliamentary system equally tends towards the development of such Caesarist features. The prime minister gains an increasingly dominant position toward parliament, out of which he has come."
23. The extent of Ostrogorski's impact on Weber's theory of party organization is questioned by Lawrence Scaff (1980-1: 1279, n.11) who concludes that James Bryce's influence was "primary." The argument is plausible. Yet so far as the term Caesarism is concerned—at least as Weber formulates it in the parliamentary democratic context—Weber's usage is much closer to Ostrogorski than Bryce ([1888] 1927: 623) for whom Caesarism essentially denotes "military despotism" in an older, nineteenth-century sense that was recapitulated in Germany by Wilhelm Roscher. Moreover, while Ostrogorski himself invoked Bryce on various occasions where the two thinkers shared a common opinion (e.g., Ostrogorski [1889] 1970 II: 567 on the "fatalism of the multitude"), Bryce in his turn contributed the preface to the 1902 English-language edition of *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties*. Any attempt to untangle Bryce's influence on Weber from Ostrogorski's is thus no simple matter.
24. Weber [1919] 1978a: 1413, 1429-30 = 1958: 334, 355; Weber [1919] 1970a: 111-12 = 1958: 530. On the constitutional liabilities of the Second Empire that militated against a vibrant German parliament, see Weber [1918] 1978a: 1423 = 1958: 347 (on Article 27), and, more importantly, Weber [1918] 1978a: 1410-16, 1425, 1431 = 1958: 330-8, 350, 357 (on Article 9).
25. Also [1918] 1978a: 1454 = 1958: 385, on parliament's indispensability as "the agency for enforcing the public control of administration, for determining the budget...for deliberating and passing laws," emphases omitted.
26. In "Germany's Future Constitution" Weber says that proportional representation is tolerable "in *normal* times," i.e., in a period of relative social peace, but its overall effect is to weaken "unified political leadership"—something crucially needed to overcome Germany's travails. He adds, "Applied to government formation, a proportional system would be the radical opposite of any dictatorship. That will be differently judged according to one's economic, social and political views": Weber [1919] 1958: 462 (I have omitted a number of emphases). Also [1919] 1970a: 114 = 1958: 532: "... in its present form, proportional representation is a typical phenomenon of leaderless democracy" and Weber [1918] 1978a: 1443 = 1958: 372, on coalition government.
27. Weber [1919] 1970a: 114 = 1958: 532. Also Weber [1918] 1958: 457: "A Reich President supported by the revolutionary legitimacy of popular election, who would stand opposite the Reich corporate bodies in his *own* right, would have an incomparably greater authority than one who was parliamentarily elected," emphasis in original. (Wolfgang Mommsen [1963: 310] interprets the phrase "revolutionary legitimacy" as code for charismatic legitimacy. We could just as well say "Caesarist" legitimacy)
28. Weber stresses that it is entrenched politicians who are resisting leadership—and they are the dominant voice in parliament—not party politicians in general. For the latter, "popular election [of the Reich President] creates a change in the form of selection for official patronage;" it does not curtail official patronage, the oxygen of the ambitious deputy, as such.
29. "Germany's Future Constitution," [1919] 1958: 457.

30. Weber [1919] 1970a: 106 = Weber 1958: 523; cf. Weber [1922] 1978b: 268 = 1964: 199. It is thus perfectly appropriate for Eduard Baumgarten (1964: 549) to entitle his own short section on Weber's constitutional proposals: "Der Reichspräsident: cäsaristische Demokratie," and for Wolfgang Mommsen (1984: 340, 343-4, 353, 366) to agree on an identical equation. In Weber's *sociological* writings, the president chosen by plebiscite is described under the rubric of "charisma": Weber [1922] 1978b: 219 = 1964: 162; Weber 1922: 552.
31. Weber's extensive engagement with Mommsen's work is most obvious in his *Habilitationsschrift* ([1891] 1986b).
32. Meyer (1978: 329) thought that Ferrero's *Grandezza e Decadenza di Roma* (1904) made the opposite mistake to Mommsen in seeing Caesar as "a mere toy of events."
33. The same general objection, incidentally, that Marx in *Capital* III leveled at Mommsen himself ("who discovers the capitalist mode of production in every monetary economy"). See Marx [1894] 1981: 923; cf. 444, n.46. Mommsen's use of words like "democracy" in the Roman context, and his frequent attempts to provide analogies between antique and modern conditions, have often been criticized as historically strained.
34. Weber uses the term in the 1897 and 1909 versions of *Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum* (*Agrarian Relations in Antiquity*). See, respectively, Weber 1897: 1-18, at 12, and Weber 1924a: 1-288, at 242, 253. The latter, expanded version of the essay appears in English as Weber 1976: 35-386). (The references to Caesarism can be found on 322, 335). See also Weber [1891] 1986b: 140.
35. Weber 1975: 227, n.69 = 1951: 1-145, at 28, n.4.
36. Schäffle (1896 II: 487) says that Napoleon III could have been the model for Aristotle's depiction of tyranny in *The Politics* book V, chapter 9 (he must mean book V, chapter 11) because "faked plebiscites, an army of praetorians, corruption, police censoring of the press, the adventures from Mexico to China, the European wars, well paid but servile deputies, civil servants, jailing, deportation, assassination, incarceration of 30,000 political opponents and the like" are all "characteristics of tyranny."
37. See the section on "Combinations of the Different Types of Authority" in Weber [1922] 1978b: 262-6 = Weber 1974: 195-7. Also, the discussion in Mommsen 1974: 74-5.
38. The fact that *Economy and Society* itself contains a theory of politics (Collins 1986: 2-3) is no objection to the distinction previously made. From a Weberian standpoint, a theory of politics is concerned with causal explanation, rather than with partisan advocacy, and is thus subject to the same protocols governing any other area of scientific investigation.
39. Cited in Baier et al. 2000: 106.
40. Cited in (Mommsen 2005 [2000]: 83. A contrasting interpretation of Weber's sociology is suggested by Hennis [1987] 2000: 164, n.47.
41. Weber [1922] 1978b: 267, 1126 = 1964: 198, 846.
42. Both expressions can be found in Weber [1919] 1970a: 113 = 1958: 532.
43. Weber [1922] 1978b: 268, 269 = 1964: 199. See also Weber [1922] 1964: 558.
44. Weber [1922] 1964: 199 (rendered in the English translation as "plebiscitary democracy" Weber [1922] 1978b: 269).
45. Weber [1922] 1978b: 266-8, 1126, 1129 = 1964: 198-9, 846, 849.
46. Weber [1916] 1970c: 267-301 at 295-6 = 1920 I: 237-75, at 268-9.
47. Cf. Baier et al 2000 and Edith Hanke's diagram on p. 88-9 of Weber 2005a. The 1918 "Three pure types of legitimate *Herrschaft*" (Weber 1922) found its way into

- part two of the fourth edition of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* and is also included in Weber 2005a. Omitted from the English language edition of *Economy and Society*, it appears in translation in Weber 2004: 133-145.
48. Weber [1919] 1970a: 106-7 = 1958: 523-4. One should add that although “demagogy” is a necessary element of Caesarism, it is not to be equated with it. The prime case of a non-Caesarist demagogue, Weber claimed, was the modern journalist ([1919] 1970a: 96 = 1958: 513). Similarly, although Weber adopts a phraseology that appears to compound demagogy and charisma—as in his references to “charisma of the spirit and the tongue” (the context is Periclean democracy) or to “the ‘charisma of rhetoric’” (the context is modern electioneering)—the ideas remain analytically distinct. See, respectively, Weber [1922] 1978b: 1126, 1129 = 1964: 846, 849. On the concepts of demagogy and charisma in Weber’s writings see also Walter Struve 1973: 142.
 49. Weber ([1922] 1978b: 267 = 1964: 198) maintains that *plebiszitäre Herrschaft* is a transitional mode of law-making between the charismatic and rational-legal types.
 50. On non-democratic acclamation see Weber [1922] 1978b: 1126 = 1964: 846.
 51. Weber [1922] 1978b: 1126 = 1964: 846. Cf. Weber [1922] 1978b: 1129 = 1964: 848 (“We are not at all dealing with an election, of course, when voting for a political ruler has a plebiscitary and hence charismatic character”) and Weber [1918] 1978a: 1451 = 1958: 392 (where Weber remarks that “the specifically Caesarist technique is the plebiscite. It is not an ordinary vote or election, but a profession of faith in the calling of him who demands these acclamations”).
 52. See their compounding in Weber [1919] 1970a: 108 = 1958: 525-6: “That the plebiscitarian ‘machine’ has developed so early in America is due to the fact that there, and there alone, the executive—this is what mattered—the chief of office-patronage, was a President elected by plebiscite.”
 53. Note that Weber ([1922] 1978b: 1128 = 1964: 847) construes “a system of direct democracy” as the antithesis of a charismatic leadership structure.
 54. I am excluding Weber’s discussion of *Herrschaft* as it relates to economic interests. On this, see Weber [1922] 1978b: 941-946 = 1964: 691-695.
 55. Literally, “the rule of the street”: Weber [1918] 1978a: 1460 = 1958: 392.
 56. Weber [1918] 1978a: 1460-1 = 1958: 392-3; Weber [1917] 1970d: 394-5 = 1958: 274. Weber’s analysis of the “masses” was the most hackneyed aspect of his discussion of modern democracy. Clearly, Weber was no simple-minded Le Bonnian. But one spies, here as elsewhere, Le Bonnian overtones in his work: compare Le Bon [1895] 1960: 39, 54 on Latin crowds. (Le Bon’s *Psychologie des foules* was published in a German translation—*Psychologie der Massen*—in 1908.) It is also possible that Weber borrowed Le Bon’s concept of “prestige” to fashion the notion of charisma; the similarities are legion. For Le Bon, prestige is “a sort of domination exercised on our mind by an individual, a work, or an idea. This domination entirely paralyses our critical faculty, and fills our soul with astonishment and respect.” Prestige, moreover, is not an isolated property but “the mainspring of all authority” (130). In addition, Le Bon divided prestige into two parts: “acquired” or “artificial” – redolent of Weber’s analysis of charisma’s routinization—and “personal,” a “faculty independent of all titles, of all [institutionalised] authority, and possessed by a small number or persons whom it enables to exercise a veritably magnetic fascination on those around them, although they are socially their equals, and lack all ordinary means of domination ... The great leaders of crowds such as Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Joan of Arc, and Napoleon, have possessed this form of prestige in a high degree, and to this endowment is more particularly due the position they attained” (131-3). Le Bon’s paradigmatic case of personal prestige is Napoleon I (133-6) but he has

earlier compared Napoleon with Julius Caesar (69). In fact, the “type of hero dear to crowds will always have the semblance of a Caesar. His insignia attracts them, his authority overawes them, and his sword instils them with fear” (54-5).

Weber does, in one place, present charisma and prestige as synonyms (Weber 1922: 556) while in another place he makes the point that “in general, it should be kept clearly in mind that the basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a *belief*, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent ‘prestige’” (Weber [1922] 1978b: 263 = 1964: 195; I have omitted a number of emphases). Yet “belief” was typically not a strong enough term for Weber when he wished to depict charismatic *Herrschaft*. As Beetham (1985: 247, n.65) remarks: “The term Weber uses to describe the attitude of those subject to charismatic authority is not ‘Glaube’ (belief), as in the other types of legitimacy, but the more emotional ‘Hingabe’,” which means devotion or surrender.

57. See Weber [1918] 1978a: 1457 = 1958: 389; 1978a: 1459-60 = 1958: 392. On electoral “passivity,” Weber [1919] 1970a: 99 = 1958: 517.
58. Weber [1922] 1978b: 984-5 = 1964: 724-5. Again, while few will take exception to the claim that the “demos...in the sense of a shapeless mass never governs,” Weber’s remark hints that “shapeless” is what the demos of necessity is (he offers us no other sense of demos in this context). During the Great War, Weber’s hauteur towards the common people visibly changed. The decency, loyalty, and sacrifice of the soldiers he encountered persuaded him to include them as bona fide members of the *Kulturnation*; that gave further impetus to his demand that the returning soldiers enjoy equal political rights in the Reich (see Ay 1999). Even so, this change of heart appears to have had little demonstrable consequence for Weber’s view of mass democracy and the necessity of leaders to impose their will upon it.
59. We have already seen Weber describe democratic government as a sort of “dictatorship”: for example [1919] 1970a: 106-7 = 1958: 523-4. On the Roman precedent, see Weber [1922] 1978b: 1125 = 1964: 844-5.
60. The statement quoted comes from a lecture delivered by Weber in 1905 to the St. Louis Congress of Arts and Science: Weber [1906] 2005b: 354 which is itself a restoration, by Peter Ghosh, of Weber 1970e: 370. (The manuscript of the German original has not survived.)
61. See Weber’s comments in “Suffrage and Democracy in Germany” [1917] 1958: 278 on the manner in which the highest democratic executive office transmuted, in the First World War, into “a political military dictatorship,” emphasis omitted. Cf. Weber [1918] 1978a: 1452 = 1958: 383.
62. The “military” aspects of dictatorship, and their Roman precedent, are also addressed explicitly in *Economy and Society*. See Weber [1922] 1978b: 268, 1125 = 1964: 199, 844-5. Also the instructive remarks of Nippel 2000b: 17.
63. Weber also speaks in the *Protestant Ethic* of “the *relatively* high degree of immunity of formerly Puritan nations to Caesarism, and in general the inwardly freer attitude of the English to their great statesmen.” In England, one discerns an “attitude that, on the one hand, is more inclined to an acceptance of the great man, yet, on the other hand rejects any hysterical ‘adulation’ and the naïve idea that anyone could have a duty of political obedience out of ‘gratitude.’” Alluding to Bismarck, Weber contrasts that state of affairs to “much that we, for example, have experienced from 1878 onwards” (Weber [1905] 2002: 136, n. 84 = 1920 I: 99, continuation of 98, n. 1).

On the use of “charisma” around 1913 see Part II of *Economy and Society* 1111-57 = 1964: 700-2. Weber also includes the trinity of charismatic, traditional

- and legal modes of *Herrschaft* in the “Introduction” to the series of essays entitled “The Economic Ethic of the World Religions, Comparative Essays in the Sociology of Religion.” Though the Introduction and the first essay of The Economic Ethic series (on Confucianism, which also contains important sections on charisma) were both written in 1913, they had to wait until 1916 for publication in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. On their references to charisma see Weber 1970c: 295-6 = Weber 1920 I: 268-9, and Weber, 1951a: 30-42, 119-29, etc. = Weber 1920 I: 310-25, 408-17, etc.
64. Elsewhere, Beetham (1985: 216-7) observes that while in the Freiburg Inaugural, the leadership that Weber desires is “presented in terms of leadership by a class—hopefully the bourgeoisie—and is dependent upon their achieving a wider political and national outlook as a class...political leadership in Weber’s later writings is presented as leadership by an individual, within a context of political institutions and on the basis of a political relationship with a mass electorate.” Beetham traces this transformation to Weber’s belated realization that the bourgeoisie, and every other modern class, was “too closely bound to a particular economic function and outlook to be capable of wider political achievement which went beyond that of class interest ... Hence, the need for a distinctively political elite or leadership to counteract the dominance of class and economic factors.”
 65. See Weber [1919] 1970a: 79-80, 106, 113, 124 = 1958: 495-6, 524, 532, 543. Arthur Mitzman (1970: 247-8) implies that the term charisma is employed in “Suffrage and Democracy in Germany” (1917). It is not. References to “Caesarism,” on the other hand, occur three times in that text, viz, 1958: 233, 277, 279.
 66. As in Weber [1922] 1978b: 961, 986, 1126, 1130 = 1964: 707, 726, 846, 849; and Weber [1915] 1970c: 296 = 1920 I: 269; also Weber [1906] 1970e: 370. If “Politics as a Vocation” is included in the category of sociological/academic writings, see Weber [1919] 1970a: 106 = 1958: 523.
 67. Respectively, Weber [1922] 1978b: 1126, 1130 = 1964: 846, 849.
 68. Weber 1922: 558, and Weber [1922] 1964: 198-9 = 1978b: 267-9.
 69. Weber [1922] 1978b: 1126 = 1964: 846.
 70. Weber [1918] 1978a: 1457 = 1958: 389.
 71. Compare Weber [1919] 1970a: 106 = 1958: 524, with Weber [1922] 1978b: 1132 = 1964: 851.
 72. Compare Weber [1918] 1978a: 1451-2 = 1958: 382, with Weber [1922] 1978b: 244, 266-70, 1126, 1149 = 1964: 181, 198-201, 846, 867. Also, Weber 1922: 556.
 73. Called a “demagogue” in Weber [1919] 1970a: 96 = 1958: 513, called “Caesarist” and demagogic in Weber [1922] 1978b: 1130 = 1958: 849. Also, Weber 1922: 556.
 74. Compare [1919] 1970a: 106-7 = 1958: 524-5 with, *inter alia*, Weber [1922] 1978b: 269, 1117, 1130 = 1964: 199-200, 837, 849.
 75. Compare Weber [1918] 1978a: 1451 = 1958: 382, with Weber [1922] 1978b: 1127 = 1964: 847.
 76. Twice: Weber [1922] 1978b: 986, 1130 = 1964: 726, 849.
 77. On Napoleon, see Weber [1922] 1978b: 244, 268 = 1964: 181, 199. On Bismarck, see Weber [1918] 1978a: 1387 = 1958: 302.
 78. See, respectively, Weber [1922] 1978b: 961-2 = 1964: 707, and Weber [1918] 1978a: 1387 = 1958: 302.
 79. Recall that part I was written between 1918-20, part II between 1910-14.
 80. The importance of the earlier *Über einige Kategorien der verstehenden Soziologie* (Weber [1913] 1951b: 427-74 = Weber 1981: 151-80) is not in dispute here, but that text is not anything as comprehensive as the *Soziologische Kategorienlehre*.

More importantly, although it has a little to say about the meaning of legitimacy and *Herrschaft*, it has absolutely nothing to say about the types of legitimate *Herrschaft*.

81. Also Strauss 1959: 96-97 and Voegelin 1949: 241-244.
82. In the 1980s, Caesarism had a brief reprise in neo-Gramscian thought: Stuart Hall and Bill Schwarz sought to apply the concept to the British Social Democratic Party and to earlier coalition politics. See Hall 1983; Hall and Schwarz 1985; and Schwarz 1985.
83. See Brecht [1957] 1969; and the references to Caesar in the two versions of the Solomon Song: *The Threepenny Opera* III/7 (premiered in Berlin in 1928 = Brecht 1979: 64-5); *Mother Courage*, Scene 9 (premiered in Zurich in 1941 = Brecht 1980: 75-6). Brecht also wrote a short piece on “Caesar and his legionary” ([1949] 1961: 61-77). On his interest in Caesar, see Dahlke (1968), and the more critical analysis of Dickson ([1978] 1994: 127-138).
84. Claude Nicolet ([2003] 2006: 202-5) has also, rightly, taxed scholars such as myself for failing to consider the significance of Jérôme Carcopino, a major scholar of antiquity and student of Caesar and Caesarism. For the purposes of this book, however, my interest in Caesar and Caesarism ends with Weber’s death in 1920. (Carcopino’s most important work on Caesar and on the Roman Republic appeared in the mid-1930s.)

Part 2

Fate and Fate Communities

4

Fate

Introduction

In the spring of 2004, I gave a talk to a small group of historically minded sociologists in the Austrian village of Marienthal. Twenty kilometers from Vienna, Marienthal was memorialized in a remarkable study, conducted in the early 1930s, by Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Hans Zeisel. The authors charted the disastrous impact of near-total unemployment on a previously close-knit, politically active community. The collapse of its textile mill robbed Marienthal's inhabitants of both economic sustenance and social energy. Jahoda ([1933] 1971: 2) and her colleagues recorded a doleful place marked by "a diminution of expectation and activity, a disrupted sense of time, and a steady decline into apathy."

In that historically poignant setting, I resolved to talk about a very different sort of crisis in Hong Kong. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) had recently shut down the city and sowed trepidation in the hearts of millions. The spring of 2003 was the first time it occurred to me that I could die along with countless others in a sudden and quite surprising way. My fate was linked with that of innumerable strangers. To help me convey this experience in a sociological idiom, I employed at Marienthal the English term "community of fate" and sought to give it a specific and rigorous meaning.

German speakers in attendance were disquieted. Listening to my talk, they translated community of fate into *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, a plausible rendition because *Schicksal* is broadly equivalent to the English words "fate" or "destiny," and *Gemeinschaft* means "community." *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* reminded my Marienthal colleagues of Nazi propaganda (see below).¹ They told me that "community of fate" was just too ideologically loaded to be sociologically credible. In reply I acknowledged the ideological payload of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* but went on to make three

points. First, that *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* was no monopoly of Nazi fanatics. Second, that to suggest “community of fate” was inherently ideological was to conflate a *German contested concept* with an English term. Third, that because “community of fate” is almost a tabula rasa in the English language it affords scope for dispassionate elaboration that might be impossible for its German counterpart.² The expression community of fate employed in the Hong Kong SARS context was, I said, by no means the equivalent of the German *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. In any case, one could still evoke aspects of the German word—for instance, adapting Max Weber’s usage (or, indeed, that of Otto Bauer)—without succumbing to humbug or worse.

That answer was a little too neat. In particular, it sidetracked an intriguing question. Should we abandon a term wholesale because we associate it with one poisoned articulation? Should we, to put the matter a little differently, cede a word to our opponents because they abused it? Everything depends, surely, on the term itself. No non-Nazi would operationalize *Volksgemeinschaft* (National Community) because, to my knowledge, that was principally a Nazi expression. Nor would non-Bolsheviks wish to press “traitor of Motherland family members” into service. Such terms are terminally injured for sociological purposes because they were employed exclusively as instruments of propaganda and terror. *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, on the other hand, has a much more nuanced, multivalent history, as do *Schicksal* and *Gemeinschaft*. All of these terms are conceptually open.

In the sociological tradition, no one was more sensitive to fate than Max Weber. This chapter examines the ways he handled both the idea of *Schicksal* and *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. Some other usages of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*—across the political spectrum in the German-speaking world—are also considered. Chapter 5 selectively reframes Weber’s analyses, under the rubric “community of fate,” so as to illuminate a particular—and very unusual—kind of response to social emergency.

Fate and Choice

We saw in chapter 1 that Weber employed a couple of German terms to express the idea of fate or destiny. The first was *Verhängnis*, summoned in the closing paragraphs of the *Protestant Ethic*. *Verhängnis* has the connotation of dire consequences, of calamity; the adjective *verhängnisvoll* means something like “disastrous.” The other term Weber employs, much more often, to express the idea of fate is *Schicksal*. Three contexts of its use are especially salient for our purposes. In the

first, Weber urges his German contemporaries to shake off their political lassitude and become a nation of co-rulers. Many people associate Weber's notion of fate with a logic—rationalization, for instance—that is inevitable and unstoppable. But in the setting that concerns us here “fate” is the partner of choice: an exercise of will by political actors resolved to change society, rather than submit meekly to its developmental tendencies. The fact that choice and fate co-exist is, on the face of it, a curious juxtaposition, yet everyday usage confirms it. If fate were irrevocable it could not be tempted nor, as in Jonathan Schell's book about the dangers of nuclear proliferation, *The Fate of the Earth*, could it hang in the balance. Nor could people seek to “change their fate”—as the *zeks* of the Gulag Archipelago did when planning their escape (Solzhenitsyn 1974: 391). Weber's usage played on all these familiar meanings, but also explicitly adapted ancient Greek usage. In the *Iliad* (3. 182), fate or *moira*, is not an ineluctable destiny, apportioned at birth, but an *interruption* of the expected course of events. And in the *Republic* (Book 10 617c-618b), we learn of the words of Lachesis, a daughter of Necessity, that “Your guardian spirit [*daimōn*] will not be given to you by lot. You will choose a guardian spirit for yourselves.... Virtue knows no master. Your respect or contempt for it will give each of you a greater or smaller share. The choice makes you responsible.” Equally, the “harsh spinners” (*Clothes*) that appear to determine fate, may stop their spinning at the time of a person's birth, fixing fate for ever, or continue their work throughout the agent's life. That Platonic resonance is clear in one of Weber's ([1917] 1949a: 18 = 1973: 508) most celebrated passages: “The fruit of the tree of knowledge, which is distasteful to the complacent but which is, nonetheless, inescapable, consists in the insight that every single important activity and ultimately life as a whole, if it is not to be permitted to run on as an event in nature but is instead to be consciously guided, is a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul—as in Plato—chooses its own fate i.e. the meaning of its activity and existence.” (A broadly similar phrasing, again evoking fate and the Biblical tree of knowledge—Gen. 2:9; 3: 3—appears in Weber analysis of “objectivity” in social science and social policy [1904]:1949b: 57 = 1973: 154).

Similarly, Weber refused to believe that helplessness in the face of bureaucracy was an “inescapable fate.” It would only become so if people concluded that the “the ultimate and only value” of human affairs was technically rational administration. True, the “advance of bureaucratization is unstoppable” in a complex society because it is an indispensable

machine of coordination and standardization. But that only raises the question for all those who value liberty of how democracy and freedom are possible at all. Weber's answer is that they remain possibilities for so long as people fashion institutions that enable dynamic leadership and compel officialdom to serve vibrant political and cultural values. In a jolting phrase he called on his fellow citizens to "thrust their hands into the spokes of the world's development." ([1918] 1994b: 269 = 1958: 430; cf. Weber [1916] 1994c: 77 = 1958: 141). The metaphor is remarkable for its contrast to both the classical view of revolution (the Aristotelian/Polybean wheel of constitutions, eternally fated to repeat their inexorable cycle) and the modern one espoused by Marx and Engels in which acceleration towards a predetermined future is ardently welcomed. That enabled the founders of Marxism to assert that the fight of the "lower middle class, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant" against extinction is "reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history" (Marx and Engels [1848/1888] 2002: 231). Weber, conversely, urged his compatriots to slow down the wheel's motion, to impede or redirect it, even if that were to be a painful decision.

Weber's defiance towards a preordained future is further displayed in his remark that liberty and democracy "are only possible where they are backed up by the determined *will* of a nation not to be ruled like a flock of sheep. We 'individualists' and supporters of 'democratic' institutions must swim 'against the tide' of material constellations" (Weber [1906] 1995a: 109 = 1989: 274). Swimming against the tide implies both a gravitational pull and the struggle against it; the first is necessary, the second is possible. Yet Weber equally insists that it is only by recognizing our fateful horizons that political action can become realistically calculative and informed. The ability to confront "fate" on this account is actually a test of intellectual and moral courage by which individuals furnish proof of their aptitude for politics as a vocation. Political actors, he argued, should meet fate – both the obdurate present and "the structure of the future" (Weber [1905] 2005: 335)³—with sobriety, aware of the limitations it imposed. An immature nation incompetent at ruling itself, shackled to a 'will of powerlessness' in domestic affairs" is one clearly unable to project "the 'will to power' in the world." Yet Germany, with its population of seventy million and its position as one of the European great powers, had an "accursed duty and obligation" to the world to preserve cultural plurality. Should Germany collapse as a continental power, the cultural vacuum it left behind would be filled by the domination of, on the one hand, Anglo-American ways of life and, on the other, Russian

expansionary statism. “This is fate, and no amount of pacifist talk will alter the fact” (Weber [1916] 1994c: 77 = 1958: 141).

Weber did, of course, allow that Germany could in theory relinquish its role as a great power, resigned to the status of a Switzerland or Denmark. But if it were to turn its back on the creation of the Reich, the “‘power pragma’ that governs all political history” would soon see to it that Germany would be absorbed into the spheres of influence of more robust neighbors. It was sheer folly to believe that Germany could be both militarily impotent and secure, pacifist and a great power. The continental position of the Reich, jostling for influence and elbow-room in a region of predatory neighbors, was “our particular fate” (Weber [1916] 1994c: 77-8 = 1958: 141).

In light of the horrific events that followed the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Weber’s fears of Russian incursions into Germany may appear absurd. Yet they were by no means idiosyncratic. Before the First World War, German political and military elites often voiced their apprehension of a Russian attack, perhaps in alliance with France, Britain, and Italy. Pessimism and despair about the outcome of such a war, rather than gung-ho enthusiasm for it, was the dominant note. In July 1914, Reich Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg told his private secretary, Kurt Riezler, that he felt “a fate (*Fatum*) greater than human power hanging over Europe and our own people.” Earlier, predicting a calamity, he lamented that “Russia’s claims [are] growing [along with her] enormous explosive strength” (quoted in Ferguson 1998: 98-99). Today we are skeptical about Weber’s claim that Germany had a duty to future generations of Europeans. The more immediate point is his contention that great powers are burdened by their own history—by the geopolitical position they inherit—and by their need for security. In a hostile world, all states that value their survival must be vigilant towards edgy and expansionist competitors. The “power pragma” of an anarchic international system dictate the conditions under which a nation-state will press for regional hegemony, resist a potential hegemon, or fall under its sway.⁴

This, of course, is the “realist” position in international relations that Weber bequeathed to Hans Morgenthau, and that finds its most astringent contemporary formulation in the work of John Mearsheimer.⁵ Like Weber, Mearsheimer establishes the ever-present tendencies of great power conflict: the absence of a central, pan-state regulatory authority; the fact that all states are equipped with some offensive military capability; the lack of certainty in states’ calculations about the behavior of other

state actors; the fact that states must attend principally to a rival's power capacity rather than to the shifting intentions of its leaders.⁶ A state with continental borders is far more vulnerable to attack than a polity separated from its rivals by oceans or channels. Since becoming a great power in 1898, the U.S. has never been invaded; Britain has not been invaded for over four centuries. In contrast, over the past two centuries France has been invaded seven times, Russia five times and Prussia/Germany three times. Mearsheimer's analysis of a framework that no one consciously designed, and few would wish to create, is stark and clinical, his concepts finely honed for the unsentimental task required of them. We learn of the dangers of "unbalanced multipolarity," of "balancing versus buck-passing," of the "stopping power of water." But this does not preclude the embrace of a more antique vocabulary, as he recounts the pathos by which states are "fated to clash as each competes for advantage over the others," a situation he describes as "tragic" (Mearsheimer [2001] 2003: xii, 3-4, 30-32, 114-128).

Fate, Comradeship, and the Political Meaning of Death

Geopolitical considerations also influenced another of Weber's usages of fate, but this time the context was the experience of comradeship and the political meaning of death. During the Great War, Weber launched a passionate defense of universal and equal suffrage in Germany, arguing that the returning troops should all enjoy equal voting rights, unencumbered by the discriminatory provisions of the Prussian three-tier electoral system. The importance of equal voting rights for the nation, on Weber's account, had nothing to do with a natural equality of human beings. It had everything to do with the fact that, for once, the individual is not considered in terms of differences of status and wealth, but formally and simply as a citizen. Equal suffrage "expresses the political unity of the nation (*Staatsvolk*)" (Weber [1917] 1994a: 103 = 1958: 254). And since it is the polity that confers such a condition, it may also demand the ultimate sacrifice of all its citizens. "All inequalities of political rights in the past," Weber asserted, "ultimately derived from an economically determined inequality of military qualification which one does not find in the bureaucratized state and army" (ibid: 105 = 256). The modern concept of the state citizen (*Staatsbürger*) implies equal death-chances: the "equality of certain *fates*" that arises from membership of a national community in which people "are 'equal' before death" (ibid, Weber's emphasis).

By the same token, death in the service of a national community has a quite different meaning to that of a brute event of nature. Between August 1914 and September 1915, Weber helped administer the military reserve hospitals in the Heidelberg area. His particular responsibility was to supervise the welfare of physically and emotionally injured German soldiers and prisoners of war. In that capacity, Weber had a chance—rare for a scholar, far from the front—to see the impact of military conflict on the ordinary soldier and to reflect on what the state was asking from him. Once they recovered, most of the wounded Germans would be sent back to the theater of war to risk death again. Weber was impressed by the genuine decency and dignity of these soldiers. It was this experience, Karl-Ludwig Ey (1999:114) tells us, that prompted Weber's sociological category of the "extraordinary". And it was the war, above all, that induced Weber to reappraise upwards the worth of the common man and to reconsider the purpose of dying for one's country.

When, before 1914, Weber examined the attitudes of various classes to war, his attitude to the common man was significantly different. Consider his remarks on the pacifist sympathies "among the masses, especially among the proletariat," a factor connected to the economic opacity of war and imperialism in the modern age. Whereas the ancient Attic *demos* lived very obviously off war tribute and was able to see the evident benefits it conferred—plunder was distributed openly in the popular assemblies and public festivals—the modern proletariat has only the vaguest understanding of war's material fruits. This is because the economic advantages of military imperialism are far less palpable than they were in the ancient world. Modern creditor nations derive pecuniary rewards through interest payment on debts and the repatriation of profits. Insofar as labor gains materially from this state of affairs, it does so indirectly. Little surprise, then, that workers tend to reject foreign expropriation as largely irrelevant to their own welfare (and perhaps their principles too). But another factor is also at play: the broader class struggle in which the proletariat is engaged. Labor tends to see military expansion as potentially dangerous to its interests because every "successful imperialist policy of coercing the outside...strengthens the domestic 'prestige' and therewith the power and influence of those classes, status groups, and parties, under whose leadership the success has been attained (Weber [1922] 1978b: 920 = 1964: 673). Even so, Weber adds, the class-based pacifism of "petty bourgeois and proletarian strata" is mercurial and somewhat superficial. In part this is because of the susceptibility "of all unorganized 'masses' to emotional influences"—that is, to demagoguery.

In part it is because of the opportunities that expansion, under certain circumstances, offers for emigration and land. Yet another factor behind the willingness of the “masses” to go to war is that they, “in contrast to other interest groups, subjectively risk a smaller stake in the game.” How so? War is more dangerous to the crown than to the masses because a monarch may fear that a rout will topple his dynasty. Conversely, a successful war is a menace to constitutional republican sympathizers because of the power prospects it affords to “the victorious ‘general’” (another allusion to Caesar/Bonaparte). Many members of the bourgeois class find war troublesome because state demands and requisitions interrupt or distort “business as usual.” And the ruling stratum of notables worries that military defeat will provoke chaos and revolution. So what gives to the propertyless and little-propertyed “a smaller stake in the game” than these other interest constellations? Weber’s answer is revealing:

The “masses” as such, at least in their subjective conception and in the extreme case, have nothing concrete to lose but their lives. The valuation and effect of this danger strongly fluctuates in their own minds. On the whole, it can easily be reduced to zero through emotional influence. (Weber [1922] 1978b: 921 = 1964: 674)

Such an Olympian judgment—in which the loss of life seems to matter so little to those who lose it, whose own “valuation” appears so indeterminate, and whose motives seem so fickle—starkly betrays the engrained reflexes of the German *Bildungsbürgertum* of which Weber was a bona fide member. This cultivated elite of the German middle class considered itself, together with the nobility and the officer corps, the indisputable bearer of the culture-nation and repository of honor, national or otherwise. In contrast, the masses are a faceless lot, to be fabricated for the nation’s purposes, *Menschenmaterial* of war (Ay 1999: 126, n. 25).

That broadly was Weber’s attitude before the war. The bloody reality of the conflagration, however, changed his mind about the masses. Not on the issue of leadership and plebiscitary democracy. But on the matter of honor, sacrifice, and fateful responsibility, postures and qualities that Weber now extended beyond his own circle to everyman. The fate of the nation, and its honor, was in the soldiers’ hands.⁷ Delivering a speech to hospital patients in Christmas 1914, Weber portrayed quotidian death as “an irrational fate from which no meaning can be derived.” Death strikes us when it will with an uncomprehending inevitability; it has simply to be accepted. Death for the sake of one’s country is entirely different. Those who fall in the current war are the “seed corn of the future.” They are heroes who sacrifice their lives “for the freedom and honor of

our people.” Their deaths furnish a national tabernacle for generations to come. No greater glory could be imagined (Marianne Weber [1926] 1988/1975).

Weber’s speech found sociological expression in the “Interim Reflection” essay of 1915. In contrast to the Christian religious ethic of brotherliness which rejects force and war as an abomination, the modern polity asserts that the pursuit of right frequently demands the use of violence. And war itself creates two related phenomena. First, it generates “a pathos and a sentiment of community,” an unconditional devotion among the combatants that builds solidarity and, breaking through the usual habitat of “association,” releases “an active mass compassion and love for those who are in need.” Second:

war does something to the warrior which, in its concrete meaning, is unique: it makes him experience a consecrated meaning of death which is characteristic only of death in war. The community of the army standing in the field today [1915] feels itself – as in the times of the war lords’ ‘following’ – to be a community unto death, and the greatest of its kind. Death on the field of battle differs from death that is only man’s common lot. Since death is a fate that comes to everyone, nobody can ever say why it comes precisely to him and why it comes just when it does.... *Only* in war, can the individual *believe* that he knows he is dying “for” something.... Only those who perish “in their callings” are in the same situation as the soldier who faces death on the battlefield.⁸

The common soldier, faced with annihilation, thus transcended death as an irrational, meaningless fate while also, and far more grandly, shouldering the fate of the nation.

***Schicksalsgemeinschaft* and the Idea of the Nation**

I come now to the third major context in which Weber invokes fate, and this is his discussion, in *Economy and Society* (1911-1920), of national belonging as a kind of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* —a term that I shall leave in German so as not to confuse it with my own adaptation of “community of fate.”⁹

Weber offered various accounts of the nation but always emphasized the concept’s ambiguity. The difficulty, as he saw it, is that obvious criteria such as common race, ethnicity, language, or religion are neither necessary nor sufficient to constitute a “nation.” Take language, for example. Weber acknowledged that a common language, and with it the “ritual regulation of life,” is the basis of mutual intelligibility, “the most fundamental presupposition of group formation” (Weber [1922] 1978b: 390 = 1964: 309; see also Banton 2007: 27-28). But that only takes us analytically—and experientially—so far. The Swiss consider themselves

to be a nation but they are also polyglot. Conversely, the Irish share a language with the English while insisting on their own nationhood. German speakers of Alsace frequently have a stronger attachment to France than they do to Germany, while Baltic Germans are, in the main, loyal to the Russian tsar. A similar exercise of empirical deconstruction can be undertaken for race, ethnicity, and religion. It transpires, then, that the nation is above all, something symbolic: simultaneously an idea, a value, and a sentiment rather than a demonstrable physical entity. The chief vehicle of its propagation is the intelligentsia—just as, correspondingly, the prime movers in the formation of the idea of the state are those “who wield power in the polity” (Weber [1922] 1978b: 925-6 = 1964: 677-8). As an idea abbreviating a human collectivity, the nation transfigures the “naked prestige of ‘power’” into a value. That value, in turn, consists of the belief that a certain community possesses distinctive cultural peculiarities and even a worldly providential mission. Cementing idea and value is what Weber repeatedly calls a “sentiment of solidarity” or a “community of sentiment” typically derived from shared memories. These memories are especially strong when they recall times of trial and conflict in which one collectivity (“the nation”) has been pitted against another or several. Aesthetic aversions also play a role in the formation of national identity and these dislikes, when stripped to their essentials, are largely social in character. American Yankees, Weber says, are far less willing to see negroes as part of the American nation than they are native Indians with whom they sometimes intermarry. The reason for this goes beyond the fact that Indians have a closer physical resemblance to the white man than negroes do. Nor is the fabled lore of “negro odor” relevant. The explanation lies in the Yankees’ perception that the negroes were slaves, while the Indians were not. Social inferiority is the root cause of aesthetic repugnance (Weber [1912] 1970g = 1924a: 484-5).

Lest Weber’s remarks on the nation appear too desiccated, he adds that, faced with the demand to pin down some common minimum of the term “nation,” one would locate it in the political community (which brings us back to the contention, mentioned above, that a nation sublimates naked power). Nations have a pronounced tendency to morph into states; hence the conjunction “nation state.” This suggests to Weber that the idea, value, and sentiment that constitute a nation are ultimately located in the political field (Weber [1912] 1970g = 1924a: 484). To be sure the feeling of ethnic honor, based on a putative “community of descent,” is especially conducive to mass national identification because it is “accessible to anybody,” however lowly or refined. Yet ethnic identity and

membership does not itself, Weber maintains, “constitute a group.” It is better understood as a facilitator of group formation that is unleashed once a *political* community (based on the control of territory and the persons within it) comes into existence. Still, ethnic identity, and with it the potential claim of ethnic superiority is especially well suited to national cohesion because of its attraction to those without property: ethnicity is a possession that does not depend on money or estate. Mass ethnic honor thus allows a kind of “horizontal co-existence,” as distinct from class or status domination, while simultaneously legitimizing the subordination of those who do not share the required ethnic traits of a “chosen people” (Weber [1922] 1978b: 387-393 = 1964: 305-311).

Political communities, of which states are the modern norm, entail a delineated territory, the presence of physical force to rule over it, and a mode of regulation that encompasses the social and economic interrelations of the territory’s inhabitants. States, unlike economic actors, impose a supreme constraint over those whom they rule. As Weber ([1922] 1978b: 903 = 1964: 658) puts it:

The political community...is one of those communities whose action includes, at least under normal circumstances, coercion through jeopardy and destruction of life and freedom of movement applying to outsiders as well as to members themselves. The individual is expected ultimately to face death in the group interest. This gives to the political community its particular pathos and raises its enduring emotional foundations. A common political fate,¹⁰ i.e. above all, a common political struggle of life and death, has given rise to groups with joint memories which often have had a deeper impact than the ties of merely cultural, linguistic, or ethnic community. It is this “community of memories” which...constitutes the ultimately decisive element of “national consciousness.” (Cf. Weber ([1922] 1978b: 398, 923 = 1964: 316, 675)

Accordingly, if the idea of the nation is rooted in a political community, both nation and state assume normative significance to the degree they evoke, heroically and ritualistically, an embattled hallowed past, the mythical stuff of cohesion, a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*.¹¹ It is from this *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, and in good measure coterminous with it, that a “community of sentiment” is born (Weber [1912] 1970g = 1924a: 484-5).¹²

Excursus on *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* as a Contested Concept

The idea of an embattled community fighting for its life is among the most resounding motifs of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. I shall expand on that theme in chapter 5. In this Excursus, however, I wish to return to the qualms of my Marienthal interlocutors – mentioned in this chapter’s introduction – that *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* is a term too badly compro-

mised by Nazi use to be sociologically credible. It is true that the Nazis used the term. But the broader truth is that *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* is a word/concept with a complex and contested history that has enjoyed employment from all sides of German political life. I attempt no full conceptual history of it here. Instead I confine myself to showing a few of its salient manifestations and to indicating why the English term “community of fate” is free of its baggage. We can begin by noting that, for a while, *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* found favor in Jewish circles as a rhetorical means, after the Great War, “to reaffirm a fragmenting German Jewish identity by an appeal to the past” (Foster 1986: xi). Under the term’s roof, various sections of Jewish opinion were invited to find a common, exemplary, home. It accommodated Zionists and the orthodox by its conception of the Jews as a people or *Volk*. It embraced secularists who could still grant their continuity with an ancient religious tradition and its social rites.¹³ And a specific diasporic gloss to the concept was furnished in 1935 by Arthur Salz. Nations, he says, “are formed, shaped and molded in the melting pot of destiny.” They do not require territorial or even linguistic unity as a *sine qua non*. Vital, on the other hand, is the “unity made up by a common consciousness of the past and future, by common feelings in sight of the reverses of life, by a feeling of solidarity across all social, political, and economic borderlines.” Accordingly, “a nation is a community, the members of which are held together by common destinies, a unity made of fate.”¹⁴

Schicksalsgemeinschaft thus afforded Jews a dignified emblematic means to combat anti-Semitism in an age when genealogical research into Jewish history, often couched in the language of eugenics, reached its apogee. That this was a double-edged sword soon became apparent. Anti-Semites claimed that Jewish exceptionalism testified, by definition, to Jewish difference from Aryan Germans and from the *Volksgemeinschaft* the Nazi movement was resolved to establish.¹⁵ Worse, the National Socialists contested the same term and invested it with a more sinister meaning. Here is an extract of a speech by Hitler:

Therefore we National Socialists march into every election professing only that on the next day we shall begin to work once more for the inner reorganization of the body of our nation. For we do not fight for parliamentary seats or ministerial office, but for the Germans, whom we intend to knit together again to form an indivisible *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. The Almighty, who permitted us [the National Socialist party] to grow from seven men to thirteen million in thirteen years, will also permit those thirteen million some day to become one German nation. (*Appell an die Nation*, speech of 31 July, 1932)

Hitler's comments assumed added urgency during the Second World War when, after 1943, the defeat of the nation he claimed to champion looked ever more likely. Faced with punishing aerial assault on German cities, the Nazi regime sought to solidify its relationship to, and grip over, the civilian population by trumpeting the myth of national greatness. *Schicksalsgemeinschaft's* previous associations with the *Volksgemeinschaft* now took second place to a connotation of deep crisis, as the Germans were gradually prepared by the state for a battle of Wagnerian proportions. So-called mood reports—compiled by the Security Service—employed *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* as a stock propagandist device to emphasize the determination, heroic morale, and solidarity of a *Volk* that, despite everything, remained strong and undaunted. In fact, pounded German cities experienced increasing disarray, flight, social division and civil turmoil during the last two years of the war.¹⁶ Hamburg, in July 1943, suffered as many fatalities as Britain during the entire period of the Blitz. Local, regional, and national authorities were simply overwhelmed by the frequency and scale of the devastation. Social atomization, rather than integration, was the result (Gregor 2000). So horrific were the firestorms and the bloated vermin they eventually produced – rats of stupendous size and the appetite to match it, finger long maggots, putrid-colored flies – that one commentator describes Hamburg as “the necropolis of a foreign, mysterious people, torn from its civil existence and its history, thrown back to the evolutionary stage of nomadic gatherers” (Sebald 2003 [1999]: 36).

Yet with each defeat, Fate or Destiny, far from deserting the Nazis, became their alibi. Hannah Arendt (1994 [1963]: 52) remarked:¹⁷

During the war, the lie most effective with the whole of the German people was the slogan of “the battle of destiny for the German people” [*der Schicksalskampf des deutschen Volkes*], coined either by Hitler or Goebbels, which made self-deception easier on three counts: it suggested, first, that the war was no war; second, that it was started by destiny and not by Germany; and, third, that it was a matter of life and death for the Germans, who must annihilate their enemies or be annihilated.¹⁸

The world is no longer assailed by Hitlerian exhortations. Islamism has taken its place. Yet political debate in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) retains its fondness for *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. Consider its long-standing official insistence that the FRG is not an “immigration society” or “immigration land,” notwithstanding the fact that between 1950 and 2000 over 12.9 million foreigners migrated to it. The fact of migration is, of course, not denied. And the asylum policy for the politically persecuted or endangered is generous by international standards.

But the political status of such foreign migrants has remained dubious owing in part to an ambiguity in Germany's constitution. Article 116 (1) of the Basic Law, promulgated on 23 May 1949 and now embracing the former east German Democratic Republic, states that "a German within the meaning of this Basic Law is a person who possesses German citizenship or who has been admitted to the territory of the German Reich within the boundaries of December 31, 1937 as a refugee or expellee of German ethnic stock [*Volkszugehörigkeit*] or as the spouse or descendant of such a person." As Douglas Klusmeyer (2000) points out, the legal concept of *Volkszugehörigkeit* has multiple but connected connotations. It suggests a person's identification with a people—the German Volk in this instance—"manifested through visible markers such as language, customs, and religion." Equally, while Article 1 of the Basic Law affirms that human dignity is inviolable, it continues by saying that the agent that acknowledges such "inviolable and inalienable human rights" is the "German people" (as distinct from "German citizens"). This legal casuistry enabled 224 parliamentary delegates of the Christian Democratic Union and Christian Social Union in 1989 legally to challenge the extension of municipal voting rights to non-German residents, even if they had lived in Germany for a long time. The argument centered on the contention that the "model of a sovereign people [*Staatsvolk*]...is the political *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* to which individual citizens belong." And, glosses Klusmeyer (2000:12), because "they always retain the option to return to their original homelands, foreign residents are not bound to this community in the same inextricable bond as German nationals. The absence of this inescapable bond and burden of responsibility for the decisions of this community [the complainants maintained] justifies reserving voting rights for German nationals." The Federal Constitutional Court agreed.

It may appear from what I have written thus far that *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* is the property of liberal nationalist, National Socialist, or conservative intellectual circles. Yet it received its most brilliant and sustained articulation in the early twentieth century from none other than the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer. Bauer's *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* ([1924/1907] 2000), written when the author was still only twenty-five, contains a nuanced attempt to define *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* that repays the effort it requires.¹⁹ Adapting a curious blend of legal neo-Kantianism and Marxism, Bauer begins with the unobjectionable point that a nation is not an essential datum or a product of some transcendental and teleological destiny. It is the result of a contingent

historical process, conditioned by anthropological (bio-physical) forces as well as by culture. Together this creates a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* and out of it a “community of character.” Each nation as a community of fate and of character is unique. Nations attract specific loyalties because they possess “different codes of representation: different concepts of justice and injustice, different views of the moral and immoral, the decent and the indecent, the beautiful and the unsightly, different types of religion and science” (ibid: 99). In turn these codes of representation are determined by the patterns of education that prevail within particular societies, and that induce among their citizens common foci of attention (or “will”). Accordingly, the “average German is different from the average Englishman, but similar to every other average German” (ibid: 109). It follows that different nationals experience the world differently. Even science, allegedly a uniform mode of cognition, allows markedly contrasting research methods and protocols among, for instance, French and English practitioners.²⁰

Bauer is not always consistent in distinguishing among the nation, a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* and a community of character (see ibid. 99-102 for somewhat differing formulations).²¹ Often they appear concatenated. In any event, all three ideas are closely related and overlapping. That family resemblance contrasts sharply with what Bauer calls a “community of similarity.” His argument is that a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*, and the nation on which it is founded, is something more than a simple pattern, or recapitulation, of common experience. Hence a school cohort, an assemblage of colleagues, or a group subject to the same economic conditions, may encounter the world in a broadly comparable way yet still fail to develop any active reciprocity. In contrast, *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* suggests a type of interaction (for instance, joint suffering) that elicits a shared bond and familiarity. Such co-membership, and the social emotions it garners, is both represented and reinforced by participation in common rituals and festivals, but especially in the sharing of a common language, official and vernacular, on which Bauer puts great store.²² Indeed the plurality of these phenomena is one of the key obstacles to a truly international class struggle. At the same time, a community of fate requires more than interactive recognition; it also needs a spatial demarcation—delimited boundaries—and “external regulation.” Or at least it needs this temporarily, says Bauer, as he realizes that he is close to revoking a key tenet of Marxist orthodoxy. To avoid apostasy he declares in a rather contrived footnote on Ferdinand Tönnies’s “excellent *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*,” that the state is only one such mode

of regulation and that it will “disappear” with the end of “commodity production” (ibid: 469, n. 78). Bauer’s Marxism contained a fundamental teleological component: a belief in the inescapable advance of socialism and its full realization in the post-capitalist association of producers. But determinism is not an essential component of a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. Fate, in Bauer’s usage, is a term that describes the resources and possibilities of a particular culture. Blind finality or ineluctable necessity has nothing to do with it.

Conclusion

Schicksalsgemeinschaft, hence, covers the gamut: analytical concept, ideological foil, political symbol and rhetorical hyperbole. This freight is the principal reason why some of our German contemporaries blanch at its use.²³ A fully satisfactory account of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* would require a detailed conceptual history of its employment in plural and antagonistic senses.²⁴ It would forego all attempts at precise definition because, as with Caesarism, *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* has no univocal meaning. The concept is inherently disputable. But the history of an integrally contested concept is not my task here – in contrast to my earlier discussion of Caesarism. For current purposes it suffices to elicit from the German concept a few key elements—crisis and group formation, a speech community and codes of communication, ritual regulation, common suffering and embattlement, collective identity – that are capable of being reworked in “community of fate,” a largely dormant Anglophone term free of much of the ideological baggage of its German counterpart.

* * *

At this point readers who are bored by meta-theoretical discussion are advised to skip immediately to the next chapter. They will lose nothing in substance by so doing. I feel bound to offer these additional concluding remarks only because without a defense of my recourse to Durkheim in chapter 5, sociological theorists – one constituency of this book—will accuse me of thoughtlessly mixing chalk and cheese. In most treatments of sociology, Weber and Durkheim are typically presented as antinomies. I need to give some justification for my attempt to bring them together.

All readers of Weber recall his oft-cited statement (1978b: 4 = 1964: 3) that sociology is a science “concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of ‘action’ insofar as the

acting individual attaches a subjective *meaning* to his behavior—be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is ‘social’ insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of *others* and is thereby oriented in its course.” Social action, the foregoing makes plain, supposes something even more basic: “action” itself, in which “the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior.” Action is a fundamental capacity of human beings; it is an anthropological datum based on the ability of human beings to orient themselves to the world and to make choices among alternatives (Campbell 1996). For Weber, social collectivities – such as families, organizations, and “orders”—exist to the degree, and in the precise manner in which, people attribute to them a specific sense (*Sinn*).²⁵ Weber’s emphasis – let us call it “orientational”—reminds us that the social artifice is something actively produced and reproduced, even if in ways that may be surprising to human agents.

Emile Durkheim would doubtless have agreed with much of this, but he would have thought it superficial. To be sure, if Man were not a certain kind of meaning-bearing animal, capable of orientations to others, social relations would be impossible. But situations are more than the repository of meaning; they are, in the form of relationships, also its crucible, the moral and physical matrices in which orientation makes sense.²⁶ If Weber’s “orientational” action-theory directs us to the manner in which human beings project meanings onto the world, Durkheim’s “situational” perspective highlights the affective frameworks that lend purpose to human activity. Weber may, on occasion, have flagged the importance of “ritual regulation.” But it is Durkheim who appreciated, better than any of his sociological contemporaries, how rituals actually work, how face-to-face interaction energizes and demarcates social activity. We may plausibly suppose that American men decide to marry American (or other) women because of the meaning they attach to that person. But, once married, American men “drink less, take fewer drugs and work harder, earning between 10% and 40% more than single men with similar schooling and job histories.”²⁷ Marriage, as a social locus, as a series of bounded relationships and emotional transactions, *does* something to the people within it, changing their orientations, generating new meanings. I shall argue that communities of fate do something similar.

It may seem that I am asking sophisticated readers to make a rather simpleminded choice: between an orientational (Weberian) and a situational (Durkheimian) approach to the study of social and political life. My purpose, however, is different: not to oppose Weber and Durkheim but to show, as I will in chapter 5, what we can gain from their align-

ment. Weber was fully capable of a situationalist emphasis whenever he broke free from the restraints of his methodology.²⁸ At one point he refers to action as a mode of human conduct not just “related to the behavior of others” but “co-determined in its course through this relatedness” and “intelligibly explained in terms of this” ([1913] 1981: 152 = 1973:429). Besides, as Donald Levine (2005: 115) observes, Weber’s work, irrespective of its nominalist pronouncements, is saturated by arguments that posit “supraindividual formations”: mechanisms of recruitment, types of specialization, tendencies towards monopoly, juridical restraints, cultural systems that favor worldly achievement, conditions that advance or impede political democracy in bureaucratized societies, and so on.

A situational bias also informs Weber’s analysis of geopolitical fate, discussed above. Actors (the German people) find themselves living at a time, and in a constellation, (a continental national state) that is dangerous. Beyond any feeling or impression is the brute “fact” that “as a nation, Germany is surrounded by rivals and can maintain her position of independence only by the military service of a maximum of strong and healthy men” (Weber [1905] 2006: 218).²⁹ If America shared Germany’s “fate,” with “powerful and warlike neighbors at its side, it would be forced to wear the coat of mail like ourselves, who constantly keep in our desk drawers the march order in case of war” (Weber [1905] 2005: 345).³⁰ Germans, en masse, can decide to renounce the nation’s position, or, more precisely, they can seek to renounce it; that is where their orientation and perception is relevant. They cannot, however, repudiate the geopolitical landscape in which that choice is exercised. Nor can abnegation make them secure. If every German man and woman oriented themselves to the idea that a continental nation-state requires no defense, that would not, thereby, make Germany safe. People can define a situation any way they want to. But define the situation naively or mistakenly, and it will rudely surprise you. Weber never tired of asserting the difference between sober assessments of reality and life in cloud-cuckoo land. And whether one believes in his notion of a “responsibility before history,” or Guenther Roth’s (1984a) idea of a “responsibility for history,” we are clearly responsible for *something*.³¹

So let us now go forward in the company of both Weber and Durkheim. Let us transport them to Hong Kong in the miserable spring of 2003. Together, they will help us make sense of what happened.

Notes

1. The German Wikipedia entry—at <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schicksalsgemeinschaft>—focuses almost entirely on National Socialist usage. But look more systematically in the German Google and you will find a very heterogeneous clientele of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. It includes environmentalists and left-leaning community activists.
2. I say “almost a tabula rasa” because, as we shall see briefly in the next chapter, the term community of fate is evoked in some social science contexts.
3. The original German text has not survived.
4. The difficulties of a nation-state changing course are a staple of path-dependency theories. See for example Mahoney (2000), Thelen (2003) and Katznelson (2003). Fate might also be re-described as a specific kind of “trap.” See Collier (2007) on the conflict, natural resource and other “traps” that affect the “bottom billion.” Identifying these traps, however, enables us in principle to spring them by intelligent economic policy and coordinated international effort.
5. On Morgenthau as a Weberian, see Turner and Factor 1984: 168-179.
6. I am referring to Mearsheimer’s important book—*The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*—as contrasted to his execrable recent interventions on the “Israel lobby”. While Mearsheimer stresses the role of fear and insecurity as the key factors in fermenting international conflict, Weber emphasizes the role of “prestige”:—the “prestige of power means in practice the glory of power over other communities” (Weber [1922] 1978b :911 = 1964: 665). He adds, “Furthermore, as every big political community is a potential aspirant to prestige [i.e., a potential hegemon], it is also a threat to all its neighbors; hence, the big political community, simply because it is big and strong, is latently and constantly endangered”—Germany’s position after 1903.
7. In “Between Two Laws” ([1916] 1994c: 78 = 1958: 141-2), Weber writes of the meaning attached to “the commitment of everybody (including women, for they too are ‘fighting’ the war if they do their duty) to the cause of honor, which means, simply, commitment to the historical obligations imposed on one’s own nation by fate.” On all this and much more, Ay’s two articles (1999 and 2004) are indispensable.
8. Weber [1915] 1970f: 335 = 1920: 548. Weber adds that this “location of death within a series of meaningful and consecrated events ultimately lies at the base of all endeavors to support the autonomous dignity of the polity resting on force.” He acknowledged that the “political community” is by no means the only community in which “the renunciation of life is an essential part of the shared obligations.” Religious martyrdom, kinship vendettas, status group codes of honor are all examples of non-political sacrifice ([1922] 1978b: 903 = 1964: 658).
9. The term’s desultory appearance in *Economy and Society* is difficult to identify in the English translation because only one of the three usages is rendered “community of fate.” See Weber [1922] 1964: 316, 675, 740 = Weber 1978b: 398, 923, 1007. On a “common political fate,” see Weber [1922] 1964: 658 = 1978b: 903. Another mention of shared political fate, linked to collective memories, appears in Weber [1922] 1964: 308. No equivalent appears in the English translation 1978b: 391.
10. *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* is the term Weber uses in Weber ([1922] 1978b:923 = 1964: 675).
11. Solidarity need not, Weber says, imply deep emotional commitment. It may arise simply as a response to outside threat; external danger is a sufficient reason for a people to cleave to their state.

12. A twist on this is Weber's point that a *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* can connect nations, as in the memory of allies that, in the past, they stood together: e.g., Alsatians and the French since the Revolutionary War. See the reference in footnote 10. While this ends the discussion of Weber's concept of fate, let me once more stress its selectivity. Readers who wish to look further are advised to turn to German editions of Weber's work with their marvelous indexes. Not all of them include the term *Schicksal* or its cognates (most surprisingly, Weber 1992), but among those that do I have found most useful Weber 1951b (18 citations) and Weber 1958 (22 citations). Again I would caution that most of these renderings are casual and unexplicated. In *Politics as a Vocation*, for instance, *Schicksal* appears four times: as predicament, as historical character, as situation, and as fact or eventuality.
13. The American political theorist Peter Breiner tells me that his parents—Austrian Jewish émigrés—used *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* term in broadly this way. They invoked it not to describe the condition of Jews in the United States but rather to describe the sense in which they and their children were Jewish without, however, being religiously observant.
14. Leo Baeck Institute Archives—Arthur Salz AR6288, Box 1, File 1. I am grateful to David Kettler for bringing this unpublished manuscript to my attention.
15. Foster (1986: x-xiii).
16. 131 towns and cities in Germany were bombed, killing approximately 600,000 German civilians, destroying three and a half million homes, and leaving seven and a half million homeless by June 1945.
17. On the exculpatory use of “fate,” see Arendt ([1963] 1994:50). See also Arendt ([1951] 1973: 330 on the trans-national mentality of the trench generation that emerged during after World War I and the “community of fate” on which Nazi propaganda traded.
18. Self-annihilation was another option. When Field Marshal Paulus surrendered to the Russian foe, Hitler was incredulous, lamenting bitterly that suicide was the only honorable course. After all, “[w]hat is life? Life is the Nation. The individual must die anyway.... He could have freed himself from all sorrow and ascended into eternity and national immortality, but he prefers to go to Moscow” (cited in Beevor 1998: 392).
19. For a useful summary of the book's themes, see Nimni (2000).
20. Bauer (7-9) draws explicitly on Pierre Duhem's work on the divergent structures of perception evident among English and French physicists.
21. Hence on p. 22, the “nation is a relative community of character” while on p. 100 we are told that “we have arrived at our definition of the nation as a community of fate.” On p. 101 Bauer suggests that the nation can “be defined as a community of character that has grown...out of a community of a fate.” Other related concepts that Bauer develops are a “community of language,” a “community of descent,” a “community of culture” and a “community of blood.” I will not pursue these discriminations here.
22. The centrality of language, and a language community, is a pronounced feature of Bauer's account of the nation, and anticipates many later writers on this subject (e.g., Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner). What Bauer calls the “oral transmission of cultural elements” embraces both the “victory of a uniform language over the use of vernaculars,” and also the sensibility that a native language gives its possessor from childhood onwards. Hence, “a foreign language only rarely becomes the property of the individual in the same complete way as the mother tongue does.” Invariably, “its most delicate and profound effects are lost: even the cultivated German is only seldom affected by the English and French work

of art with the same force as by the German work of art. It is inconceivable for a nation to maintain itself as a community of culture on a lasting basis without the linguistic community, the most important tool of human interaction” (ibid: 103; cf. 111; and, with added emphasis on the significance of national phonetics, the comments from the Preface to the Second Edition [1924], 13-16).

23. They might blanch more if they knew of its conceptual resonance in modern Taiwan where the Chinese equivalent of *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (= *Mingyun gongtongti*) was commonly invoked during the 1980s and 1990s. Ventilated by nationalist politicians and publicists who favored the island’s *de jure* independence from the mainland, it was employed to enlist the greatest number of people to the cause. Historic divisions among Taiwan’s ethnic groups—aboriginals, Hakkas, mainly from Guangdong, *minnanren* (Minnan-speaking descendents of those from Fujian province) and *waishengren* (those “outside province people,” of diverse location, who had policed Taiwan on behalf of the Nationalist government after 1945 and then settled on the island)—made this no easy task. One solution was to argue that while Taiwan was not a nation centered on a single common language or tradition, it was a “community of fate” that, facing a predatory Communist Party on the mainland, embraced everyone irrespective of ethnicity. Of critical importance was not when a person or group came to Taiwan – aside from the aboriginals, all were immigrants of earlier or later provenance—but rather that they “loved” it and identified fervently with their local community. Even “pragmatic unificationists” such as President Lee Teng-hui, a former chairman of the Guomindang Party (KMT), embraced a version of this idea though, disliking the portentous connotations of fate, Lee preferred to speak instead of a “community of life” (*Shengming gongtongti*).

My remarks are indebted to a brilliant paper on Taiwan identity by Jiang Yihuah (2004). For a theoretical account of Taiwan as a “community of fate,” see Chang (1997: 73-116) who understand the term essentially to denote “a question of survival and indicates the construction of common experiences in the present among diverse communities of memory” (106). For Chang, a community of fate depends on a common legal framework that “enables the construction of common experience and the attainment of common good.”

24. In an email message to me, David Kettler remarks: “The thing about *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* is that in its most malign form it provides a formula for passive aggression: because ‘we’ have been forged into a community by a shared victimization, ‘we’ are bound to a certain common mission—and ‘we’ are entitled to achieve it. The formula is naturally marshaled against those who resist ‘our’ pursuit of that mission, designating them as complicit in our victimization, but it is even more forcefully applied to those who reject the classification although they share attributes considered constitutive of the ‘we’ in the formula: they are not simply enemies but traitors. The other thing about *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* is that it can function in more or less harmless or even benign ways, as one of the formulas for ‘identity politics,’ as a conceptualization of the grounds for a certain respect or recognition, or as the explanation for certain shared patterns of character... Your (Baehr’s) best hope is that a translation into English as “community of fate” can ease the historic pressure on the concept, but the two key terms have their own imperialist history.”
25. Bendix (1984: 30) argued that Weber’s definition of action “has an empirical rather than a philosophical thrust which is obscured when his word for sense (*Sinn*) is translated as meaning (*Bedeutung*).”
26. See Hedström and Swedberg’s (1998: 23) useful typology of situational, action-formation, and transformational “mechanisms.” All of these mechanisms are essential to sociological accounts of human conduct, Weber’s included.

138 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

27. See *The Economist* May 26, 2007: 21-23, summarizing the research of Avner Ahituv and Robert Lerman. More generally, see the excellent book by Roback Morse 2001.
28. The sources, limitations and contradictions of Weber's action theory are squarely confronted in Levine 2005, Turner and Factor, 1994, Fulbrook 1982, and Turner 1981.
29. The original German text has not survived.
30. The original German text has not survived.
31. Elsewhere Roth (1984b:404) observed: "Weber's nationalism is, of course, completely outdated. Today, one nationalism in Europe can no longer stand unmediated against the others. Under threat of instant nuclear annihilation and slow ecological deterioration, the continent, if not the whole world has become a 'community of fate.'"

5

Communities of Fate and the SARS Emergency in Hong Kong

Introduction

Few episodes in recent times have proved so rich in surprises as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) saga of spring 2003. Among a number of oddities, consider for the moment just one. Only weeks before the SARS crisis publicly erupted in March 2003, the United Nations was in acrimonious disarray. A divided Security Council had failed to agree on strategies to disarm Saddam Hussein and to impede a war against him. Yet just as pundits were announcing the death of the UN, SARS suddenly gave one branch of it—the World Health Organization (WHO)—renewed energy and respectability. It is the most basic axiom of international relations that states are jealous to preserve their prerogatives and “sovereignty,” of insisting that other countries and organizations do not meddle in their internal affairs. But the Global Alert and Respiratory Unit of the WHO managed not only to forge an unprecedented degree of cooperation among disease laboratories scattered across the planet, it was also able to elevate itself to the extraordinary position of global prosecutor, judge and jury. Governments—in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, Singapore, and Canada—quaked at its pronouncements, feared its travel advisories, and pleaded to be released from them. To use a ubiquitous metaphor of the time, the “war” against SARS was the epitome of the UN ideal: a worthy defense against a common, unequivocal foe, under the auspices of a truly pan-national organization.

This chapter examines SARS’s impact on Hong Kong, a territory whose global importance is disproportionate to its size of 980 square kilometers and population of almost seven million.¹ A logistics hub that has become simultaneously a disease hub, transporting pathogens such

as the SARS coronavirus around the world, Hong Kong's condition cannot be one of indifference to the international system as a whole.² Moreover, something happened in Hong Kong that provides us with a new, or at least re-fashioned, concept for sociological theory. I begin by delineating the concept "community of fate," proceed to apply it to Hong Kong in the spring of 2003, and show how it amplified political "voice" (Hirschman 1970: 24).³ Of special pertinence to my discussion are the nature of military language (which I examine from a Weberian standpoint) and the nature of social ritual (which I examine from a perspective that is indebted to Durkheim and Erving Goffman). I call this social ritual "efface work" and draw attention to its anomalous character in a masked city fearful of bodily contact and co-presence. I argue that mask culture under these conditions promotes emotional contagion, while attempting to keep disease contagion at bay.

Community of Fate Defined

We saw in chapter 4 that the German concept *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* possesses a rich and turbulent history. Any educated German speaker will be able to come up with some idea of what it entails. In contrast, the English expression "community of fate" is notable for its marginality. True, some scholars of management and the labor process have employed the concept to identify a paternalistic corporate ideology that, to the degree to which it is implanted, enthuses workers with a sense of loyalty and common sacrifice.⁴ But this kind of specific, self-conscious and theoretical usage is exceptional. Mostly, social scientists refer to community of fate only in passing—as in the idea of a pan-European sense of active citizenship (Gunsteren 2005: 410-411)—or to distinguish between communities of choice (better off neighborhoods able to maximize security and safety) and communities of fate (poor neighborhoods, with fewer resources to defend themselves against crime and other social injuries).⁵ Communitarian writers appear to have no place for it in their casuistries.⁶ Nor does the master of the sustained, inflected definition, Erving Goffman, who summons "community of fate" only to render it as little more than a synonym for collegiality.⁷ Even books that contain the term in their titles avoid fleshing out its meaning (Rosenbaum 1965; Marske 1991).

In the following discussion, community of fate is a term that depicts a process of group formation under extreme duress. It refers to a pattern of temporary social cohesion arising from a mass emergency or "disaster." Community of fate, in this adumbration, is an outcome-in-process; it only

exists to the extent to which, and during the period in which, it is being formed and reproduced. Many sociologists since Durkheim and Mauss have observed that “institutions have a tendency to reveal themselves when they are stressed and in crisis” (Klinenberg 2002: 23). Communities of fate are different: they *come into being* as a result of stress and crisis, instantiating a mode of life that hitherto was only nascent, and interrupting the doze of routine. They are also capable of being socially productive and consequential, which means capable of collective action for the brief time they are in existence. Quintessentially local, symbolically and materially bounded, community of fate is not to be confused with “risk society” which depicts something chronic rather than acute, general rather than particular, modern rather than trans-temporal, and vaguely recognized by its recipients rather than being viscerally grasped.⁸ Community of fate falls under the aegis of conflict, social ritual and resource mobilization theories many of whose dynamics it accordingly shares. “Fate” in this context denotes an unwanted, yet socially recognized, emergency which confronts people with a major joint challenge to their existence. If people possess resources, including organization and leadership, if there are one or more axes around which their interests can converge, they are in principle able to grapple with this fate actively and purposefully. “Community” refers to the sense that, other divisions and interests notwithstanding, agents recognize a common danger, face a diffuse menace, and are able collectively to do something about it. This is not the same as saying that everyone feels exactly the same way, behaves the same way, or has the same death chances, a recapitulation of “mechanical solidarity” (cf. Turner 1976: 61ff).⁹ It is to affirm, however, that a common focus of sustained attention, and an intense feeling of horizontal interconnectedness, are essential to a community of fate.¹⁰

Condensed pockets of solidarity (Collins 2004: 41), communities of fate are of smaller or larger size. What typifies them is a powerful sense of group membership (as distinct from a spasm of altruism) which generates, and via feedback requires, group symbols and energies. Where all hope is gone, resources spent, and action deemed hopeless, communities of fate are impossible. Candidates for communities of fate include ravaged towns, besieged cities, and quarantined areas, yet neither depredation, nor siege, nor *cordon sanitaire* is sufficient for a community of fate to form. Manifest for a shorter or longer period of time, a community of fate is a stranger to normal times. Those who briefly join it experience time as a rupture with the recent past: the biblical *kairos* whose break with linearity jolts people into new or intensified ways of feeling.

The above portrait hints at, but does not rigorously describe, the seven factors that produce a community of fate. Let me now turn to these explicitly using the SARS crisis in Hong Kong as an exemplary case.

SARS in Hong Kong: Sociology of an Epidemic Disease

SARS came to Hong Kong in late February 2003 when Liu Jianlun, a doctor from Guangdong province, visited Hong Kong for a wedding, stayed at the Metropole Hotel, and unwittingly infected fellow residents—who promptly carried the disease to Vietnam,¹¹ Singapore, Germany, Ireland, Canada, and to Hong Kong’s own hospitals. Unaware of the new disease’s virulence, the Hong Kong government initially downplayed its danger. Insisting that cases of “atypical pneumonia” were confined to health workers who had contracted the disease from the index patient, Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr. Yeoh Eng-kiong proclaimed on March 13 that there was no need for the wider community to be anxious. Others disagreed. When Professor Sydney Chung Sheung-chee, the respected head of Chinese University of Hong Kong’s medical school, publicly contradicted the health secretary’s assurances, Hong Kongers smelled danger.

The British handover of Hong Kong to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in July 1997 was supposed to herald a new chapter in the territory’s history, combining economic prosperity with growing attachment to the Motherland. Instead, Hong Kong’s retrocession to the PRC coincided with the Asian financial meltdown, aggravated further by a newly installed government that appeared to lack the rudiments of good governance.¹² Already before SARS appeared in late February 2003, triggering three months of fear, 1,755 cases, and 299 deaths, Hong Kong was a troubled place.¹³ Yet its travails had been largely segmental in character, affecting different groups in somewhat different ways or concentrating misfortune on a minority. Economic recession and downsizing throw some people out of employment, while others retain their jobs. A period of deflation may damage retailers, but for customers whose wages and salaries remain stable or increase, there are bargains to be had. Falling property prices—they lost around two thirds of their market value in five years—affect only that minority in Hong Kong who are in the private housing market. Avian flu destroyed the livestock of chicken farmers and sellers, but there is always other meat to buy and, in extremis, other professions to pursue. In contrast, SARS affected everyone more or less simultaneously.¹⁴ It announced a collective, rather than an idiosyncratic fate, a dramatic rupture with quotidian existence rather than, as with illnesses such as cancer or heart disease, yet another statistic of everyday death.¹⁵

To assume the characteristics of a community of fate at least seven factors must conjoin. First, a community of fate requires danger recognition: people's understanding that they are faced by a hazard so pressing, so immediate *and so evident* as to demand their urgent attention.¹⁶ They must be aware of the peril that confronts them – not aware of all its implications (an impossibility), but sufficiently knowledgeable to comprehend that they are in the midst of a menace that threatens their very existence. Without that recognition, a human group may be destroyed or decimated innocent of what hit it, as was the case with the South East Asian areas struck by the earthquake induced tsunami in December 2004. Indonesia, one of the affected countries, is no stranger to similar kinds of natural catastrophe. Ten weeks before the volcanic island of Krakatoa erupted on 27 August 1883, killing over 40,000 people, it produced ominous signs of the deluge it would later unleash. Residents of Batavia (Jakarta) felt disconcerting vibrations they had never before experienced. A recent chronicler of the events nicely sums up the phenomenology of danger recognition:

There had been a curious trajectory about each person's morning on that day. They had awakened to the unusual sounds, and they had been merely puzzled. By the time they breakfasted, they had become concerned. The Christians among them had gone off to their churches, feeling moderately alarmed. After matins they had ventured back out on to the streets, by now in their droves, and they were, at least privately, in moods that were at first quite agitated and, as the thunder wore on, very apprehensive indeed. (Winchester 2003: 163)

Yet two days later “after its alarming opening salvo, the island quietened down again” (ibid: 169). Life returned to normal. People resumed their professions and distractions. The talk of the town was the much heralded visit of Wilson's Great Circus. Danger-recognition lapsed. The forces that would smash Krakatoa to smithereens—the dynamics of tectonics, subductions, fault-zones, and sea-floor spread—were unknown at this time. When the volcanic island did finally blow up, hurling devastating tsunamis at its neighbors, it was too late for action or flight.

Danger recognition thus has its own micro-moments: it may be activated, falter, reassert itself or abate once more. In the case of SARS in Hong Kong, equipped with an advanced communication system, a crisis was evident to most people from around March 19, 2003 onwards,¹⁷ possibly before, dramatized by a daily recorded death toll, a government call to arms on March 24 in which citizens were enjoined to combat the disease, and by the WHO travel advisory against non-essential visits to Hong Kong and Guangdong issued on April 2. From then until the WHO

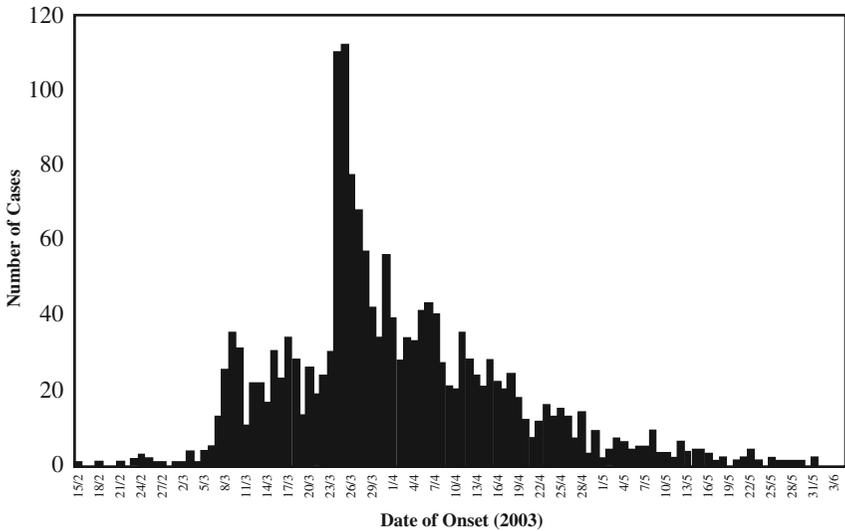
removed Hong Kong from its list of SARS-affected areas on June 23, the territory became an international pariah.

Second, the formation of a community of fate requires not only danger recognition but also moral density, namely, a pervasive and intense feeling of social interconnectedness in which people are aware of a common predicament and a common interest that stretches beyond the family unit. Moral density, in this adaptation of Durkheim, is not identical to altruism which is only one—and probably the rarest—of its modalities. Nor is it the same as a “therapeutic community” described by Allen Barton ([1969] 1970: 216ff, 270ff). Contact with, and succor for, those infected by SARS, for instance, was rendered almost impossible by their immediate quarantine and sequestration. Once released from hospital, SARS patients were avoided and suffered discrimination (see below). Moral density, in my articulation of it, only requires that people believe that their own fate is tied up with others close to them and that emotional contagion (in this case, of fear and anxiety) sweeps through collective life. Later I describe the mechanism of this contagion; I call it “efface work.”

Even so, danger recognition and moral density are insufficient factors to elicit a community of fate. Pertinent, too, is the length of time the emergency lasts: an isolated event may shake a people from its slumber, but is unlikely to instill the necessary vitality to keep it awake. Another way of putting this is to say that communities of fate are formed by *trial* rather than by *shock* (or awe), by sustained, chronic ordeal rather than by acute anguish—unless, of course, a shock repeats itself periodically in which case it takes on the features of a trial. In Hong Kong that ordeal was recapitulated daily in the reports of new infections, but was given added drama by a series of events that over a two month period brought home the gravity of the situation: the outbreak around March 11 in the Prince of Wales Hospital Ward 8a, which struck more than twenty healthcare workers; the Amoy Gardens infections of late March-early April which ended up killing forty-two people and which catalyzed the WHO travel advisory; the report on April 8 of SARS among twenty-seven families in the Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate, a building complex across the road from Amoy Gardens provoking fears that the disease was becoming airborne or being carried by vectors such as rats and cockroaches; the much publicized and grieved death on May 13 of Joanna Tse Yuen-man, the young doctor who volunteered to work in a SARS unit in Tuen Mun public hospital and who came to symbolize all that Hong Kong people admired;¹⁸ an outbreak in late May at the Lek Yuen Estate in Sha Tin in

which eleven residents, including a four-month-old baby, were infected; the search, again in late May, for guests who had stayed earlier in the month at Harbour Plaza Hotel where one of their number had gone down with SARS. And these were only the major local events which kept hearts racing. Meanwhile, the Chinese mainland was in pandemonium; Beijing was not removed from the WHO's list of SARS affected areas until 24 June. So despite the general fall in SARS' casualties revealed in Figure 1, new outbreaks—represented by small graphical spikes—kept Hong Kong people on tenterhooks.

Figure 1
SARS Cases in Hong Kong:
Epidemic Curve by Date of Onset



Source: SARS Expert Committee (2003)

Fourth, a community of fate is formed where people feel compelled to stand their ground, where there is little, if any, chance of flight or of individual escape from the common lot and where they experience their predicament as collective exile.¹⁹ This situation may be called closure. Accompanying it is social condensation as energies that would normally be dissipated are concentrated in one place. Closure is unusual. When, in 1894, a bubonic plague epidemic hit Hong Kong, the bulk of the Chinese population—around 100,000—simply fled. That response was repeated exactly a century later in the north Indian city of Surat where news of plague sparked a mass exodus of half a million that included most of

the medical profession (Marriott 2002: 51).²⁰ Furthermore, Hong Kong society balkanized in 1894 along racial and ethnic lines. White colonists and Chinese workers, xenophobic mirrors both, blamed each other for the crisis, clung to opposed therapeutic diagnoses and remedies, and were granted different medical facilities (Marriott 2002: 53-62). Attempts at effective quarantine collapsed (Welsh 1996: 302-307). The situation was radically different with SARS in 2003. Then it was mostly expatriate families that left briefly, ethnic divisions were insignificant, and modern medical science—through the agency of hospital doctors—received common approval.

Hong Kong people are notoriously peripatetic. Around 7 percent of them have right of abode in other countries, while around 43 percent have close relatives living elsewhere, thus affording a temporary foreign refuge. But moving is easier said than done when employment continues and when local family commitments must be redeemed. Many cities on the Chinese mainland were demonstrably unwelcoming of Hong Kong visitors. And in Toronto, a home from home for many Hong Kongers, even relatives often stated in so many words: “Stay away for the moment; don’t put us in danger too.”

Moreover, the implications of closure became more pointed still when they took institutional forms. Salient examples included the travel advisory of 2 April, the first on Hong Kong ever issued by the WHO, which had a severe, if temporary, dampening affect on economic activity;²¹ the Swiss government’s prohibition, on the same day, of Hong Kong exhibitors (and those from other SARS-affected countries) from participation in the Basel World Watch and Jewelry Show; the announcement on 7 May from the University of California, Berkeley, that students from countries on the WHO’s travel advisory list would not be allowed to attend the summer school program;²² and the request, soon afterwards from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, the University of Rochester, in New York, and Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, that students in SARS areas skip their graduation ceremony. Reed Exhibitions, the organizers of the world’s premier jewelry trade show in Los Angeles, first banned Hong Kong exhibitors from attendance, then allowed them to exhibit on condition that a separate pavilion be built for them, and finally demurred to full participation provided the luckless jewelers left Hong Kong ten days early, received health checks forty-eight hours before entering the fair and presented up-to-date health certificates. Meanwhile on May 16, the Hong Kong government was informed by its Irish counterparts that Hong Kong athletes were debarred from partici-

pating in the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games.²³ From an outsider's point of view, such constraints and interdictions are reasonable precautionary measures designed to protect the citizens of host countries. But from the standpoint of many Hong Kong residents, they suggested that "Asia's world city" had become an international outlaw.

Above I listed four ingredients that constitute a community of fate: *danger recognition* (alertness based on verified public knowledge of the disease); *moral density* (aided by the fact that SARS, albeit unequally, ran its course through all major districts of Hong Kong); *trial* rather than shock; and *closure* with its attendant stigmatization by other nations. These are all necessary conditions for a community of fate to be formed. Additional requirements include *material and organization resources* to resist the menace (for instance, a combative media in Hong Kong's case, citizen support groups for medical staff), and an *axis of convergence* (notably a common language or ethnicity, civic pride, and so forth) along which social cohesion is affirmed. An axis of convergence, in this usage, is to be distinguished from the "convergence behavior" described by researchers such as Anthony Wallace ([1956] 2003), and Jerry Rose (1982: 53-55): the tendency of many kinds of people – returnees, helpers (officials and volunteers), voyeurs, profiteers—to congregate around the disaster site. Where calamity produces a stigmatized group, the tendency is the reverse: people keep their distance, repulsed by the fear of physical or symbolic contamination.

The existence of an axis of convergence—cultural qualities that enable group cohesion—can never be assumed. Consider Montreal during the smallpox outbreak in 1885. At the time of the epidemic, Montreal boasted a city population of around 167,000 people; the suburbs accounted for some 30,000 more. Like Hong Kong, Montreal was a commercial hub of the region. Unlike Hong Kong, where SARS produced a community of fate, smallpox in Montreal only accentuated previous divisions. The city fractured along lines of ethnicity (Anglo-Irish/ French), confession (Protestant/Roman Catholic), language (Anglophone/Francophone), and neighborhood (East End/West End). No axis of convergence materialized. Even treatment of the disease sowed discord: a rump of miasmatic doctors claimed that vaccination was pernicious. At this time, the germ theory of disease was still in its infancy. Faced with an aversive agent that threatened its existence, Montreal produced victim clusters but failed to generate community-wide solidarity.²⁴ Stephen Kroll-Smith and Stephen Robert Couch (1990) identify a similar social fragmentation in their ethnography of Centralia, a Pennsylvanian anthracite coal

mining town that endured a twenty-five-year underground fire. A poor, family-focused settlement, composed of ethnically and religiously mixed residents, resigned to economic vicissitude and the dominance of outsiders, Centralia possessed no axis of convergence to meet the threat to its collective existence. Worse, it ruptured along lines of proximity to the fire (“hot side” [southern] and “cold side” [northern] areas), generational difference, and organizational affiliation.²⁵ Together these and other factors created what the authors bleakly describe as “social hatred,” illustrated by one Centralian’s jibe that: “It’s my neighbor and not the fire that bothers me most” (Kroll-Smith and Couch 1990: 109).

By contrast with Montreal and Centralia, territory-wide identification in Hong Kong is facilitated by a propitious axis of convergence: ethnic homogeneity. Of Hong Kong’s population of 6.82 million (I use mid-2003 government figures because this is the period we are discussing), around 93 percent are ethnic Chinese, approximately 60 percent were born in the territory, and the vast majority of residents are Cantonese speakers, the language associated with Guangdong Province. Moreover, the cultural identity of Hong Kongers is strong. Natives still do not identify primarily with the mainland. People routinely speak of the “Chinese government” (as if it were not their own) or of “traveling to China,” just as some Newfoundlanders still talk about taking a trip to Canada. And respondents asked by the Hong Kong Transition Project (e.g., 2002a) to choose among various self-ascribed identities—as Chinese, as Hong Kong Chinese, or as a Hong Kong person—have repeatedly affirmed attachment to the last designation (Hong Kong person) or to one that combines a sense of place and of ethnicity (Hong Kong Chinese). Self-descriptions of being simply “Chinese”—correlating with mainland patriotism—have only intermittently garnered more than 25 percent of responses, though this may be changing as residents perceive the successes of the PRC under a pragmatic and relatively effective administration.²⁶

Finally, *social ritual* is also critical in galvanizing a community of fate’s collective life. This can take many different forms but its consequence is always the same: by providing a specific crisis identity it separates the group both from normal life and from the world of the unaffected. Let us call social ritual during the Hong Kong SARS crisis “efface work”—the activity of wearing a mask in public places. In a later section, I shall examine it closely. First, however, let us attend to the language of SARS, the public rhetoric that marked the event.

Table 1
Hong Kong Transition Project Data Set

The following is a list of how you might describe yourself.
 Which is the most appropriate description of you?
 (All figures shown in percentage [%])

Surveys (Dates Conducted)	Hong Kong Chinese	Chinese	Hong Kong Person	Hong Kong British	Overseas Chinese	Others	N
April Post-Budget Address Survey 2004 (30 Mar – 7 Apr 2004)	27.5	25.7	41.6	2.2	1	2	710
Nov District Council Election Survey 2003	24.8	25	44.6	3	0.8	1.8	709
June SARS Survey 2003	27.4	19.2	45.4	3.4	1.4	3.2	776
Feb Pre-Budget Address Survey 2003	21.9	24.1	45.3	2.7	2.3	3.7	790
April Post-Budget Address Survey 2002	26.8	24.5	43	2.7	0.9	2.1	751
November Post-Policy Address Survey 2001	25.8	23.1	44.4	3.4	1.3	2	759
July Patriotism Survey 2001	23.8	28.4	41.8	2.9	1.3	1.8	831
July Party Survey 2001	25.6	26.7	41.4	2.4	0.9	3	1029
June Media Survey 2001	24.9	23.7	44.9	2.9	1.2	2.4	830
April Post-Budget Address Survey 2001	24.1	28	41.7	2.7	1.7	1.8	837
October Post-LegCo Election Survey 2000	25.8	25.9	43.6	2.5	0.7	1.5	721
August Pre-LegCo Election Survey 2000	26.5	23	43.4	3.7	1.9	1.5	857
April Post-Budget Address Survey 2000	29.5	24.1	38.2	4.5	1	2.7	704

The Language of SARS: Max Weber versus Susan Sontag

SARS can be understood epidemiologically as a virus that tested Hong Kong's health care system and governance to the maximum. Sociologically it can be seen as a test of Hong Kong's moral existence: how the city and its environs coped with fear. The ancient notion that plague is a sign of evil is no primitive superstition. It grasps the reality that any threat to the group as a whole is simultaneously a "sacred" violatory event of the most extreme kind (see Gordon 1999: 7). The specter of plague or any other pandemic summons up the possibility of a collective death: the extirpation of the social itself.

Aside from the new institutions it generates (civic and government initiatives, pressure groups, etc.), how does one recognize a community of fate and delineate its existence? Durkheim ([1893] 1933: 64-9) claimed to find the index of forms of solidarity in law and attitudes towards punishment and compensation. One vital index of a community of fate, I suggest, is to be found in the "social language" (Goffman [1959] 1974: 159), symbols, and "codes of representation"²⁷ that people use to describe

their predicament. More precisely, a community of fate can be located by investigating *what* people saliently speak about; *how* they speak about it, that is, with what terms and metaphors; and with *what sensibility*.

Was the disease abating or spreading? What could be done to stop it? How safe were one's children and relatives? Should domestic helpers be permitted to leave their employers' apartments for the usual Sunday gatherings in Central (the financial and government district) and elsewhere? By definition, this is not the usual language of everyday life, but when it momentarily becomes so it articulates by repetition the new reality. Moreover, in both Chinese and English-language media, metaphors of war were pervasive. Short of a genuine ethnography, we cannot be certain that such figures of speech were shared by, and convincing to, ordinary people. But it takes little imagination to see a structure of plausibility for this rhetoric.²⁸ War was on people's minds: SARS coincided with the invasion of Iraq. And even though SARS in Hong Kong ended up killing "only" 299 people, this knowledge was not available at the time. SARS brought mass insecurity and uncertainty. It was a unique pathogen with no standard medical cure. Its mechanism of transmission was puzzling: might cockroaches and rats be vectors of the disease? As with war, Hong Kong's resources were marshaled by the government. And SARS came from the "outside," imported from Guangdong on the Chinese mainland. Like a place cut off by war and embargo, Hong Kong the "besieged city" (Lee 2003: 102) endured the temporary desertion of the world. The territory as a whole felt under threat. The end of SARS appeared like a kind of liberation.²⁹

What light can a Weberian perspective throw on these events and the language with which they were depicted? In *Economy and Society* and elsewhere, Weber famously urged sociologists to "understand" those whom they seek to study scientifically, to unravel the sense that individuals attach to their conduct. This means accepting that people have reasons, often good ones, for doing what they do and, by extension, for talking about it in a specific way. Taking those reasons seriously as a guide to actors' performance and their ability to reflect upon that performance enables the sociologist to explain *in part* the action in which they are engaged. Eschew caricature, see the world as agents see it, reconstruct the experiences and institutions that made their conduct plausible and, from their standpoint, moral. That is not always easy. We are disinclined, for instance, to understand fascism from the standpoint of fascists. We fear, in our muddled post-moral society, that such a concession might be the first step to granting fascism legitimacy. Yet as Michael Mann (2004:1-5)

reminds us, European fascism did offer plausible solutions to people who abhorred class conflict and who craved social order. It provided opportunities for revenge, ingratiation, and material advancement. It thrived in dense networks of civil society. It was idealistic and activist. Misanthropists and misfits constituted only a fraction of fascist converts. The majority consisted of youth of all classes, the artistic avant-garde (for instance, the Futurists), the educated, and the scientifically curious. Fascism was attractive to academics and professionals. It drew support from all classes. In today's tendentious idiom, fascism would be called "progressive."

Similarly, it is illuminating to study the language through which agents express their emotions and to look for the sense in it. Again, however, that is not always deemed acceptable. In a famous polemic, the culture critic Susan Sontag ([1978/1989] 1990) deplored martial imagery in the medical context finding it by turns dangerous, humiliating, and offensive.³⁰ Two aspects of disease metaphors particularly disturbed her. The first is the way that metaphors, symbols, and analogies attach themselves to disease, so that, for instance, TB is understood through the figure of the romantic, melancholy type. The disease is given a meaning, rather than ascribed a specific pathogenetic cause. Human fantasies are projected onto it. Second, the disease *itself* becomes a metaphor and turns adjectival: Jews were depicted by National Socialists as syphilis-like or, alternatively, as "a racial tuberculosis among nations" (Hitler [1925-6] 1943: 300-8; Lifton 1986:15-18; Proctor 1999). Trotsky dubbed Stalinism the "cancer" of Marxism, and likened it also to syphilis and cholera. The associations are invariably punitive: the individual or group with which the disease is compared must, like the disease itself, be annihilated; half-measures only encourage its insidious propagation. Sontag suggests that instead of referring to the "immunodefensive system" we talk about "immune competence," an idea echoed by Donna Haraway in prose far less scintillating than Sontag's. "Is there a way," she says, "to turn the [military] discourse [of immunology] into an oppositional/alternative/liberatory approach? Is this postmodern body...*necessarily* an automated Star Wars battlefield in the now extra-terrestrial space of the late twentieth-century...?"³¹ Emily Martin, in her probing ethnography of American cultural depictions of the immune system, makes a similar point, citing an interviewee who imagines the immune system as "ocean waves, tides ebbing and flowing in constant, turbulent change."³² Yet Martin is careful to distinguish between her own, and some of her informants' preferences for non-military images and the reality of "the street" in which they remain pervasive and reasonable to the agents concerned.

Sontag was right to condemn a conflation of the pathogen (the virus or the bacterium) and the host (the person affected), depicting them both as the “enemy.” A qualified rebuttal of the uses of military language in the context of disease is salutary. It is absurd to talk about a “war on cancer” and, post Richard Nixon, few people do. Yet Sontag’s condemnation of disease-as-war language is not qualified but blanket. She demands a wholesale abnegation of this rhetoric, probably because of a deeper abhorrence to invoking war and, *a fortiori*, to war itself. War is repugnant; therefore the extrapolation of martial language is repugnant too. The key limitation of Sontag’s approach, however, is that it is principally concerned with diseases—TB, cancer, AIDS—that tend to affect individuals segmentally rather than with those that, presaging collective extirpation, abruptly strike simultaneous fear into whole communities.³³ For there is clearly a difference between contracting cancer and being subject to, or terrified by, a mass emergency that cuts across all sectors of the population: as in the case of SARS, or the outbreak of bubonic plague in San Francisco in 1900, or smallpox in Montreal in 1885. In these instances, it makes sociological sense to treat military language not as an object of revulsion, but as an index of emotions that are themselves socially explicable. When Alessandro Manzoni wrote about the plague that struck Milan in 1630, he described a death that was “swift and violent” (Thucydides also remarked on plague’s “violent spasms”) and of a disease that was “threatening, and actually invading, a country and a people.” Significantly, the historical sources on which Manzoni relied say that the first person to introduce the epidemic into the city was a soldier, either from the garrison of Lecco or of Chiavenna.³⁴ Or consider Daniel Defoe’s *A Journal of the Plague Year* ([1722] 2001), a reconstruction of the plague that swept through London in 1665. The book offers a bonanza for students of early eighteenth-century thinking about disease contagion. Also telling is the language that the author uses to depict the chaotic scene. The pestilence that stalks the terrified denizens in a time of “extremity” (168) is “like an armed Man” (xv), an “enemy” (135, 188, 189, 233) a “walking destroyer” (192), an “arrow that flies thus unseen,” (192), a site of “violence” and “injury” (147, 204), “fury” and “rage” (150, 158, 163, 225) that subjects people to a state of “siege” (189). They must “guard” against it (204) and do their “duty” (224). Or as Defoe puts it “A plague is a formidable enemy, and is arm’d with terrors, that every man is not sufficiently fortified to resist, or prepar’d to stand the shock against” (223-4). The fact that while the English “stood on ill terms with the Dutch, and were in a furious war with

them” they also “had such dreadful enemies to struggle with at home,” made matters even worse (202).

Experience of disasters more generally evokes the language of embattlement. E. L. Quarantelli and Russell Dynes (1976: 141) note that “[natural] disaster victims not infrequently personalize disaster agents so that they are talked about as if human agents were attacking the community.” Kai Erikson’s studies of the human experience of toxic pollution persistently show among respondents a sense of “assault,” “stealth and treachery,” an agent that is “furtive” and that feels like “a time bomb ticking” within them (Erikson 1994: 150-1).³⁵ A more spectacular example is the Mississippi flood of 1927—a natural disaster to rival that of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The flood inundated 27,000 square miles; approximately 330,000 people were plucked from the roofs of submerged homes, high ground, and levees; 700,000 victims ended up taking Red Cross relief. Throughout the catastrophe the language of war – and quasi military operations – was ever present. Major John Lee, the Army district engineer in charge of the Mississippi River Commission’s Vicksburg office, declared that “In physical and mental strain, a prolonged high-water fight on threatened levees can only be compared with real war” (cited in Barry 1997: 156). And the battle he fought with his “army” of levee workers was desperate. Men patrolled the levees to stop dynamiters. The National Guard was mobilized. And in his first national radio address, Herbert Hoover, then secretary of commerce, warned of the danger south of Mounds Landing:

Everything humanly possible is being done by men of magnificent courage and skill. It is a great battle against the oncoming rush, and in every home behind the battle line there is apprehension and anxiety.... It is a great battle that the engineers are directing. They have already held important levees against the water enemy. What the result of the fight may be no one knows. But the fortitude, industry, courage and resolution of the people of the south in this struggle cannot fail to bring pride to every American tonight.... Another week will be a great epic. I believe they will be victorious.” (Ibid: 280)

Political rhetoric? Of course. Inflated and self-serving? Perhaps. But politicians choose words because they sense their public resonance and credibility. In 1927, Hoover became a hero of the Delta. A year later, he won the presidency in a landslide election.

We can now return to SARS in Hong Kong equipped with the Weberian assumption that people are not ignoramuses, and that understanding disease-as-war language is a very different thing from unmasking it as offensive. Put plainly: for what purposes was war language used and by whom?

First it was a trumpet of exhortation, a medium through which the authorities belatedly stressed the gravity of the problem and sought to mobilize the entire population. Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's chief executive, announced early on that "whether we can defeat SARS depends on the strength of unity between all citizens and the government."³⁶ A few days later he sought to be more emphatic remarking that "we [government ministers] are confident that we [Hong Kong people] will win the war."³⁷ It is true that government tardiness was itself a major bone of contention during the SARS outbreak. So, also, was its insensitivity to public feeling. Many criticized the Health Authority for failing to protect ill-equipped and over-stretched "front line" workers from themselves catching SARS.³⁸ War language sounded the alarm—public officials such as the chief of the Hospital Authority were also SARS victims—and reflected the seriousness of what was happening.

Disease-as-war metaphor was used, secondly, as a means of official exculpation. Hence Hospital Authority chairman Leong Che-hung told a sub-committee of Hong Kong's Legislative Council (the lower chamber, otherwise known as Legco): "Sars was a war and this war did not allow the authority and the [Princess Margaret] hospital more time to be 100 per cent prepared."³⁹ Or listen to Health Minister Yeoh, the day after a Legco report censured him for hesitancy and poor communication: "We tried our very best in our battle to control this mysterious and deadly disease. For the inadequacies of the health-care system that were exposed during the early days of the epidemic, I offer my deepest and most sincere apology."⁴⁰

In part, war language was a dissimulation intended to hide ineptitude and to escape responsibility. Yet from the beginning of the SARS outbreak, many people frankly acknowledged the difficulty of making clear-sighted decisions in a situation that approximated the fog of war. Legislative Council member Dr. Lo Wing-lok likened the Hospital Authority and Health Department to "troops" (*jundui*) that are "marching through the fog."⁴¹ Psychiatrist and Justice of the Peace, Dr. Ip Yan-ming echoed that sentiment: "We're marching as if through a fog," he said, adding that even so "all medical workers can continue to fight. All citizens have to be united to win this battle."⁴² And Professor Sydney Chung—a high profile critic of the government who accused it of giving health workers the equivalent of bamboo sticks to fight the virus—remarked that, early on, "we [doctors and nurses] were marching in the dark. Every step we took was nerve wracking for me."⁴³

The hermeneutics of suspicion has accustomed us childishly to assume that the language of public officials is automatically compromised by the status of those who employ it. It is almost as if leaders and their administration must, by definition, be immune to wider public sentiment. The point is to unmask their ulterior power motives, invariably considered to be inimical to, or parasitical upon, the common weal. One is not required to suspend one's critical faculties to believe that, during the SARS outbreak, many officials acted in good faith and echoed a louder, and plaintive, *cri de coeur*. Incompetence is not the same as insincerity. Management is not the same as manipulation. Equally, criticism of officeholders which is not simple abuse presupposes a moral framework in which criticism makes sense; "Curses may bind as well as vows."⁴⁴ Health Minister Yeoh felt compelled to resign, in the wake of the July 2004 Legco Report, not because he was pushed to do so by Hong Kong's Chief Executive or by Hong Kong's so-called ministerial "responsibility system." It was the taunts on the street, the ferocity of invective Yeoh received when it looked as if he would *not* resign that persuaded him to do so. History may well produce a kinder verdict on Dr Yeoh who, to this author, is no villain. But in a society where public expression is legal and open, and where power without "face" is little power at all, there was no creditable option short of going.

Besides, disease-as-war language threatened to ensnare as much as fortify officials who used it. Wars and mass epidemics, like other disasters, challenge the state's most basic claim to legitimacy: its claim to provide social order and to protect citizens from each other and the depredation of "outsiders." If provision of security is the primary *raison d'être* of the modern state, it follows that ruling institutions that fail to provide it are likely to become destabilized. Disease control has also become so integral to the state's regulatory capacity that it must increasingly be factored into its geopolitical considerations and into the international legal regime. This *microbialpolitik*, as David Fidler (1999:18-19, 279-309) calls it, has become urgent with modern communications, effortlessly transporting diseases around the world, and with the threat of biological and other weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁵ Invoking war language is risky, a double-edged sword, because to lose a "war" is to bleed authority. The body politic must, at the very least, secure the bodily integrity of its citizens. Moreover, a telling aspect of war imagery during SARS was that critics and supporters of the government, pro and anti-Beijing media alike, used it. That power holders wish to legitimate their rule is a sociological platitude. But in an open society legitimation works only

to the extent that it credibly taps sources of public feeling. Consent, *pace* Noam Chomsky, is not so easily “manufactured.”

A third context for the use of disease-as-war imagery was as a media frame which allowed it to organize, simplify, and dramatize the message in an eye-catching and patriotic way.⁴⁶ Hospital Authority supremo, Dr. William Ho, was lauded as the “Commander in Chief.”⁴⁷ Mr. Tung, Hong Kong’s chief executive, was likened to a “general,” coordinating government ministries.⁴⁸ The *Hong Kong Economic Times* advised its readers to hold firm to the “two chief battle lines” of precaution and attack. We must “attack aggressively, and fight swiftly.”⁴⁹ *Ta Kung Pao* agreed: every citizen, it insisted, should think of themselves as a “SARS warrior” with a duty “to stand up and fight against” the virus.⁵⁰ “Fighting SARS. It’s Everyone’s Business” proclaimed the *South China Morning Post* (SCMP) in a 1 May 2003 report describing how transport operators, hotels, banks, arts and recreation venues, supermarkets, restaurants, office and retail complexes, and airlines were all playing their part in a citywide alliance. And so did the SCMP itself organizing the revealingly titled “Project Shield”—a mass fund raising campaign to provide medical supplies (superior goggles, face masks, protective hoods with respirators, DuPont Barrierman protection suits, etc.) for the embattled public health sector workers. Within a week of being launched in late April, it collected over \$HK10m (US\$1.28m).

Fourth, the language of war functioned as a tribute to the so-called front-line health “heroes.”⁵¹ Here again, there was a clear media and government frame that popularized such language but in this case it tended to coincide with, and collide with, much popular usage; it was not simply contrived. Medical workers who died were portrayed as “solemnly” laying down their lives “in the battle against SARS,”⁵² “sacrificing” their lives for the community, and falling in the “line of duty.”⁵³ Government leaders spoke at their funerals. The fallen were buried in Gallant Garden, the place reserved for the elite of public servants who die by serving the community. They were given posthumous gold and silver medals by the government for “noble gallantry of the highest order.”⁵⁴ “Memories of SARS warriors will remain with us eternally,” mourned a header in *Ta Kung Pao*.⁵⁵ And the Hospital Authority (2003:2.5 = 15) put it this way:

...many healthcare workers, managers, government officials and others made heroic efforts in the face of danger to fight the disease and limit its effects. Through their efforts it was finally contained after 100 days. It is important to acknowledge that these were civilians sent into the theatre of war, with no end to the battle in sight and no grand plan for victory. The enemy was unforgiving...

Was this lachrymose media hype? One measure of its greater public authenticity was the angry dispute over how best to commemorate the dead heroes. To be sure, the “hero” motif, both in Chinese and Western cultures, is complex and multifaceted (Birrell 1999: 67-112). Heroes can blur into saints or sages. They can save humans from flood and famine or do other great deeds. Heroic doctors and firefighters are supposed to save lives; heroic soldiers are supposed to take them in order to protect their country. Binding these motley associations together is the compressed idea of sacrifice, courage, and steadfastness. So while it is erroneous to reduce modern ideas of heroism to a military core, it is nonetheless plausible to detect a military *resonance*, subtle or obvious, in such images as “fighting” SARS (embattled front-line health workers, etc.) and in the award, posthumously dispensed, of medals for gallantry. My research has found no public challenge to the appropriateness of this symbolism. Controversy hinged instead on its application.

In the government’s summer 2003 Honors list none of the health workers received Hong Kong’s highest honor—the Grand Bauhinia Medal. The relevant committee’s decision was met with astonishment. Michael DeGolyer, a professor of politics at Hong Kong’s Baptist University spoke for many when he criticized the government for putting bureaucratic considerations ahead of public gratitude: “Given that so many talked so much about the heroism of the medical staff during the Sars outbreak, not giving the highest award to those who made the highest sacrifice, the doctors and nurses who died trying to save lives during the Sars outbreak, is an insult to their memory.” The legislator for the medical sector, Lo Wing-lok, agreed. And DeGolyer added: “It shows the continuing lack of political sense and leadership at the top, and a total insensitivity to the need we have for heroes.”⁵⁶

The fiasco—which continues as of this writing in regard to compensation for the families of private doctors who perished—is itself testament to how poorly the government orchestrated the warrior theme. If there ever was a cynical ploy to capitalize on Hong Kong’s heroes – the popular symbol of the battle against SARS—it failed miserably. Bureaucratic formula and calibration trumped compassion as officials fashioned a scale of desert to apply to the dead. Were they struck down knowing the consequences of treating SARS victims or were they infected unwittingly? Did they catch SARS from a family member or from a patient? Did they volunteer their service or were they drafted in as part of regular duties bound by the Hippocratic Oath? These questions are not inherently absurd. A bureaucratic response that avoids populism

has merit. But by employing a procedural casuistry to a case that was felt to be *sui generis*, and by elevating consistency over compassion, the government looked heartless.⁵⁷ The passions that SARS abridged, and the moral vocabulary it generated, resisted being neatly squeezed into normal institutional channels of procedural correctness. The more they were, the more the government's own professions of guardianship looked hollow and out of step with public sentiment. Failure to erect tombstones for the dead health workers in Gallant Garden also prompted outrage.⁵⁸ The Health Authority simply disclaimed responsibility, saying it was a matter for the relevant families and hospitals to mark the graves of those who had perished. The incredulity with which that attitude was met in Hong Kong is evidence that these "front-line heroes" were the people's own, not a public relations ruse. "True solidarity," Mary Douglas (1986: 97) notes, "is based on shared classifications." Already weakened by pre-SARS scandal and poor judgment, the government's prestige was further tarnished by classificatory dissonance. The extent of that accumulated damage became plain on 1 July 2003 when half a million Hong Kong people, their masks removed, turned out on the streets to protest the government's national security legislation—and protest everything else. It was the largest demonstration ever held in Hong Kong aimed at a domestic government.⁵⁹ That effervescence was followed by increased democratic agitation through the summer and fall of 2003. Hong Kong democrats call it the "July 1st effect." In good measure it was a SARS effect too. I return to it presently.

In lieu of appropriate government commendations, ordinary citizens provided their own. Booklets about the life of service of Dr. Joanna Tse Yuen-man, one of the dead, were bulk ordered by a number of Hong Kong schools.⁶⁰ A film about her life called *The Miracle Box* was screened at Hong Kong cinemas; even before the film was officially released, 240 screenings of it had been booked by schools and religious organizations.⁶¹ And in February 2004, bronze busts of the six public health workers, commissioned by the New Century Forum (a policy think tank) were unveiled at the Airport Express station in Central on Hong Kong Island. The busts are now housed in the Museum of Medical Sciences.⁶² They represent the sacralized "face" of Hong Kong.

Plainly, concepts of war that surface today during periods of disaster represent a highly mythologized view of military experience. How could they not? Most people in Hong Kong under fifty have never experienced military combat; they know of it vicariously through media depiction. Yet this misses the point. Exploring the significance of martial language,

however mythologized, is not the same as glorifying war. Its purpose is to tap into a well of symbols that abbreviate the meanings of social distress for those who experience it. The language of war provided a key element of the speech community of Hong Kong. Rather than irately condemn this language, I suggest we pay attention to it in order to understand what it reveals about social life in periods of extremity.

Efface Work and the Mass Media

“One’s face, then, is a sacred thing, and the expressive order required to sustain it is therefore a ritual one.”—Goffman ([1955] 1967: 19)

If language was one key medium through which people communicated a danger to their own existence as individuals and to the society of which they were part, social ritual was another. Here I am less concerned with the persistence of established rituals than I am with the emergence of new ones, peculiar to the situation itself. Durkheim argued in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* ([1912]1995), that social solidarity requires the existence of bodies in close and regular interaction, face-to-face encounters, to charge up a sense of a common reality. In a powerful, recent adaptation of this argument, Randall Collins (2004: 41) glosses:

Society is held together more intensely at some moments than at others. And the “society” that is held together is no abstract unity of a social system, but is just those groups of people assembled in particular places who feel solidarity with each other through the effects of ritual participation and ritually charged symbolism.

Of particular importance, in Collins’s theory, is what he calls “emotional energy”: the variable confidence, élan, initiative and purposefulness which people derive from ritual interactions and which by social disposition they seek to maximize. Emotional energy is localized and situation specific; it is most intense at the moment of the ritual itself, tending to drain away thereafter unless and until it is periodically renewed. It both belongs to and, in feedback loops, constitutes a ritual encounter. In a figure that schematizes the ritual process, Collins (48) itemizes its four necessary ingredients: group assembly (bodily co-presence), barrier to outsiders, mutual focus of attention and shared mood.⁶³ Let us apply these ingredients to the Hong Kong case.

What kind of society was Hong Kong during the SARS crisis? I am not thinking here of intensive units of interaction such as health workers—or New York firefighters in the aftermath of 9/11—who handled the crisis around the clock, lived together for weeks on end so as to avoid infecting their own families and who, by so doing, intensified the bonds of their

own solidarity pocket. My interest is in the wider society, the ostensible spectators on events, as it were. What, if anything, distinguished it symbolically from its previous social character? A shared mood of trepidation was one feature, aggravated by the fact that SARS was a new virus for which there was no known cure and that mutated in unpredictable ways. A mutual focus of attention was another factor, centered on daily (sometimes hourly) updates of SARS casualty statistics, and information about where the disease was spreading. And there was a double barrier to outsiders: one elected by foreigners who stopped coming to Hong Kong; the other generated, under pressure, among Hong Kongers themselves for whom domestic strangers—and even intimates—became a source of jeopardy as unwitting carriers of the pestilence. Where, then, was the group-assembly, the close interaction that gives people a sense of belonging? Had it momentarily disappeared? Or was there still some means by which it made an appearance? Disease repels people from contact. It puts a premium on co-absence. By minimizing bodily contact it must also attenuate solidarity and moral density, and thereby the presence of society itself. The reality is more complex.

In a seminal essay, Erving Goffman coined the term “face work” to exemplify the many ways that individuals publicly challenge, apologize, cooperate with, and forgive one another in situations of co-presence. “A person’s performance of face work, extended by his tacit agreement to help others perform theirs, represents his willingness to abide by the ground rules of social interaction” (Goffman [1955] 1967: 31). For Goffman, the self consists not just as an assemblage of “expressive implications” but also as “a kind of player in a ritual game who copes honorably or dishonorably, diplomatically or undiplomatically, with the judgmental contingencies of the situation” (31). “By repeatedly and automatically asking himself the question: ‘If I do or do not act in this way, will I or others lose face?’, he decides at each moment, consciously or unconsciously, how to behave” (36). As is well known, Chinese culture attributes an especial importance to “face” and its requirements.⁶⁴ The paradox of *efface* work begins, however, with the face out of sight. Disease, too, is faceless, invisible, unlike a marauding army, a volcanic lava flow, a tsunami wave, or the violently swaying trees that announce the arrival of a hurricane. And the more mysterious it is, the more a disease is likely to induce generalized hypochondria. All kinds of sundry illnesses are read as its symptoms: diarrhea, coughing, fever.

Disease in Hong Kong is a remarkable laboratory to examine how even in situations of social repulsion a collective existence is affirmed. Isola-

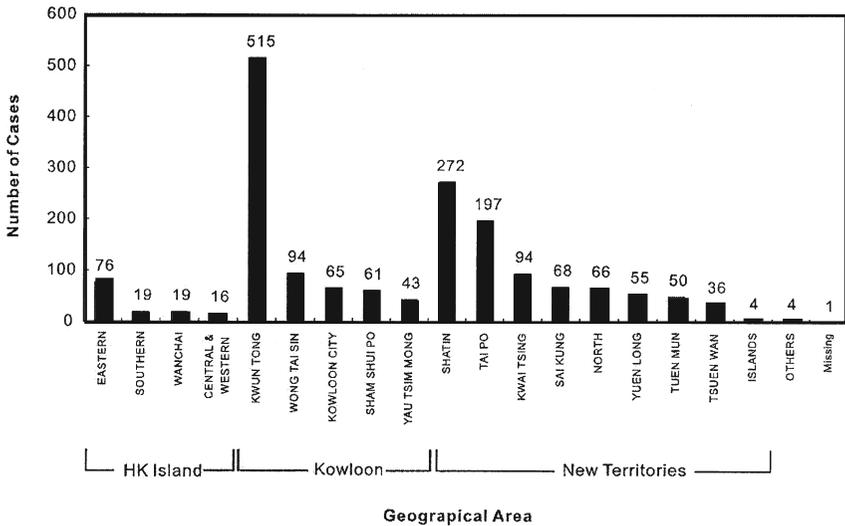
tion has its social patterns and consequences. Granted, where possible, people in Hong Kong vacated the usual packed public spaces: shopping malls, restaurants, churches, and cinemas. But for the most part flight was impossible. People still went to work and, for at least half of the period in which SARS was active, to school and to university. Those without their own vehicles (the majority) were compelled to employ public transport. Thus bodies remained co-present for much of the time. Families still met, even if they were reluctant to maintain contact with elder members—the key target group of SARS deaths.

In a masked city it was difficult to recognize the identity even of one's friends and colleagues as they passed. Yet mask wearing became the quickly improvised, if obligatory, social ritual; failing to don one was met with righteous indignation, a clear sign of ritual violation. The mask symbolized a rule of conduct: namely an *obligation* to protect the wider community; and an *expectation* regarding how one was to be treated by others (Goffman [1956] 1967: 49). More simply, the mask was the emblematic means by which people communicated their responsibilities to the social group of which they were members. Through mimicry and synchronization—key mechanisms of emotional contagion (Hatfield et al. 1994: 156-8)—mask wearing amounted to a joint action, normatively embodied, the entrainment and attunement of the society as a whole. By disguising an individual's face, it gave greater salience to collective identity. By blurring social distinctions, it produced social resemblance. Mask wearing activated and reactivated a sense of a common fate; it was a mode of reciprocity under conditions that supremely tested it. Accordingly, mask demeanor was much more than a prophylactic against disease. It showed deference to public emotions and the decision to respect them. That, throughout the crisis, Health Secretary Yeoh refused to wear a mask, saying that the virus was only transmissible through intimate contact, was a social gaffe of the first order. Note too that efface work—precisely because it is a performance—requires effort. Though this is not the emotional energy of attraction and enthusiasm, and the antithesis of collective celebration, mask wearing demands activity: donning the mask, changing it every couple of hours, feeling it become fetid with spittle, speaking through it in frustratingly muffled tones, buying new masks, ripping them off in relief when backstage. As a contribution to general sociological theory, I suggest that SARS showed that social ritual (as mask wearing) can function even where *there is resistance to bodily contact*, even where *emotional energy is very low*, and even where a group *uses an emblem that appears to symbolize the opposite of integration*.

But if the mask functioned as the most visible signal of Hong Kong's collective fate, it was by no means the only means through which a common mood and focus of attention was generated. The mass media assumed a vital role.⁶⁵ To say it "constructed" SARS is obvious yet simplistic. The media transmitted and amplified many of the images of SARS (the masked city, heroes, war vocabulary); to that extent it was a "carrier group" (Alexander 2004: 11) of the public iconography. At the same time, it was itself constituted by public debate which it recursively channeled and for which it became a moral repository. The media was the people's bridge to each other at a time when some co-presence was inevitable but group assembly was avoided—like the plague. Media was also of great significance during the SARS outbreak because Hong Kong people, unlike their Chinese mainland counterparts, could trust it and because, uncontrolled by the Communist Party, it was able to monitor the government, call it to account, suggest remedies and, in many instances of government hesitation, take the lead. In short, the media was not drafted in by the government, or controlled by it, for the purposes of public relations.⁶⁶ And particularly in an age of multiple media channels afforded by the World Wide Web, attempts to monopolize information are constantly tested. For instance, the Hong Kong government was initially reluctant to give details about where SARS was being discovered. Naming particular residential estates, it was said, might breach personal privacy, have legal implications and cause panic. A citizen's initiative simply sidelined such legal niceties: four computer buffs set up a website which gave the residential address of confirmed and suspected SARS cases. The website received five million hits between 2 and 21 April 2003 and, compunction set aside, the government relented.⁶⁷ On 15 April it established its own list of SARS-affected buildings. At the same time, newspapers released daily charts and figures itemizing where SARS had appeared or where its course was running. The upshot of this development was that Hong Kong residents could see clearly the *dispersion* of SARS throughout the entire territory—a factor that made Hong Kong as a whole, not just one part of it, feel collectively embattled.

Never mind that the SARS was unevenly distributed, concentrating in Kwun Tong (515 cases) in Kowloon.⁶⁸ The New Territories were also badly hit—Shatin had 272 cases, Taipo another 197. And while Hong Kong island, the financial and government center of the territory, was left relatively unscathed, seventy-six people in the Eastern district still contracted SARS. Cumulatively, that lent credence to the widespread belief that SARS was either actually present in one's own neighborhood

Figure 2
Number of SARS Cases by Geographical Areas



Source: Hospital Authority (2003)

or within a short striking distance of it. Bottled up in their apartments, making every attempt at work and on public transport to seal themselves off from sources of contamination—their fellows—Hong Kongers in another age would have felt largely impotent. It was radio, television and to a lesser degree the internet that gave them hope, and that linked their destiny to that of their faceless, bemasked compatriots.

Radio played a special role. Its regent (later deposed) was Albert Cheng King-hon, the charismatic and pugnacious commentator whose morning call-in program on Commercial Radio's *Teacup in a Storm* (sic) attracted around 80 percent of Hong Kong radio listeners between 7.30-10.00 AM. Cheng established himself as the champion of health workers and the scourge of government procrastination.⁶⁹ Programs like his prompt one commentator to say that, during the SARS episode, the “media became the true ‘intermediary’ that united different segments of the people and publicized their cause,” helping them cope with the uncertainty of SARS “more effectively than any bureaucratic measure” could.⁷⁰

The term “intermediary” is striking for, in a famous passage, Durkheim ([1912] 1995 [1912]: 232) also notes the importance of what he calls “tangible intermediaries” in constituting collective representations. Durkheim observes that it is “by shouting the same cry, saying the same

words and performing the same action in regard to the same object that [people] arrive at and experience agreement” (232). The same cry in the case of Hong Kong was “SARS” and lamentations devoted to the dead; the same action was donning the mask, retreating to the household and listening to or watching regular broadcasts of such amplificatory and “tangible intermediaries” as radio, television. The “heroic front line health workers themselves” were SARS’ heroic emblem, rather like firefighters in the case of 9/11.

And when it was all over? “I feel like a survivor from a war zone” said Justin Wu Che-yuen, a Chinese University of Hong Kong clinical tutor and Hospital Authority medical officer. “I and my colleagues don’t feel like celebrating—we knew Hong Kong would be taken off the WHO [travel advisory] list. But there is a sense of relief today.... At the peak of the outbreak, I worried about the spread of the disease, from public lifts to people on the street. You couldn’t trust anyone because some people didn’t even know they had the virus.”⁷¹ Edmond Wong Chi-woon (23), scriptwriter of the film *City of Sars*, concurred: “It’s been intense. Such a massive, massive experience for this city. It hit everything, from Hong Kong’s economy and its place in the world to the way we touch each other. It’s not easy to squeeze all that into 90 minutes. I think everyone working on the film feels a tremendous sense of responsibility.” “I’m not sure if this film even falls into the same genre as all the other virus films. If anything it is closer to a movie about war being fought on the home front. Yes, that’s it—a war movie crossed with reality TV.” Added fellow director Peter Chan Ho-sun, “Something fundamental has changed in Hong Kong since Sars. It doesn’t feel so lost any more.⁷² We have something to celebrate.”⁷³ So it is that disease may provide an unexpected opportunity for social life to be renewed. Daniel Gordon’s study of Marseilles, during the plague of 1720, shows how that epidemic, for all the suffering it caused, and in good measure because of it, became a source of civic pride, a badge of the city’s independence from the royal court of France to which it was subordinated in 1660. A vibrant commercial port and vector of disease, Marseilles was cordoned off from the rest of France, but thereby regained some of its lost autonomy. If Marseilles became “the first instance in which disaster was used as an emblem of pride to counteract the homogenizing tendencies of modernity” (Gordon 1999: 17), Hong Kong may be the latest.

Communities of fate, in the sense defined previously, have the potential to be productive, socially consequential bodies. What, then, did SARS produce? The SARS crisis occurred during a period in which the

Hong Kong government sought to activate the slumbering Article 23 of the Basic Law, a provision that requires the local government to “enact laws on its own to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People’s Government, or theft of state secrets.” Article 23 also instructs Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to “prohibit foreign political organizations or bodies from conducting activities in the Region, and to prohibit political organizations or bodies of the Region from establishing ties with foreign political organizations or bodies.” Even before the SARS outbreak, Article 23 provoked mounting anxiety among Hong Kong people, as data from the Hong Kong Transition Project shows clearly,⁷⁴ and as political agitation also revealed: in December 2002, around 60,000 people took to the streets in protest. Published without a “white bill” which would have specified in detail the precise legal formulae to be applied, government consultation on Article 23 appeared peremptory and, even worse for a constitutional document, ambiguous. Both the specific offences of subversion and secession were freshly created. The definition of what constituted “state secrets” was broad and, bereft of a public interest defense, draconian; its implementation would have gagged, or at least intimidated, the academy and the media. And the crime of sedition—“inciting others...to commit the substantive offence of treason, secession or subversion...or [causing] violence or disorder which seriously endangers the stability of the state or the HKSAR”—included both speech acts *and publications*. No wonder many believed that Article 23 was a tyrant’s charter.

Meanwhile, SARS confirmed many Hong Kongers’ worst fears about Communist Party secrecy—the seriousness of the disease was originally covered-up—and the major difference between their own society and that of the mainland. If Article 23 had been in place and enforceable, many Hong Kong people asked themselves, would their own media have been able to monitor fearlessly the course of the disease, speak out on behalf of local residents, and hold the government to account for its tardiness and incompetence?⁷⁵ And it was SARS’s compression with previous government debacles, and the threat posed by Article 23 that eventuated in the July 1 demonstration on Hong Kong Island. The scale of the protest—a march to the government offices in Central of over 500,000 people—shocked the government and surprised the demonstrators themselves. For the contrast with the miserable spring days of March and April could hardly have been greater or more dramatic. Then, people fled public spaces—restaurants, cinemas, shopping malls, and public transport to the limited degree it could be avoided—and timidly confined themselves

to their apartments. Now, in a major social effervescence, a large cross section of Hong Kong people—pressed tightly together, unmasked and charged up with a collective enthusiasm – demanded political change. Never before in Hong Kong history, had so many gathered at one event to make political demands of their own local government. The result was simultaneous and deeply alarming for Beijing. Two Hong Kong government ministers resigned. The Executive Council (the Hong Kong government’s cabinet) hemorrhaged as the leader of the pro-business Liberal Party expressed his dismay at government intransigence, while the pro-Beijing mass party, which had supported Article 23, took a body blow to its prestige. Article 23 was shelved and, as of this writing, has not yet been resuscitated.

On the mainland, a demonstration like July 1, and the civic initiatives that presaged and accompanied it, would have been impossible, met by police truncheons or worse. In Hong Kong, by contrast, July 1 marked a period of hope that the government would be more receptive to local demands and also facilitate what the Basic Law permits: universal and direct elections, after 2007 and 2008 respectively, of the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council (Legco). The November 2003 District Council election, with its resounding victory for the democratic movement, lent further credence to that aspiration.⁷⁶ But just as supporters of the democratic parties were pressing the Hong Kong government to reveal its constitutional timetable, consultations were chilled by mainland intervention. A stream of Communist Party officials and lawyers, including some who had been among the drafters of the Basic Law, lined up to announce in December 2003 and January 2004 that electoral change was a “one nation,” not a one system, affair. A Hong Kong delegation to Beijing in early February 2004, led by the then Chief Secretary Donald Tsang Yam-kuen, was told in no uncertain terms that Hong Kong’s process of political reform must abide by Basic Law “principles”: acceptance of the mainland’s right to set the terms of constitutional change; “gradual and orderly progress” that fits the “actual” circumstances of Hong Kong; development that consolidates the executive-led system; and reaffirmation that “patriots” should govern Hong Kong.⁷⁷ Xu Chongde, a former Basic Law drafter, also reminded Mr. Tsang’s taskforce that the Basic Law’s allusion to full democracy refers to changes “subsequent” to 2007, an indeterminate phrasing that by no means sanctions immediate or rapid transformation. The result in 2004 was to freeze the political process for at least a further few years albeit with some potential for increased representation (e.g., on the committee that chooses the chief executive).

In the September 2004 Legco elections, the pro-democracy camp won 60 percent of the total votes case (55.6 percent of the electorate voted in a system of great internal complexity) but only twenty-five of Legco's sixty seats. Today (October 2007) Hong Kong's future democratization is on hold and mass support for it is ambivalent. Pan-democratic forces are seen by many as incorrigible windbags with only a veto to offer. It is possible that the "July effect" and with it the SARS effect, is over for the short term, though new crises may witness its resurrection.

Durkheim ([1902-3] 1981: 89) observes that

We constantly have the impression of being surrounded with a host of things in the course of happening whose nature escapes us. All sorts of forces move themselves about, encounter one another, collide near us almost brushing us in their passage; yet we go without seeing them until that time when some impressive culmination provides a glimpse of a hidden and mysterious event which has occurred under our noses, but of which we had no suspicion and which we begin to see only in terms of its results.

The "impressive culmination" of SARS, though not reducible to it alone, was the July 1 protest. Whether it was a turning point in Hong Kong's evolution, or part of a broader "trajectory" (Abbott [1997] 2001: 249) towards democracy—or neither—is not something we can yet know. Nonetheless, it was the kind of socially consequential action that communities of fate produce.⁷⁸

"Community of Fate" —Objections and Applications

Is "community of fate," as a concept for social theory, a one shot deal? It might be applicable to Hong Kong during the SARS emergency but what about elsewhere? And if it is applicable elsewhere, how do we distinguish it from other crisis episodes? After all, a concept that is too elastic is obviously also too imprecise.

As a social scientific concept, "community of fate" is open to at least four different sorts of complaint. First it may be objected that it is inherently sentimental. Writing before the Nazi deluge, Helmuth Plessner ([1924] 1999: 65) warned prophetically that the "idol of this age is community," a notion that, in the face of life's hardness, "has compressed all sweetness into mawkishness, tenderness into weakness, and flexibility into the loss of dignity." Community, he protested, is a saccharin concept ready made for all kinds of tendentious purpose.⁷⁹ Yet hackneyed or dubious usage does not of itself disbar a term from sociological employment; it if did, we would have to say adieu to class, gender, status and citizenship. Careful definition is all we require and social scientists

have produced a range of sophisticated attempts to offer precisely that (notably Keller 2004; Delanty 2003; Cohen 1985).

Besides, this anticipated objection rests on a misunderstanding. In my sense, the solidarity instantiated by a community of fate is based not on altruism but on a focused sense of inter-connectedness and membership, not on love, but on danger, not on sympathy, but on fear. Nor is a community of fate to be confused with a “democracy of distress” (Kutak 1937: 72), a Walt Whitmanesque spirit of universal brotherhood, a Sartrean “fused group,”⁸⁰ or the *communitas* that, according to Victor Turner, accompanies the ritual process: a modality of social relationship that blends homogeneity, equality, comradeship.⁸¹ To the extent that homogeneity exists in a community of fate, it is based on the common perception of menace. This may lead to the sacrificial comradeship of Weber’s “community of death” in which the self and the group are a mirror of each other. But it is also plainly open to misanthropic and hostile feelings to which, in the case of SARS, even the celebrated health workers were not immune. Medics were heroic only at a distance. Close-up, they and their families were feared as likely bearers of the killer virus. Those who had any close encounter with SARS, be it former patients, relatives of patients, and even some of the medical staff treating them were pariahs within a pariah community. Consider the sobering experience of Leung Siu-hong a male nurse who caught SARS while providing SARS patients with intubations in the intensive care unit of the Princess Margaret Hospital:

The worst thing about contracting Sars [for me] was not all the suffering but the fact that my family experienced a lot of discrimination when I was sick. When my sister told her boss that I had contracted Sars her colleagues started avoiding her and saying many mean things to her. But my family was too scared to tell me. I can’t believe that after risking my life to help others, my family ended up being discriminated against. Every time I hear people talking about how they support health workers I feel sick to my stomach. They are all worthless lies. In reality, they treat us like lepers or monsters.... You don’t need to express your support and gratitude. We are just doing our job. We are not working for applause or praise. All we want is to be treated like normal people. I don’t want to see protests from residents who don’t want our dorms to be near their homes. It really attacks our morale. Many colleagues go to work every day and undergo self-exile without a deadline. It’s worse than being infected.⁸²

Similar expressions of disdain, anger, and alienation were ventilated by many of those who inhabited SARS affected estates. A survey of Amoy Gardens residents, conducted in August 2003 by the Mood Disorders Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and which focused on the impact of SARS during the month of April, found widespread ostracism. More than 40 percent of the 903 residents interviewed reported

that friends had rejected dining invitations from them; roughly the same percentage felt compelled to conceal their place of abode when eating out or visiting a doctor; 30 percent were denied home maintenance or delivery services; and 20 percent told of being denied entry to hotels or enduring discriminatory treatment in medical clinics.⁸³ Where therapeutic communities emerge (e.g., after a tsunami or a tornado), their energy is typically directed to “primary impact” casualties of the disaster: the wounded and materially dispossessed. Hong Kong’s community of fate, in contrast, was principally composed of potential victims. Those who had the disease were relegated to the margins of social life. Its center was occupied by people who feared they might be next.

It is worth adding that wherever victim contestation proliferates, it is sure sign that a community of fate has failed to materialize. So long as Hong Kong was struggling to eliminate the SARS virus, and was designated a SARS infected area by the WHO, its denizens could plausibly see themselves to be suffering a territory-wide calamity: economic, social, and medical. Some suffered more than others, grievances were aired, discrimination was felt, but no competition for victim-hood among citizens took place. Recrimination was typically aimed at officialdom. The period of maximum impact was short. Contrast that situation with the cases reported by Beverley Cuthbertson and Joanne Nigg (1987) in their research on U.S. communities battling the effects of asbestos contamination and pesticide poisoning. A virus cannot be seen with the naked eye, but few doubted that those people who were diagnosed with SARS actually had it.⁸⁴ The effects of technological agents are more ambiguous and, accordingly, allow greater scope for skepticism and denial. Experts disagree with each other; official enquiries produce contradictory evidence. The protracted nature of social disruption, which can last many years, adds to a sense of chronic malaise rather than acute trial. Cuthbertson and Nigg identified four groups claiming injury: hazard-endangered victims, hazard-disclaimer victims, perpetrator victims, and bystander victims. The abundance of claims was not the problem. It was their tendency to become rivalrous. Notably, hazard-disclaimer victims reacted with anger to being relocated, while hazard-endangered victims responded with relief; the former frequently viewed the latter as economic opportunists whose actions had caused more dismay than the disaster-agent itself—or, rather, the putative disaster-agent.

A second objection to the notion of a community of fate is that it is unrealistic. No situation embraces everyone in the same way or to the same degree. That is true. It is also true that the specification of just

what constitutes a disaster's "social unit" or boundary is a complex issue (see Kreps 1984: 313-317 for a useful overview of the problem.) While community of fate does suppose cognitive compatibility—the ability of people to understand each other and anticipate each other's conduct—it does not require psychic or motivational unity, a mythical notion espoused by disappointed romantics (nicely disabused by Wallace [1970] 2003a: 222-224). There are always people who are not afraid, who do not wear masks, or who wear them ironically in customized colors. Some people are better resourced and have more opportunities for flight than others; closure has its limits. Hence, in Hong Kong, many expatriate families fled for home, returning when the worst appeared to be over. But the chasing of exceptions is *sociologically* uninteresting unless it discloses some new pattern; "anomaly" is the word we give to facts still unexplained. I began by saying that a community of fate is something local and situational, based in a particular place and time. It is grounded in a temporal and spatial "we" and the pre-political loyalties that sustain it. Its existence depends on micro processes that are both shaped from the outside (the collision with danger, closure) and unfurl from within (notably, common foci of attention, social ritual). On this account, a community of fate, like pearls on a string, is composed of all those people, and just those people, who are affected and linked by all seven features that I mentioned earlier. Just as evidently, communities of fate build on extant social materials; they do not spring out of nowhere. But nor do they simply distil, and render visible, a set of pre-existent social materials. On the contrary, communities of fate reconfigure social life itself, reshuffle and reprioritize its elements, and bring into being something new and unexpected.

A third objection to the notion of community of fate is epistemological. It will occur to all social scientists of an individualistic and nominalist persuasion who find Durkheimian ontology "mystical" and who deplore "collective concepts." Can the concept of community of fate convince such a person? Probably not. Transform it, then, into a Weberian ideal-type. From that vantage point, particular crisis communities can be calibrated against the seven analytical ingredients mentioned previously. One seeks deviations from the "model" so as to highlight cases of historical specificity. Consider two situations: the Forest Jews of Belarus and the Warsaw Ghetto.

The so-called Forest Jews were a community of Jews, and a few Gentiles, that survived Nazi occupation by hiding in the *puscha* (dense foliage) surrounding the Belarus towns of Novogrudok and Lida. By

July 1944, when the Red Army evicted German forces from the region, it comprised around twelve hundred persons. This “Jerusalem,” as its denizens called it, contained most of the ingredients of a community of fate that I mentioned above. Its members were a stigmatized group. They joined the wooded Jerusalem because of their belief that conditions in their town were so hazardous as to demand their attention and action. Many endured forest life for two and a half years. They mobilized resources by living off the land, erecting shelter and expropriating food and goods from nearby farms. And their localization (albeit one of mobility among the forests) eventuated in a small town with its own division of labor. It contained

Living quarters; workshops for tailors, shoemakers, seamstresses and carpenters; a large herd of cows and horses; a school for sixty children; a main street and a central square; a musical and dramatic theater; and a tannery that doubled as a synagogue. (Duffy 2003: xi)

Of special significance, and without which the community would never have existed or survived, was the indefatigable leadership of three brothers: Tuvia, Zus, and Asael Bielski. Their knowledge of the terrain, vision, daring, willingness to prosecute a guerrilla war against the invaders, rather than succumb to apathy, were the *sine qua non* of the Forest Jews. The Bielski brothers also led with an iron fist and tolerated little dissension; to that extent, the band approximates a regimented group. Social ritual revolved around daily watches for the enemy and deference paid to the rules of camp life. And what did the Forest Jews accomplish? They retained their freedom at a time, and under conditions, calculated to destroy it.

A far more interesting case, precisely because it fits fewer ideal-typical dimensions of community of fate (thereby prompting us to probe deeper) is that of the Warsaw Ghetto. “Ale glach! Ale glach!”⁸⁵ So shouted the Ghetto’s equivalent of the medieval Fool. But was this true? On the face of it, the Warsaw Ghetto contained many of the properties required of a community of fate. Established in October 1940 and demolished in April/May 1943, the Ghetto was a cramped space which at its peak contained possibly 400,000 inhabitants. It was materially bounded by a wall and other constrictions. It consisted of a stigmatized group. It was active, with many emergent associations springing up to face calamity. The Ghetto hosted not only orchestras, but also created vibrant and highly active social institutions (notably, mutual aid and tenement committees)—revealing describe by Mazor ([1955] 1993: 76, 101) as “new forces,” the “spontaneous manifestation” of “humanism and solidarity.”

Political groups such as left-wing Zionists continued to exist. And, of course, the Ghetto produced the remarkable and bloody uprising against the Nazis.

Closure was another obvious ingredient. Mazor (ibid: 41, 42) characterized the Ghetto as a “hermetically-sealed universe” or a “sealed coffin”; in fact, it allowed some degree of porosity between the Ghetto’s membrane and its hinterland. People left the Ghetto to work and some never returned; food, clothes and weapons were smuggled in. Yet beneath the penumbra of the *Todeskästchen* (“death casket”) as the Nazis called it, the Ghetto was a deeply stratified place. It contained stark contrasts between the starving and those still able, as a result of smuggling or corruption, to eat delicacies. It contained Jews of many areas, occupations and languages whose plight was by no means uniform. Take occupation: doctors, dentists, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, tailors and shoemakers were in far greater demand, and thus better off, than teachers and lawyers. But most conspicuous of all was the fact that much of the political authority and coercion that existed in the Ghetto was devolved by the Nazis on to Jews themselves. The Jewish Councils were widely distrusted; the Jewish “police” or militia universally hated outside their own small circles. By using Jewish auxiliaries, the Nazis deliberately created the conditions of division. This also complicated and impaired danger recognition. To be sure, everyone knew that they faced a terrible threat. Reich-Ranicki ([1999] 2002:141) observes that “weighing” on everyone, “whether young or old, whether clever or stupid was a dark and terrible shadow from which there was no escape—the shadow of the fear of death.” Mazor concurs: the City of Death was rank with fear. Yet the Nazis’ practice of granting exceptions to camp deportation for a few “privileged” groups fractured solidarity. Temporarily extended to employees of the Jewish Council, policemen, hospital staffs and others of immediate utility, this “torture by hope,” an oscillation between “provisional life” and “instant death,” left its agents desperate but socially splintered.⁸⁶ Social differentiation is certainly compatible with a community of fate. It was not differentiation, however, but divisiveness that reduced the scope of solidarity in the Ghetto, a fissiparousness that the Nazis deliberately engineered. And the situation of discord and separation was aggravated by an epidemic of typhus that induced further social repulsion and disarray.

This is an incomplete picture of a complex situation. Much more needs to be learned about the codes of representation, the social language, employed by the Ghetto’s residents. A detailed sociological analysis

would begin by noting, for instance, that “Warsaw Ghetto” was itself a Jewish self-description, alluding to the historical experiences of the Jews over many centuries. The Nazis, in contrast, avoided this term and referred instead to the walled environment as the “Jewish Quarter.” A closer analysis than I have provided would, I am confident, also show the widespread use of neologisms, a local argot and ritual that was specific to the conditions encountered by the entrapped Jews. It might be objected that the reason why the Warsaw Ghetto was only dubiously a community of fate, while the Forest Jews were, ideal typically, very close to being one is simply a matter of scale. There is some truth in this. The greater the numbers and internal complexity of a group, the more difficult it is for a community of fate to form. Yet while small size may be a favorable condition for a community of fate, it is neither a necessary nor, of course, a sufficient one. Much of Hong Kong, I have already argued, approximated a community of fate during the SARS outbreak of 2003. Conversely, the smallest units of embattled people may fail to create one. We have only to read Victor Klemperer’s account of the so-called Jews’ Houses in Dresden to get a sense of this. True, Klemperer was the kind of person to especially loathe the “promiscuity” of the Houses, that is, their chronic lack of privacy and indiscretion. But his portrait suggests a more general malaise: “Many of the people with whom we would gladly live in peace, are at daggers drawn, slander one another. Cohn curses the Stühlers—‘they’re just Bavarians, that’s all!’, Konrad and Berger rave at one another” (Klemperer [1995] 1999: 341-2).

At the beginning of this section, I alluded to four possible objections to community of fate. I have now examined three of them. The final anticipated misgiving concerns the notion’s analytical borders and its capacity, or perhaps incapacity, for empirical precision. So let me conclude by distinguishing communities of fate from other social phenomena to which they bear only a passing resemblance. A common terminal predicament is insufficient to constitute such a community. People who, for instance, are in the last stages of cancer often endure their illness in isolation, at best enclosed within the embrace of their melancholy families, nourished by the affection of their friends, or ministered to by nurses in the hospice they have entered. The “living tend to draw away from the dying” (Hackett and Weisman 1964: 303). Occasionally, a support group may stiffen resolve and add a further protective layer of consolation but the inevitability of death, and its very singularity, turns the victims and those who care for them, inwards. It is rare for such deaths to be memorialized by anything more than a tombstone or a textual dedication. A summa-

tion of individual tragedies, whatever the numbers, is not equivalent to a community of fate.⁸⁷

Moreover, a community of fate is by no means identical with any sequestered or embattled group. It does not include, or only does so under the most unusual circumstances, inmates of asylums, prisons, slave labor camps or death camps. These administered, disciplinary organizations are too controlled, routinized and de-energized to constitute communities of fate in the sense delineated here. They are contrived enclaves, created deliberately to pacify a human group, rather than emergent communities of fate pregnant with indigenous action. For an example of another type of enclave, consider Hitler's attempt, in the final days of the Reich, to designate Königsberg, Breslau, Schneidemühl and Poznan, as "fortress towns." Instead of encircled German troops being permitted to retreat, Hitler ordered them to stand their ground, a suicidal policy that resulted in thousands of unnecessary deaths. Breslau's experience was especially terrible. Under the direction of Gauleiter Hanke, whose policy was "strength through fear," even "ten-year-old children were put to work under Soviet air and artillery attack to clear an air strip within the city" (Beevor 2002: 91-92). Summary executions of all preparing to surrender were his trademark. These islands of wretchedness were purposely designed to make people go down fighting in the Reich's *Götterdämmerung*.

Nor, unless exceptional circumstances supervene, is a community of fate compatible with a social group that suffers a near total loss of honor, systematically disorganized and degraded by the oppressor, and that is either denied relations of kinship (the key pre-political loyalty) or only allowed them on terms so fictive as to assimilate a person's identity to that of the master's. Under these circumstances one has not a community of fate but "social death" of the oppressed. In concentration camps and *some* slave societies, whatever their many qualitative differences, informal social relations among the subordinates are, of course, present. But these ties have no authority—parental, spousal or otherwise—, are conditional and temporary, and exist among people with limited independence. Suffering a "secular excommunication" from their cultural heritage,⁸⁸ ritually humiliated on a daily basis, the slave and the concentration inmate have little sense of a worldly future in which they have a respectable place. Here is Primo Levi ([1958] 1993, p. 150), remembering the execution of an inmate his fellows were unable to prevent:

To destroy a man is difficult, almost as difficult as to create one: it has not been easy, nor quick, but you Germans have succeeded. Here we are, docile under your gaze;

from our side you have nothing more to fear; no acts of violence, no words of defiance, not even a look of judgment.

In contrast, a community of fate is sociologically recognizable by a social grouping's ability publicly to mourn, and by the possibility of a self-sacrifice that makes sense to the agent because it has a collective value. Remembrance requires symbols to make palpable, vivid—in a word, emblematic—what otherwise would be a passing memory of a transient event, subject to the atrophy and dissipation that time normally bestows on all mortal projects.

Lastly, a community of fate is not to be confused with a single-purpose ensemble, notably a military unit or terrorist cell purposefully and specifically designed to fight and to risk death: the “band of brothers” of assembled English archers at the battle of Agincourt, lionized in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, or Easy Company, 101st Airborne, of Stephen Ambrose’s modern reconstruction, pushing doggedly into the enemy heartland from their Normandy beachhead. Such units are akin to what Weber called a “community of the army” (Weber [1915] 1970f: 335 = 1920: 548). They are expressly created by political units (e.g., states) for the sole purpose of killing members of other political units. Loyalty, honor and corporate solidarity comprise their internal *raison d’être*. It is also an empirical question as to whether besieged cities are examples of communities of fate in the sense used here. They can be but, again, the more they are subject to strict organizational control from above the more they look like militarized, regimented units. In the battle of Stalingrad (September 1942-January 1943), for instance, Russian infantry fought for their lives against the depredations of the Wehrmacht’s Sixth Army, while 10,000 Russian civilians lived a precarious, troglodyte existence under the rubble of pulverized buildings, most succumbing to hunger, food poisoning and polluted water. Many conditions of a community of fate were present. But the resolve of the city’s inhabitants to stay and fight was in good part a matter of compulsion from the authorities. NKVD troops shot without hesitation all who disobeyed orders or who appeared tainted by even the slightest trace of “defeatism” or “cowardice.” Facing an unforgiving enemy, a ferocious domestic secret police, and with no exit, the populace of Stalingrad was enjoined to “become one of the stones of the city” (Beever 1998: 173). Similarly, when German forces prepared to attack Moscow in the winter of 1941, NKVD troops, under Stalin’s orders, formed so-called “blocking detachments” just behind the front line whose principal objective was to

fire on all Russian forces *running past them*. The idea was to use fear to crush fear. It appears to have worked.

The antithesis of a community of fate, in my sense, is a zone of dissolution,—an anti-community in which social life has largely vanished. That state of disintegration is evoked by Eric Klinenberg (2002) in his discussion of the “abandoned community” of North Lawndale before and during the heat wave of 1995. Typified by abnormally high rates of concentrated poverty, isolation, and crime, and the equally large concentration of single room occupancy, North Lawndale’s empty lots and vistas are variously described as a world “totally different” from the neighboring Little Village (pp., 34, 90); as “bombed out” and like a “war-zone” (p. 97), a “foreign land” (p. 110). An increasingly depopulated nether world in which older people were afraid to leave their rooms for being assaulted or harassed by thugs, North Lawndale only needed the heat wave to give the *coup de grâce* to an already defenseless group.

An even better illustration of a broken community is Buffalo Creek, the mining hollow in West Virginia that in 1972 was inundated and destroyed by debris filled water escaping from a mining company’s makeshift dam. Erikson’s (1976) poignant account of the “human wreckage left in the wake” of that disaster is a classic case study of the factors that produce and characterize anti-communities. Unlike North Lawndale of Klinenberg’s depiction, the Appalachian mountain hollow of Buffalo Creek contained a relatively intact community before the torrent of mud smashed it to pieces. The miners and their families did not so much “live *on* the land as *in* it” (Erikson 1976: 130). Status distinctions were minimal, while a strong sense of fellowship, mutual helpfulness, and attachment to place was reinforced by high rates of home ownership. Later, displaced mining families would describe their new trailer accommodation as concentration camps, prisons and sweatboxes (ibid.:152).

Two factors conspired in the hollow’s ruin. The first was the flood itself, an explosive consequence of incremental complacency by the mining company, which literally dislodged the people of Buffalo Creek from their homes. Second, the attempt to come to their aid was bungled. Relocated and scattered to thirteen nearby trailer camps in which previous neighborhood patterns were discarded; housed in cramped mobile homes with frames and roofs that amplified sound in a nerve-wracking cacophony of cracking, popping and rattling; bereft of privacy and increasingly at odds with the Housing and Urban Development authorities: all attempts to help the displaced simply made things worse. Erikson’s depiction (ibid.: 148) of the erstwhile community “two years following

the disaster” as “dazed” and “wounded,” unable to “mobilize the energy or the conviction necessary to stabilize their own lives or to rebuild” their world, is the very opposite of a community of fate.⁸⁹ Significantly, too, Erickson portrays the people of Buffalo Creek even in its heyday as largely bereft of leadership or of people wishing to assume a leadership role (*ibid.*: 128); the equality of death-chances nurtured underground militated against such hierarchy. Post-disaster leadership was absent; so were significant resources. Much had simply vanished in the deluge. Even when compensation became available it was too late to reconstitute a community that by then was irreparably fractured. Employment had gone, the hollow destroyed, and hence key axes of convergence had also evaporated. Nothing symbolizes the destruction of this traumatized group and its spatial location better than “the decision by the state of West Virginia to build a fine new highway right up the middle of Buffalo Creek” (*ibid.*: 152).

The very different examples of North Lawndale and Buffalo Creek only serve to make plain that disaster as a result of epidemic or some other catastrophe, is no guarantor of solidarity—even when a community has previously been strong and “cellular.” On the contrary, disaster in many instances serves to splinter a society and weaken still further those who are already most vulnerable.

Conclusion

Disasters are heterogeneous. So are responses to them. Natural catastrophes—typhoons, tsunamis, floods—have different impacts from those that are man made, such as toxic spills and other chronic technological disasters which are more likely to be class-biased (Kroll-Smith and Couch 1990: 160).⁹⁰ Not all disasters are subject to the same behavioral “syndrome” of dazed passivity, altruism and suggestibility, euphoric identification with the damaged community, and return to ambivalent normality (Wallace [1956] 2003b). My concern in this chapter has been neither to provide a map of disasters in general nor to provide a general theory of disaster response. I have sought only to investigate one reaction to social extremity and to give that reaction a name. Many questions remain unanswered: Does disease produce a different kind of collective response than military invasion, as for instance in Nanking, the Chinese city facing the Japanese Imperial Army in 1937, or Leningrad under siege from the Wehrmacht in 1941? At what point, and under what conditions, does a group disintegrate or reassert itself with new found energy? A particular area that requires further elaboration is the relation-

ship between community of fate and the character of the host society. For instance, how does the nature of a group's axis of convergence affect a community of fate? Does ethnicity have different consequences from language or confession? Both realist and nominalist approaches to the subject of disaster are possible and, under different logical protocols, valuable. That pragmatic compatibility is fortunate. For war, terror, epidemic and other "natural" disaster continue to haunt our times. If community of fate fails to shed light on situations of social duress, on the dynamics of groups facing a radical challenge to their existence, it is simply redundant. If, however, the concept enables us to understand at least some aspects of crisis conditions, it will have done a little work for students of emergency.

Notes

1. Current economic data on Hong Kong, often with international rankings, can be found in the Hong Kong Yearbook published by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government. It is also available online at: <http://www.info.gov.hk/yearbook/>. On Hong Kong's foreign reserves see <http://info.gov.hk/hkma/eng/press/1997/970919e.html> On trade: <http://info.gov.hk/censtatd/eng/hkstat/fas/ex-trade/trade3/trade3.htm>. Regionally, the power of Hong Kong is immense. Over the past two decades, Hong Kong has been the biggest contributor to the Chinese mainland's foreign direct investment; in 2003 it supplied a third of it. Hong Kong companies now employ in Guangdong province approximately 12 million workers, almost twice the population of Hong Kong itself. Hong Kong is also part of the Pearl River Delta, a region that boasts a GDP of more than \$270 billion, and which is the world's sixteenth biggest economy and tenth largest exporter. See "Asia ascending," *Economist* June 11, 2005: 80; also "A strong tailwind," *Business Week* [Asian Edition] Sept. 8, 2003: 23.
2. It was on ships arriving from Hong Kong that bubonic plague first visited the United States. Honolulu and San Francisco were struck in 1899. Within a decade the disease had reached Texas and Florida. It has never been entirely eliminated from continental America.
3. I experienced the episode first hand, charting it from the middle of March to July 1 by which time Hong Kong was deemed SARS-free
4. Nancy Plankey Videla (2006) stresses that this community of fate is best conceived as a managerial "construction," with contradictory effects, rather than as indicative of a true identify of interests. To that extent her usage is close to the Gramscian idea of hegemony —a pseudo-consensus that works in the interests of, and is mobilized by, the powerful. A softer version of community of fate in a managerial context is evident in the work of Robert Cole 1979: 240ff. I am grateful to Professor Plankey Videla for informing me of this source.
5. Hope 2001: 214.
6. However, Selznick's sophisticated treatment of community as a variable, rather than as an all-encompassing set of social relationships, does invoke the notion of a "common faith or fate." Selznick 1992: 358.
7. Colleagues, for Goffman ([1959] 1974:158-159), are defined as "persons who present the same routine to the same kind of audience but who do not participate

- together, as team mates do, at the same time and place before the same particular audience.” He adds that “whatever their tongues, they come to speak the same social language.”
8. On fate’s relationship to risk, see Beck 1986: 53-54.
 9. Unlike mechanical solidarity, predicated on anatomical and functional resemblance, communities of fate can be highly stratified. Equally, while mechanical solidarity refers to an extant, pre-established group of everyday life, a community of fate is a group in the making. It emerges through trial and conflict and evaporates once these conditions disappear. A different view is offered by Ralph Turner (1976:63) who argues that the “reinstatement of organic solidarity after failure in the division of labor, either because of external crisis or internal breakdown, requires a period for enactment of mechanical solidarity, to recreate the continuing assurances upon which organic solidarity depends.”
 10. Though not necessarily the “horizontal comradeship” or “fraternity” described by Anderson [1983] 1991: 7.
 11. There it would kill the Italian doctor, Carlo Urbani. He reported a case of atypical pneumonia to the WHO on February 26, contracted the disease shortly thereafter and died on March 29. The label SARS was not used in the early days of the microbe’s appearance; it was a coinage of the WHO on March 15. In mainland China, it continued to be called “atypical pneumonia: (*feidianxing feiyan* or, more concisely, *feidian*).
 12. Good governance in Hong Kong is itself impeded by the structure imposed on it by the Basic Law, the city’s so-called mini-constitution. Hong Kong’s political system is one of “authoritarian toleration.” I attempt a detailed analysis of its vulnerabilities in Baehr 2004. For a convenient edition of the Basic Law, see Chan and Clark 1991.
 13. Given that influenza alone kills around 20,000 people each year in the United States, the official number of SARS’ combined fatalities *in all countries*—774—looks unimpressive. Yet this is hindsight. At the time, because SARS was a new virus, epidemiological extrapolation was impossible; no one knew what the final death tally would be.
 14. For economic data on SARS’ immediate impact, see Sung and Cheung (2003), and Brown (2003). Useful sources on the outbreak are: Fidler (2004), DeGolyer (2003), Lee (2003), and Loh et al. (2003). The documents of three public enquiries are also invaluable: see SARS Expert Committee 2003; Hospital Authority 2003; Legislative Council of Hong Kong 2004.
 15. As Abraham (2004: 52-53) remarks, “Earlier crises [in Hong Kong] had brought political and economic uncertainty.... But now, in addition to all this, there was something new. There was the elemental fear of illness and death. And no one seemed to be exempt. It was not just those in crowded housing estates who were falling ill. The powerful and wealthy were also at risk.... In those dark days in March, SARS seemed to be a disease that could strike anyone, anytime.”
 16. Recognition of an emergency is typically a processual, rather than a spontaneous, act of cognition. For an acute analysis of its dynamics, see Bobbitt (2002: 427) who itemizes its five stages: notice, definition, decision, assignment, and implementation.
 17. When the first five SARS deaths were confirmed.
 18. Eight health-care workers died from SARS, of whom six worked in the public sector. The deaths of the public sector medical staff received enormous amounts of publicity. The six were doctors Joanna Tse Yuen-man, 35, and Kate Cheng Ha-yan, 30, male nurse Lau Wing-kai, 38, and three health-care assistants, Wong

- Kang-tai, 58, Tang Heung-may, 36, and Lau Kam-yung, 47. James Lau Tai-kwan, 56, and Thomas Cheung Sik-hin, 58, were the two private doctors who died.
19. The experience of exile and isolation is the leitmotif of Albert Camus's *The Plague*. See Camus (1947) 2001: 53, 56-8, 138-9, etc.
 20. When the plague struck Bombay in 1897, approximately 380,000 people (half the city's population) retreated to the hinterland (Marriott 2002: 201).
 21. Over 3,800 businesses folded between March and the beginning of June, and Hong Kong's unemployment rate, at around 9 percent, was the highest since 1975. SARS' impact on tourism (the occupancy rate fell to 20 percent in April and May), airlines (Cathay Pacific's usual figure of 33,000 passengers a day fell to around 4,000 in April and May), consumer spending, and the property market, are detailed in Sung and Cheung (2003) and Brown (2003).
 22. After protest from the WHO, the decision was rescinded on 17 May
 23. The decision was reversed on June 7 (subject to quarantine conditions) but for three weeks this incident provoked a hue and cry in the Hong Kong media, aggravated by the pathos that the athletes in question were physically impaired.
 24. Yet perhaps matters are more complex than I am making them appear. My account of Montreal relies on the study by Michael Bliss ([1991] 2003), a noted Canadian historian of medicine who emphasizes the city's social dissension. But perhaps another investigation, guided by the model proposed here, might show that Montreal did contain one or more communities of fate. On that account, we would not treat the city of Montreal as a single unit, but examine instead the inner dynamics of the East and West sides. Another example might be San Francisco's Chinatown—"a tenth of the city terraced into twelve tiny blocks" (Chase 2003: 11)—during the plague epidemic of 1900. Chinese residents (virtually all males) were cordoned off, quarantined, and vilified as being responsible for the disease. Distinctive looks, diet and attire—the typical queue or pigtail was emblematic of residual Manchu loyalty—physically set apart this group from its Caucasian neighbors. Yet local authorities such as the powerful merchant-based Chinese Benevolent Association, and the Chinese consul, Ho Yow, ensconced in his official Chinatown residence, spoke up for their country folk and defended their interests. Perhaps there are also occasions in which communities of fate exist as a nested structure much like a series of Russian *matryoshka* dolls.

These are intriguing possibilities that only research, and greater analytical precision, could substantiate. But they do not negate the concept I am developing here; they simply extend its implications and lend it a more realistic air. They suggest, plausibly, that communities of fate have macro, meso, and micro expressions. Or, to use a different language, that communities of fate may form in both "cellular," relatively homogenous entities, and "spectral" ones which cut across many divisions. For sociological purposes, the latter are far more intriguing and for an obvious reason: the more solidaristic a social group is to begin with, the less it requires greater solidarity to cope with a parlous condition. Defensive consolidation of a pre-existing pattern is quite different from group formation of a new one. In contrast, the more spectral the group that becomes a community of fate—essentially the more strangers it composes and the more stratified its occupational, confessional and civic life—the more remarkable it is. The city as a whole is thus a legitimate level of focus to the extent that one sees it as a "parent community" (Jacobs [1961] 1992: 118; cf. 30) in relation to its districts and neighborhoods, or as a "complex social system of integrated institutions that touch *and* interpenetrate in a variety of ways" (Klinenberg 2002: 22, emphasis in the original).

25. See also Miller and Fowlkes's (1982: esp. 47-8, 95-96) study of the Love Canal disaster, in what is now the city of Niagara Falls. There, too, basic divisions emerged among residents in their assessment of the extent of chemical seepage and its boundaries. "Believers" clashed with "non-believers" and both clashed with the local authorities.
26. Table 1 shows no significant rise in the number of people who described themselves as Hong Kong persons in the Hong Kong Transition Project's June SARS survey (2003). But it does show a brief, but untypical, decline in those describing themselves simply as "Chinese."
27. On community of fate as a "code of representation," recall Bauer [1924/1907] 2000: 99.
28. Wallis and Nerlich (2005) report that martial metaphors were rare in the UK media's framing of SARS. One reason for this, they suggest, is that SARS appeared more remote and thus less urgent in Britain than in Hong Kong or China. Similarly, the UK government "needed to avoid panic, not call on national solidarity or quash dissent—both areas where militarist metaphors can help."
29. The first book on SARS, published with lightning speed in the middle of the outbreak, was called *SARS War: Combating the Disease* (Leung and Ooi 2003). When the disease abated, a sub header in the *South China Morning Post* declared: "As people take off their masks and cheer Hong Kong's virus free status, the city must face reality—the threat posed by Sars will never go away," June 24, C1.
30. The two texts, respectively, were "Illness as Metaphor" and "Aids and its Metaphors." In 1990 they were published as one book and this is the edition I use here.
31. Cited in Martin 1994:76.
32. "Turbulent change," however, smacks of the commotion of civil or military unrest.
33. More accurately, diseases like AIDS can be either an individual or a communal fate, and sometimes both. Hence, to the degree that homosexual men in the 1980s congregated in the same areas and had sex in these areas with the same or multiple partners, one could talk, somewhat loosely, of AIDS being a community disease. Villages in Africa and Asia ravaged by AIDS also show how it can become a community-wide disaster. Finally, individuals with a disease may create micro communities through forming self-help groups or advocacy organizations.
34. The quotes come respectively from Manzoni [1827] 1972:574, 569. Descriptions of the impact of bodily contact on disease transmission pervade Manzoni's account e.g. 574, 577, 586, 601.
35. On the "war approach" to disaster, see Gilbert 1998:11-18. Gilbert has analytical objections to this approach but recognizes that it is "intelligible" and fits well with "common sense." He observes that "disasters bear a great resemblance to war, with the cause of disasters being sought outwardly" (12). The cause is an agent that, like an army, intrudes from an external space. See also Quarantelli and Dynes 1976: 141, 146.
36. *Hong Kong Commercial Daily* 26 March/03, B01 (no reporter's name cited).
37. *Ta Kung Pao*, 28 March/03, A01 (no reporter's name cited). Chinese has various terms for war and battle, notably *zhang* and *zhan*.
38. The reference to nurses and doctors as "front line" (*qianxian*) workers was ubiquitous through this entire period, used by government officials, media and citizens alike.
39. *South China Morning Post*, 10 June /04, A3 (reporter Carrie Chan; header "Sars was like facing a war, says health boss"). The context is criticism that the Princess

- Margaret Hospital was badly prepared to take care of the number of SARS patients it admitted: 744 between March 29 and April 11, 03.)
40. *South China Morning Post*, 7 July/04, A1 (reporters Elaine Wu, Chandra Wong and Mary Ann Benitez).
 41. *Apple Daily* 17 March/03, A02 (reporters Leung Shun-yu, Chui Doi-ling, Chui Wan-ting, and Lai Ka-kui).
 42. *Hong Kong Economic Times* 26 March/03, C01 (no reporter's name cited).
 43. *Singtao Daily* 13 April/03, A06 (no reporter cited). For the comment about bamboo sticks, see *Mingpao* 28 March/03, A14 (no reporter's name cited).
 44. Crewe (1999: xxxv), summarizing Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.
 45. Fidler (2004:7, 42-68) calls SARS the "first post-Westphalian pathogen."
 46. For the framing of Foot and Mouth Disease (in which martial imagery also plays a salient role), see Nerlich (2004).
 47. By *Ta Kung Pao* 24 March/03, A01 (no reporter cited).
 48. From a headline in *Wenweipo* 2 April/03, A02 (no reporter cited). In a retrospective on June 23/03, headlined "105 Days of War without Gun Smoke," *Wenweipo* once more likened Mr Tung to a "commander" who "led the troops," A05 (no reporter cited).
 49. 25 March/03, A05 (no reporter cited).
 50. 28 March/03, A02 (no reporter cited).
 51. Chinese usage is multivalent. *Ying* suggests the "select few", the best, outstanding. *Xiong* denotes a champion; a masculine connotation suggests courage and valor much like the Latin *vir* (as in virile, virtuous, etc.). *Yingxiong* refers to a hero and a conqueror. As in all languages, everything depends on context
 52. *Wenweipo* 28 April/03, A01 (no reporter cited), on the death of Lau Wing-kai.
 53. See the reports in the *Hong Kong Economic Times* 28 May/03, A18 (reporter Liu Kit-yiu) and *Wenweipo* 28 May/03, A06 (reporters Si Lap-wai and Luk Chi-ho).
 54. For an extensive analysis of the hero motif in the context of SARS, see Baehr 2004a.
 55. June 23/03, A12.
 56. *South China Morning Post* July 1/ 03; p C1; reporter Mary Ann Benitez; header: "Sars heroes denied top honour"; sub-header: "Failure to recognize health staff who died fighting virus is branded 'an insult to their memories.'"
 57. The place for valid inconsistency is subtly explored by Kolakowski ([1957] 1971) who notes that consistency is a source not only of fairness but also of fanaticism.
 58. See Agnes Lam's report in the *South China Morning Post* SCMP, Oct. 6/03, A2.
 59. For a more sustained discussion of the political features of SARS, see Baehr 2004b. (Two Hong Kong demonstrations in 1989, supporting the students at Tiananmen Square were larger, than the 1 July 2003 protest. However, these were aimed not at the local colonial government but at Beijing.)
 60. *South China Morning Post* May 31/ 03, C1. Chan Siu-sin's story ran under the header: "Heroic doctor's life a model for students." See also, on the death of Lau Kam-yung, *Wenweipo* 28 May/03, A06, under the heading "Another heroic soul added to the United Christian Hospital." Images of heroes as saints coincided with heroes as SARS warriors.
 61. *South China Morning Post* April 8/04, C1 (reporter Carrie Chan). The report appears under the header: "Sars hero's tragic love story a hit at the box office."
 62. *South China Morning Post* February 24/04, C1. The boxed report appears under the header "HK's Sars heroes are immortalized in bronze."
 63. Collins's sociology of emotions extends Durkheim and Goffman, but also builds on a burgeoning literature e.g. Barbalet 1995, Katz 1999 and Scheff 1990.

64. Significantly, the first footnote of Goffman's "Face-Work" essay is devoted to Chinese conceptions of face. For a more recent analysis, see Bond 1991: 58-71.
65. On the media's role as a channel, not simply a shaper, of sensibility, see Chan (2003: 131), Loh et al. (2003: 204), Lee (2003: 104), Sung and Cheung (2003: 155).
66. This is what Eric Klinenberg (2002: 165-224) suggests in his analysis of the Chicago heat wave of 1995. Duneier (2004) contests this point. For a response, see Klinenberg 2004.
67. Loh et al. 2003: 205.
68. Hong Kong is a geographical expression for three contiguous areas: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the New Territories.
69. I am drawing on my own observations and on Loh et al (2003.: 204-5), who point out, with a roster of examples, that "the influence of media figures like Albert Cheng [and his side-kick Peter Lam] reinforced the impression that the government was under siege, as officials no longer seemed to be taking the lead in providing guidance to the public." On a number of occasions the Hospital Authority and the government changed direction following radio exposure.
70. Lee 2003: 104.
71. Quoted in a report by Alex Lo, *South China Morning Post* June 24/03 p. C1.
72. On SARS creating a "new sense of being 'homed'" following an "alien SARS attack," see Lee 2003: 103.
73. *South China Morning Post Magazine* June 8/03, 10-11. Article by Tom Hilditch. The other "virus films" to which Wong is alluding include *Outbreak*, *28 Days Later*, *Twelve Monkeys*, and the 1958 horror classic *The Blob*.
74. Hong Kong Transition Project, *Accountability and Article 23* (Hong Kong: Baptist University, 2002b): 8, 12, 36-37 and passim. The report is available at <http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~hktpl/>
75. "Freedom of the press ceased to be abstract when it was measured in terms of the deaths of 299 people, the infection of over one thousand and the virtual collapse of key sectors of the Hong Kong economy, including the tourism and hospitality industry," DeGolyer 2003: 125. A survey conducted by Hong Kong University's Public Opinion Program, between April 16 and April 23, revealed that only 9 percent of respondents were satisfied with the SAR government's performance; this was a record low. See also Hong Kong Transition Project 2003.
76. With a 44.06% (1,065,363) turnout of registered voters, the District Council election witnessed the Democratic Party securing 95 seats (up from 86) and its main rival—the pro-government Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB)—winning 62 seats (down from 83). The Democratic Party fielded 120 candidates while the DAB fielded 204. Many others democrat sympathizers, independent of the two big parties, were elected.
77. For further details, see the reports in the *South China Morning Post* of February 10 and 11, 2004.
78. On other political and legal responses to disaster, see for instance, Fidler 2004, Olson 2000, Shefner 1999.
79. Or as Raymond Williams (1976: 66) observed: "Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (state, nation, society, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavorably..." Selznick (1992), while agreeing with the general thrust of Williams's observation, makes the converse point that "community" is also often disparaged as small-minded and claustrophobic.

184 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

80. Sartre [1960] 1976: 345-404.
81. I am greatly simplifying Turner's discussion. Even so, the "community" of which I write has little substantially in common with his three models of *communitas*: existential, normative, and ideological (Turner [1969] 1977).
82. "Behind the mask," *South China Morning Post*, May 2, 03, C4.
83. "Amoy Gardens' post-traumatic Sars disorder," by Klaudia Lee, *South China Morning Post*, December 19, 03, A4.
84. Barton ([1969] 1970: 254) theorizes that "randomness of impact makes it less likely that an individual will blame the victims." But the attribution of blame is analytically distinct from the attribution of stigma. SARS victims were seen as innocent victims of their illness but they were still to be given a wide berth and shown little face-to-face solicitude.
85. Yiddish for "All alike! All alike!"; German = "Alle gleich! Alle gleich!" See Reich-Ranicki ([1999] 2002: 144) on which the following account relies, together with Mazor ([1955] 1993). Both authors were confined in the Ghetto and have produced luminous, yet hard-headed, accounts of it. I note in passing that Mazor's work brims with references to "fate" as on 14-15, 89, 94, 100, 132, 136, 140, 151. On 184-5 he remarks that "All the occupants of the Warsaw ghetto were united by a common fate. They lived on a ship that was about to sink...[C]orruption and demoralization never penetrated deeply into the general population. Most people showed tremendous tenacity and great resolve.... Also, they created, amazing, highly specific institutions of public relief.... It was the popular forces in the ghetto that bred and nurtured the heroic resistance against the Germans in the unforgettable days of April and May 1943."
86. On "torture by hope" and privileged categories, see Mazor (1993 [1955], p. 144). On "provisional life" and "instant death" and the Nazi definition of "useful Jews," see Reich-Ranicki ([1999] 2002: 178-9).
87. Yet see Resnick (1999:2) who employs "community of fate" to depict the initial coming together of hemophiliacs. For Resnick, "community of fate" is tantamount to a community of "empathy." This is not the sense in which I use the term.
88. I have been drawing on Orlando Patterson (1982: 5 and passim). On social death in concentration camps, see Goldhagen (1997: 168-70)
89. Cf. Wallace's ([1957] 2003c) theory of maze-way disintegration.
90. Kroll-Smith and Couch (1990: 8-9, 158-172) and Miller and Fowlkes (1982) provide excellent analyses of the many contrasts between natural disasters and CTDs.

6

Concluding Remarks

Scholarly interest in Max Weber expresses itself in two basic modalities. The first is characterized by writers who are, above all, concerned with exegesis. They wish to interpret Weber's arguments by precisely reconstructing his language, the conventions within which he worked, and the disputes in which he engaged. Work of this type is highly detailed and obsessively attentive to context. Its historicism is to be distinguished from those who are less concerned with footnote scholarship (as they see it) than with reworking Weber's ideas for the modern conjuncture. Writers in this camp, the second modality, are theorists first and foremost. They may be sensitive to history but they do not seek to write it.

In this book I have tried to straddle both of these rather insulated genres: historicist and presentist. Part 1, on Caesarism and Charisma, offered a way of thinking about Weber's arguments about the nature of modern political leadership. It contended that to understand Weber requires us being familiar with aspects of the Caesarism debate that preceded him and that he joined as an engaged contemporary. To deepen our sense of that particular debate, I probed the republican pre-history of Caesarism. Examining political republicanism furnished a far longer trajectory than is usual to locate Weber's own distinctive contribution to, and the distinctiveness of his stance towards, the Caesarism debate. I restricted myself to delineating what Weber himself said, the frameworks in which he said it, and the history (or, more precisely, some of the history) of those frameworks. And I sought to show how the highly contentious notion of Caesarism mutated into Weber's sociology of charisma, part of an ideal-type of rulership or domination that claimed to be non-evaluative.

Part 2 took a very different tack. There I employed Weber's work to help make sense of mass emergency. Instead of providing a detailed and systematic catalogue of his many usages of "fate," I was content to highlight the most salient ones. Fidelity to Weber's own arguments took

second place to adapting them for my own purposes better to understand modern times. Translating *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* as “community of fate,” I connected Weber to Durkheim. Weber offered a way to think about the significance of military metaphors and about what he called the “ritual regulation of life.” But it was Durkheim (and Goffman) who helped us decipher how this ritual regulation actually works, how groups manage to cohere under conditions of duress. Weber purists will shudder at this shotgun marriage. I, on the other hand, hope to see more of its progeny.

Over the past twenty-five years, our knowledge of Weber has witnessed a tremendous growth in sophistication. Each revelation about his life and prodigious output has only intrigued us more. We have learned to distinguish between what Weber intended and earlier and later simplifications of his motives. Most of all, we have learned that to understand Weber requires reconstructing the historical situations—academic, social, domestic, and regional—in which he sought to intervene. These gains are not to be sniffed at. We owe them to the work of individual scholars and of coordinated projects, notably the German critical edition of Weber’s collected works, and, in the Anglophone world, the inauguration of the journal *Max Weber Studies*. Yet those most committed to the historical Weber, to producing a biography of his work, and who, by temperament, tend to loathe sociology, have to face a very revealing paradox. Weber remains a towering figure in the human sciences that no educated person can sensibly ignore. But without the “misunderstandings” and “simplifications” to which his work has been subject over the years, he would never have become interesting enough to be studied at all. It is precisely because Weber was plucked out of his own time, employed for projects alien to his own mental universe, that he became worthy of being studied historically in ours.

Let him have the last word. In a “Message of Congratulations to Gustav Schmoller on his Seventieth Birthday” (24 June, 1908), Weber offered the following encomium:

At a time of the most arid economic rationalism, you have prepared a place in our science for historical thought such as to this day no other nation has enjoyed in the same way or the same extent. As you yourself have frequently observed, within our discipline the scientific needs of each age swing back and forth between theoretical and historical knowledge. Even if the time has now come to devote more attention to theory, it is thanks above all to your decades long and incomparably successful work that the time is now ripe for such theoretical work. Before us there now stands a mighty edifice, permeated with historical knowledge and psychological analysis, and shaped by philosophy, to which we, the younger ones, can once again attempt to apply the conceptual tools of theory (Weber [1908] 2008: 59).

Appendix

Caesar in America

Introduction

In recent years, empire has returned as a buzzword of political discussion. We are told by numerous pundits that the United States is an imperialist power, that the presidency is abusing its executive authority, and that American administrations are pursuing a militarist agenda. I have offered my own views on these hackneyed accusations elsewhere (Baehr 2007). Here, however, I simply wish to remind a modern audience that agitation about American empire, militarism, and arbitrary power stretches back to the founding of the United States. To illustrate those dangers to the new republic, and to thwart them, the specter of Caesar was ritually invoked by the constitutional pioneers.

This appendix examines the role that the Caesar question played in these early disputes. It is also intended to anticipate the objection that my treatment of Caesar demonology in chapter 2 was too abstract. Historians will demand more texture and complexity. They will insist that political republicanism was internally dynamic—consider the four “stages” of English republicanism delineated by Blair Worden (1991: 444)—and characterized by various tensions: for instance, between a conception of politics as an activity animated by the self-interested quest for power and, simultaneously, “an idealization of civic virtue” (Wootton 1986: 70). Accordingly, we need an actual case study to show how the Caesar question was raised and what the stakes were in raising it. America during its revolutionary period provides one intriguing example.

Antiquity in the New World

Historians of early America have for some decades recognized the importance of ancient Greece and Rome to the men and women of the revolutionary and founding period. This importance lay not in any

simple imitation of antiquity whose models were, in fact, often criticized and deemed alien. Nor, *a fortiori*, did it lie in a wholesale adoption of a classical discourse; on the contrary, classical and republican idioms coexisted with, and were mediated by, many other cultural traditions: liberal, Christian, radical Whig, Enlightenment, for instance. Rather, the significance of ancient Greece and Rome consisted in the cultural materials it offered for thought and practice. As Gordon Wood ([1969] 1972: 50) remarks, “it was not as scholarly embellishment. . . . that antiquity was most important to Americans in these revolutionary years. The Americans’ compulsive interest in the ancient republics was in fact crucial to their attempt to understand the moral and social basis of politics.”¹ This entailed the attempt to understand how and why the ancient republics thrived and collapsed, and what role virtue on the one hand, and luxury and corruption on the other, played in this historical tragedy.

The school and college curriculum was by no means the only, or the most important, medium through which this “compulsive interest” was disseminated. Nor was the appeal to—and of—antiquity simply a matter of elite sensibility. On the contrary, classicism proved capable of arousing more general enthusiasm largely because its province of inspiration transcended the book. “All but a few knew their ancient history, much as medieval believers knew their biblical history, through ritual and icons and theater” (Wills 1984: 133). Indeed, even among the educated of the eighteenth century “classicism was less a matter of accurate scholarship than of political mythmaking” (*ibid.*). Ritual, icons, and theatre were means of reliving and reenacting significant episodes of the ancient world, compressing the space and time between contemporary events and classical templates. College students, for instance, might adopt classical names in the secret literary societies to which they belonged – Princeton’s Cliosophic Society has been ably researched—and role-play the characteristics associated with their heroes (by no means always classical).² A speaker at a public meeting might don a Roman toga, as Joseph Warren did in a speech delivered to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Boston Massacre in 1770, thereby directing “a complex, multileveled sign to his audience.” The sartorial appearance of the Ciceronian speaker, as much as his ringing declamations against “luxury” and “corruption,” activated in the minds of the audience, one author conjectures, “the ‘cultural code’ that constituted the living classical tradition of the America of the 1770s” (McLachlan 1976: 83).

Dramatic and theatrical enactment of Roman republican virtue could also take more standardized forms. In the thirteen colonies, few plays

were more celebrated than Joseph Addison's *Cato* ([1713] 1928)—it went through nine editions in America before 1800—and reached an apotheosis of sorts in its performance in front of George Washington and his troops at Valley Forge on May 11, 1778.³ Epitomizing the quintessence of republican integrity, patriotism, courage, and fortitude – “My life is grafted on the fate of Rome” (II/1 = 1928: 21) – Addison's *Cato* is the uncompromising, iron foe of Caesar. While *Cato* is stalwart in virtue and the personification of the steadiness of law and principle, Caesar is voracious, restless, unstoppable.⁴ And while Addison himself would doubtless have been astonished by the American reception of the play, its popularity suggests it furnished a source of inspiration and contemporary parable to the audience who watched and reflected on its performance. When, in the tragedy, Caesar sends his ambassador Decius to *Cato* offering clemency, but in effect demanding capitulation, the parallel is unlikely to have been lost on the embattled colonists. In response to Caesar's proposal of “friendship,” *Cato* states his impossibly honorable terms: “Bid him disband his legions,/ Restore the commonwealth to liberty,/ Submit his actions to the public censure,/ And stand the judgement of a Roman senate./ Bid him do this, and *Cato* is his friend” (II/1 = 21).

Classical pseudonyms among essayists and publicists, so often derived from Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*,⁵ were yet another device to paint an individual in Greek or Roman colors. To adopt a pseudonym in these conditions was to do more than simply decorate a pertinent theme, protect oneself from the possibility of state prosecution, or strike a gentlemanly pose; it was to show the synchronicity between a contemporary discourse and a reconstructed ideal which the alias abbreviated. The practice was widespread in eighteenth-century America, notably among both supporters and opponents of the Constitution thrashed out in Philadelphia in 1787. The opponents, so called Anti-Federalists, were often quick to wear the badge of Agrippa, Brutus, or *Cato*. But even those advocates of the new Constitution who were convinced that antiquity had little positive to offer an expansive American republic evinced a similar proclivity. For while the political structures of the ancient republics were not to be emulated, this did not mean that persons of that epoch had nothing to offer as symbols of heroic qualities and as capsules of historical instruction. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay published the *Federalist Papers* under the *nom de plume* “Publius” (the reference is to Publius Valerius, or Publicola, one of Rome's first consuls; he is compared with Solon in Plutarch). Hamilton also at various times before 1800 adopted

the pseudonyms of Phocion, Tully (i.e., Cicero), Camillus, (all from Plutarch) and Titus Manlius (from Livy) (Adair 1974b: 275).⁶ These Roman figures could, in different ways, be seen as exemplars of virtue or as enemies of demagoguery—as such, all were of an anti-Caesarean ilk. And although it was claimed by Paul Leicester Ford ([1892] 1970: 281), and later often repeated, that Hamilton was the author of the two “Letters of Caesar” published in the New York *Daily Advertiser* of October 1787, the textual grounds for this contention have been discredited by subsequent research (Cooke 1960; Storing 1981 *CAF* [= Complete Anti-Federalist⁷] Vol. 2: 103, 126-7). The view that Hamilton’s imperial ambition, and his desire to attain presidential office, led to his growing identification with the Roman dictator⁸ is equally implausible. Hamilton, to be sure, was proverbial for his love of glory and fame. But true fame and glory, he declared, were to be distinguished from “ambition without principle,” a view reminiscent of Plutarch’s judgment of Caesar. Hamilton also hated political demagoguery, and contrasting Cato with Caesar maintained that “the former frequently resisted—the latter always flattered the follies of the people.”⁹ It is also highly improbable psychologically that Hamilton could, at one and the same time, identify with Caesar and yet couple him to Catiline,¹⁰ or associate Caesar’s name with individuals or situations he deplored: for instance, Daniel Shays, leader of the so-called Shays Rebellion in Massachusetts (1786)—Shays is linked to Caesar and Cromwell in *Federalist* 21—and Hamilton’s nemesis Aaron Burr, the man to whom, on July 11 1804, he would fall in a duel.¹¹

Finally, if the names of classical figures could be adopted, they could also be assigned, a fate to which George Washington’s career attests. He was compared with Moses, and also with both Cato and Fabius, but it was “Cincinnatus” that, for many of his contemporaries, seemed the most appropriate designation. Washington was linked to that early republican savior of Rome because of his patriotic commitment to lead the American Army against the British between 1775 and 1782 while refusing pay; and because of his decision, executed in December 1783 to “retire from the great theatre of Action”—to resign his commission once the war ended so that he might, at the pinnacle of his achievements and prestige, return to civil life (Wills 1984: 12-13). By so doing, he created a sensation at home and in Europe. Through “the creative power of surrender,” Washington showed his radical distance from the likes of Julius Caesar with whom he “was always contrasted” (Wills 1984: 3, 138).

The Danger of an American Caesar

The expression “Anti-Federalist” denotes a position opposed to the federal constitution drafted in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787 by the Constitutional Convention, presented to the Continental Congress (the central authority of the day) in September of that year, and then submitted to the thirteen American states for ratification. Anti-Federalists viewed the new constitution’s authors as men who had exceeded their legal warrant as state delegates¹²; and they preferred, though they also understood many of the limitations of, the more decentralized Articles of Confederation, the constitution that emerged from the War of Independence, and which had become operative in 1777.¹³ It was the Articles of Confederation that the new constitution replaced; and it did so through a more integrated, hierarchical and centrist political structure.

During the ratification debate that followed the Convention’s deliberations, terms like “federalist” and “republic” were hotly contested. Anti-Federalists claimed it was they who were the real federalists—believers in a decentralized or confederated body politic that reserved equal and final powers to the sovereign individual states that composed it—and their opponents averse to federalism in their desire to replace the federal principle by a unitary, “consolidating,” or “general” one. In response, the framers of the constitution countered, as Madison did in *Federalist* 39,¹⁴ that federal and “national” principles were balanced in the new constitution to the benefit and harmony of both. Failure to achieve this balance, Madison argued, would not produce genuine federalism, but civil anarchy and the subjection of the states to the pressure of “majority” factions,¹⁵ domestic alliances and foreign intervention. Further, as the idea of a “federal *authority*” began to supersede the earlier notion of a “federal *principle*” (Storing 1981 *CAF* Vol 1: 10) it was the constitution-makers at Philadelphia who assumed the mantle of true federalism, while their critics found themselves steadily compelled to fight back employing an essentially negative self-description.

A related battle raged over the meaning of “republic,” a term that until around the time of the constitutional debate had only rarely been employed positively.¹⁶ It is important not to caricature—or sentimentalize—Anti-Federalist thinking on this subject. Anti-Federalist arguments, like those of their adversaries, were neither straightforward nor monolithic but rather combined various propositions, idioms, and sensibilities. For instance, behind much of the talk about virtue and the common good was the powerful liberal notion that both were valuable in as much as

they served individual freedom (Storing 1981 *CAF*: 83 n. 7). At the same time, these critics of the Convention often summoned ideas and values of a recognizably antique or classical republican lineage. Notably, they championed the values of simplicity and moderation; and they were particularly concerned, echoing one interpretation of Montesquieu, that states should not become too large and thereby heterogeneous. Size was a critical factor, Anti-Federalists claimed, because to the degree that states grew larger they became less able, by their very impersonality, to secure the devotion and loyalty of their citizens; less qualified because of their remoteness to express the political will of the latter; and, in consequence of both factors, more inclined to rule by force than through persuasion. Small republics mitigated these ills through inspiring in people the justifiable conviction that they controlled their own destiny. Where representation was necessary (as Anti-Federalists often conceded it was) the imperative mandate for delegates, short tenure of office, rotation, etc. should attend it.¹⁷ Small republics were also more likely to preserve the people's homogeneity: a homogeneity of blood, education, middling wealth, and civic virtue underpinned by religious instruction, elements that an expanded republic, on the model of the new constitution, would be bound to destroy (Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 1: 15-23).

In addition, Anti-Federalists raised the familiar republican critique of pseudo-constitutionalism. For *A Columbian Patriot*, the whole constitution was a sham, "a heterogeneous phantom," "a Republican *form* of government, founded on the principles of monarchy" (Storing 1981 *CAF* Vol 4: 275). *Centinel* concurred: "but of what avail will be the *form* without the *reality* of freedom?" Evidently, the Convention had learned a sinister lesson from "that profound, but corrupt politician Machiavel, who advises any one who would change the constitution of a state, to keep as much as possible to the old forms":

for then the people seeing the same officers, the same formalities, courts of justice, and other outward appearances, are insensible of the alteration, and believe themselves in possession of their old government. Thus Caesar, when he seized the Roman liberties, caused himself to be chosen dictator (which was an ancient office) continued the senate, the consuls, the tribunes, the censors, and all other offices and forms of the commonwealth; and yet changed Rome from the most free to the most tyrannical government in the world. (Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 2: 157)

Hitting back against this kind of argument, the authors of the *Federalist* claimed to be recommending institutions consonant with republican history and principles, though as we shall see, it was the break with classical republicanism, rather than its continuation, that was the most

signal feature of the Federalist achievement. Even so, in *Federalist* 39 Publius insisted that the government to be established by the new constitution was authentically republican: “a government which derives all its powers directly or indirectly from the great body of the people, and is administered by persons holding their offices during pleasure for a limited period, or during good behavior. It is *essential* to such a government that it be derived from the great body of the society, not from an inconsiderable proportion of a favored class of it.” Equally, the government was republican “in its absolute prohibition of titles of nobility” (255-56)—not, as it happens, an actual prerequisite of republican forms. But the really daring part of the argument, as breathtaking as it was disingenuous, came earlier in the series. There, in *Federalist* 10, Publius sought in a remarkable *coup d’essai* to recast the traditional meaning of republic through making representation, extensiveness, and diversity its definitive features. On this account, a republic was to be contrasted with a “pure democracy...a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person” (126; cf. 141f). Though “theoretic politicians” might laud such a government, its practice was execrable. A pure democracy, far from being the precondition of individual liberty, was actually its negation: intense in the emotions it generated, authoritarian and intolerant of dissent, no respecter of property or life. Nor could one rely on its longevity since its failure to accommodate plural interests fostered indignation, tumult, and ultimately revolt. A genuine “republic” was superior in every way. The commission of government to a relatively small number of elected representatives, free to deliberate with detachment on matters of weight, would “refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.” The intrusion of local prejudices, petty interests and intrigues into great matters of national governance—common Federalist complaints about state behavior under the Articles of Confederation—would be commensurately diminished and corrected by such a system.

Similarly, geographical and political extensiveness would draw in to the political arena the most diverse “parties and interests” thereby making it that much more difficult for any one group, however large, to impose its views on the whole: “Extend the sphere [of republican government] and...you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such

a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other" (127; cf. *Federalist* 51 = 321).

Madison's compatriot, Hamilton, took the argument a bracing step further in his defense of the executive power, the arm of government Anti-Federalists feared most. Tackling head on the idea "that a vigorous executive is inconsistent with the genius of republican government," Hamilton sought to prove that such an executive was essential to it. Had not even the Roman Republic required the office of "dictator" to protect it from domestic intrigue, public sedition and foreign menace? However, dictatorship—"the absolute power of a single man"—was not what the new constitution intended to establish; its multiple checks and balances were expressly designed to avoid this exigency. Instead it would establish an executive capable of providing the "energy" necessary for "good government." Such energy in the executive required the concentration of executive authority in the hands of a single magistrate (the chief magistrate, i.e., the president); a reasonable period of time (four years) in which his proposals could be formulated and administered; the inducement of presidential re-eligibility which, among other advantages, would reward excellence and experience; fixed remuneration adequate to the discharge of his responsibilities; and powers sufficient to rule justly and effectively, for example, powers to strike-down "improper laws" through the use of a qualified veto, to conduct war, make treaties, appoint officials.¹⁸

Something else should be noted about Hamilton's defense of an energetic executive. In the numbers of the *Federalist* that I have just summarized, Hamilton's main point is not that executive energy is a phenomenon unique to republican government, but rather that energy or vigor is necessary for all "good government."¹⁹ To the degree, then, that a republic is to have good government, it must have an energetic one. The specifically republican element he emphasizes is the "safety" of the body politic from an imperious magistrate (435-6). This feat was to be secured by means of legislative restraint (e.g., the ability of Congress to override the presidential veto by a two-thirds majority), judicial compulsion (e.g., the provision of impeachment) and by the fact that the president was, of course, dependent on public support to be re-elected. All this notwithstanding, there remains a very real and integral sense in which energy is conjoined to the idea of a republic. First, Hamilton is clear that "the vigor of government is essential to the security of liberty" (*Federalist* 1 = 89), and it was liberty, as we have seen, that was the perennial concern of republican arguments.²⁰ Second, energy is a precondition of that great-

ness and fame that were as important to Hamilton—the “love of fame,” he says in his famous defense of presidential re-eligibility, is “the ruling passion of the noblest minds” (*Federalist* 72 = 414)—as they were to antique and classical republicanism. As Douglass Adair ([1967] 1974a: 11) noted, the quest for fame suggests dynamism, “it rejects the static complacent urge in the human heart to merely *be* and invites a strenuous effort to *become*—to become a person and force in history larger than the ordinary. Unlike honor that can be inherited, “fame has to be earned.”²¹

Yet because of the elasticity of the republican idiom, it was always possible for one motif to collide, or come into uncomfortable tension, with others—for instance, injunctions advancing political equality and social homogeneity. Anti-Federalists were not averse to fame or greatness in themselves, particularly where they were being claimed for some collective agent: a country, a generation—or the dissenting minority in the Philadelphia Convention.²² Juxtaposed to such a view, however, was a strong belief in what Isaac Kramnick (1987: 44) calls “the mirror theory of representation,” a theory that achieved an almost pristine expression in the arguments of Melancton Smith. In an oft-quoted speech delivered to the ratifying convention of New York in June 1788, Smith maintained that “when we speak of representatives,” a particular idea suggests itself: “that they resemble those they represent; they should be a true picture of the people; possess the knowledge of their circumstances and their wants; sympathize in all their distresses, and be disposed to seek their true interests.” The problem with the proposed constitution, and especially the small number of representatives to be elected to the House of Representatives (one member for every thirty thousand people), was that the élite of society (“the natural aristocracy”) would, in practice, come to govern the country. This would occur because “the influence of the great”—on account of their wealth, status, and capacity to organize—would be most strongly felt during election time, and because it would meet little serious or concerted resistance. On the one hand, the “poor” or the “common people,” bereft of time and resources, would fragment or, even worse, fall under the sway of “some popular demagogue, who will probably be destitute of principle.” On the other, members of the “middling class,” typified by the “substantial yeoman of sense and discernment,” would be disinclined to put themselves forward. Their frugal manners and general style of life would deter them from joining the ranks of the “elevated and distinguished.” But it was precisely the middling class that a country like America needed to represent it. A House of Representatives that had little room for this class would become “a government of oppression”:

I do not mean to declaim against the great, and charge them indiscriminately with want of principle and honesty. The same passions and prejudices govern all men. The circumstances in which men are placed in a great measure give a cast to the human character. Those in middling circumstances, have less temptation—they are inclined by habit and the company with whom they associate, to set bounds to their passions and appetites—if this is not sufficient, the want of means to gratify them will be a restraint—they are obliged to employ their time in their respective callings—hence the substantial yeomanry of the country are more temperate, of better morals and less ambition than the great. (Storing *CAF* 1981. Vol. 6: 157-8)

It is true that Smith was making an argument against the creation of what today we would call a ruling class, not against the quest for fame or glory. But an important connection remains. The middling classes, consisting of men “who have been used to walk in the plain and frugal paths of life” (158), are not an entity disposed to seek glory or fame; as we have seen from the above quotation, their passions are bounded, as is their ambition. Smith, in praising this class, emphasizes the republican ideas of equality, moderation, prudence and temperance (compare Montesquieu [1748] 1989: 43-8)—not “distinction,” another republican idea picked up by Hamilton. The hero seeking fame and using power to acquire it, or the president, infused with the energy of office, sounded too haughty and grandiose for Anti-Federalists. It made them think not of the selfless patriot representing the common good, but of the person seeking renown, preeminence, and dominion at the expense of his fellow citizens.

At this point, and against this background, we can turn to the Caesar question. Both Federalists and Anti-Federalists raised it in highly negative contexts, but they did so in their own peculiar and revealing ways. For Anti-Federalists, the main problem summed up in the name “Caesar” was the abuse of the executive arm of government. On their account, the constitution drafted at Philadelphia aggravated this problem in several respects. In particular, constitutional critics damned the office of president as a massive, unjustifiable, and menacing accretion of power (cf. Wood 1972: 521-2).

One of their most common complaints was that the sheer number and extent of powers to be enjoyed by a president made him comparable to a monarch: “tell me what important prerogative the King of Great-Britain is entitled to, which does not also belong to the President during his continuance in office,” asked *An Old Whig* rhetorically.²³ The accusation was incendiary. America had only recently emerged victorious in a war against the British crown. To suggest that the framers were creating a monarchical system in the aftermath of that triumph, was to impugn their patriotism – *Agrippa* suggested nothing less than perfidy when

he claimed to notice the “pretty strong attachments to foreign nations” evident among some of the Philadelphia Convention’s leaders (Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 4: 92)—and to imply further that, should their draft be ratified, the War of Independence would have been fought for nothing.²⁴ Aside from the formidable array of powers at his disposal, the president was likened to a monarch in two chief respects.²⁵

In the first place, his tenure of rule appeared to be potentially unlimited so long as he was alive. Though the president was initially elected for a four year term, this could be extended indefinitely because the constitution allowed for presidential re-eligibility. This provision alarmed Anti-Federalists such as *Denatus* who sought to restrict re-eligibility to two terms²⁶ and so ensure that “after governing he [the president] ought to be governed, to prevent his despotic principles from making head.” More generally: “The conduct of Dejoces, Julius Caesar, Oliver Cromwell... ought ever to be held in view when the powers of this president are in contemplation” (Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 5: 266).

Second, the office of president looked distinctly regal to Anti-Federalists because of the way its incumbent was to be selected. Chosen by an electoral college, rather than elected directly by the people, the president embodied a remoteness inimical to that “maxim in republics” that stated that “the representative of the people should be of their immediate choice.” Adopt this system, *Cato* warned, and “you will incline to an arbitrary and odious aristocracy or monarchy” (Storing *CAF* 1981, Vol. 2: 115, 117). Furthermore, the fact that the Presidency was an elected office, rather than an hereditary one, made it not one jot any less monarchical or abhorrent for Anti-Federalists. When *An Old Whig* observed that the president was “a KING as much *a King as the King of Great-Britain*,” this did not mean he was the same kind of king. On the contrary, he was a sovereign “of the worst kind;—an elective King.” A hereditary monarchy may have been repulsive to republican feeling, but it had at least the advantage in principle of enabling dynastic power to pass smoothly and peacefully from one family member to another. In contrast, the president of the putative American Republic, as “an elective King,” suggested “a scene of horror and confusion.” Such a ruler would be typically ill-disposed to return to the travails and trivialities of everyday life. Especially perilous to liberty would be a situation in which he was “a favorite with his army” while lacking “the virtue, the moderation and love of liberty which possessed the mind of our late general [Washington].” And if such a man’s moral failures were to be compounded, as were Caesar’s, by a combination of indebtedness and ambition, he “would

die a thousand deaths rather than sink from the heights of splendor and power into obscurity and wretchedness.” It was this ominous prospect that the constitutional draft encouraged: “under pretence of a republic” it had laid “the foundation for a military government, which is the worst of all tyrannies” (Storing *CAF* 1981, Vol. 3: 37-8).

The reference to “military government,” for which Caesar so often stood as a codeword, and vice-versa, is worth pursuing further because it was so often raised by Anti-Federalist writers. The potential for militarism in the new constitution was believed to derive from a number of sources. The first was the presidential office itself which conferred on its incumbent the power of commander-in-chief and by so doing gave him direct constitutional control over the forces of coercion, be they at the national or state level (*Federalist* 74). Second, in failing to prohibit the existence of a “standing army” in peacetime,²⁷ the new constitution was asking for trouble: it would allow the president a military instrument separate from and independent of the state militias and equipped, it was alleged, with the power to dominate them. The idea of a commander-in-chief ruling over a standing army during peacetime was horrific to Anti-Federalists. “It always hath been and always will be the grand machine made use of to subvert the liberties of free states. *Pisistratus and Caesar* are not forgotten” warned *A Federal Republican*.²⁸ Whereas militias “composed of the yeomanry of the country have ever been considered as the bulwark of a free people,” said *John DeWitt*, it “is universally agreed, that a militia and a standing body of troops never yet flourished in the same soil. Tyrants have uniformly depended upon the latter, at the expense of the former.” Standing armies were an “engine of oppression” as the examples of *Pisistratus*, *Dionysius*, and *Caesar*, among others, showed persistently enough (Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 4: 37-8).

The danger came from a couple of directions. On the one hand, rulers of a state might use the army for their own malevolent purposes. On the other, the army itself might “subvert the forms of the government, under whose authority, they are raised, and establish one, according to the pleasure of their leader.”²⁹ In the view of *Brutus*, the army was an especial problem for a free state because military discipline, being stringent and compelling, was invariably able to override a soldier’s patriotism. Indeed, “every lover of freedom” need look no further for confirmation of this menace than the experiences of Rome and Britain, “the two most powerful nations that have ever existed in the world; and who are the most renowned, for the freedom they enjoyed, and the excellence of their constitutions”:

In the first, the liberties of the commonwealth was [sic] destroyed, and the constitution overturned, by an army, led by Julius Cesar [sic] who was appointed to the command, by the constitutional authority of that commonwealth. He changed it from a free republic, whose fame had sounded, and is still celebrated by all the world, into that of the most absolute despotism. A standing army effected this change, and a standing army supported it through a succession of ages, which are marked in the annals of history, with the most horrid cruelties, bloodshed, and carnage....

The same army, that in Britain, vindicated the liberties of that people from the encroachments and despotism of a tyrant king, assisted Cromwell, their General, in wresting from the people, that liberty they had so dearly earned (Storing 1981, *CAF*, Vol. 2: 413)³⁰

Elective kings and military despots: these, then, were the main tendencies that Caesar's name abbreviated. Each issued from, or amounted to, an abuse of executive power. But why should such an abuse appear likely? Behind the criticism of the draft's particular articles was another deeper, more encompassing, ontological objection in which Biblical tradition (see Lutz 1984: 192) and Polybian determinism joined forces. The enormous powers vested in the new order by the Convention took insufficient account of human nature and the lessons of human history: "sir, we know the passions of men, we know how dangerous it is to trust the best of men with too much power. Where was a braver army than that under Jul. Caesar?" (*Brutus*, in Storing 1981, *CAF*, Vol. 2: 407). "We are not sure that men have more virtue at this time and place than they had in England in the time of George the 2d" affirmed *A Newport Man*.

If to take up the cross and renounce the pomps and vanities of this sinful world, is a hard lesson for divines, 'tis much harder for politicians,—a Cincinnatus, a Cato, a Fabricius [sic], and a Washington, are rarely to be found...[:] whether human nature be less corrupt than formerly I will not determine; but this I know that Julius Caesar, Oliver Cromwell, and the nobles of Venice, were natives and inhabitants of the countries whose power they usurped and drenched in blood (Storing 1981, *CAF*, Vol. 4: 252).

Cato agreed. The "general presumption that rulers will govern well is not a sufficient security," he advised, asking his readers to cast naivety and innocence aside. An American is fully capable of being a tyrant, for "Americans are like other men in similar situations, when the manners and opinions of the community are changed by the causes I mentioned before, and your political compact inexplicit, your posterity will find that great power connected with ambition, luxury, and flattery, will as readily produce a Caesar, Caligula, Nero, and Domitian in America, as the same causes did in the Roman empire" (Storing 1981, *CAF*, Vol. 2: 117-8).³¹

Indeed for many Anti-Federalists there was something distinctly anti-Christian and idolatrous about the Convention's handiwork. Attempts to

find in the constitution “the finger of God” were, according to *Helvidius Priscus* opportunistic rationalizations by men whose belief in the Creator was doubtful in the extreme. Men of “the fashionable sceptical race,” like Dr. Benjamin Rush, should avoid “impious affectation.” Even here, a Caesarean parallel could be invoked to damn the un-Godly. “While the Roman usurper was ravaging Gaul, whenever it was convenient for their purposes, his commissioners consulted the Pagan oracles, and when the people were prepared by their love of pleasure, and prostration of principle, to bow to the yoke of servitude, he was pronounced from the lip of the Cybels, the destined master of the world” (Storing in *CAF*. Vol. 4: 155-6). The charge was clear: Caesar’s manipulation of religion for political purposes—his assumption in 63 BC of the head of the Roman state religion (the Pontifex Maximus) is specifically mentioned—was being imitated by the Convention’s supporters for reasons of pure expediency. But just as Caesar was a man without “much religion” and was happy to dispense with religious precedent when it suited “the purposes of the tyrant,” the same could be expected from those who had drafted the constitution.

Publius against Polybius

Of course, to Federalist writers such accusations—especially those regarding the fiduciary character of the Convention’s proposals—were a travesty of their position. Far from being sanguine about human nature, they sought to design institutions best able to cope robustly with its imperfections and perversity, “supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives” (*Federalist* 51 = 320).³² “Why has government been instituted at all?” Publius enquired in *Federalist* 15. “Because the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint” (149). Far from relying on altruism, the framers believed that one should mobilize people’s natural, restless inclination to pursue their own individual interests in such a way as to maximize the common good. To do this required a finely balanced constitution which fully recognized the “constitution of man.” “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition” (*Federalist* 51 = 319). Translated into institutional terms this meant “contriving the interior structure of the government as that its several constituent parts may, by their mutual relations, be the means of keeping each other in their proper places.” Though “each department should have a will of its own” it was important that the constitution “be so constituted that the members of each should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others” (318-9).

And what of the danger of a Caesar figure? Though in the *Federalist Papers* Caesar is alluded to on several occasions, his name is mentioned explicitly only once (*Federalist* 21 = 174). Why might this be? One possibility is that the framers, being more theoretically creative and innovative than their conservative rivals, being freer of an imaginative cosmos dominated by the Polybean wheel, felt far less afraid of a Caesarean terminus. As such, they had less reason to invoke it. I return to this below. But another answer is also plausible. In an earlier chapter, I wrote of the polarity of Caesar's name: its ability to generate antitheses. We now come to a second power it possessed that, for want of a better word, can be called recursiveness. By this expression, I mean more than the simple evocative force enjoyed by the term "Caesar" and by means of which it summoned-up such concepts as "usurpation," "demagogy," and "military despotism." I mean its ability to make these concepts virtually its own. To be sure, this kind of elision and adhesion—the ability of a name to stick to a concept so as to make both virtually indistinguishable—will appear dubious to the logician who will tell us that Julius Caesar's mode of rule is best thought of a species of the genus "usurpation," or "demagogy," or "military despotism"—all expressions that the framers employ when they are looking for a Caesar analogue. But in linguistic practice this kind of analytical distinction is of little import. The reason is that, from the standpoint of republican conventions, Caesar is thought of not primarily as one modality of, say, usurpation; rather he is considered *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is, as the very exemplification of it. Accordingly, species and genus semantically collapse into one another. Cromwell also played this role for republican thought, but significantly he is almost always mentioned alongside his great Roman progenitor. One explanation, then, for the paucity of direct reference to Caesar in the *Federalist Papers* is simply that such direct reference was unnecessary. Mention of usurpation and its cognates did all the work that was required, for within the linguistic conventions of the time this would conjure up the figure of Caesar in the reader's mind. Still, what is clearer than these conjectures is the actual shape of the framers' argument, and it is to this that I now turn.

For Publius, the main threat to liberty and the American polity came not from a fortified executive branch designed along the lines proposed by the Philadelphia Convention, but from its absence or insufficiency, a salient feature of the constitutional status quo under the Articles of Confederation. Under the Articles, as Publius saw it, three conditions of tyranny or dissolution (the latter would lead ineluctably to the former) were being

fostered: the cancerous growth of legislative authority; a power vacuum at the centre; and demagoguery. Caesar is by implication linked to the last two of these conditions. But in a move analogous to Publius's radical redefinition of "republic," the Caesar problem is turned on its head. Now it is extensive popular participation and decentralized state-legislative supremacy that is claimed to be the locus of Caesar-like situations, and a vigorous, though balanced, executive its most vital impediment. Let us see how this argument works.

Federalist writers were far more anxious about "legislative usurpations" (*Federalist* 48 = 309),³³ than executive ones. "It is one thing to be subordinate to the laws, and another to be dependent on the legislative body" (*Federalist* 71 = 410).³⁴ Specifically, the problem of "legislative authority" lay in its tendency "to absorb every other" branch of government:

The representatives of the people, in a popular assembly, seem sometimes to fancy that they are the people themselves, and betray strong symptoms of impatience and disgust at the least sign of opposition from any other quarter; as if the exercise of its rights, by either the executive or judiciary, were a breach of their privilege and an outrage to their dignity. They often appear disposed to exert an imperious control over the other departments; and as they commonly have the people on their side, they always act with such momentum as to make it very difficult for the other members of the government to maintain the balance of the Constitution. (*Federalist* 71 = 410-11)

Moreover, the fact that the legislature consisted of many members was no guarantee of civic and political freedom. Quoting part of a paragraph from Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787),³⁵ Publius concurred that "One hundred and seventy three despots would surely be as oppressive as one.... An *elective despotism* was not the government we fought for; but one which should not only be founded on free principles, but in which the powers of government should be so divided and balanced among several bodies of magistracy, as that no one could transcend their legal limits, without being effectually checked and restrained by the others."³⁶ But, surely, a confederated "democracy," maximizing popular participation at every level of government, would be able to avoid despotism, elective or otherwise? Publius disagreed. Direct, decentralized democracies were far more prone to despotism than "representative republics" for at least two reasons. First,

In a democracy, where a multitude of people exercise in person the legislative functions and are continually exposed, by their incapacity for regular deliberation and concerted measures, to the ambitious intrigues of their executive magistrates, tyranny may well be apprehended, on some favorable emergency, to start up in the same quarter. (*Federalist* 48 = 309)

In other words, it was direct democracies that were especially prone to executive abuse. This is because the “multitude” is incompetent to rule and will sooner or later find itself compelled, on some pretext or in some emergency, to relinquish its functions.

Second, the Articles of Confederation actually encouraged the rise of Caesar-figures, Publius implied, because they made no provision for truly national (pan-state) institutions and their corollary, a truly national executive. Under the Articles, there was simply no way for the existing central government, the Continental Congress, to “exact obedience” from intransigent states unwilling to obey the law it enacted; and there was no power, either, to intervene in cases where a particular state was riding roughshod over the liberties of its own members and menacing its neighbors. Reversing the received wisdom that a decentralized political system was an obstacle to tyranny, Publius insisted that such a system was a stimulus to it:

Usurpation may rear its crest in each State and trample upon the liberties of the people, while the national government could legally do nothing more than behold its encroachments with indignation and regret. A successful faction may erect a tyranny on the ruins of order and law, while no succor could constitutionally be afforded by the Union to the friends and supporters of the government. The tempestuous situation from which Massachusetts has scarcely emerged [the allusion is to Shays’ Rebellion] evinces that dangers of this kind are not merely speculative. Who can determine what might have been the issue of her late convulsions if the malcontents had been headed by a Caesar or by a Cromwell? Who can predict what effect a despotism established in Massachusetts would have upon the liberties of New Hampshire or Rhode Island, of Connecticut or New York? (*Federalist* 21 = 173-4)³⁷

The conditions that led to a Caesar-like situation, then, were those of political impotence. As a matter of historical contingency, a Caesar or a Cromwell had not as yet emerged, but a vacuum of power, rather than its energetic and expeditious exertion, had created the possibilities for such an appearance. A strong, national executive authority, vested in the office of the presidency, as provided for under the new Constitution, was the proper remedy for these political ills. It was also a remedy for those associated with a standing army.

Both Federalists and Anti-Federalists equated Caesar with what we would now call militarism (the word itself did not yet exist³⁸) but, again, their view of this equation differed. Anti-Federalists, as we have seen, traced it to the existence of a commander-in-chief in control of a standing army. For Publius, on the other hand, a “military despotism of a victorious demagogue” was much more likely to originate in “anarchy, civil war, [and] a perpetual alienation of the States from one another”

(*Federalist* 85 = 486) than from the constitution favored by the Philadelphia Convention. Again and again, the framers hammered home the message that it was national division that was the real threat to liberty, not consolidation, and that the values defended by the Anti-Federalists would actually be undone by their own proposals. Hence a *proliferation* of standing armies *and* an irresponsible executive would be the inevitable outcome of America's fragmentation:

Frequent war and constant apprehension, which require a state of as [sic] constant preparation, will infallibly produce them. The weaker State, or confederacies, would first have recourse to them to put themselves upon an equality with their more potent neighbors. They would endeavor to supply the inferiority of population and resources by a more regular and effective system of defense, by disciplined troops, and by fortifications. They would, at the same time, be necessitated to strengthen the executive arm of government, in doing which their constitutions would acquire a progressive direction towards monarchy. It is of the nature of war to increase the executive at the expense of the legislative authority. (*Federalist* 8 = 115)

Finally, a strong, consolidated nation-state would act as a prophylactic against demagoguery, another major tendency of democratic and "pure republican" types of government. For:

a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people, commencing demagogues and ending tyrants. (*Federalist* 1 = 89)

The reference to Caesar is unmistakable and it was no coincidence that Publius should in this incarnation be Hamilton, a man whose aversion to demagoguery was often ventilated.³⁹ However when it came to the issue of demagoguery much more than personal predilection was at stake.

A salient theme of the framers' arguments was the danger to a state of "popular fluctuations," that "sudden breeze of passion" and "transient impulse which the people may receive from the arts of men, who flatter their prejudices to betray their interests."⁴⁰ Regular elections to the House of Representatives and the Senate were one thing; direct appeals on high matters of state quite another. The latter were to be particularly eschewed where the relations among the various branches of state were concerned because complex and delicate problems required the careful exercise of political judgment, as opposed to the hysteria and bamboozling most likely to eventuate from the orchestration of society as a whole. Further, the direct involvement of the people in such matters, far from inspiring

confidence in a government's receptivity to the popular will, actually worked to the detriment of its legitimacy. Because "every appeal to the people would carry an implication of some defect in the government, frequent appeals would, in great measure, deprive the government of that veneration which time bestows on everything, and without which perhaps the wisest and freest governments would not possess the requisite stability" (*Federalist* 49 = 313-4).

The same kind of logic—avoid or attenuate the unmediated intrusion of "the multitude" into the political arena wherever possible⁴¹—applied with equal force to the office of the chief magistrate. Far better to appoint the president through an electoral college than to submit his candidacy without the mediation of "men chosen by the people" for this "special purpose." "A small number of persons, selected by their fellow citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to so complicated an investigation" (*Federalist* 68 = 393). In fact the impact of the citizen body as a whole was to be quadruply diluted, and thus quadruply cushioned from the clutches of the Caesarean demagogue. First, it was the legislature of each state, rather than the people en masse, that would decide how the presidential "electors" were to be chosen. Second, the electors (whose number was to be equal to the sum of a particular state's representatives and senators) would, by definition, make up a plurality of members, as distinct from a single person on whom passions could focus: "The choice of *several* to form an intermediate body of electors will be much less apt to convulse the community with any extraordinary or violent movements than the choice of *one* who was himself to be the final object of the public wishes." Third, on a day to be decided by Congress, these electors would cast *their* ballot for the presidential candidate of *their* choice. (The totality of states' votes would then be recorded by the president of the United States' Senate.) Fourth, the process of voting was to take place, not in some central location, but in the electors' own state: "this detached and divided situation will expose them much less to heats and ferments, which might be communicated from them to the people, than if they were all to be convened at one time, in one place" (*Federalist* 68 = 393).

Moreover, once the president was chosen he was to be given powers, a duration of office, and a fixed remuneration sufficient to resist demagoguery forcefully and with confidence. The president is not, according to Publius, the incarnation of the vox populi, but a leader positioned "to dare to act his own opinion with vigor and decision."

When occasions present themselves in which the interests of the people are at variance with their inclinations, it is the duty of the persons whom they have appointed to be the guardians of those interests to withstand the temporary delusion in order to give them time and opportunity for more cool and sedate reflection. Instances might be cited in which a conduct of this kind has saved the people from very fatal consequences of their own mistakes, and has procured lasting monuments of their gratitude to the men who had courage and magnanimity enough to serve them at the peril of their displeasure. (*Federalist* 71 = 410)

It should be clear, then, that the president was never intended to be what later centuries would call a Caesarist or a plebiscitarian leader. Just the reverse. The language used to describe the president's relation to the people, is, if anything, quasi-Platonic: the chief magistrates of the future are likened to ruler "guardians," clear-sighted, wise, discerning, disciplined, "devoted to what they judge to be the interests of the community, and never prepared to act against them" (Plato, *Republic* IV/1). The president's office does not rest on the direct choice or instantaneous legitimation of the collectivity. Unmediated appeals to the citizen body on constitutional questions appear to be barred to him. Nor is he the mouthpiece or expression, real or nominal, of the sovereign people. For the framers, a Caesar-like figure, and the situation that produces him, are pathologies of democracy, fragmentation, public credulity.⁴² To design a constitution that avoided these problems was central to their proposals.

I remarked that Anti-Federalists opposed the Philadelphia Convention's work not just on the basis of particular objections, but on that of a grand objection: they contended that it took no account of the frailties and the darker propensities of human nature. It was also observed that Federalists would have been aghast at such an allegation since their view of humanity was as vigorously unsentimental as it is possible to be. The constitution they drafted or supported was intended to acknowledge human weakness and depravity, mobilize human energies, and produce a system of government as stable as it was powerful. Yet how, with such a view of human nature, could the framers have believed that such a constitution was actually possible? How might one be able to halt the Polybean wheel in America? Whence came this confidence?

If is of course entirely possible that while the framers' confidence was quite limited, their sense of urgency was intense; and that it was this impulse more than any other that lent fire to their arguments. Men like Madison, Hamilton, Washington, John Jay, Robert Morris, James Wilson, Henry Knox, James Duane, and Gouverneur Morris were all people who had been deeply shaped by the war, derived from it continental, as distinct from simply state-bound, experience, and served the

nation in a continental capacity: as officers in the Continental Army, members of and diplomats for the Continental Congress, leading lights of committees devoted to the military effort (Elkins and McKittrick 1961: 202). Eleven years younger on average than their most illustrious Anti-Federalist rivals, they had less invested in the structure of politics before 1776 (the year of the Declaration of Independence) and even less sympathy for the provincialism of state-centered politics that, during the war, caused them so many frustrations. It was the Revolution itself that brought them national prominence and that expanded their vision of what a modern nation-state needed in order to function in the world. Minimally, it required a central authority, with a stable financial base, and powers to implement and enforce its laws: elements that the Articles of Confederation and state particularism so lamentably impeded (Elkins and McKittrick 1961: 203-6).

In short, the sense of emergency and frustration produced in the cauldron of war, together with the new vision it created, was enough to convince many people that a constitution on the lines of the Philadelphia Convention was required. Yet there was more. In a penetrating account of the constitutional achievement,⁴³ Gordon Wood (1972: 593-615) points out that Federalist protagonists initiated both a profound change in the political structure of America and in its imaginative and theoretical underpinnings. Furthermore, they were aware of the scale and novelty of their own audacious accomplishment. The document that emerged from the Philadelphia Convention contained with it a series of features that broke profoundly with the older, classical, and republican template. The notion that a constitution was most stable when it was based on the integration of various rankings or orders of society was replaced by the idea—and constitutional provisions to secure it—that all branches of government were the “grants of the people” at large (Wood 1972: 597, quoting James Wilson). The executive and judiciary, as much as the legislature, were the people’s agents and representatives; stability and freedom from tyranny were to be promoted through the separation of these agencies, energy by their competition and rivalry. The constitution itself enshrined the people’s sovereignty, vesting powers in government that were partial, tentative, and provisional. As such, the constitution was a compact among the people, as distinct from a vertical agreement between rulers and ruled. However, the “people” referred to in these contexts were not a homogenous entity—save in the senses that all were to enjoy equal rights, and that their legal standing was not compromised by rank, order, or title—nor an entity primarily animated by, or in mod-

ern conditions capable of being primarily animated by, virtue. On the contrary, the “people” comprised a plurality of interests and “factions” seeking advantage and power. Government must recognize that the common good was, in at least some respects, a mean of diverse interests. Security was best attained by a federal republic in which “the society” was “broken into so many parts, interests and classes of citizens, that the rights of individuals, or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority.” Just as religious rights were protected by the “multiplicity of sects,” so civil rights were safeguarded by the “multiplicity of interests” (*Federalist* 51 = 321). Liberty denoted not, as it had for the classical republicans, participation in government and security from external enemies, but the liberty of individuals to pursue projects in civil society, and to go about their daily private lives, free from government infringement and intervention. It was naive to think that political virtue could substitute for interest and faction. “America would remain free not because of any quality in its citizens of spartan self-sacrifice to some nebulous public good, but in the last analysis because of the concern each individual would have in his own self-interest and personal freedom. The really great danger to liberty in the extended republic of America, warned Madison in 1791, was that each individual may become insignificant in his own eyes—hitherto the very foundation of republican government” (Wood 1972: 612).

Underlying these formulations, another conviction fortified Federalist writers: their belief in the novel possibilities afforded by science for political agency. Concretely, this meant that an intellectual aristocracy versed in the “science of politics,” would be able to perform great deeds hitherto believed to be impossible. The rationalist faith in logical reasoning, and the empiricist faith in the lessons of experience, are both evident in Publius’s statements regarding the “wholly new [political] discoveries” of modern times. These demonstrated the “primary truths, or first principles” as basic to ethics and politics as to geometry; the benefits to be gained by “quitting the dim light of historical research, and attaching ourselves purely to the dictates of reason and good sense,” all the while remembering how important are time, experience and experiment in correcting the errors to which human beings inevitably fall prey.⁴⁴ It is easy to see why the harnessing of science to politics was an extraordinarily liberating belief. Once properly understood, the primary truths—“that every power ought to be commensurate with its object; that there ought to be no limitation of a power destined to effect a purpose which is itself incapable of limitation”—could plausibly lessen that “excess of jeal-

ousy and timidity” that issues in “absolute skepticism and irresolution” (*Federalist* 31 = 216, 219). For the framers it was not the sheer sum of power that led to its abuse, but rather its faulty organization, unbalanced distribution, or thoughtless application. There was nothing to dread about power as such; “the danger of usurpation ought to be referred to the composition and structure of the government, not to the nature and extent of its powers” (*Federalist* 31 = 219).⁴⁵ It was ignorance of science that condemned humanity to the endless repetition of the Polybean wheel. Armed with the kind of experimental attitude that science proffered, republics were no longer doomed to terminal decay. The merit of the new American republic was not that it solved every problem once and for all, but rather that it contained the reformatory mechanisms necessary to confront problems as they arose, lending to politics the suppleness and dynamism that the republics of antiquity had so parlously lacked. Anti-Federalists might invoke the dark shadows of the ancient past. But for those who saw the dynamic relation between “an interest in the progress of political science and the cause of true liberty,” (Madison)⁴⁶ even the Caesar-question might at last be resolved.

Notes

1. This is a weaker claim than that made by Mullett (1939-40) or Gummere (1962) but a stronger claim than that made by Bailyn ([1967] 1992: 26) who remarks that while the “classics of the ancient world are everywhere in the literature of the Revolution,” they “are everywhere illustrative, not determinative, of thought. They contributed a vivid vocabulary but not the logic or grammar of thought, a universally respected personification but not the source of political and social beliefs. They heightened the colonists’ sensitivity to ideas and attitudes otherwise derived.” This way of phrasing matters seems to me questionable because we are invited to make a choice—between “illustration” and “grammar”—without knowing the criteria under which to make it in this particular case. If an “illustration” is used again and again—as the Caesar figure is, for instance—has it not become *part* of the “logic or grammar of thought”? Moreover, if we see the classical world as something mediated by and refracted through other traditions, then even on Bailyn’s account it appears to be formative and integral rather than simply “illustrative.” For instance, see Bailyn: 42-5, 102, 113-4, 131, 133, 135-7, 141-2, etc. A sensible attempt to address these issues is found in Rahe 1992: 570-72.
2. See McLachlan 1976.
3. Details in Litto 1966: 435, 447.
4. “Alas,” says the senator Sempronius, “thou know’st not Caesar’s active soul./ With what a dreadful course he rushes on/ From war to war. In vain has nature formed/Mountains and oceans to oppose his passage” (I/3 = 1928: 11).
5. According to Adair (1974b: 274 n.6), the John Dryden translation [1683-86] that I have been using thus far was the standard one for early American readers; this is contradicted by Meyer Reinhold (1975: 41) who maintains that Sir Thomas North’s translation [1579]—based not on the Greek, but on Jacques Amyot’s [1559] French rendering—was more often consulted than Dryden’s.

210 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

6. Hamilton in 1803 also began signing himself as Pericles, an indication, says Adair, of his imperial designs.
7. Storing's *The Complete Anti-Federalist* is a misnomer; it contains, according to Bailyn (1992: 327) "only about 15 per cent of the total available antifederalist material." However, Storing's six-volume compilation (the seventh volume is an Index) will suffice for my purposes here.
8. See Adair 1974a: 15-22, 1974b: 279-85; cf. Stourzh 1970: 98-9, 119, 239 n.85; Pocock 1975: 529-532.
9. This and the previous statement are cited in Stourzh 1970: 99.
10. See the remarks cited in Govan 1975: 4 77.
11. Govan's (1975: 476) bibliographic study of Caesar references in the writings of Alexander Hamilton shows that, with only one exception, Hamilton's remarks on Caesar "uniformly carry an opprobrious connotation". The exception is a neutral usage. Further doubt is cast upon Hamilton's supposed Caesarian aspirations by Owens, Jr. (1984).
12. See *Cato* in Storing 1981 *CAF* Vol 2: 108; *Centinel* in Storing 1981 *CAF* Vol 2: 156-7.
13. For instance, see Smith, in Storing 1981 *CAF* Vol 6: 150.
14. Because of the multiple editions of the *Federalist* [1788], I have resorted to citing, in the first instance, the relevant essay number. All page references are to the Penguin Classics edition, edited by Isaac Kramnick (1987). References to Kramnick 1987 are to his excellent Editor's Introduction. In the bibliography, the *Federalist* is cited under James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay.
15. We are accustomed to think of a faction as a minority grouping, but to Publius "By a faction I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" (*Federalist* 10: 123).
16. Kramnick (1987: 41) points out that "None of the eighteen constitutions adopted by the thirteen American states between 1776 and 1787...used the word 'republic.'"
17. See, for example, the arguments of *The Federal Farmer* in Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 2: 304.
18. The relevant *Federalist Papers* are 70-77 = 402-36.
19. Madison agreed in *Federalist* 37 = 243-44.
20. Cf. Machiavelli's *Discourses* Book 11, and Part 2 of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*.
21. Compare with the Preface to Sallust's *The Jugurthine War* I/1-3. Rahe (1992: 565-6) argues that while Hamilton may have used the classical lexicon of "nobility" and "fame," nowhere did he "insist that the love of fame is a spur to the pursuit of virtue or an echo of the universal longing for true excellence." For a contrasting view in which patriotism and "true excellence" appear to be part of what Hamilton intended in his evocation of "fame," see Stourzh 1970: 99-106, and the revealing quotations from Washington and Pickering (103).
22. See *Cato*, *Centinel*, and *Helvidius Priscus* in, respectively, Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 2: 117; Vol. 2: 155; Vol 4: 156.
23. Storing 1981 *CAF* Vol 3: 38; cf. *Cato* Vol 2: 115, 117.
24. The monarchical allegation was contemptuously dismissed by Publius in an outburst of bitterness unmatched in the *Federalist Papers*. See *Federalist* 67 = 389-392.

25. The vice-president's powers were also considered dangerous; see, for instance, Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 2: 12, 115; Vol. 5: 44, 117.
26. In time, *Denatus* would have his way: see, Section 1 of the twenty-second amendment (1951) of the Constitution: "No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice" etc.
27. The constitution did not specify the creation of a standing army, but nor did it specifically prohibit one: see *Federalist* 8 = 115. It was the absence of such a prohibition that Anti-Federalists attacked.
28. Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 3: 76. The author does not mention the President in this context, but rather the powers of Congress.
29. Remark *Brutus* in Storing 1981, *CAF*, Vol. 2: 413.
30. See also the comparison between Caesar and Cromwell in Storing 1981 *CAF*, Vol. 2: 407-8.
31. See also *An Old Whig* in Storing, *CAF*, Vol. 3: 48.
32. Reliance on human goodness is rare in the *Federalist Papers*. Where it appears, as in *Federalist* 55 and 76 (= 339, 431), it manifests itself as a *deus ex machina* to supply, as Federalists might have put it, the defect of better arguments.
33. Compare with Montesquieu [1748] 1989: 166: "Since all human things have an end, the state of which we are speaking [England] will lose its liberty; it will perish. Rome, Lacedaemonia [i.e., Sparta], and Carthage have surely perished. This state will perish when legislative power is more corrupt than executive power."
34. Or as Benjamin Rush remarked ([1777] 1947: 71) "It has been said often, and I wish the saying was engraven over the doors of every statehouse on the Continent, that 'all power is *derived* from the people,' but it has never yet been said that all power is *seated* in the people. Government supposes and requires a delegation of power: It cannot exist without it." Attempts to involve the people on a mass scale in, specifically, the judicial arm of government, were monstrous and counterproductive, Rush contended. "All history shows us that the people soon grow weary of the folly and tyranny of one another. They prefer one to many masters, and stability to instability [sic] of slavery. They prefer a Julius Caesar to a Senate, and a Cromwell to a perpetual Parliament." See also Rush ([1779] 1951 Vol. 1: 235) where Caesar and Cromwell are also invoked in a highly odious context.
35. Which in the paragraph's entirety contains a negative reference to Caesar.
36. Jefferson [1787], in Peterson 1975: 164 = *Federalist* 48 = 310-11. See also Jefferson's intriguing letter, dated January 26th 1811, to Destutt de Tracy, in which he defends the Philadelphia Convention's decision to create a "singular" rather than a plural *executive*. The failure of the French to do so, he argues, was the key cause for the collapse of the Directory, and the rise of Napoleon. Jefferson continues: "You apprehend that a single executive, with eminence of talent, and destitution of principle, equal to the object, might, by usurpation, render his powers hereditary. Yet I think history furnishes as many examples of a single usurper arising out of a government by a plurality, as of temporary trusts of power in a single hand rendered permanent by usurpation." The real guarantee of liberty was not a plural executive, but strong state governments. In contrast, the "republican government of France was lost without a struggle, because the party of *un et indivisible* had prevailed; no provincial organizations existed to which the people might rally under authority of the laws, the seats of the directory were virtually vacant, and a small force sufficed to turn the legislature out of their chamber, and to salute its leader chief of the nation" (Jefferson, in Peterson 1975: 520-25).
37. See also *Cassius* in Ford [1892] 1970: 34-5.

212 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

38. The word was coined around 1816/18, but was then left in abeyance until Pierre-Joseph Proudhon employed it in 1861. By the late 1860s it was firmly on its way to becoming a keyword of European political discussion. On the term's origins and trajectory, see Berghahn [1981] 1984.
39. It was thus appropriate and in character that one participant at the Convention should portray him as "a convincing Speaker" but no "blazing Orator." This is part of a sketch of Hamilton by Major William Pierce, a fellow member of the Philadelphia Convention. See Hunt and Scott [1920] 1970: lxxxviii-lxxxix.
40. The quotes come, respectively, from *Federalist* 63 and 71 = 371, 409-10.
41. On the dangers for the polity of over-large representative assemblies, see *Federalist* 55, 58, 63 = 336, 351, 370ff.
42. They were also a pathology of proletarianization: see Burns (1954: 162-3) on Hamilton's and Madison's fears about this, and the Caesar parallel on which both writers allegedly drew.
43. On which I rely heavily in the following two paragraphs.
44. *Federalist* 9, 31, 70, 85 = 119, 216, 404, 486.
45. See also *Federalist* 23 = 187.
46. The statement comes from Madison's will, printed in part in Hunt and Scott [1920] 1970: v.

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Index

- Adair, Douglass, 195
Anti-Federalists, 189-198, 203-209
Arendt, Hannah, 129
- Bagehot, Walter, 43-45
Bamberger, Ludwig, 36
Bauer, Otto, 130-132
Baumgarten, Hermann, 63
Beetham, David, 99-100
Bethmann-Hollweg, Theobald von, 121
Bismarck, Otto von,
 as a Caesarist figure, 34-36, 68
 criticisms against, 4, 59, 62-67, 79,
 101
 comments on Caesarism, 45
 German rule, 105-106
Böhmer, Johann Friedrich, 32
Bonaparte, Louis, 31-32, 37, 42
Bonaparte, Napoleon,
 fall, 33
 rise to power and legitimacy, 36-37
"Bonapartism," 37-38
British electoral process, 42
British reform acts, 42-43
Burke, Edmund, 39
- Caesar, Julius,
 as an ideal, 19-20, 24-25, 79-81,
 201-209
 as historical figure, 2, 31
 as negation of republicanism, 2-3,
 16, 51-52
 as tyrant, 26, 32
 comparison to Napoleon Bonaparte,
 31
 in republican demonology, 2-3, 16-
 29
 in republican literature, 24-25
 military achievements, 24
 republican depiction, 3, 15
 role with government, 27-28
 Victorian Age representation, 30-32
- Caesarism,
 American, 191-200
 as a leadership concept, 61
 as tyranny, 82-83
 and Bonapartism, 38
 and democracy, 60
 and its relationship with the
 "masses," 40-46, 84-85, 93-99, 124
 and Jacobinism, 48
 Bismarckian, 50, 59-60, 62-68, 77-
 79
 defining, 2, 32-36, 40, 67-68
 French, 34-36
 illegitimacy, 36-40, 67-68
 Italian, 34
 Mommsen's interpretation, 79-82
 of Louis Bonaparte, 37-38
 parliamentary, 68-73
 Roscher's interpretation, 83-87
 Schäffle's interpretation, 82-83
 weaknesses, 85-86
- Cato, 189-191, 197-200
Centralia, Pennsylvania, 147-148
charisma,
 and Caesarism, 4, 60-62, 99-104
 legitimacy, 90-92
 types, 97-99
- Cicero, 14, 18, 21-22, 24-25, 29
class conflict, 26
Collins, Randall, 159
Colonna, Fabrizio, 25
community of fate, *see also* Schick-
salsgemeinschaft
 analyzing, 167-177
 and the role of disaster and disease,
 139-159
 defining, 6, 117, 140-142
Jewish, 171-177
opposites, 175-177
requirements, 143-148

242 Caesarism, Charisma and Fate

- Constant, Benjamin, 39
“cult of the individual leader,” 35
“cult of the university,” 33
Cuthbertson, Beverley, 169
- democracy,
 parliamentary, 68-72
dictatorships, 33-34
Durkheim, Emile, 6-7, 144, 149-150,
 163-164, 167, 186
- electoral processes, 43, 46, 94-95
Eliaeson, Sven, 61
Erikson, Kai, 153
ethnic identity, 127-128, 130
Ey, Karl-Ludwig, 123-124
- “face work,” 160-161
Factor, Regis, 4
fama (fame), 22-23
fate, 118-122
Federalist Papers, 189-195, 200-209
Ferrand, Joseph, 44-45
Ferrero, Guglielmo, 48
Fidler, David, 155
Fortuna (goddess), 5, 28, 78
Fowler, W. Warde, 80
France,
 central government, 44
 French revolution, 42-43
- Germany,
 liberalism, 65
 Social Democrats, 63
Ghosh, Peter, 4
Goffman, Erving, 140, 160, 186
Gollwitzer, Heinz, 40
Gordon, Daniel, 164-165
Guicciardini, Francesco, 25-26
Gundolf, Friedrich, 30-31
- Hamilton, Alexander, 189-190, 194-196,
 204-205
Hanke, Gauleiter, 174
Harraway, Donna, 151
Harrington, James, 27
Hennis, Wilhelm, 77-78
Herrschaft, *see* Weber, Max
Hitler, Adolf, 128-129
Hong Kong,
 and the SARS epidemic,
 consequences, 146, 169-177
 effects, 144-145, 150
 government handling, 142
 social rituals, 161-162
 Article 23, 165-167
 media, 157-159, 162-163
Hoover, Herbert, 153
Hurricane Katrina, 153
- Indonesia, 143
- Jacobinism, 48
- Klemperer, Victor, 173
Klusmeyer, Douglas, 130
Knapp, Georg Friedrich, 102-103
Koselleck, Reinhart, 11
Kramnick, Isaac, 195
- Lazzaro, Giuseppe, 34
Le Bon, Gustave, 95
legitimate governance, 33-35
Lord Byron, 30
Lord Malmesbury, 42
- Machiavelli, Niccolò,
 Art of War, 25
 “classical republicanism,” 15
 Discourses, 25
 post-Caesar writings, 25-27
MacIntyre, Alasdair, 1
Madison, James, 46-47, 194-194
Mann, Michael, 150-151
Marx, Karl, 47
“masses,” 40-46, 84-85, 93-99, 124, 154
Max Weber Studies, 186
Mazzini, Giuseppe, 35-36
Mearsheimer, John, 121-122
Meyer, Eduard, 80
Milton, John, 19
moira, *see* fate
Mommsen, Wolfgang, 62, 79-82
monarchies,
 heredity, 85-86
 legitimacy, 66
Montesquieu,
 “classical republicanism,” 15, 17-18
 Spirit of the Laws, The, 18
Montreal, 147-148
moral density, 144
Morgenthau, Hans, 121

- Napoleon III,
 and Mommsen, 81
 as Caesarist figure, 34-36, 40, 83-84
 reign, 3
 Naumann, Friedrich, 81-82
 Nazis,
 role of Fate, 130-131
 Nietzsche, Friedrich,
 view on Julius Caesar, 31-32
 Nigg, Joanne, 169
- plebiscitary democracy, *see* Caesarism
 Plessner, Helmuth, 167
 Plutarch, 24-25
 Pocock, J.G.A., 18
 Polybius, 28-29
 Preuss, Hugo, 74
 Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph, 47
 Publius, 189-193, 200-209
- Quarantelli, E.L., 153
 Quincey, Thomas de, 30
- republicanism,
 citizen responsibility, 14, 17
 class conflict, 26
 defining, 13, 15
 fortune's role, 21
 patriotism, 14, 20
 values, 16-19
 virtue (*virtù*), 14, 17-18, 20-21, 25,
 41
 Richter, Melvin, 60
 Romieu, Auguste, 32-36, 40
 Roscher, Wilhelm, 82, 83-87
 Rose, Jerry, 147
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques,
 electoral process, 46
Political Economy, 18
 Rüstow, F.W., 68
- Sallust (Gaius Sallustius Crispus), 22-24
 SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syn-
 drome),
 and the community of fate, 6, 139-
 167
 Schäffle, Albert, 82-84, 86-87
Schicksal,
 defining, 6
Schicksalgemeinschaft, *see also* com-
 munity of fate
 defining, 118
 Federal Republic of Germany
 (FRG), 129-130
 fight for survival, 127-128
 national belonging, 125-126
 social democracy, 48-49
 Sontag, Susan, 151-153
 state citizen (*Staatsbürger*), 122, 130
- Third Republic, 48, 76-77
 Tocqueville, Alexis de,
Democracy in America, 32
 view on republicanism, 47
 Tönnies, Ferdinand, 39, 131-132
 trinitarian theory, 29
 Turner, Victor, 168
Tyche, *see* Fortuna
- uomo buono*, 18-19
- Verhängnis*,
 defining, 5, 118-119
- Wallace, Anthony, 147
 Weber, Max,
 analysis of Caesarism, 11, 39-40,
 59-106
 analysis of the "masses," 93-99
 and the French Revolution, 69
 concept of fate, 6, 118-134
 critics, 15
 discussion of Otto von Bismarck,
 80-82
Economy and Society, 60, 67, 87, 150
Herrschaft, 60, 67, 86-89, 98-99,
 100-101, 103-106
 legitimate domination, 2
*Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of
 Capitalism*, 4
 research on soldier's impact with
 military conflict, 123-124
 sociology, 87-89
 support for a German Reich
 president, 74-77, 82
 voting rights, 122
 Weimar Constitution, 74
 West Virginia, 176-177
 Wilhelm II, 77
 Wolin, Sheldon, 88-89
 Wood, Gordon, 188
 Worden, Blair, 187

