

The New Politics

SITTING IN his imposing office in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome, Benito Mussolini, now eight years in power, contemplated the nature of his revolution: each revolution created new political forms, new myths and cults; it was necessary now to use old traditions and to adapt them to a new purpose. Festivals, gestures, and forms had to be newly created which, in turn, would themselves become traditional.¹ Karlheinz Schmeer has told us only recently that the invention of a new political style was the chief innovation of National Socialism; political acts became the dramatization of the new myths and cults.² We are still familiar with the huge mass meetings, the serried ranks, and the colorful flags so typical of European fascism. Though many of the sites where they took place were destroyed by the Second World War, enough fascist architecture remains intact to give us a feeling of the political style they symbolized.

Yet this political style was not new, and Mussolini was quite correct when he talked of adapting old traditions to new purposes. For what we call the fascist style was in reality the climax of a "new politics" based upon the emerging eighteenth-century idea of popular sovereignty. A common substance of citizenship was said to exist, of which all could partake. No longer would royal or princely dynasties take the place of popular self-expression. This concept of popular sovereignty was given precision by the "general will," as Rousseau had expressed it, by the belief that only when all are

acting together as an assembled people does man's nature as a citizen come into active existence.³ The general will became a secular religion, the people worshipping themselves, and the new politics sought to guide and formalize this worship. The unity of the people was not merely cemented by the idea of common citizenship; rather, a newly awakened national consciousness performed this function. This national consciousness had grown up alongside the ideal of popular sovereignty in many European nations. The nation in the eighteenth century was now said to be based upon the people themselves, on their general will, and was no longer symbolized solely by allegiance to established royal dynasties. The worship of the people thus became the worship of the nation, and the new politics sought to express this unity through the creation of a political style which became, in reality, a secularized religion.

How was this done? From the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, through the use of national myths and symbols and the development of a liturgy which would enable the people themselves to participate in such worship. The concept of the general will lent itself to the creation of myths and their symbols. The new politics attempted to draw the people into active participation in the national mystique through rites and festivals, myths and symbols which gave a concrete expression to the general will. The chaotic crowd of the "people" became a mass movement which shared a belief in popular unity through a national mystique. The new politics provided an objectification of the general will; it transformed political action into a drama supposedly shared by the people themselves.

Parliamentary, representative government seemed to many men to contradict the concept of the general will, atomizing men and politics rather than creating unity. But the new politics was, from the beginning, part of the anti-parliamentary movement in Europe, advocating a secular religion as the political cement of the nation. Historians have stressed parliamentarianism as being decisive in the political formation of

that age, the most important development of the past as well as the great hope for the future. As a result of the domination of this point of view, the study of the growth of a new political style connected with nationalism, mass movements, and mass politics has been neglected, not only so far as the nineteenth century is concerned but also as a necessary background to fascism.

Theories about fascism itself have tended to ignore the importance of those myths and cults which eventually provided the essence of fascist politics. For those who thought of themselves as liberals or as belonging to the left, fascism often presented an aberration of history, an "occupation" of the country by a barbaric minority. The people were held captive and when left to determine their own destiny would return either to a renewed liberalism or to Socialist ideals. Such a concept of fascism was particularly widespread among those forced to emigrate as opponents of the fascist régimes.⁴ But despite the fact that some who fervently held such views in the past changed their mind,⁵ this concept of fascism is still widespread. Even a more sophisticated recent historian of the movement, like Ernst Nolte, believes that the bourgeoisie turned to fascism only during a crisis, returning to their traditional liberalism once the crisis had run its course.⁶

Fascism as an actual historical movement was the product of the First World War, and this fact has been used either to deny or to underestimate its connections with a prewar past. Without the war and the peace that followed, there would have been no fascist movement and therefore, so it is argued, the prewar period did not really matter very much. Fascism thus becomes closely linked to its "epoch": the Europe between the wars. This point of view is not meant to provide an apologia for fascism, but it does endow the movement with a certain uniqueness and views it as an immediate response to a particular historical situation.

There is a large measure of truth to such an analysis, for the collapse of Europe after the war was an essential ingredient of

fascism and provided much of its popular appeal. Yet, all these historians ignore fascism as a mass movement, and also mass democracy, both of which developments had a long history before Nazis and other fascists made good use of them. Indeed, the concept of totalitarianism has been misleading in this connection. For this implies terror over the population (a new version of the older occupation theory) and a confrontation of leader and people. It is based upon the presupposition that only representative government can be democratic, a historical fallacy which not only nineteenth-century mass politics but even the Greek polity should have laid to rest. For it was precisely the myths and cults of the earlier mass movements which gave fascism a base from which to work and which enabled it to present an alternative to parliamentary democracy. Millions saw in the traditions of which Mussolini spoke an expression of political participation more vital and meaningful than the "bourgeois" idea of parliamentary democracy. This could happen only because of a long previous tradition, exemplified not only by nationalist mass movements but by the workers' mass movements as well.

Though the new politics touched all of Europe, we are concerned with its growth and effect upon Germany. Within this disunited nation, the exaltation of the general will as the supreme good was stimulated by two factors once the nineteenth century opened: by the rise of nationalism, which based itself upon the Volk as an entity held together by its historical myths and symbols; and by the rise of mass movements and mass politics. Such mass movements demanded a new political style which would transform the crowd into a coherent political force, and nationalism in its use of the new politics provided the cult and liturgy which could accomplish this purpose.

The rise of nationalism and of mass democracy, the two factors which stimulated the worship of the people as a secular religion, joined hands in Germany during the nineteenth century. Nationalism defined itself as a movement of the people

as it succeeded in obtaining a mass base. The masses which concern us cannot be equated with a mob. Contemporaries who witnessed the rise of nationalist mass movements by the middle of the nineteenth century believed that the mob was taking over the politics of their time. The liberal German historian Georg Gottfried Gervinus wrote with icy disapproval that the political movements of his age were supported by the instinct of the masses. At roughly the same time, in France, Comte Arthur de Gobineau attempted to analyze his own civilization, and recoiled in horror from the confrontation of élite and mass which he saw taking place everywhere.⁷ The liberal and the conservative agreed on this point.

The word "mob" is usually used for men and women who stand outside society, or for those who through chaotic violence try to change it. Gobineau and many of his contemporaries perceived the masses in this way. George Rudé has attempted to show that mobs in the eighteenth century did have a purpose which informed their action, even if this purpose was not always rationally expressed.⁸ The German masses with whom we are presently concerned also constituted a movement with definite goals and presuppositions. To be sure, at times such a movement lasted only for a few years or even days, but despite this, the masses always reconstituted themselves within a definite framework and according to lasting goals. Many people drifted in and out of the festivals and rituals of the nationalist movement, but its framework remained intact.

This movement had taken on the form of a secular religion long before the First World War. While mass movements and mass democracy were opposed to representative institutions as the mediating element between government and governed, they could not, in fact, dispense with such devices. "Totalitarianism" was never a system of government in which a charismatic leader beguiled his followers like the Pied Piper of Hamelin. To be sure, the official party of the one-party state could and did act as mediator between leader and followers.

But this was never satisfactory enough. New and different institutions came to the fore as part of a secular religion which bound leader and people together, while at the same time providing an instrument of social control over the masses. The secular religion which grew up in the nineteenth century has often been analyzed in terms of men and movements whose influence was confined to an intellectual élite: for example, Saint Simonism (influential in France and Germany). Our concern must be that secular and nationalist religion which became operative in German political life as part of mass movements, and which accompanied the entrance of the masses of the German population into the politics of their time.

This religion relied upon a variety of myths and symbols which were based on the longing to escape from the consequences of industrialization. The atomization of traditional world views and the destruction of traditional and personal bonds were penetrating into the consciousness of a large element of the population. The myths, which formed the basis of the new national consciousness whether of a Germanic or classical past, stood outside the present flow of history. They were meant to make the world whole again and to restore a sense of community to the fragmented nation. The "longing for myth" in Germany was noticed by many contemporaries from the French Revolution to the Second World War.⁹ Its roots lay deeply embedded in history. We shall illustrate once again those characteristics which Huizinga thought were typical of the fifteenth century: "having once attributed a real existence to an idea, the mind wants to see it alive and can effect this only by personalizing it."¹⁰ If, in that bygone age, "the mere presence of a visible image of things holy sufficed to establish their truth,"¹¹ this would remain the appeal of modern German national symbolism as well. Such myths had ties with religious and Christian world views, but they became secularized both through the heathen past to which they re-

ferred and through the instant happiness they promised to those who accepted them.

These myths did not stand in isolation, but were made operative through the use of symbols. Symbols were visible, concrete objectifications of the myths in which people could participate. "The community lays hold of some part of its world, apprehends the totality in it, and derives from it and through it that totality and its content."¹² This world view expressed in a specific way the mythology of a people; a mythology which, as Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling put it in 1802-3, was the "universe in a festive garb, in its primeval state, the true universe itself . . . already become poetry." Symbolism was the only adequate way to express this universe, and such symbolism must incorporate the aesthetic and artistic, for not only was this universe poetic, it was also the very font of creativity.¹³

The urge toward symbols which Schelling exemplified was typical of German romanticism. Symbols, the objectification of popular myths, give a people their identity. Gershom Scholem has told us how the Star of David as a Jewish symbol became disseminated only in the nineteenth century. He is, no doubt, correct when he explains this new urge as the search for identification with a Judaism which, after emancipation in the early nineteenth century, had become merely an "Israelite persuasion." The "Symbol of Judaism" must match the "Symbol of Christianity."¹⁴ But Jews may have felt the same urge for symbolism as the Romantic movement did. They reflected, at times, the culture in which they lived. Nationalism, which at its beginning coincided with romanticism, made symbols the essence of its style of politics. These had always played a cardinal role in Christianity and now in a secularized form they become part and parcel of German national worship.

Public festivals had become cultic rites during the French Revolution and this tradition foreshadowed German concern

with the new politics a few decades later. Various groups within Germany created their own festive and liturgical forms within a political context; the most important of these, the male choir societies, the sharpshooting societies, and the gymnasts, were to add significant elements to the new politics. These groups, important and widespread in Germany, provided the pillars for the most significant early public festivals. And permanent symbols helped to condition the population to the new politics: not only holy flames, flags, and songs but, above all, national monuments in stone and mortar. The national monument as a means of self-expression served to anchor the national myths and symbols in the consciousness of the people, and some have retained their effectiveness to the present day.

These were tangible expressions of a new political style. But "style" in this context denotes more than a political device destined to replace the liberal concept of parliamentary government or to illustrate the reality of myth. Such "style" was based upon artistic presuppositions, on an aesthetic essential to the unity of the symbolism. Friedrich Nietzsche aptly described what was involved here:

To think objectively . . . of history is the work of the dramatist: to think one thing with another and weave the elements into a single whole, with the presumption that the unity of plan must be put into the objects if it be not already there. So man veils and subdues the past, and expresses his impulse to art—but not his impulse to truth and justice.¹⁵

This veiling and subduing of the past was accomplished through myth and symbol, and the artistic thus became essential to such a view of the world. So did the dramatic, which will preoccupy us constantly throughout this study, for the idea of the new politics was to transform political action into a drama.

Aesthetic criteria not only informed the festivals already mentioned, but also determined the form and structure of national monuments. The direct involvement of masses of

people forced politics to become a drama based upon myths and their symbols, a drama that was given coherence by means of a predetermined ideal of beauty. Political acts were often described as particularly effective because they were beautiful, and this whether German nationalists were describing their festivals and monuments, or German workers were talking about their own May Day parades.

The religious tradition played a large role here, the idea that acts of devotion must take place within a "beautiful" context. Here we are close to the theatrical and dramatic tradition of the Baroque as exemplified by the Baroque churches, though this tradition was rejected by nineteenth-century nationalists as frivolous. For the beauty which unified politics could not be playful; it had to symbolize order, hierarchy, and the restoration of a "world made whole again."

These, then, were the traditions which National Socialism eventually adopted and, in fact, changed but little in practice. As a mass movement, National Socialism successfully adapted a tradition which had presented an alternative to parliamentary democracy for over a century before the fascist movements themselves became a political reality.

Fascist and National Socialist political thought cannot be judged in terms of traditional political theory. It has little in common with rational, logically constructed systems such as those of Hegel or Marx. This fact has bothered many commentators who have looked at fascist political thought and condemned its vagueness and ambiguities. But the fascists themselves described their political thought as an "attitude" rather than a system; it was, in fact, a theology which provided the framework for national worship. As such, its rites and liturgies were central, an integral part of a political theory which was not dependent on the appeal of the written word. Nazi and other fascist leaders stressed the spoken word, but even here, speeches fulfilled a liturgical function rather than presenting a didactic exposition of the ideology. The spoken word itself was integrated into the cultic rites, and what was

actually said was, in the end, of less importance than the setting and the rites which surrounded such speeches.

To be sure, Hitler and Mussolini wrote theoretical works. Within the Nazi movement Alfred Rosenberg's standing depended to a large extent upon books like *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts* (*The Myth of the Twentieth Century*.) But in practice it was different. No doubt millions read these works, yet even among them the importance of the spoken over the written expression of the ideology was emphasized. As in any traditional cult, the cultic action itself took the place of theoretical works. Even *Mein Kampf* never became a bible for the Nazi movement in the same sense that the writings of Marx and Engels became fundamental to the Socialist world. There was no need for this, for the ideas of *Mein Kampf* had been translated into liturgical forms and left the printed page to become mass rites of national, Aryan worship.

To term such dissemination "propaganda" is singularly inappropriate here, for it denotes something artificially created, attempting to capture the minds of men by means of deliberate "selling" techniques. This is to misunderstand the organic development of the Nazi cult and its essentially religious nature. Typically enough, even as acute an observer as Theodor Heuss, who was to become the first president of the German Federal Republic, believed in 1932 that the dissemination of Nazi propaganda was influenced solely by considerations of success or failure. It was the results which counted.¹⁶ Moreover, such pragmatism was considered proven by the fact that this propaganda excluded discussion with its enemies and their point of view. There is some truth in this observation, for no deeply held religious faith is open to rational dialogue. But the very success of the propaganda which Heuss acknowledged should have given him pause. It was not, after all, created for a specific political purpose only in 1932, but constituted the adoption of a political style which in Germany had already passed through its necessary stages of organic growth. The "religious instruction" given by the party was for Heuss

merely an example of bad taste. While he realized that Hitler valued the written less than the spoken word, this understanding did not lead him to connect this fact with the cultic nature of the Nazi movement. Instead, he ascribed Hitler's preference for the spoken word to the Führer's insight into his own limitations.¹⁷ Heuss's attitude is typical of civilized and liberal people when they are faced with the phenomenon of the new politics. Many historians who now have the advantage of hindsight have followed in these footsteps.

The accusation that through propaganda the Nazis attempted to erect a terrorist world of illusions can be upheld only in part. No one would deny the presence of terror, but enough evidence has accumulated to account for the genuine popularity of Nazi literature and art which did not need the stimulus of terrorism to become effective.¹⁸ This is true for the Nazi political style as well; it was popular because it was built upon a familiar and congenial tradition.

For those of the left, even today, the fascist appeal to irrationality was due to the supposed fact that late capitalist society could only defend itself by such a regression.¹⁹ But if the Nazi political style was a specific phenomenon of late monopoly capitalism, then such capitalism must be read back into the time of the French Revolution and the early nineteenth century. For it was at that point that the new politics really began and was developed as an act of mass participation. But for Karl Marx that age was precisely the time when capitalism made its positive contribution to society. As we shall see, the German workers' movement itself attempted, however reluctantly, to adopt and, in fact, contribute to the new political style. Recently, however, some Marxist analyses of fascism have no longer seen that movement as merely an instrument of capitalism, but instead as a spontaneous mass movement exploiting crisis conditions. The emphasis on spontaneity still disconnects fascism from the course of history and endows it with unique qualities. In the final analysis, the left's concept of fascism with its emphasis on propaganda and ma-

nipulation is, in this case, similar to the liberal attitudes described above. How misleading these points of view actually are, this book hopes to demonstrate.

As we have stated, German mass politics and mass democracy moved in a world of myth and symbol, and defined political participation by means of cultic rites and settings. The appeal was directed to activating men's emotions, their own subconscious drives. This is hardly a new insight, nor one confined to Germany. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when mass movements came to be more frequent and dominant, both Gustave Le Bon and Georges Sorel in France had already formulated theories similar to those we are discussing, designed to direct and control mass movements.

Le Bon stated as a fact in 1889 that the "substitution of the unconscious actions of crowds for the conscious activities of individuals is one of the principal characteristics of the present age."²⁰ After observing the masses in action during the movement headed by General Boulanger, Le Bon said that he was impressed with what he called the "conservatism of crowds," and the importance inherited ideas seemed to have for them. These ideas he believed were expressed through myths, and his contemporary, Georges Sorel, held that workers could not be led into a general strike without appealing to the ancient myth of heroism in battle.²¹ However ambivalent Le Bon and Sorel may have been about the results of their observations, both believed that political institutions no longer mattered, but that instead a new "magic" determined the nature of politics.

Hitler and Mussolini were both influenced by Le Bon's analysis. However, Le Bon only summarized a trend which already existed before his time, and which was much more complex than the "magical" relationship between leader and led upon which he concentrated. Politics was a drama within which liturgical rites took a place, a concept which has been aptly defined by Erik Erikson: "Ceremonial permits a group to behave in a symbolically ornamental way so that it seems to

present an ordered universe; each particle achieves an identity by its mere interdependence with all the others."²² But this interdependence is cemented by symbolic action: episodic, as in public festivals; and more permanent, as in the formation of special groups like the gymnasts or in the construction of national monuments.

The French Revolution was the first modern movement where the people sought to worship themselves outside any Christian or dynastic framework. Honoré Gabriel de Mirabeau, one of the leaders of the revolution, summarized the purpose of the revolutionary cult: as in Greece and Rome, civic festivals must lead people step by step to envisage a unity between their faith and the government.²³ The "cult of reason" was supposed to replace Catholic ceremonial. But this cult of reason abandoned rationalism; it tended to substitute the Goddess of Reason for the Virgin Mary and infuse its cult with hymns, prayers, and responses modeled on the Christian liturgy. The festivals of the revolution and their symbols attempted to transform everyone into active participants. The mere creation of a worshipful mood was not considered good enough. Typically, Joseph Chénier's drama, *Triomphe de la République*, brought everyone to the stage: women and infants, old men and young, magistrates and military. Choirs and processions gave Republican ceremonies a religious cast.²⁴ Indeed, Goddesses of Reason replaced the Virgin Mary in churches which themselves were transformed into temples devoted to the cult of the revolution. The Cathedral of Notre Dame became known as the Temple of Reason. Nature, too, was certainly not forgotten; the revolution even endowed the early morning rays of the sun with symbolic and political importance.²⁵ The "general will" became a new religion.

Though the cults of the revolution dominated Paris for barely one year, they provided a dress rehearsal for the new politics of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany. For the mass movements of modern times also sought to worship the "general will," whether it was that of the people who

formed a nation or those who formed the proletariat. The symbols would change, the concept of a sacred cult become more elaborate, but the example of the revolution was to provide a continuous inspiration. Even the classicism which an artist like Jacques-Louis David annexed to revolutionary propaganda, later, in Germany, determined much of the sense of beauty and form of the new political style.

Within the new politics, however, the de-Christianization of the worship of the people was never to become an accomplished fact. The religious and patriotic ideas of German Pietism had a profound effect upon the development of German nationalism, and therefore upon the cult and liturgy of that movement. Originally, in the seventeenth century, Pietism was a completely inner-directed movement within which state and nation vanished. Only in the eighteenth century did Pietists begin to include visions of the nation within their ideal of the spirit and Christian love. In 1784, for example, Friedrich Carl von Moser connected "Pia Desideria" (true piety) with the sanctification of service on behalf of truth and the fatherland.²⁶ Pietism managed to forge a unity between religion and patriotism, and fill love of the nation with Christian faith. "He who does not love the fatherland which he can see, how can he love the heavenly Jerusalem which he does not see?" (1774).²⁷ The nation now was not only a Christian nation, but was filled with a mystical Christianity which was constantly equated with the inner spirit. "The fatherland is within you," a "sacred space" within every man's soul.²⁸

This Pietism infused the German heritage with a dynamic and emotional content of great importance in creating the kind of brotherly community, based on love, that Pietists desired. Pietism, for all its inwardness, did not discard liturgical forms. For Count Zinzendorf, a central figure in eighteenth-century German Pietism, Christian liturgy expressed the unity of the Christian community better than mere words. Christianity both through piety and liturgy unified this community, and it is small wonder that in Germany Christian

liturgical form and the national cult were to exist in close proximity. Ernst Moritz Arndt, the poet of German unity, said in 1814 that Christian prayer should accompany national festivals,²⁹ but even when such obvious linkage vanished the national cult retained not only the forms of Christian liturgy intact, but also the ideal of beauty: the "beauty of holiness" which was exemplified by Christian churches. This tradition, fused with classicism, led to such artistic forms as could inspire political action. Both in the French Revolution and in Pietism, the ideal of inner-directed creative activity had already pushed outward into the political realm.

The artistic and the political had fused. Against the problems of industrialization, German nationalism defined itself as truly creative; the artistic became political. The parallel with Christianity was once again present. Christian art was the visible expression of Christian theology and the beauty of the liturgy aided in disciplining the congregation. Artistic creativity for the German nationalist movement was not merely an expression of man's inner nature, but helped also to give form to the shapeless mass through symbols and public festivals. In the choice of "sacred places" in which festivals and national monuments were set, a similar emphasis was placed upon emotions that were fostered by the proper environment, which was also the function that Church architecture fulfilled in Christianity.

The pragmatism of daily politics lay within this cultic framework and for most people was disguised by it. But "disguise" is perhaps the wrong term in this context, for any disguise which utilizes regular liturgic and cultic forms becomes a "magic" believed by both leaders and people, and it is the reality of this magic with which we are concerned. The politics of German national unification, its economic and social basis, these have often been investigated by historians. But they have forgotten that nationalism was a mass movement and as such embraced many different classes in propagating a fervent belief which became a major force of its own. The

climax of this magic came during the Nazi period, but it was of importance long before that time.

We may not agree with the psychologist William McDougall's contention that nationalism, because it exalts character and conduct in a higher degree than any other form of group spirit, is psychologically justified. But nationalism did provide an object for mental activity which McDougall quite correctly saw as a prerequisite for the group spirit.³⁰ Nationalism proved most successful in creating the new politics in part because it was based on emotion. But this emotion did not produce a "crowd in ecstacy" simply because reason and logic were missing.³¹ Rather, the careful efforts of nationalist movements were directed toward disciplining and directing the masses in order to avoid that chaos which defeats the creation of a meaningful mass movement.

Fascists and National Socialists have only been the most recent mass movements to make the theories of men like Le Bon come alive. It would have been more pleasant to describe the new politics as a failure. But tracing its course over so long a period, we cannot do so. Surely, if unfortunately, we have touched upon one of the principal dynamics of politics in a mass age. It would have been much more satisfactory to repeat the dialogue in one of the 1920's plays of the poet Ernst Toller: "The masses, not man himself, are the only effective force. No, the individual is supreme!"³² Toller believed that both the masses and patriotism were surrogates for naked egoism. They stood in the way of the power which the individual should possess. If only Toller's ideal could have been transformed into historical reality! Instead, the conjunction of masses and nationalism was not manipulated by but in fact shaped much of modern German history. The voices of intellectuals like Ernst Toller were lost in the crowd.

This book is concerned with the growth of a secular religion. As in any religion, the theology expressed itself through a liturgy: festivals, rites, and symbols which remained constant in an ever-changing world. National Socialism, without

doubt, illustrates the climax of the uses of the new politics. Fascist Italy also had its festivals and symbols, but Mussolini did not give them the key importance which Hitler saw in their application. We cannot claim to give a complete history of the growth and development of the new politics in Germany here; we shall merely try to analyze its nature and to demonstrate its development through the use of the most important and significant examples. Nor can we give detailed explanations of the political developments which accompanied the growth of the new politics in Germany. Yet it is useful to sketch the principal periods of German history within which the nationalization of the masses took place.

The first such period stretches from the "wars of liberation" (1813-14) against Napoleon to the attainment of German unity in 1871. The very beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed a feeling of disappointment with the disunity of Germany and the nature of its fragmented government. The German Confederation, founded at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, was unsatisfactory because princes instead of the people continued to rule; and instead of bringing national unity, the Congress created a loose confederation of thirty-nine states. This situation led to a glorification of the past "wars of liberation" against the French, when Germans had fought side by side against the intruders. The systems of government enforced by the reaction which followed the Congress of Vienna and its suspicion of nationalism gave the new politics its starting point: democratic and nationalist, opposed to the Establishment. The revolutions of 1848, important as they were as a part of German history, are of less consequence in the history of myth, symbols, and mass movements. To be sure, the 1860's saw an intensification of nationalism and its use of the new politics. But this took place under the spell of Italian national unification and as a long-range reaction to the failure to gain national unity in 1848.

The Second Reich, 1871-1918, was the fulfillment of many hopes for unity, yet that period was one of crisis for the new

politics. Bismarck dominated Germany until his fall from power in 1890. The "Iron Chancellor" created a Reich in accordance with his view of *Realpolitik*, stressing the power of the state rather than the kind of spiritual unity that nationalists had thought important. The new Germany was unified only to the extent that was absolutely necessary: minorities were left alone, the individual states retained many of their powers,³⁹ and Bismarck's conservatism seemed unable to check the social divisions which were threatening to divide the nation at a time of rapid industrialization and urbanization. The state attempted to annex the nationalist dynamic and tame it into respectability, thus endangering its dynamic and democratic potential. Emperor William II (1888-1918) from the nationalist point of view continued these conservative policies, in spite of the high hopes first placed in the "people's Emperor." The German Republic, which followed the Second Reich and the lost war, gave the new politics a new impetus. The beginning of the Weimar Republic in 1918 ushered in the true age of sustained mass politics: as an expression of revolutionary ferment, left or right, and as a political necessity in a state based upon the ballot box. The very weakness of the Weimar Republic transformed it into a forum where each group could fight out its own vision of Germany's future, provided it could attract enough following. It was no longer Bismarck's Germany, where the emperor had held most of the threads of government in his own hands. In 1933 the triumph of National Socialism liquidated parliamentary government, but retained those techniques of mass politics that had been developing for over a century before the actual seizure of power.

Within this historical development we can see a certain rhythm which determined the growth of the new politics. From the beginning of the nineteenth century until the unification of Germany, it arose for the most part outside the framework of the German states, directed rather against the governments. The urge toward national unity did not find

favor in the eyes of most kings and princes who ruled the nation. But after 1871 and until the birth of the Weimar Republic, the new German state attempted to manipulate the liturgy, to bend it toward an officially sanctioned nationalism. This attempt seemed to stifle the liturgical impulse which had been in the forefront during the earlier period. We shall see this reflected in the development of national monuments, as well as in the fate of those organizations which had proved crucial in the history of the national cult before unification. But protests against this imposition of a liturgy from above became important, and, for example, found their expression in new theatrical forms as well as in the "festivals" devised by Richard Wagner at Bayreuth. Finally, in the Weimar Republic, when all politics became mass politics, something of the earlier dynamic of the national liturgy would be restored.

Though this political style had a force of its own long before National Socialism appeared, it has seemed useful throughout this book to look forward from time to time in order that we may not lose touch with the climax of this political development. For in spite of all the problems which the new politics faced, we can detect a basic continuity that extends from the struggle for national liberation against Napoleon to the political liturgy of the Third Reich. Such continuity is not to be confused with a search for the origins of the Third Reich. Rather, we are concerned with the growth and evolution of a political style which National Socialism perfected. The aesthetics of politics, which is our concern, its objectification in art and architecture, did form Adolf Hitler's mind to a large extent. But this does not mean that it led to National Socialism or that it caused the German dictatorship. Such an assertion would be simplistic, given the complexity of history. The new politics stood on its own two feet; those attracted to it were not only National Socialists, but also members of other movements which found this style attractive and useful for their particular purposes. However attractive this political style proved to be for much of the popula-

tion, however important a function it fulfilled in an age of mass politics, it provided merely one among a great variety of factors which went into the making of the Third Reich.

In analyzing a political style which was eventually used for such ugly ends, it may seem odd to begin with a discussion of beauty. But the "aesthetics of politics" was the force which linked myths, symbols, and the feeling of the masses; it was a sense of beauty and form that determined the nature of the new political style. The ugly ends to which this style was eventually used were masked by the appeal of the new politics for a large section of the population, by its usefulness in capturing their longings and their dreams. A concept of beauty objectified the dream world of happiness and order while it enabled men to contact those supposedly immutable forces which stand outside the flow of daily life.

The Aesthetics of Politics

A RECENT French writer has coined the phrase, "le snobisme de l'absolu,"¹ describing a literary and intellectual snobbishness that looks for heroes to worship and for the exceptional in life. To be sure, such an attitude had existed in the past and it eventually led many intellectuals into the arms of fascism, where they sought their heroes and a life removed from the ordinary drabness of bourgeois existence. But this kind of snobbery was also basic to the new politics, and appealed to the masses as it did to intellectuals. For the cult of politically charged myths and symbols was based on their exceptionality, on the fact that they stood outside the ordinary course of history and could be truly understood only by those who heroically defended them. The longing for experiences outside daily life, experiences which "uplift," is basic to all religious cults and was continually transferred to the secular religion of politics. Even the bourgeoisie liked to infuse their ordered lives with the extraordinary and the uplifting. (An examination of the European novel around the turn of the last century has shown that the mystique of "living life to the full" had become a secularized myth in which domestic or public festivals symbolized the high point of existence.²) Through such festive occasions the banal was transformed into a closer unity between men and nature, into a community among men.

An occasion was considered festive because, through symbols, it brought to light another world, that of wholeness,

cohesion, and, above all, beauty. The German popular novel of the later nineteenth century shows constant preoccupation with the problem of beauty: a beauty which must exist in order to give life its proper meaning.³ But what was this concept of beauty which infused not only novels read by the hundred thousands but also the new style of politics? Before we attempt to analyze it we must grasp the function it was meant to fulfill. For many Germans during the eighteenth century—Friedrich Schiller, for example—beauty was the unifying element in society.⁴ It related what was common to all members of society, for beauty was considered a timeless absolute that could bring out the capacity for perfection in all men. The beautiful could unite opposites in human nature: strength and passivity, freedom and law. "Beauty," then, was an ideal type arising from that which endures in a man's character and, through this, penetrating his condition in life and ennobling it.⁵ This functional element of beauty was well understood by the start of the nineteenth century.

The most important nineteenth-century attempt to create an aesthetic of the beautiful has as its theme the elimination of the merely accidental; the aim is to give man a consciousness of higher existence which will reconcile him to the reality of life. Friedrich Theodor Vischer's six-volume *Ästhetik, oder die Wissenschaft des Schönen (Aesthetic, or the Science of the Beautiful)* was written between 1846 and 1857 in order to prove that life in this world can be transformed into something beautiful and healthy. This could be achieved by what he first called man's fantasy, and then man's soul. Man is capable of idealization, claimed Vischer, for if our eye were like a microscope we would see not the beauty of nature and man, but the lice on the leaves of a tree and the imperfections in even the tenderest human skin. Further, beauty is a way of looking at things and at life which brings to light the "absolute idea" basic to all existence. This idea is obscured by a fragmented and atomized world, yet it is always within us.

Vischer believed that the present was unpalatable, a bour-

geois world of disorder and chaos, and that beauty had retreated into men's souls and could only be projected outward through symbols. The soul infused an object with its mood; in this way, ideals of beauty could break through and end man's alienation from the world in which he had to live.⁶ It is typical of a more general intellectual development that after 1857, as he entered the second half of the nineteenth century, Vischer placed increased emphasis upon the human need for myth and religion.⁷ The human soul had felt the need to transform this world by infusing it with a beauty which stood beyond the rational bounds of consciousness.

Vischer's ideal of beauty was functional, and he never really defined the ideal type to which all aesthetic should relate itself. The sense of beauty was supposed to make men feel at home in this world by providing them with a reality other than that of daily life in an industrializing society.

As a committed liberal, Vischer had taken part in the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848, where he advocated an extension of the franchise. But for him as for many others in the second half of the nineteenth century, parliamentary political activity played little part in the quest for beauty which was so widely shared. The historian Heinrich von Treitschke was correct when he wrote that almost everyone used Vischer's aesthetic without giving credit to the author.⁸

Contemporary popular literature reflected Vischer's ideas. For novelists like Marlitt, whose stories sold in the hundred thousands around the turn of the century, the ideal of beauty gave a unity and purpose to life, opposed to and transcending modern materialism. The appreciation of beauty led to a definition of the truly sensitive human soul, which in the novels then projected this ideal upon the world. Typically enough, such a soul would also love order and harmony. A world of beauty was a world where "everything was in its appointed place"; a world where one was "at home."⁹ For popular writers like Marlitt, at the end of the nineteenth century this meant a harmonious and cohesive bourgeois world. For

Vischer, beauty was an intrinsic part of order, and he inveighed against "chaotic art." It is no accident that in the novels of the time, descriptions of beautiful objects take up much room. The long descriptions which fill the works of a famous writer like Paul Heyse can serve as an example. In his case, the content of such beauty was linked to bourgeois taste: to opulence and the combination of comfort and order. But for all these writers, the concept of beauty was related mainly to its healing function. This was important not only for literature and art but also for politics. Vischer described the functionalism of beauty as it was conceived by the national cult both before and after his time. What was the content of this beauty, and to what models did it refer?

The most important ideal of the beautiful was derived from antiquity and, specifically, from Greece. Johann Joachim Winckelmann's works played a key role here; he rediscovered the beauty of Greek art for the later part of the eighteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries an important segment of German intellectual society agreed with him that the "good taste which is increasingly spreading through the world was first formed under the Greek skies."¹⁰ In order to grasp true beauty, artists were now compelled to imitate Greek models.

What, then, is the essence of the Greek ideal of beauty? Winckelmann attempted to describe it in his *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (*History of Ancient Art*, 1775). He maintained that beauty resides both in the proportions and in the structure of Greek art. The proportions had to be symmetrical, but this was not the principal consideration leading to true beauty. Rather, beauty consisted in a unity of form which encompassed all individual variety. As Winckelmann put it, if we have an unrelated series of beautiful forms in a nude sculpture, we cannot grasp its beauty. Therefore, a sculpture must possess the unity of an ocean which appears smooth as a mirror, although constantly in motion.¹¹ Beauty had always to be grasped as a whole and must combine in one

harmony the detailed proportions of the ideal human form. Unity of form could not be described merely through points or lines drawn on the sculpture. On the other hand, nothing that was merely accidental or unique was allowed to mar its "ideal form." Not the individual, but "beautiful humanity," found expression in Greek art.¹² Beauty fulfilled a function which we have already analyzed: it stressed harmony and order, the "ideal type" of humanity, and strictness of form. These functions of beauty could be claimed only by Greek art, as symbolizing "noble simplicity and quiet greatness."¹³

The German concept of beauty in the nineteenth century was opposed to an excess of movement or decorative detail. Laocoön, strangled by snakes, Winckelmann tells us, despite all his passion represents a great and quiet soul.¹⁴ Too much movement in sculpture represented an imprisoned and violent soul, the very opposite of the "idealistic beauty of true nobility." The Greeks were a harmonious people living under their blue skies, reconciling men with their troubled world; true passion, as Winckelmann defined it, consisted of a "quiet restfulness" through which the passion shines without disturbing the harmony of the human personality. He rejected all artistic representations of violent emotion, and his chief aversion, naturally enough, was to the art of Baroque.¹⁵

"The inevitable effect of the beautiful is freedom from passion," said Friedrich Schiller, echoing Winckelmann, who made the poet see Greek art through his eyes. For Schiller, too, beauty united opposites and dissolved them into one harmony. This did not mean that turbulence could not exist within the individual parts, but that the overall effect must combine "utter rest and extreme movement" in such a way that man himself did not become passionately and restlessly involved. For Schiller, man must always remain free and inviolate.¹⁶ Beauty was never chaotic but, for Schiller as for Vischer, had laws and principles of order. This image of beauty was well equipped to influence the organization of masses and festivals. As such, we shall meet it often, adopted

without giving credit to aesthetic theory, but still tied to it in its ideal of beauty which was based ultimately on these aesthetic principles.

The proper proportions of beauty, which could be mathematically expressed in the geometry of a beautiful face, were only a part of the harmonious whole. Here art must surpass nature. Beautiful nature exists, Winckelmann held, but only in bits and pieces, while the artist creates a perfect beauty in which there can be no admixture of ugliness.¹⁷ These general principles were then illustrated through detailed descriptions of Greek sculpture and Greek buildings. His *History of Ancient Art* combined theory with concrete examples, and the theory itself was often expressed through pithy phrases which stuck in the reader's mind.

This concept of the beautiful concretized and gave meaning to the ideal of "classical form." Shortly after Winckelmann, Friedrich von Schlegel in 1794 voiced this longing for Greek examples in contrast to modernity: "When the consistence of the ancients is contrasted with our own dismemberment, their broad masses with our interminable mixtures, their simple decision with our paltry embarrassment and confusion, we are indeed impressed with the conviction that they were men of the loftiest stamp." Schlegel believed that his contemporaries might discover a still greater perfection of beauty.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the ancients had succeeded at one time and the moderns still had to try.

The art of the ancients, through its beauty, could solve the dilemmas of modernity. The living examples were statues and temples which still impressed the beholder. Their outward form was important because it personified the functioning of the human soul. Outward appearance was linked to the state of the soul, a linkage which Vischer also stressed. For the beholder, the outward appearance must evoke the ideal type. Beauty, the highest concept of which man is capable, would in this manner transmit itself to other men. The total harmony

of the figure, and all parts within it, projects what is noblest in man.

"In the formation of the human face the so-called Greek profile is the most telling part of an uplifting beauty,"¹⁹ This judgment, passed by Winckelmann in 1776, was to retain its validity during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It served to define the "ideal German man" from the time of the Greek statues which Winckelmann admired to the figures by Arno Breker which watched over the entrance to Hitler's new Reichs Chancellery. Beauty was expressed through a stereotype which would remain operative from the eighteenth century and eventually melt into the "Aryan type" the Nazis and their predecessors praised so highly. Many of the important racist writings, such as those of Hans F. K. Günther in the 1930's, simply repeated the ideas and descriptions we find in Winckelmann, claiming them as a monopoly of the Aryan race. Instruments were invented to measure the right proportions of the human face and classify the worth of men accordingly. This trend, which began at the end of the eighteenth century, was almost immediately applied to the classification of the human species.

Anthropologists were impressed by the "ideal type" represented by Greek art, though Winckelmann himself had been careful to disclaim any racial judgments. He posited the ugliness of the Jewish nose and the squashed noses of Negroes, but he immediately related this particular prejudice to an innate sensitivity peculiar to whites, while admitting, for example, that to Negroes a squashed nose might be beautiful.²⁰ But for most of those who applied the ancient idea of beauty, such caution was thrown to the winds. For example, the influential Dutch anatomist Pieter Camper (1722-1789) attempted to explore racial differences through a comparison of the facial and skull measurements of Negroes and monkeys. He presupposed aesthetic criteria which already defined and evaluated the progression of the human species. The ideal form was

represented by Greek statuary, and the further a race departed from it, the lower it must rank on the scale of humanity.²¹ Negroes became a species placed somewhere between man and animal. If the white race was to continue to symbolize beauty and nobility, it was important that it did not mix with other races and produce offspring that would lose the Greek ideal form. Thus the beginning of racial eugenics is closely associated with the crucial symbolism of Greek and noble beauty.

The ideal of beauty was transmitted not merely by anthropologists but also by important social and political groups. Gymnastics were supposed to train fighters for the liberation of Germany; but these freedom fighters, in order to be effective, had to represent an ideal of beauty which did not admit any distinction between acstheries and individuality—the uniqueness of the individual and the cult of beauty which united all Germans. The compulsory gymnast's uniform was designed partly to obliterate any distinction between rich and poor gymnasts, and partly to make gymnastics easier. But it had another function as well. Its simplicity symbolized a strictness of form which, in turn, referred back to the ancient concept of beauty. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, who in 1811 founded the gymnastic movement, condemned the departure from that noble simplicity of form which his gymnasts should symbolize: "the bigger the stomach, the more unsteady and turbulent man's looks, the emptier is his soul."²² The student fraternity movement, from its beginning in 1810, worshipped a similar beauty, and this continued into the Youth Movement which began at the end of the nineteenth century. The constant reiteration that the true German must have a beautiful body repeats the worship of the Greek models.

The tradition was also continued in stone and mortar in the national monuments of the century. The nation depicted its quest for unity through Greek motifs and Greek temples. The *Walhalla* near Regensburg, built at the demand of King Ludwig I of Bavaria between 1830 and 1842 on the banks of the Danube in order to keep the spirit of German unity alive, was

a Greek temple. The statues of famous Germans which filled it imitated the manner in which the Greeks had celebrated their own famous men. But the *Walhalla* was no isolated example. The so-called Hall of Liberation at Kelheim, the Hall of Fame and the Gate of Victory in Munich—each of these imitated Greece. The *Niederwalddenkmal* in the Rhineland, and later the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal*, built to commemorate the victory over Napoleon, repeat Greek motifs in their construction or in their friezes. At the same time, Frederick William IV of Prussia continued and elaborated classicism in the north. These monuments span the nineteenth century and, as the self-expression of the German nation, illustrate the "tyranny of Greece over Germany." The "good taste" about which Winckelmann wrote had found a home not only under the blue skies of Greece but also beneath the grey skies of Germany. Winckelmann had wished ardently that this taste might spread everywhere, but he did not foresee that it would in fact become a vital part of German national self-identification.

The development of artistic modes of expression was crucial, and the architects who were used to build these representations of the nation were trained in classical models. They journeyed to Rome and Greece to fill their sketchbooks with drawings of ancient monuments; and they were deeply influenced by the revival of classical architecture which had taken place in Prussia during the latter half of the eighteenth century. Men like Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) and especially Friedrich Gilly exercised a continuing fascination on future generations. We have the testimony of Albert Speer, Hitler's favorite architect, of the importance of Gilly in developing his own artistic taste.²³ Friedrich Gilly (1772-1800) influenced future generations by his designs and his teaching, rather than by actual buildings. He received commissions only in the last years of his life, and none of them enabled him to build the monumental structures which were his special concern. But through the exhibitions of his designs for public

monuments and new cities, and through his teaching at the architectural academy in Berlin, he guided future architects who did get the opportunity to put theory into practice. Schinkel, who rebuilt much of Berlin, and Leo von Klenze (1784-1864), who transformed Munich, were his pupils. But aside from such personal influence his designs, which survived his early death, exercised a compelling attraction.

These early classicists were reinforced above all by Leo von Klenze, the architect of the *Walhalla* who in the 1840's also rebuilt much of Munich to conform to the classical taste of King Ludwig I of Bavaria. Gottfried Semper and a host of other architects continued this tradition in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the example of such men provided the inspiration for Hitler's own taste. Through the Munich architect Ludwig Troost, Adolf Hitler came to admire Klenze's work.²⁴ Classicism survived all its enemies; not only did it make peace with romanticism—which in reality meant co-existence rather than fusion—but it also received added impetus as a reaction against the *art nouveau* (*Jugendstil*), the style so popular at the turn of the century. The architects we have mentioned were only the most celebrated examples of such continuity.

Yet, especially in the building of national monuments, Winckelmann's original definition of beauty underwent an important change. While he had praised simplicity and believed that a simple house could be more beautiful than a palace, the architects who tried to translate national feeling into stone and mortar no longer agreed. From the start of the nineteenth century, the classical tended to be confused with the monumental. They mixed the Roman tradition of the Colosseum with the Greek ideal of beauty. This urge toward the monumental, what Winckelmann would have called the exaggeration of form, was a logical consequence of the heightened national impetus: national grandeur had to be symbolized. Moreover, the eternal nature of the German spirit had to be taken into account. The monument must therefore be visi-

ble from a vast distance and dominate the natural environment which surrounded it.

This confusion of the monumental with grandeur and eternity has deep historical roots. It was influenced not only by Rome, but also by the massive forms of the Egyptian Pyramids (as we shall see later). Moreover, "monumentalism" was inherent in the combination of aesthetics and nationalism. The movement toward the monumental was further exemplified by public festivals which played a vital part in the national cult. For the urge to the monumental was an integral part of the growth of nationalism in the age of mass movements, when masses of the population were drawn into the agitation for national unity. Goethe had already perceived what was involved when he described the Amphitheatre in Verona during his Italian journey (1786). Within the theatre the masses are automatically formed into a unity, taking on one form and one spirit.²⁵ This effect is due both to the simplicity of the amphitheatre and to its monumentality. Throughout the nineteenth century political leaders as well as poets thought increasingly in terms of mass politics and mass democracy, and this development was reflected in the transformation of the original ideal of Greek beauty into monumental art.

Much later, Moeller van den Bruck's *Der Preussische Stil* (*The Prussian Style*, 1916) reaffirmed that the Prussian style was indeed the classical style which had predominated in Berlin at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. He once more identified classicism and monumentality: through its monumentality, he says, architectural style receives an embodiment which allows it to portray domination and manliness. Moeller condemned romanticism as feminine, because it lacked the laws of classical form and substituted a weak and sweet feeling for a strong and true sense of beauty. The Romantic style could be admired, he maintained, but the Prussian style symbolized the sacred, which one could worship. Through its simplicity and monumentality it harked back to a time when man, hero, and artist were

identical; therefore, it projected itself into eternity, despising everything which was momentary or accidental.²⁶

Moeller retained the Greek ideal and repeated both Winckelmann's and Vischer's efforts to eliminate the merely accidental from aesthetics in favor of the eternally valid functions of beauty. Moeller's ideas were to pass into Nazi architecture. National Socialists complained bitterly that the monumental in art had decayed during the late eighteenth century as art became individualistic in a liberal age and was no longer able to speak to the community as a whole. The term "monumental," they claimed, derived from the word "momentum," sounded an appeal to activism. Moreover, a monumental style symbolized for the National Socialists moral greatness and the undiminished force of the human soul.²⁷

But for all the ideological justifications of the monumental, it also served to solve a purely practical problem. Mass movements needed large spaces in order to accommodate the people who attended their festivals. During the second half of the nineteenth century this problem was already being widely discussed, mostly in connection with obtaining a "sacred space" in front of national monuments. But discussions concerned with the creation of the right environment for national worship were also concerned with the structure of festival halls able to hold some 75,000 or more people. The Hall of Congresses in Nuremberg where some of the Nazi party rallies were to take place was similar to the Roman Colosseum. The classical tradition was still relevant in 1933 and the architects even attempted to retain the Greek principles of a noble simplicity. But Hitler was only repeating a commonplace when he said that "We must always keep the people in mind and build stadiums which can contain 150,000 to 200,000 people."²⁸

Nazi art and architecture was deeply influenced by the classical revival of the late eighteenth century, despite the criticisms it leveled against its individualism. The monumental was always superimposed upon the "noble simplicity" of Greek

form and harmony. However, the classical ideal from the beginning had to face the Romantic movement and the revival of German symbols and myths within it. This confrontation led to a synthesis on several levels, one of which is exemplified by reference to the power of the Germanic soul which we quoted above, and which was used in order to justify the classical and monumental tradition.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century romanticism captured the imagination of many who were devoted to the ideal of German unity. Thus Ernst Moritz Arndt in 1814 suggested that a monument erected to celebrate the victory over Napoleon at Leipzig should be "large and wonderful like a colossus, the Pyramids or Cologne Cathedral." Arndt's proposal combines the monumental with Oriental and medieval inspiration, a typically romantic mixture of nostalgias. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn also advocated the building of national monuments (1800), coupling this desire with the romantic fascination with history. Monuments survive all times and the fury of all enemies, but they will be lifeless unless the history of the nation remains alive within the soul of the people. Arndt said nothing about the classics, but Jahn believed that ancient monuments could serve as a living example, for all peoples through all centuries made pilgrimages to Greek and Roman temples.²⁹ The classical tradition and romanticism did not merely confront each other within the rising spirit of national consciousness. They combined into a loose synthesis, or indeed co-existence, which was to determine the way Germans expressed their national spirit and its worship.

To be sure, Gothic elements, favored by much of romanticism, can be detected in some of the national monuments, such as the *Hermannsdenkmal* (see Plate 7). But the romantic and medieval impetus was rarely expressed through the construction of imitative national monuments. Those castles and other buildings which dated back to the earlier Gothic periods of history were used as scenery, as an already existing setting for the worship of the nation. The classical tradition was in-

tegrated into this medieval setting, with emphasis on the romantic and Germanic. The early student movement used the medieval Wartburg Castle, where the mastersingers had held their festivals and Luther translated the Bible, as the setting for an important demonstration of German unity. But when, later in the century, they built a monument on the Kyffhäuser Mountain, the romantic aspect was already present in its setting, the "Holy Mountain" on which it was built; the construction of the monument itself also has classical motifs. The romantic and the classical could exist side by side or, as we shall see, could form a closer union. But the romantic seldom replaced the classical.

Contemporaries were aware of this dominance of the classical, and many deplored it. Carl Bötticher, a famous architect, in 1846 praised a certain German style of building in which a roomy, large construction was made possible by means of high ceilings and arches. Such German architecture was preferable to the Greeks. A later commentator remarked in 1890 that with Bötticher's speech the Hellenistic tradition of Winckelmann had vanished from Germany.³⁰ Nothing could have been further from the truth. As late as 1886, Constantin Frantz, advocate of a medieval corporate state and a political writer of some importance, lamented that the revival of German national consciousness led to an aesthetic snobbery and had produced classical Germanias but no true German art. Writing in the *Bayreuther Blätter*, published by the disciples of Richard Wagner, he called for the revival of the true German Romanesque spirit. His accusation was correct, but his solution found no favor even though it seemed to correspond with romantic medievalism.³¹

The ancient idea of beauty and its function remained intact, continuing to delineate the "ideal type" of the German man and to determine the design of national monuments. But it surrounded itself with Germanic symbols. The wood and the oak were very important, and the people who gathered at public festivals and national monuments preferred such set-

tings. This was especially true when national monuments became closely linked to public festivals during the second half of the century. Both became part of a cultic rite, and nearly as much thought was given to the gathering places which surrounded the monument as to the monument itself. Thus the actual monument on the Kyffhäuser was to be a part of a terrain on which the masses could gather, surrounded by a Germanic wood, to perform acts of national worship.³²

At its maturity, the new secular religion of the Volk combined romantic and ancient elements in this way without marring the ancient concept of beauty, which thus retained its essential function. The worship of the Germanic landscape never replaced the dominance of Greece which is so obvious in most national monuments, as well as in the later representational buildings of National Socialism (the Nuremberg stadium, for example).

The romantic and the classical did not merely collaborate in providing the *mis-en-scène* for national festivals; they at times reached a closer synthesis. The Greek ideal of simplicity fused with a Germanic tradition which had exalted this ideal as part of the national heritage. German humanists of the sixteenth century (themselves influenced by the classics) had already endowed the German national character with an ethic which stressed simplicity and an upright character. Perhaps the re-discovery in that century of Tacitus' *Germania* played its part here, for Tacitus had contrasted these Germanic virtues with the decadence of Rome. →

Moreover, the romantic shared, with the evolution of classicism toward the monumental, the move toward "heightening the effects of nature" and a love for the extraordinary. This desire to enlarge nature was realized through the use of open spaces, the arrangement of trees and stones. It could have assumed a playful form, as in the grottos which Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, the architect of Louis XV, constructed for the French king. But it did not remain so, and Ledoux himself linked the heightened effect which he sought to bestow upon

nature with his attempt to produce the same effect through the extraordinary dimensions of his buildings.³⁸ Nature and buildings were both being remolded to impress man with the extraordinary, that which stood outside daily life and which symbolized the high point of human existence. The analogy between such concepts and the sacred was easily made, for cultic ritual needed also to be placed outside the ordinary, linked to extraordinary forces which sprang from the cosmos and from man's soul.

Classical style and Germanic romanticism also joined hands on another level, one which is exemplified by the most widespread of German national monuments: the Bismarck towers, built at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, which dotted the nation in praise of the chancellor who had brought about German unity (Plates 1 and 2). Wilhelm Kreis, who built five hundred of these towers between 1900 and 1910, was worried by the dominance of classicism. Germans had to find their own style and cease to imitate foreign models. But he was unwilling to reject the classical tradition altogether, for he also felt that through its idea of beauty the noble soul peculiar to Germans could be symbolized. He found his ideal compromise in the tomb of the east Gothic king Theodoric at Ravenna (Plate 3).³⁹ Theodoric the Great (c. 454-526) had entered Germanic legend, first as a part of the *Nibelungen* saga and then through themes for fairy tales and adventure stories. He became the symbol of Christian knighthood.⁴⁰ But during the struggle for national unification the east Gothic monarch was transformed into a militant Germanic hero who opposed the culture and might of Rome. Felix Dahn's book, *Ein Kampf um Rom* (*Fight for Rome*, 1867), popularized the struggle of the Germanic Goths against the Romans in Italy, and Theodoric became the representative of a courageous and noble people. This tomb was, therefore, symbolic of Germanic ideals even while it retained a classical form in its construction.

Using this model to build his Bismarck towers, Kreis's archi-

teecture could fulfill the national purpose of those who sponsored them. According to its student sponsors, these towers were built to imitate the way in which the ancient Saxons and Normans had honored the graves of their heroes, by pillars of stone without any decoration.⁴¹ The tomb of Theodoric did resemble a massive heaping of stones, but it also attempted to retain classic form.

Kreis himself was influenced by the Prussian classical architecture of the end of the eighteenth century.⁴² While the tomb of Theodoric was the model for countless of his Bismarck towers, when it came to building more ambitious monuments to the chancellor-hero, Kreis relapsed into classicism. Some of these were modeled on the Pantheon, which seemed to fuse the beauty of ancient form with the monumental style peculiar to Rome.⁴³ Though Kreis constantly relapsed into classicism he sought at times to save himself from it, not only by the model of Theodoric's tomb but also by emphasizing the romantic German landscape as the most appropriate site for his monuments. As he put it: For the effectiveness of a national monument as a shrine of worship, the landscape in which it is situated is of prime importance. But to be effective within such a romantic and Germanic setting, the building must have monumental and cubic forms. By stressing cubic forms Kreis did not mean the abandonment of classical harmony, symmetry, and proportions.⁴⁴ The meaning of classical beauty was to be united with the symbols of the Volk. The monument erected by the German fraternity movement at Eisenach to commemorate its fallen soldiers in the war for unification, finished in 1903, illustrates the classical and romantic synthesis perfectly. The contemporary architectural journal *Bauzeitung* described it as a "Germanic temple" in the form of a Doric rotunda. It symbolized a "monumental quiet" and power restrained through form. Once again we receive the force of Winckelmann's definition of beauty. But the Greek example has now become Volkish: "the wonderful Volkish harmony of Greek art," as the journal put it.⁴⁵ But

nature is also important here, for this art was combined with a mood induced by the native landscape in which it was set, and both together symbolize the unity of a common fatherland. Kreis was the architect of the Eisenach monument, or *Burschenschaftsdenkmal*, and its symbolism would hold true for the Bismarck towers as well. As always, and again in the Winckelmann tradition, Kreis used as little decoration as possible. Instead, the huge hall inside the monument was flooded with a "mystical sea of light" from the specially designed windows.⁴¹ Not very original, Kreis was typical of many other architects of the time, and of an aesthetic which served to represent the nation.

Kreis was to live into the Nazi era and receive the lavish praises of Adolf Hitler.⁴² Small wonder, for the synthesis he advocated was crucial to the liturgy of Nazi politics. He became an expert at constructing memorials to fallen soldiers during the Second World War and was chosen to design their cemeteries. Here too a romantic landscape surrounded what were essentially classical buildings.

The synthesis of the classical and German took one other peculiar form; Arndt's reference to the Pyramids was part of another important tradition. German architectural interest in Egypt dates back to the sixteenth century, and travelers to Rome could see obelisks strategically placed to give a heightened dimension to the papal *Roma Triumphans*. The eighteenth century witnessed an increasing interest in the use of Egyptian models. At the beginning of the century Fischer von Erlach, the most important Baroque architect of his time, enlivened his landscape designs by the use of obelisks and pyramids.⁴³ Other architects built pyramids such as that in the park of the Wilhelmshöhe in Kassel (1706), or even whole Egyptian temples (the Apis Altar of Johann Melchior Dillinginger in Dresden, 1731). Gilly took up this fashion and, typically, combined it with his love for classical forms. His sketchbook (1791) displays such a combination: a pyramid with a flattened top and a classical pillared entrance (Plate 4).⁴⁴

Gilly's example, as usual, was significant. His student, Haller von Hallerstein, submitted designs for the *Walballa* which combined the classical and the Egyptian, while at least one design for the monument to commemorate Frederick the Great of Prussia also followed Gilly's example.⁴⁵ Indeed, pyramids had come to symbolize the mysterious, reverential, and astounding. Moreover, they could be seen from a long distance away. Giambattista Piranesi's *Antichità Romane* (*Roman Antiquities*, 1756) popularized the pyramid as a symbol of eternity, and his book of copper plates became well known all over Europe. Here he attempted to show what ancient Roman cemeteries must have looked like; the eternity of time is represented by pyramids, obelisks, towers, and sarcophagi, all on top of each other or in close proximity. For Piranesi this was a monument to ancient Rome.⁴⁶ The pyramid was thus connected with eternity and also with Rome, whose architecture was so much admired as setting a standard for beauty and monumentality. Herder, too, praised the pyramid in 1774 for its simplicity and its synthesis of square and circle. For him Greece obtained its cultural inspiration from Asia and Egypt.⁴⁷

The Romantic movement, with its love for the mysterious and unusual, was fascinated by both Indian and Egyptian cultures. As early as the seventeenth century, the Jesuit Kirschner had thought that India was an Egyptian colony.⁴⁸ Friedrich Schlegel attributed Egyptian art and architecture to impulses coming from the Indian subcontinent. He was filled with admiration for "the gigantic grandeur and durability of Egyptian and Indian architecture in contradistinction to the fragile littleness of modern buildings."⁴⁹

Pyramids also had associations of grandeur and durability, and were therefore considered a sign of eternity. At the turn of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, they were particularly popular as tombs.⁵⁰ The symbolism of pyramids led the French architect Ledoux to believe that important buildings should climax in the pyramid style. Both Ledoux and

Gilly were attracted to this form because it facilitated the emphasis upon grandeur and massiveness. But Egyptian form never rose to typify the "concept of beauty": that was left to classicism. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn compared Greek and Roman temples with the Pyramids of Egypt. The pyramid had also outlasted time, but the national history which it symbolized was forgotten. The Greek and Roman temples still exemplified a glorious past. Clearly, the classical was a valid precedent for national monuments which "as symbols of national history embrace the fatherland with a garland of flowers, more firmly than iron and diamonds."⁵¹

Egyptian forms could be used within a classical framework in order to heighten the effect of the monumental. That was how Gilly used his pyramid, and it was how the Egyptian form entered the arena of national representation. It is no coincidence that Wilhelm Kreis's tomb of Theodoric also contains pyramidal elements or that Bruno Schmitz, one of the most prolific architects of national monuments, always returned to this form. Here, then, was an inspiration which could be used to extend the classical ideal of beauty toward the monumental and which would fill the beholder with even more reverence and astonishment.

National monuments illustrate most clearly the concept of beauty associated with the new politics and its development. But other symbols which were used in sacred national rites cannot be omitted. The sacred flame was of the greatest importance as a symbol of Germanism. Such a flame was intended to crown the Bismarck towers, but its symbolic use in nationalism goes back to the very beginning of the nineteenth century. When it came to celebrating the first anniversary in 1815 of the Battle of the Peoples, the German victory over Napoleon, most of the ceremonies throughout German towns and villages centered upon a "pillar of flame" which illuminated the hill or mountain on which it was built. At times, altars for these fires were constructed on public squares. This was the "altar symbolizing the salvation of Germany and at

the same time an altar in praise of God. Let the holy flame of German unity cast its sacred light."⁵²

The symbolism of fire and flame dates back to primitive times. Fire and torch were used to fight demons, and the power of the flame derived from the fact that it linked earth and heaven (often connected by lightning, which symbolized the cosmic or divine origins of the flame). No doubt some connection was made between sun cults and the sacred flame, though this does not seem to have been of importance in pagan Germany. The Christian use of the sacred flame was important as well: the Easter candle, the consecration of a flame. Some interpreters of the Bible saw in fire the symbol of God's love. But above all, the Holy Ghost was often given the properties of fire and flame in words and in pictures.⁵³ The eternal light over the altar further annexed the sacred flame to Christianity.⁵⁴

Christian and heathen symbolisms were mixed up together, but it was the sacred flame or the pillar of fire which dominated the ceremonies, though the people also went to church in order to give thanks to the Lord. The symbolism of the German oak was added, and men walked in procession wearing its leaves. Often such a tree was put in the midst of the flames, thus uniting the two symbols. Villages and towns thought of the oak as the "tree of liberty" made familiar through the festivals of the French Revolution.⁵⁴ The oak was one of the most sacred trees in primitive times, perhaps because of its imposing size, perhaps also because it had provided nourishment. "Holy oaks" could be found in all regions of Germany. Christianity also annexed this symbol, the worship of the oak was connected to the worship of the Virgin Mary. Her picture was found miraculously in the hollow of an oak, whereupon a chapel was built on that spot.⁵⁵ The symbol of the oak was, like the sacred flame, a part of popular piety and therefore easy to use in the cause of national self-representation.

In 1815 there was still a confusion of symbols, Germanic,

Christian, and even French, though the nationalistic festivities were meant to celebrate the victory over that nation. But the Germanic symbols, and especially the sacred flame, had already taken on a religious cast; they were a part of the cultic rites which produced a romantic mood of worship. The flame and the fire were to increase in importance as the center of the national rite, ultimately taking the place of the Christian altar in the making of a secular religion.

One further dimension should be added to the function of fire as conceived by the new German cults, and that is the idea of everlasting rebirth and, thus, of continual growth and development. The flame as it stood symbolized light over darkness, the sun as against the night. It reflected the mystical forces of the life-bringing sun which gave men strength and vitality. To the Nazis it meant "purification," symbolized brotherly community, and served to remind party members of the "eternal life process."⁵⁶ But this had always been the meaning of this symbol, connected as it was with the Goddess Freya, Giver of Light. Above and beyond this, the rising flames also stood for ascending life symbolizing "eternal rebirth."⁵⁷ Certainly here ancient Aryan legends played their part, for they had been rediscovered by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Indian antiquity was popularized as part of the Aryan heritage, which so often included the idea of "Karma": the constant rebirth of the soul. Toward the end of the century such a mystique became part of many German Volkish theories. The swastika itself played as yet no part in this symbolism—not even as a wheel of fire, as the Nazis often conceived of it.

The sacred flame thus symbolized a variety of meanings all based upon life, the cosmos, and the victory of light over darkness, the warm sun's victory over the cold of night. The summer solstice was an ancient folk festival now claimed by the newly awakened nation. The flag, too, had been one of the most ancient political symbols known to the armies of Romans, ancient Germans, Arabs, and to the Middle Ages in

general. It played an important part in the formation of the secular cults of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany. The Church annexed the cult of the flag, giving it a religious as well as secular meaning. Indeed, during the Early Middle Ages, but even later, men saw a definite relationship between cross and flag.⁵⁸ In the Middle Ages the flag was a sign of victory in battle and, with its surrender, of defeat. But as a symbol it was also used by rulers in times of peace. The flag already had a long history behind it by the time of the wars of liberation against Napoleon. Earlier on, the possession of a flag itself was important, not its colors.⁵⁹ However, when the flag became a national symbol rather than a dynastic one, its colors and patterns became of prime importance. The Free Corps, which fought against Napoleon, as well as the student fraternity movement, invented the black-red-gold color combination which was to become symbolic of a unified Reich. These men believed that the flags of the "Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" had possessed these colors, although in fact a set color scheme was unknown to earlier ages.⁶⁰

Dress itself became symbolic among national groups. The students who gathered at the Wartburg Festival were asked to appear in imitation Germanic costume.⁶¹ However, the uniform which Jahn designed for his gymnasts was not only Germanic, but was partly inspired by his admiration for the beautiful human body exemplified by Greek models.⁶² Treatise on dress at the beginning of the nineteenth century shows that its symbolic value for the national cult was fully understood.

The classical theme reappeared continually throughout the nineteenth century and later. At times during the celebrations of the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig in 1815, the placards carried by the crowds that pressed around the altar and the flame pictured Pallas Athena as "the wise goddess who has given this great victory to the world." The shield of Minerva was used to symbolize the horrible fate which awaited enemies of the German people.⁶³ The classics were always alive

amidst Germanic symbolism—landscape and monuments and sacred flame—which recalled a long-lost national heritage.

This symbolism introduced an additional concept of beauty into the Germanic ideal type. The romantic writer Carl Gustav Carus accurately described the type in 1849. Determined by the force of the sun, he was light in pigmentation, endowed with blond hair and blue eyes. All of these characteristics reflected the life-giving strength which the sun symbolized.⁶⁴ Winckelmann had believed that under certain circumstances brown pigmentation of the skin could be beautiful.⁶⁵ This idea was now rejected. Once more the classical ideal of beauty and its function were retained. But it was now fused with blond looks; and clarity of skin, which Winckelmann had praised in Greek statues, now turned into an obsession with light pigmentation, with the kind of looks that became the Aryan ideal type. Manliness and virility were associated with such looks, the same manliness which Moeller van den Bruck detected in the monumental Prussian style of the late eighteenth century and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn claimed for his gymnasts. This "Germanic man" was celebrated in the sacred flame and in the festival of the summer solstice which became a festival of hope and confidence in the national future.

The examples of Germanic symbols which we have discussed—fired by the romantic impetus of the nineteenth century, and combined with the influence of classical models—became part of German national consciousness. These concepts formed the basis of the national cult, while the synthesis between the national monument and its setting produced the church of a new secular religion. This church was not a building of stone and mortar, but instead the whole setting in which the worship of the nation took place. It was the "sacred hill," with its equally sacred pillar of fire, the German wood-echoing choirs which sang national songs, answering the oaths of brotherhood. The national monument was often an integral

part of this *mis-en-scène*, the solid symbol which provided a basis for the setting. All of this formed the "*Kultraum*" or "cultic space" whose beauty would lift man above the routine of daily life and lend a higher purpose and unity to his struggle for existence.

These rites produced on a national scale the escapism and urge toward a fuller life which festive occasions also typified in private bourgeois society. For example, the festivities which Thomas Mann describes in his *Buddenbrooks* (1901) are filled with opulence. Here, too, beauty represented a life lived to the fullest. Thomas Mann was not alone in his concept of festivals; it was shared by the bourgeoisie and the working class alike. Thus Richard Wagner's wife Cosima wrote: "I love festivals and festive occasions, the comfortable intimate ones as well as those which display grandeur."⁶⁶ Indeed, she spoke for a much wider public than the Wagner circle when she added that all manifestations of religious enthusiasm must be viewed with deep sympathy. As soon as the festive occasion went beyond the family or circle of friends, when masses of men hitherto unrelated to each other became involved, these festivals took on a new dimension as cultic rites on behalf of an ideal which would draw men together in a common purpose.

This ideal was symbolized by an eternal concept of beauty. Whether it was nationalism or workers' movements, political manifestations became secular cults, and, as the rites of a secular religion, were suffused with myths and symbolism which expressed aesthetic ideals. The "people" were not considered merely as a gathering of individuals, but exemplified an idea of the beauty of soul which was projected upon the outward world. Vischer himself attempted to see the people in this light, and the mass movements of the century took this concept as the means of their own self-identification. The aesthetic concepts we have discussed became charged with political meaning. Indeed, they formed the essence and the

framework of the new political style. This drama must now claim our more detailed attention, not just as a *mis-en-scène* but as the core of the new politics.

National monuments, for example, formed one of the most essential aspects of the self-representation of the nation. As national symbols they penetrated into the people's consciousness. We have mentioned them often in the preceding pages, but we must now examine their development in greater depth.

CHAPTER THREE

National Monuments

NATIONAL monuments—as a speaker at a festival commemorating the founding of the German Reich told his audiences—by revealing a universe of symbol and myth determine the secret music of our soul.¹ The historian Thomas Nipperdey has described national monuments as the self-representations of a democratically controlled nation, objectifying the ideals for which the nation is supposed to stand.² But it was not always so. Before the nineteenth century, such monuments had for the most part been erected in honor of kings or generals. Only at the beginning of that century did they start to encompass poets and writers, adding a cultural dimension to the political and military ones.³

The early monuments were statues whose symbolism lay in their facial expressions or dress. Plain at first, they speedily acquired symbols to surround them: for example, the horse on which a hero sat was led by classical representations of the goddesses of Peace or War, or he was crowned with laurels; or the pedestal on which a man stood was decorated by friezes illustrating his deeds and worth. Such monuments always had a symbolic meaning, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century this had become far more pronounced. National self-representation began to displace the less complicated and purely dynastic symbolism of an earlier age.

The “good taste” of classicism played an important role in the development of such national portrayal, for symbols taken