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Symbolism and Ritual as used by the National Socialists

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*Symbolism and Ritual as used by the
National Socialists*

Presented to
the Graduate College
of
Marshall University

Presented in partial fulfillment
for the requirements set by the
Department of Sociology
for the
Master's Degree

By
Stephanie M. Holcomb
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Abstract

***Symbolism and Ritual as used by the National
Socialists***

By Stephanie M. Holcomb

Utilizing symbolism and ritual, the most important factors leading to the rise of National Socialism in Germany are examined. The thesis delineates the general history of Germany up to the rise of Hitler and reviews several major historical works on the Nazi's rise. It also examines the theoretical literature on symbolism and ritual before analyzing the Nazi's use of symbolism and ritual in their ascension to and maintenance of power.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, Noel and Della Holcomb, who gave me books to read instead of sitting me in front of the television.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis was made possible by assistance from numerous people. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Richard Garnett, who chaired my thesis committee. His knowledge, enthusiasm, and advice made the completion of this project both possible and enjoyable. I would also like to thank the other members of my thesis committee, Dr. Julia Fox and Dr. Karen Simpkins, for their insightful comments. James Kreiner deserves thanks as well for his technical assistance.

Chapter One

Introduction

The transition from Weimar Germany to Nazi Germany has been one of the most studied periods in the twentieth century and of the modern era. The threads leading from the German democratic experiment to the fascist experience have been combed over in sometimes excruciating detail. The political intrigues have been recounted and analyzed; economic factors cataloged for their role in the transition; cultural traits and structures examined profusely. Scholars from nearly every academic discipline have presented their analyses on the matter. At this juncture in the early twenty-first century, the downfall of Weimar Germany and the subsequent rise of Nazi Germany are the subject of countless books, articles, documentaries, and on-line discussion groups.

Obviously, there is little need to elucidate the importance of the study of this subject. However, despite the vast amount of literature and debate on the demise of Weimar and ascendance of Nazi Germany, a coherent tapestry weaving together the diverse elements has proved elusive. It often seems as if different layers of the same montage are pitted bitterly against each other and presented as mutually exclusive

when they would together provide a more complete picture of what happened. Yet, trying to take too many threads into account and tie them together frequently leads to nothing more than a jumbled mess; modeling such a complex web of events is mind-numbing. While a solution to this quandary is certainly not obvious, we must make an attempt to reconcile the different explanations and analyses if we are to gain a greater understanding of what occurred. Monocausal arguments do not accurately reflect or describe human events. As such, this thesis is a modest attempt to circumvent the quagmire of trying to do too much at once as well as the either-or scenario.

The comprehension of social activity sometimes hinges upon the ability to think multi-dimensionally. In the realm of human events, linear progression – although it is convenient and rather commonplace to conceptualize in this manner – is seldom, if ever, the reality of the situation. Concurrently, the “cause” of events is just as rarely the result of a singular factor. While the neat packaging of events as the result of monocausal agents progressing in linear fashion is tempting, the picture generated from such explanations is at best a stilted distortion of the event. Human situations take place within a realm of dynamic interaction and must be treated as such. This was best expressed by Max Weber, who believed that the interpretive value was paramount in multicausal events.

The events leading up to the rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler are prime examples of the myriad of factors intertwining in the arena of social action. The economic and political structures, along with the ideological foundations, had undergone a massive transformation in the 19th century and were continuing into the 20th century. The French Revolution, the rise of Communism, the doctrine of evolution and the ensuing Social Darwinism as well as the escalating industrialization all combining to set the stage for the rise of Nazism in Germany. Not unimportant were the aftereffects of Germany's loss in World War I and the harsh sanctions imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. These macro-level events just touch upon one facet of explanation and have not even taken into consideration the more micro-level activities swirling alongside.

What I am proposing is certainly not novel, but it rarely seems to be done. My thrust will be to examine the transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany from a perspective that cuts across several disciplines and attempts to fill in the gaps that have been left in the wake of pursuing an explanation solely within the realm of a single academic field. While neither refuting findings nor assertions previously made nor reconciling varying explanations, my goal is to add to the details of the tapestry of our understanding by exploring the somewhat neglected elements of the picture. To that end, I will examine the role that ritual and symbolism played in the transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany. While not a

complete explanation in and of itself, ritual and symbolism also touch politics, social structures, cultural elements, and numerous other facets deemed to be important to this transition. As a connecting and transmission factor, ritual and symbolism should not be ignored when trying to understand this particular transition or when attempting to forge a coherent portrait of human events. This, of course, requires some further explanation.

Certainly, no one would argue the fact that Hitler rose to power through the legitimate means of power transmission as provided for in the Weimar constitution, and few would argue that the worldwide economic depression had little to do with the downfall of Weimar. These are facts that are beyond question and have been firmly established. However, the interpretation of those facts, how they interact, and which the most important factors are means for much dispute and provides the crux of our problem in forging a complete understanding of this transition.

In general, the differences in interpretation lay in the differences in emphasis. Economists view the economic conditions as the major reason for the downfall of Weimar while political scientists would tout flaws in the constitutional structure of the Weimar constitution. Obviously, it depends on one's perspective what one will determine to be the most important. Regardless of how much the social scientist attempts to remain neutral, the inherent biases of academic training as well as

personal predictions still creep into analyses. This is true of any interpretation and is true for this thesis as well. Nonetheless, in an effort to gain a greater understanding of these events, this thesis will argue that utilizing theoretical models of symbolism and ritual it will be more readily apparent which facts to emphasize when forging an interpretation. Once the importance of examining the role of symbolism and ritual has been established, it will be applied to an analysis of the transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany.

Before setting out on this endeavor, a brief discussion of one of the limitations of this thesis is in order. First and foremost, I do not make any pretense of understanding or elucidating how symbolic relationships are established or how they specifically get translated into actions and structures. It has been one of the more frustrating aspects of trying to do this analysis, particularly because it is that relationship between the world of ideas and the emergence of social structures, norms, and behaviors that I am most interested as a student of the social sciences. In general, most of the theories and models do not really address this problem either. The specific mechanism(s) by which symbols gain their meaning and manifest in the physical world are glossed over, explained rather inadequately, or ignored altogether. In most cases, it seems that since this phenomenon is so obvious and easily observed that it does not necessitate explanation. Symbols have their meanings and directly impact the physical world with its myriad of behaviors, structures, and

norms; these are certainly facts, yes. But, how this happens is a mystery that no one really wants to delve into. When the problem is brought up, it often ends up with stating the problems with current theory without proposing an alternative. (Bell 1992)

Regardless of these problems, this does not undermine my usage of symbolism and ritual in this analysis; it only makes it somewhat incomplete. While it cannot be explicated as to why it is so or what the particular relationship is, symbolism does in fact play a significant role within societies and their development and is an observable phenomenon. While other aspects of the theoretical models may be lacking, there is an abundance of material explaining the importance and function of symbolism and ritual within societies. Since I am concerned with generating an argument that supports my assertion that symbolism and ritual can be utilized to determine the most important facets within a picture along with applying these postulates to the transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany, the base of knowledge is sufficient to provide adequate material.

It is perhaps one of the great ironies of history that Adolf Hitler rose to power through legitimate means. Within two months, the governmental mechanisms by which he originally assumed power were either eliminated or rendered impotent, and his infamous fascist dictatorship had been established. Despite the astonishing magnitude of the coup, there was surprisingly little murmuring in Germany about the

transition. Certainly, no one could have predicted the earth-shattering consequences that would follow in the next decade and a half, but Hitler never concealed what his aims were in assuming power. The Nazi Party had a published platform, which was implemented as soon as possible. (One should note that the complete annihilation of the Jews was not on his agenda at this time either publicly or privately, so far as any evidence indicates.) While the National Socialists were not the most popular party at the onset of Hitler's chancellery, their popularity sky-rocketed in the following months largely due to Hitler and Goebbels masterful use of symbolism and ritual. This had little to do with the SS or SA because the iron-grip really did not begin until the war started neither did it have much to do with the National Socialists' accomplishments; they simply had not had the time. However, with Hitler as chancellor, the nation was focused on the symbols of National Socialism. For the first time, the entire nation became part of the mass rituals devised by the Nazis. This was in no small part the source of their power.

Almost all scholars acknowledge the tremendous power of Nazi ritual and symbolism. Unfortunately, interpretations tend to gloss over the role of symbolism and ritual or treat it as propaganda with superficial analysis. It is typically sufficient to point out its effectiveness. However, it is because of the tremendous effectiveness that an understanding of the symbolism and ritual utilized by the Nazi party is so important.

Before beginning this endeavor, however, I feel the need for a few explanatory words for my interest in historical sociology. History captures the singular moment produced from a myriad of variables and holds it up to the microscope for analysis while sociology elicits from each individual event the common thread on which each is woven into the greater web of human history. History seeks the unique as sociology strives for the commonality and the patterns to be found across the bounds of those unique events. While recognizing that the variables and events of history are inherently individual due to factors such as temporal and geographic locations, we are still dealing with humans who are actively organizing and shaping their reality in recognizable patterns. As this is the case, the divisions between sociology and history blur.

I endeavor to do neither a disservice to sociology nor history. I simply wish to utilize the strengths of both fields in the hope of elucidating part of the social existence of humans. It is my firm belief that the specialization of knowledge enabled man to delve far more deeply into the search for information than attempting to explore every lead at once. However, the extreme territoriality and conflict now manifest between disciplines is undermining our quest; each discipline has one puzzle piece but often refuses to match it with the others to see if there is any picture forming. The challenge is now in bridging the gap between the disciplines to fill in the holes left by the isolationist stance taken by modern academia. The goal is not to refute the information

gathered already by the individual fields but rather to supplement this information with that gathered by the others.

The purpose of this study is threefold. First and foremost, it is an exploratory attempt to look at the threads from a more integrated approach. It is also an investigation of the role of symbolism and ritual in the National Socialists consolidation of power. Finally, *Symbolism and Ritual as Used by the Nazis* is a modest attempt to use symbolism and ritual as indicators of the most important factors in the rise of National Socialism. In order to do this, a brief history of Germany and National Socialism will be presented in the following chapter although the general history on this period of German development is all too well known to require an extended dissertation. An examination of the importance of ritual and symbolism as well as their theoretical and practical applications will follow. After presenting the history and symbolism chapters, an analysis of the transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany utilizing symbolism and ritual will occur. Finally, this thesis will wrap up with conclusions, implications of this study, limitations, and other afterthoughts.

Chapter Two

The Republic Turns to Fascism

In the interest of providing an even account of this period in German and world history, I will divide this chapter into two brief sections. The first will be primarily narrative history, focusing on the facts with as little interpretation as possible. The second section will cover the historiography and will concentrate on the various predominant interpretations. At no point should one get the impression that either section is exhaustive of the literature available or recounts every detail. This is not, after all, a history thesis. My aim is merely to acquaint the reader with some of the finer points of the historical flow as well as the diverse and contrary interpretations among scholars. A brief overview of the literature available is sufficient to support my assertions about the state of scholarly research on this period in German history.

The Historical Narrative

Germany, as a unified nation-state, did not exist until 18 January 1871. However, as a geographic expression and in the guise of innumerable tiny principalities, Germany had existed for more than a thousand years, usually under the political leadership of Austria. It was

under the brilliant and often unscrupulous Otto Von Bismarck that the North German Confederation led by militant Prussia and the southern principalities had finally forged a united state. Under Prussian guidance over the next several decades, Germany became a force to be reckoned with on the European continent.

Before and after unification, Germany was a country positioned geographically and culturally between Eastern and Western Europe. Politically, Germany followed the models of Russia and other eastern nations. Autocratic and reactionary could best describe the local and national ideologies and governing practices. However, the cultural atmosphere mimicked countries like England and France. Artistic and technological innovations were encouraged and under few if any restrictions. Whatever trends found in either Western or Eastern Europe infiltrated the country only to be given a uniquely German interpretation and application. For example, the Enlightenment that spread liberalism and notions of individual rights and freedom across Europe also affected Germany in several significant ways. Culturally, Germany embraced the liberalism, but the political implications were another matter entirely. Suspicious of any attempts to undermine the authoritarian structure of their government, the German people interpreted this as the need for “enlightened despotism”, not more involvement in governmental affairs.

When Germany emerged as a unified state near the end of the nineteenth century, there was a compelling drive to modernize. Germany

saw herself as having to play catch-up with the other powers of Europe, and this was to a large degree true. Two fundamental elements of modernization would drive the nation throughout the turn of the century and to the end of World War II. Imperialism and industrialization were believed to be badges of honor and status among European nations and therefore absolute necessities for gaining recognition as a great power. More than anything else, Germany wanted to be a great power.

The Industrial Revolution had begun in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Once it reached the continent, industrialization spread rapidly. By the mid-nineteenth century, factories dotted Western Europe and produced numerous goods at an astonishing pace and price. In Germany, however, the Industrial Revolution had made little impact. However, once Germany did begin to industrialize at the end of the nineteenth century, the pace was break-neck.

Industrial Production, Key Indicators, 1870-1910*

	Steel (thousands of metric tons)				Sulfuric Acid* (thousands of metric tons)				Total Industrial Production Index, with 1870 = 100			
	U.K.	France	Ger.	U.S.	U.K.	France	Ger.	U.S.	U.K.	France	Ger.	U.S.
1870	334 [†]	84	126	69	590	125 [‡]	75	—	100	100	100	100
1880	1,316	389	690	1,270	900	200 [‡]	130	—	125	124	137	168
1890	3,636	683	2,135	4,344	870	—	420	—	157	143	210	284
1900	4,980	1,565	6,461	10,205	1,010	625	703	1,180 [§]	199	170	321	400
1910	6,776	3,413	13,100	25,752	1,082 [¶]	900 [‡]	1,727 [¶]	2,049 [¶]	213	203	452	688

* Sulfuric acid production is an excellent indicator of the level of production of the chemical industry as a whole.

†, for 1871

‡, for 1878

§, for 1867

£, for 1913

¶, for 1899

∫, for 1909

The race for colonies had its onset several hundred years earlier with Spanish conquistadors and other colonial adventurers. By the time Germany had reached unification, nearly all the land available for colonization had been claimed by some other European nation. The only means left for Germany to really acquire colonies was taking them from other imperialist nations. Africa proved to be one of the primary sources of both colonies and conflict for Germany. (Turk 1999)

On 28 June 1914, a Serbian nationalist shot and killed the heir to the Austrian Empire. Due to a long list of causes and primarily to the polarization of Europe into two hostile camps bound by treaties, the Great War ensued. Germany's "blank check" to Austria precipitated the situation as did Russia's staunch support of the Serbians and less publicized "blank check" to France. For the next four years, Europe was gripped by the devastation of war. When the armistice was signed in November 1918, Germany was the last of the Central Powers to succumb.

The peace talks in Paris began 48 years to the day after the formation of the German Empire. Despite the lofty vision of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, Germany was instructed not to arrive at the peace conference until late in April. In the end, the terms of peace were imposed on the defeated Germany as was the case with the other Central Powers. Despite the harshness of the Versailles Treaty, Germany had little real alternative. Half-starved by the British blockade, in political

turmoil (a Communist extremist group had led an open rebellion in Berlin in January, which continued sporadically until the Weimar Republic emerged), and under threat of the renewal of war, Germany signed the Versailles Treaty on 28 June 1919.

Although there were numerous items contained in the treaty that incensed the German people, two items chafed Germany the most. The first was the acceptance of total responsibility for the start of the Great War. The second was the payment of reparations. Since Germany bore sole responsibility for the war, the nation would have to pay for both civilian and military losses as well as for Allied occupation of the Rhineland. Add to this demilitarization and the loss of significant industrial territories.

However, as harsh as the conditions imposed on Germany were, the shock of the country's destitute status exacerbated the condition. Even in the last days, the military continued to reassure the people and the government that the war was going in Germany's favor. General Ludendorff was particularly responsible for this deception as well as aiding in the proliferation of the infamous "stab in the back" myth. So, the situation consisted of continuous reports of German successes and then suddenly Germany surrendered. The German people could never fathom such a quick reversal and could not accept that Germany had lost. This infiltrated the social and cultural fabric of Germany and

remained throughout the twenties, thirties, and World War II (Watts 1978).

The “stab in the back” myth is particularly important in understanding some of the later developments and the cultural reactions to the Jewish population. It is uncertain whether Ludendorff originated the idea or simply picked it up and circulated it. However, what is certain is that the idea originated during the final days of the war and the ensuing chaos. The story went that Germany had been betrayed by the Jews, and in some versions, the socialists. Germany was not on the verge of defeat, but Jewish interests had played a foul deception that had led to the surrender. In fact, Germany had not lost the war. This helped to explain the sudden reversal of Germany’s fortune in the war and cover Ludendorff’s deception.

As one could easily surmise, the Weimar Constitution arose amidst tumultuous disorder, and the new republic never generated much enthusiasm or support even among its creators and supporters. Its reputation for instability and weakness was justly attributed. The Weimar government governed only by tenuous and often short-lived coalitions among some of the center parties, barely keeping the right-wing and monarchist factions appeased and never quite satisfying the more liberal, socialist groups. Cabinet positions were constantly being reshuffled as backroom deals were made to keep the various members of the coalition together, and new elections were frequently held in hopes of

gaining a distinct majority that never materialized. More often than not, the Weimar government found itself unable to act in any effective way. This constant reorganizing paved the way for Hitler's ascension to the chancellorship.

Adolf Hitler ran against President General Paul Von Hindenberg in the spring of 1932 and was soundly defeated. However, the presidential elections marked only the beginning of a round of elections and plebiscites that would culminate in the decimation of the republic by the following spring. The coalition among the various parties was breaking down and alarming those in the government about the real possibility that a majority could not be formed. Although Hitler's right-wing extremist group was not close to being a majority, it gained enough strength that with the other coalition parties a majority would be formed. However, Hitler would not consent unless he was given the chancellorship. In desperation, Hindenberg appointed Hitler as chancellor in January 1933. By the end of March, Hitler had been granted dictatorial powers. The events that followed soon proved to be a major turning point in European and world history (Holborn 1972).

Before going any farther, it needs to be made clear due to the nature of this thesis that National Socialism was not an overwhelming majority party. As noted in the previous paragraph, the Nazis were only one of a number of political parties in Germany. Even after Hitler's dictatorship was established, support and enthusiasm were mixed.

Despite the propaganda that portrayed an Aryan Germany virulently behind their Fuehrer and regardless of scholarly interpretations that have often presented the same picture, Germany was like any other modern nation. Certainly, there were ever-increasing numbers of Germans who believed Hitler was their savior as he turned the economy around and accomplished international diplomatic and military feats that no one thought possible. Yet, there were those who virulently opposed Hitler going so far as to leave their homeland in protest and sometimes fear. However, even more numbers of Germans were simply apathetic. It was business as usual for a great many Germans. (Peukert 1987; Aycoberry 1999) However, the amount of enthusiasm at the onset of Hitler's reign and the gathering momentum suggest that National Socialism touched a vital nerve in the German masses.

There are three underlying currents within German political and social culture are important to understanding what was happening after the Great War. The first has already been alluded to in the voracious appetite Germany had for acquiring colonies and desire to become a world power. Nationalism had swept Europe in the latter decades of the Nineteenth century and had persisted through the war. It manifest in many different ways from cherishing all things unique to one's own state to imperialism to provoking military skirmishes to prove one's superiority. It certainly also fanned some of the flames of dislike for other countries, but only in Germany did it combine with the ideology

from the second undercurrent, eugenics, to produce such virulent hatred. (Fink, Hull, and Knox 1985)

The eugenics movement was a pseudo-scientific template for controlling human breeding to produce genetically superior individuals. The belief was that criminality, low morals, physical deformities, mental illnesses, low intelligence, homosexuality, and a host of other “ailments” were the direct result of genetic inferiority and could be eliminated by preventing those who carried such genes to reproduce. In fact, they should be prevented from reproducing for the good of the human species. However, eugenicists had devised a means for determining who had these undesirable traits. Obviously, anyone who manifested physical deformity or low morals was genetically inferior, but by a series of physical measurements, it could also be determined if the person was carrying defective genes that could be passed on. This was the origin of the “racial hygiene” the Nazis implemented and combined with nationalism to help create the cult of self-love that enveloped Germany. However, it should be noted that the eugenics movement was popular in countries other than Germany; the British and Americans were quite enthralled by its possibilities as well.

The third element of communism plays into the other two. After the Revolutions of 1848, Europe was smitten by a terror of communism. Bismarck was so terrified of it that he implemented a number of

communist goals just to steal their thunder. Communism was everything opposed to what German ideals were. The subversive image of communism would become a major symbol of the antithesis of noble Germany.

One of the hardest things to remember in light of the Holocaust and the atrocities committed by the National Socialists is that much of what they were calling for was not extraordinarily unreasonable. Certainly, there are elements that touch delicate nerves and are highly conservative. A number of the demands are dangerously reactionary. However, when viewed with the information from the previous paragraphs in mind, it is possible to understand how many Germans agreed with the party platform. Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, many of the demands are not very far from demands found in our own societies.¹

Historiography

The following does not pretend to be an exhaustive review of the literature on Weimar and Nazi Germany. It is not even close to being complete on the narrow topic that this thesis covers. There is simply more literature on the subject than could feasibly be reviewed in many theses. What is presented is an overview of the wide variety of interpretations. Many will overlap and even complement one another while others will contradict and attempt to invalidate previous findings.

There are even instances where it may appear that the conclusions reached by one scholar have absolutely nothing to do with what another scholar found; it may appear that they are not even studying the same events. It is my hope that this section will provide evidence for the need to utilize symbolism and ritual to try to pull together some of these competing explanations.

Some of the earliest analyses of the transition from Weimar to Nazi Germany simply blamed it entirely on Adolf Hitler. It was simple, neat, and adhered to the “Great Man Theory” in vogue at the time. It was easy to point to how Hitler had entranced an entire nation and managed to get them to do his evil tasks. If it were not simply his charisma, then it was blamed on some sort of pathological genius in his character. Even now there are studies that conclude Hitler’s personality to be the sole cause of the transition. Without Hitler, there would have been no Nazi dictatorship.

However, one of the most popular interpretations after World War II, and indeed it still is somewhat, was the notion that German uniqueness had caused National Socialism and Hitler to gain ascendancy. To some extent, this is obviously true because Nazism was peculiar to Germany, but both Italy and Spain during this period were under fascist rule. Nonetheless, it was argued, perhaps because of the Holocaust, that the particular German character and spirit inevitably led

¹ See Appendix B for the party demands.

to homogeneous individual submission to regimented authority. This is, after all, what the Nazis presented to the world in their propaganda.

A.J.P. Taylor falls into this category of interpretation with his book, *The Course of German History* (1962). One of the most noted historians of his day, Taylor presented a sophisticated argument on the unique position Germany found herself in and went to great pains to support his argument. He concluded that there was a certain inevitability to Hitler's rise and that without constant supervision Germany would fall back into that dark trap of National Socialism or some other brand of authoritarian nationalism. Tracing German history from the Holy Roman Empire through the end of the Second World War, the historical narrative is without flaw. However, Taylor's argument that National Socialism arose in Germany because German history is unique and specific to the German nation somehow lacks any real interpretive value. The argument is valid, but only to the extent that every historical event has its uniqueness and is situated within a geographic or political environment with its own individual historical character.

Another example of this type of explanation is found in *Metapolitics: The Roots of the Nazi Mind* (1961). Author Peter Viereck also delved into the unique roots of German culture and history to aid in understanding the rise National Socialism. However, Viereck refrains from asserting that this is why the Nazis gained power. Rather, he

argued that this is simply one of the more important threads in putting together a complete picture.

There is another class of interpretations that focus on the unique characteristics of the party members who swindled the masses. This is based upon the notion that the Nazi party did not come to power for any logical or rational reason but because of emotionalism and propaganda. There are two general forms of this type. The first is characterized by Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1961) in which the masses are argued to be ignorant and apathetic. Well written and researched, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* takes into account the lack of action on the part of the German people in preventing the National Socialists rise to power as well as the power of the propaganda. This is something that many other studies before Arendt failed to do. However, Arendt's argument stays largely within the bounds of the negative, what the German people did not do rather than what did happen to allow the National Socialists to seize power. Certainly, there is merit in understanding how the potential obstacles to an event never materialized. Moreover, her emphasis on the deliberate deceptions by the National Socialists underscores how the movement generated support and redirected attention. However, only so much of an explanation for events can be derived from what did not happen.

The second type, like William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (1960), focuses on the psychopathic manipulative genius of the

party members. An exhaustively long book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* is impeccably researched. However, it appears he based his conclusions largely on the experiments at the concentration camps and the other atrocities committed during the war. While his facts are correct, the interpretation falls short. Atrocities committed a decade after the National Socialists ascended to power do not explain why or how they consolidated power. In his defense, however, the book is largely meant to be a narrative of events.

In Detlev J. K. Peukert's book *Inside Nazi Germany* (1987), he had two different foci. On the one hand he wanted to explore what the attitudes toward National Socialism in everyday life were for the average German. On the other, he wanted to understand how National Socialism could have taken hold in Germany and undermined the republic. Intertwining these thrusts, Peukert, a German historian, argued that National Socialism's ascendancy was a result "...of the crisis of industrial class society in inter-war Germany, and that the pathologies and fractures of modernity were articulated in this crisis with particular force." (Peukert 1987:11)

In Peukert's interpretation, National Socialism did not really reach out to the masses for support; rather it was the bourgeois industrial class that imposed it upon the masses as a means of shoring up the depressed economy. Much of this argument, however, is based upon trying to prove his first focus, which was really the true aim of the book.

Peukert's main goal was to prove that the mass of German people were not behind Hitler at all. He cited instances of deliberate work slowing and humorous ditties about Hitler, Goebbels, and other high ranking officials as well as other forms of what he called non-conformity. While Peukert does an excellent job of arguing that Germany was not the monolithic giant behind Hitler that it often portrayed as, his argument that National Socialism was a result of the industrial class imposing it on the masses is based on the findings that Germany was not a hotbed of conformity. That Nazism was imposed in the masses by the industrial class simply does not hold weight when any other statistics or facts about National Socialism are taken into account.

The heavy statistical analysis in *The Logic of Evil* (Brustein 1996) completely refutes Peukert's assertion that the industrial class imposed it. Brustein presented a thorough and convincing portrait of who voted for the Nazis and who were the party members. It was not the industrial class that voted for or became members of the Nazi party. Having presented the breakdown of party supporters and members, Brustein attempted to interpret the data and determine why these individuals were drawn to the Nazis. He concluded that the party was particularly skillful at figuring out what the people wanted economically and then satisfying these material needs.

However, there is a slight problem with his conclusion. The data presented are all from before 1933. It was not until after this date that

the Nazis began implementing their economic program. Therefore, individuals could not have been supporting the Nazi party based on the fulfillment of their economic needs. Brustein may have been trying to demonstrate that people were drawn to the party because of the economic promises made and that these promises actually manifest, but it does not appear that way in his writing.

Quite a few scholars, however, deem Hitler's rise as the direct result of the failure of Weimar. Hitler and the Nazis were simply opportunists who happened to be in the right place at the right time. While this statement is somewhat simplified, it does contain the gist of this type of argumentation. In Richard Bessel's excellent book, he formulates conclusions along these lines. Citing the constraints placed upon the Weimar government, the German people not comprehending the extent to which these restraints were imposed by Versailles, the harsh economic circumstances as well as the other plagues upon Germany, Bessel concluded that a democratic Germany was looked upon as weak and ineffectual. It was only a matter of time before Weimar collapsed with the people looking for a more authoritarian government. (Bessel 1993)

It should be noted that Bessel's book, like many that conclude Weimar was doomed from the start and Hitler was very lucky, are focusing on the political, social, and economic currents in Germany between the wars. The question is not necessarily "why did Hitler come

to power?” except as perhaps a side concern. However, this class of books captures something that many others fail to mention. These books allude to the fluidity of history, the sense of chance, the possibility of other outcomes that escapes those analyzing events in hindsight. Engaging in what-ifs is an exercise in futility. Nonetheless, it ignores something vital about human events to analyze it as if what actually happened was the only possibility. While it does not necessarily help in the explanation of events to throw caprice into the equation, it gives a more realistic picture of what happened.

The interpretations presented here are characteristic of literature on the rise of National Socialism. Generally, however, I have chosen some of the more scholarly and well-written examples. Of these cases, the “facts” are true. The statistics and accounts are verifiable. The argumentation is in most cases succinct and facile, backed by indisputable facts. However, there are problems in these interpretations ranging from minor to serious. In many examples, the conclusions reached by the authors are implicitly or explicitly argued to be the singular reason for the event, ignoring the other issues altogether. Much of this is due to reasons already discussed such as difficulties in modeling and academic training. While there definitely is merit in analyzing the various threads in minute detail does add to our understanding, presenting the findings in such a limited way is misleading.

In other cases, the problem is more serious. The facts may be verifiable, but the interpretations have little validity. The contextual implications are at best stilted and at worse false. This occurs for any number of reasons including no guiding theory, coherent methodology, or sheer methodological incontinence. The crux of the problem is that the indicators chosen to answer the question or test the hypothesis are not very good or have nothing to with the question being asked. While this is not the norm, it is evident in minor form in far more scholarly research than it should be.

Chapter Three

Symbolism and Ritual Theory

Nearly every discipline within the social sciences and humanities recognizes the importance of symbolism and ritual to human interactions and behaviors. Symbolism and ritual transmit, reinforce, and redefine the social and cultural order and its norms. They provide the basic building blocks for social interactions on personal and structural levels. One can observe symbols all around and within our own and in other societies. Ritual can be found in settings as diverse as a religious building, a classroom, or on the street. Yet, while most scholars would not dispute the central placement and physical reality of symbolism or ritual, arriving at a concrete and satisfactory definition of either is somewhat elusive. Even more difficult may be finding an adequate description of the how the phenomenon operates. It may be easy to identify symbols and ritual, but theorizing about their functions can be a challenge.

This chapter will summarize the various theories about symbolism and ritual, their relationship to one another, and function within societal groups and structures. This chapter will also establish the importance of symbolism and ritual to society and in the analysis of social interactions. Although both are useful for analysis, they are far more than just tools.

Symbols are generally thought of as something that stand for something else. However, symbols are not necessarily replacements for the “real” thing. While it is true that symbols can do this as when Uncle Sam stands in as the United States, there is much more to it than that. Symbols identify individuals and groups and their placement within society such as when an emperor entered a city surrounded by fabulous numbers of servants, warriors, royal animals, and splendid regalia. Symbolism communicates ideas. An example of this occurs with both written and spoken language.

In the same vein that symbol is usually characterized as a replacement for something else, ritual is normally viewed as a rigid pattern of behavior, usually religious in nature. This is only a bit of the picture. Ritual is the pattern of behavior that generates, reinforces, and alters symbolism, but it is not necessarily religious. If symbolism can be thought of as communication, ritual can be thought of as the transmitting device. Within ritual, symbolic and practical information are exchanged and manifested. Yet, at the same time, symbols often initiate ritual such as the exchange between a colonel and a general. In fact, ritual can be a symbol in its own right.

One of the fundamental characteristics of symbolism and ritual is the ability to connect thoughts and ideas. By touching the ideological and intellectual worlds of thought as well as the physical realm of action, symbolism and ritual form the building blocks of our social fabric.

However, the emotional response elicited from symbolism and participating in ritual is probably one of the compelling ways in which society, groups, and structures are built, connected, and changed.

Beginning in the philosophical realm, phenomenology adheres to the precept that all worldviews and perceptions of reality are actively constructed in a constantly changing social arena. Phenomenology focuses on the methods by which societies and groups legitimate themselves. In other words, phenomenology is concerned with the manner in which society and its structures, values, rituals, and symbols are objectivated and become “real” beyond the confines of our mental exercises (Berger and Luckman 1967). Here the theoretical underpinnings of why symbolism is important begin to emerge rather than a descriptive analysis of how it works.

Phenomenology begins with the assertion that there is an inherent trust all humans must have in order to engage in social activities and construct reality. In this “natural attitude”, we assume a taken-for-granted stance towards other individuals, social structures, and physical objects. All objects and encounters are assumed to be unquestionably “real”. This acceptance of the reality of our surroundings and ourselves allows for interaction to occur. In the natural attitude, there are seven identifiable assumptions that allow humans to interact without constantly analyzing and having to redefine their reality.

Those assumptions are as follows:

1. that there is a physical and objective existence of all other human beings
2. that these bodies have a consciousness similar to the individual perceiving them
3. that social structures, physical objects, and symbols have fundamentally the same meaning for all humans'
4. following from the third assumption, that one can make him or herself understood to others (i.e. one can communicate one's wants/needs)
5. that the stratified social and cultural world is historically pre-given as a frame of reference for all human beings
6. that one can enter into interrelations and reciprocal actions with other individuals.
7. that the situation one finds him or herself in at any given time is only created by the individual in a very small way (Schutz and Luckman 1973).

For phenomenology, the central question is not how we attach meaning but how we legitimate and objectify those meanings, which then define and shape our reality. These assumptions form most of the basic premises of theory on symbolism and ritual.

As such, legitimations form an integral aspect of social organization, reality, and action (Berger and Luckman 1967). In *The Sacred Canopy*, Berger wrote that a legitimation is

...socially objectivated "knowledge" that serves to explain and justify the social order...[and] belong to the domain of social objectivations, that is, to what passes for "knowledge" in a given collectivity...[and] have a status of objectivity quite different from merely individual cognitions about the "why" and "wherefore" of social events. (1967/1990: 29)

Berger distinguished between several different levels of legitimations. Legitimations are not necessarily or even primarily "ideas".

Berger asserts that most legitimations are pretheoretical in nature, which is the first level. On the pretheoretical plane, one finds simple and traditional assertions that “this is how things are done”. Rising just slightly, one finds proverbs, moral maxims, and other traditional forms of wisdom such as myths and legends. Finally, one reaches the theoretical level in which “the nomos of a society is legitimated *in toto* and in which all less-than-total legitimations are theoretically integrated in an all-embracing *Weltanschauung*.”(Berger 1967/1990: 30-32)

In other words, legitimations are what allow symbols to become real and used for communication. Rituals can be legitimations or they can reinforce legitimations. In ritual, the cosmic order is depicted in symbolic forms, thus strengthening the accepted nomos.

Another complementary theory of symbolism’s central role is symbolic interactionism. According to Herbert Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism holds three basic premises that differentiate it from other sociological, philosophical, and psychological explanations of human behavior and action. The first premise is that humans act toward objects, events, and other humans on the basis of the meanings these things have for them (i.e. the individual in society). Secondly, the meaning of these things as perceived by humans is derived from and arises out of the social interaction with one’s fellow human beings in a social environment. Finally, the third basic tenet of symbolic interactionism holds that these meanings are generated in and filtered

through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (i.e. consciousness and the self).

This attaching of meanings and the interpretive quality of interacting to these meanings are the core of symbolic interactionism because everything must be formed and transmitted via a process of indication, which is necessarily a social process. Objects, whether they are humans, social structures, ideas, or physical items, have no fixed status of meaning except those generated and sustained through the indications and definitions humans attach to the objects. Consequently, the meanings of objects in our social environment are produced from the context in which they arise and are presented. As such, these meanings can be altered from geographic region to region or over various periods of time.

In the symbolic interactionist scheme, society is viewed as interacting units of individual human activity. Blumer states that [h]uman society is to be seen as consisting of acting people,

and the life of the society is to be seen as consisting of their actions. The acting units may be may be separate individuals, collectivities whose members are acting together on a common quest, or organizations acting on behalf of a constituency..... human society must necessarily be seen in terms of the acting units that form it. (1969: 85)

The individuals within society are not only the means by which the ideas and forces are transmitted throughout society but also are the way in which meanings are interpreted and attached to objects in society.

Consequently, group activity is seen both as a manifestation of the cultural and social beliefs, values, conflicts, and ideals lodged in the society or the group and the cauldron in which these things are concocted.

Symbols represent other things that individuals and groups have agreed upon to have a specific meaning. They are a means of communication because those individuals and groups understand the object or act to be linked to the symbol. Although symbols vary from culture to culture, across geographic and temporal locations, symbols are a powerful shorthand for representing and dealing with the world at large because humans live within a primarily symbolic environment. Language, which is the primary means of communicating via books, the Internet, and face-to-face interaction, is only (although this makes language sound simplistic) a pattern of sound inflections which are socially constructed and have culturally understood meanings attached to them. Words are symbols for something else (Blumer 1969; Vander Zanden 1996).

Symbols are used to denote all manner of information. As we will see later in interaction ritual analysis, symbols are used to establish and maintain a particular structure, society, and/or attitude towards these structures. Through titles, deference rituals, emblems, and other such symbols, one's standing within a society is presented and to as well as indicators as to which group(s) one belongs. For example, in American

society, high status is generally given to those with a large amount of economic wealth. However, it would be in “bad taste” to display one’s bank account so the American of high status drives a Mercedes, wears Gucci sunglasses and Chanel shoes, and stays at only the most exclusive hotels when traveling (Kerbo 1996; Vander Zanden 1996).

Preceding both phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, Emile Durkheim provided the foundation on which both build. Yet, Durkheim’s theory is more descriptive of symbolism and ritual’s manifestations and functions rather than an explanation of how they arise or create society. True to his reputation, Durkheim treated symbolism and ritual as concrete and discrete structures within society rather than the processes that phenomenology and symbolic interaction view them to be. Although his most complete work on ritual and symbolism focused on religion, he did this because religion provides the clearest examples. However, his conclusions can be applied to any aspect of social and cultural life. This is especially true since he viewed all ritual as the group worshipping itself.

In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/1954), Durkheim argued that the primary characteristic of religion is to divide the world between the sacred and the secular (or, “us” and “them”). By virtue of symbolic cues associated with those items, one understands and acts towards those items (whether these are groups of people or inanimate objects does not matter) in patterns of behavior deemed appropriate.

These appropriate patterns of behavior, which I would argue are in themselves symbols and ritual, are prescribed through ritual.

Durkheim was interested in presenting concrete physical descriptions of ritual and symbolism. To that end, he listed several different components that defined ritual. The most fundamental were:

1. The physical assembly of a group of people
2. Their common focus of attention and mutual awareness of it.
3. A common emotional mood.
4. Sacred objects: symbols which represent membership in the group.

These lead to:

1. Enhanced emotional energy and confidence for individuals who participate in the ritual and/or who respect its symbols.
2. Righteous anger and punishment against those who show disrespect for sacred objects. (Collins 1988:193)

In other words, rituals are defined in relation to their objects of focus (i.e. symbols) while symbols are materialized beliefs.

While Durkheim viewed symbolism and ritual as structures, Clifford Geertz took a more fluid and process-oriented slant. However, he still viewed symbolism and ritual as a dichotomous pair. The relationship between ritual and symbolism can best be described by conceptualizing ritual as the enactment or dramatization of a system of symbols. In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), Geertz presented a series of essays on the way ritual and symbolism operate within society and culture. More important for our purposes is his use of symbolism and ritual to analyze social interactions.

Like the other theorists, Geertz believes that ritual and symbolic interactions are the fundamental basis for human culture. In fact, it is the symbolic nature of man and his ability to create a social world on top of the physical environment that defines his position within the natural world. His ability to communicate symbolically and thus think abstractly are the hallmarks of the human animal. For Geertz, it is through culture, which he defines as the “accumulated fund of significant symbols”, that man becomes human. (Geertz 1973:32-83)

In fact, Geertz goes so far as to say

...symbols are thus not mere expressions, instrumentalities, or correlates of our biological, psychological, and social existence; they are prerequisites of it. Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men. (1973:49)

Interestingly, recent research on the evolution of the human brain supports this assertion. (Deacon 1997)

In this paper, symbolism and ritual are being used to analyze the rise of Nazism in Germany. Therefore, it is necessary to orient them to power, as it is a key component in their rise. How ritual and symbolism create, maintain, and define power are central to understanding the Nazis consolidation of power. However, defining power is not necessarily any easier than trying to define what a symbol is. While many others have put forth definitions capturing pervasively valid facets of power, Max Weber’s definition in its parsimony and directness delves right to the heart of power although Weber himself recognizes the

inherent elusiveness in this conceptualization. Correlating to and in attempt to crystallize his definition of power, he outlined a narrower concept of domination and three principles of exercising this power. Perhaps it is the recognition of the inherent difficulties in extricating power from its exercise and legitimations that gives Weber's definition its strength.

Weber's definition of power, while succinct, allows enough room for a multitude of dimensions. He wrote that "[b]y power is meant that opportunity existing within a social relationship which permits one to carry out one's own will even against resistance and regardless of the basis on which this opportunity rests." (1964: 117) However, Weber viewed this conceptualization and power in general as "sociologically amorphous" and sought to funnel it into more concrete terms by correlating it with and contrasting it to domination, which he defined as "...the opportunity to have a command obeyed by a given group of persons." Weber also did the same with discipline in which he "...meant the opportunity to obtain prompt, and automatic obedience in a predictable form from a group of persons because of a practiced orientation toward a command." (Weber 1964:117).

Weber distinguished between three types of authority. The one of most interest to this thesis is charismatic authority. With charismatic authority, power is derived and legitimated through the devotion of the followers to the leader. This devotion is based upon some special

characteristic of the leader. However, it is not even necessary that the leader possess some outstanding trait. If the followers perceive the leader to be charismatic, then that person is likely to become a charismatic leader regardless of whether he or she actually has those traits. The important aspect of charismatic authority is that the leader is perceived to have special characteristics and is treated as special and set apart from the masses. While the other two forms of authority have a conservative stabilizing bias, charismatic authority is inherently revolutionary.

Erving Goffman, following in the tradition of symbolic interactionism, wrote several books and articles delving into the way humans construct their social world and the way in which power is created, maintained, and presented in social interactions. One of the most well-known was *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In this book, Goffman took a slight twist on symbolic interactionist theory by presenting a dramaturgical model of social interactions. Specifically, he analyzed the way the actor presents himself and the meaning of this for broader social context.

Interaction is viewed as a “performance” that is shaped by the environment and audience. This “performance” is constructed to provide others with “impressions” that are in accord with the goals of the actor, but the construction and interaction exists whether the actor is aware of it or not. It is in this process that social identity is established and is

based upon “impression management”, which is the control or lack thereof and communication of information throughout the performance. In the front stage self, one will attempt to portray the norms of behavior perfectly in front of the audience; while in the backstage self, there is a relaxing of the performance or perhaps a different kind of performance is given.

However, one of the most important aspects of Goffman’s analysis for application to Nazi ritual is the concept of “teams” in which he discusses group dynamics. Here individuals are working as a group to achieve goals sanctioned by the group. Co-operation may manifest as heterogeneity or a homogeneous mix of roles played by the various actors; however, it will be determined prior to the performance because any deviation from the patterns will undermine the entire performance. Any disagreements will be carried on in the backstage area away from the audience to provide a unified front. This sort of division between the front and backstage is evident in the difference between the internal workings of the National Socialists and the monolithic juggernaut presented to the German people.

One of the primary uses of symbolism and ritual in power relationships is as a means of communicating who has power and who does not. As noted previously, status symbols are easily recognizable cues as to where a person belongs in the social hierarchy. It is the complexity and ambiguity of symbols that are the source of their

strength. As David I. Kertzer (1988) has noted, symbols have no arguments against them because what they are representing is not easily articulated into a rational form. Kertzer points out that human beings have a strange tendency to fight and die for causes that are contrary to their own material interests. (1988:8)

Kertzer discusses at great length the relation between symbols, ritual, and the legitimation of power. He notes that in relatively stable political systems and governments there is a wide acceptance of the legitimacy of the power wielders and their symbols. There is a belief in the public rituals displayed by the government. However, when there is little public belief in the legitimacy of the government, the system becomes unstable. (1988:35-56) This is important to keep in mind when examining the state of affairs in Germany just prior to Hitler's ascension.

For simplification in this thesis, symbol and ritual will be defined as inter-related, though not mutually dependent. Ritual will be the structure or action that unites the group. It also can function as a symbol generating mechanism, but it nonetheless helps to define what the symbols are and mean. A symbol will be used as a sign, word, gesture, or other item that has meaning going beyond just the strict definition of itself. It is an identifier of attributes.

The most important aspects of symbolism and ritual are that they are integrating forces that tie the individual to a group or society at large.

They tie together ideology and action. However, going beyond this, they strike at the emotional and primeval in human nature. They, in fact, form the bedrock of communication and the creation of society. Since symbolism and ritual are so inherent in the composition of society, both are good indications of what is most important. Hence, this is the basis of my assertion that symbolism and ritual can be used to determine the most important aspects of National Socialism's rise.

Chapter Four

Analysis

Where to begin with a political movement and social revolution so well known for its symbolism? Even the most historically uninformed when shown a swastika will immediately associate it with the Nazis or Hitler. In fact, it is most telling that National Socialism is most recognized for its primary symbol and that symbol has become forever associated in our culture with human atrocities, mass exterminations, and biological hygiene. However, I do intend to avoid the symbols that one most readily associates with Nazi Germany, particularly the swastika and the eagle, as there is no need to recycle what has already been analyzed.

In this analysis, I want to demonstrate one of the most infamous and obvious cases how symbolism and ritual can tie together seemingly opposing elements within a culture or society. As stated earlier in the introduction, I do not want to refute the importance of economics, politics, or any other area of human relations. I want to demonstrate the necessity of symbolism and ritual to these varying elements and show how symbolism and ritual can be used as a background for examining the competing threads of analysis. Nazi Germany is not unique in its use of symbolism and ritual; it is, however, one of the more successful and extreme cases. What one learns from this analysis can be extrapolated

to other historical and social instances. As demonstrated in the chapter on theory, symbolism and ritual are intricately tied to nearly every aspect of human interaction. In any successful political or social movement, one will find these twins. As stated before the purpose is threefold. This is an exploration, an investigation of the role of symbolism and ritual to Nazi consolidation of power, and an attempt to use symbolism and ritual to determine the most important factors in their rise.

Symbolism and ritual in Nazi Germany are so important not only because of their theoretical importance in the underpinnings of societies but also because they were so central to the regime. It was by no accident that the National Socialist's use of ritual and symbolism was so powerful. All symbols and rituals found in films and newsreels, in pamphlets and mass meetings were specifically chosen for the impact they would have on the German people. Mass meetings were designed to have their well-known euphoric effect. Words were especially chosen to elicit particular reactions. Even more striking is that people's reactions to these symbols and rituals were analyzed in minute detail. (Kracauer 1947; Leiser 1975)

In one of the more ironic turns that history has given us, Nazi Germany was one of the most technologically advanced and scientifically innovative nations during the first half of the twentieth century while clinging to idyllic portrait of the past and the earth. Certainly, the sad economic state needed an innovative re-charge, and the political climate

with its instability called for a more stable government and an authority figure that instilled confidence in the people. The Versailles Treaty was a complete betrayal of the Fourteen Points on which it was supposed to be based and imposed the harshest of conditions on Germany. But, none of these circumstances could have allowed Germany to weld together just the right elements to produce National Socialism and the marriage of technological modernity with pastoral romanticism. What was not discussed in the historical chapter was that in many circles capitalism was hated as much as bolshevism. Both were two sides of the same modern coin that was going to sap the life out of every good German. The Nazis associated both capitalism and bolshevism with materialism, rationalism, technology, and Jews. Yet, Germany was in dire economic and political straits. It was no time for lofty ideas and intellectual debates. What was needed was action and a leader to implement recovery for the German state. It was in Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists that this was found; or at least the German people were convinced by the rhetoric, public meetings, and propaganda that Hitler and the Nazis were their saviors.

The type of symbolism appropriated most readily and easily by the Nazis, the symbolism of the word, provided a pseudo-intellectual answer to this. Long before the National Socialists were anything like an organized group or even before the Great War had swept through Europe and gave Germany numerous arch-enemies, there was a distinctive

worldview arising among the intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals during the late nineteenth century. It praised the unique German soul and body and elevated it beyond any other nation in Europe. Now, it could have easily been mistaken for the run-of-the-mill nationalism that was sweeping across Europe, and in some circles, it probably was genuinely only nationalism. However, the strain of nationalism that eventually festered into the virulent brand of hatred for everything non-German was a sort of quasi-mysticism that had to be experienced in order to be understood. However, it could not be experienced by just anyone for this was not an intellectual concept. It could only be experienced by one who already possessed it. This German-ness was bound up in one's very body and being; it was the direct link between Germans of the present and the heroic Aryan spirit of the past. Perhaps, one was not yet conscious of it. But, if you were German, you already had it. No one else could even begin to comprehend it.

Central to National Socialist ideology and the plethora of symbols generated from it was the notion of race. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Social Darwinism was popular during the early part of the twentieth century, but the Nazis took it several steps farther as they were often known to do. This ideology of race, of blood and soil, provided the bedrock of National Socialism. From this came an entire system of catchphrases symbolizing the mythology and delineating to which category people and actions belonged.

With the words blood and soil (*Blut und Boden*), the core of the racial ideology is established symbolically. Race is the cornerstone in the development of a people or nation. Pure blood is the source of all creativity and genius. The Aryan race is superior above all others. It is the only race capable of genius. Only in Germany has the purity of the Aryan race been preserved, because, unfortunately, in most nations the blood has been contaminated by lesser races. Therefore, Germany has a unique place in the world: as the center of the master race and protector of that pure blood.

Within the bounds of this ideology, the core symbol around which every other symbol, argument, action, and ideology wraps itself arises. The mystical and violent German-ness of National Socialism comes directly from this symbol. Translated as “the people”, the word *Volk* carries with it much more than this. *Volk* encompasses the notions of blood and soil to refer to the community of Germans living inside the nation of Germany as well as other nations. Like race, the word carries a metaphysical connotation. Like the collective consciousness referred to by Durkheim, the *Volk* share common foci, goals, and desires. To be part of the community, you have to be born into it. Once you are part of it, it can never be taken away from you.

Descending from *Volk*, there are two other conceptualizations bearing great importance to Nazi ideology, symbolism, and action. The first is *Lebensraum* and second is the pair of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. Both

are intricately intertwined with one another and with *Volk*. These four words comprise the foundations from which all other symbols originate and provide the legitimation for National Socialist policies and actions.

Kultur quite obviously translates to “culture”, and *Zivilisation* means “civilization”. However, the connotations and images conjured by the use of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* are vastly different from the neutral words culture and civilization. *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* are for all practical purposes diametrically oppositional. *Kultur* is German while *Zivilisation* is Jewish, Russian, and American. *Kultur* is creative and productive, but *Zivilisation* carries with it notions of mechanical, dry lifelessness. It has no depth, roots, or soul; it is a depleting enterprise. It is bourgeois capitalist and communist decadence while *Kultur* is disciplined National Socialist progress. *Kultur* is a reflection of the German soul and the Aryan race just as *Zivilisation* mirrors the degeneracy of the others. *Kultur* must be guarded against *Zivilisation* just as the *Volk* must be guarded against impurities in the blood.

Lebensraum translates as “living space”. Like *Volk*, it has much more meaning to it than this. It is living space for Germans, for the *Volk*, for the proliferation of *Kultur*. It is the “call of the blood”, the mystical desire of all Aryans to be united in one State and in one Greater Germany. The “call of the blood” was the slogan used as justification for annexing areas such as the Sudetenland and the Saar that had German living there. However, with the incorporation of obviously non-German

areas such as Czechoslovakia, the emphasis shifted somewhat from the gravitational pull Germany had on all Germans living elsewhere to the need for land to support these masses of Germans. (Loewenstein 1939)

Recalling the discussion on symbolic and ritual theories, the Nazi party elite understood the power of symbolism and ritual and used it extensively in their propaganda, party meetings, and even strolling through the streets of Berlin or Munich. Hitler wrote that “[t]he mass meeting is necessary if only for the reason that in it the individual, who in becoming an adherent of a new movement feels lonely and is easily seized with a fear of being alone, receives for the first time the pictures of a greater community, something that has a strengthening and encouraging effect on most people.” (Hitler 1939:715) If there was any doubt about how these mass meetings affected people one only has to view video recordings of the mass meetings (*Triumph of Will*, 1935).

These staged rituals were designed to have an emotional effect on the audience, the mass of German people. The symbols were chosen for their aesthetic appeal. While there was a great deal of intellectual energy put into the specifics of Nazi ritual and symbolism, the response from the masses was supposed to be anything but intellectual. National Socialism saw its power as derived from the masses but it had little faith in the intellectual capacities of the average German. In fact, the Nazis had little use for intellectual facilities in its audience. As Hitler wrote, “For I must not measure the speech of a statesman to his people by the

impression which he leaves on a university professor but by the effect it exerts on the people.” (Hitler 1939:477) No one in the Nazi Party was really trying to make a sophisticated argument. Rather, the appeal was to the emotional and primal forces within the individual and German society.

Albert Speer, who eventually became a high-ranking Nazi official, gives an excellent example of the use of ritual and the appeal to the emotional. In 1930, Speer was an intellectually gifted young architect teaching at the Institute of Technology in Berlin. His father was a confirmed liberal, and Speer was not overly impressed by the hysterical lunatic he perceived Hitler to be. Nonetheless, after attending his first Nazi party meeting at the behest of his students, Speer was taken aback. He wrote

...I felt I needed to straighten things out in my own mind, to master my own confusion...Here, it seemed to me was hope. Here were new ideals, a new understanding, new tasks... The peril of communism, which seemed inexorably on its way, could be checked, Hitler persuaded us, and instead of hopeless unemployment, Germany could move toward economic recovery. (Speer 1970:45)

By the time of his second party meeting, Speer had become caught up in the National Socialist movement. Here was a well-educated man from a liberal family. He was not anti-Semitic (although anti-Semitism was not a major part of Hitler’s programme at this juncture) nor particularly nationalistic or interested in politics. Yet, he got swept up in the fervor of National Socialism. While he was not the typical Nazi party member, his

experience does give some indication of the power of the rituals and symbols that Hitler was using.

Creating a profile of the “typical” Nazi member or supporter is not necessarily an easy task. Support varied from region to region in terms of fervor and numbers. While the Nazis did often draw from across the social and economic strata, there are some generalizations that can be drawn. The typical Nazi party member and supporter was lower middle or working class. Though unemployment was rampant and the National Socialists promised jobs for the unemployed as part of their platform, there was an inverse relationship between the unemployed and membership in the party. Protestants were far more likely to be Nazi supporters than Catholics, particularly Protestant farmers, regardless of economic affluence. The percentage of younger men who were members or supporters of the Nazis was about three times that of their percentage in the general population, but the percentage married was about equal to the general population.

Interestingly, despite the National Socialists’ message about the virtues of motherhood and marriage for women, a dramatic percentage of female members were unmarried. Unmarried women represented more than seventy-five percent of the females who actually joined the party. When the numbers are broken down according to economic status, the percentages jump into the nineties for the new middle and working class. This appears to be at variance with the Nazi symbol of the prolific

mother. However, Brustein theorized that these single, working women would have much to gain from eliminating other women from the job market. (1996:117-118).

However, I would like to propose an alternative view. Not only did the Nazis encourage motherhood, but they also touted the image of the athletic, self-sufficient woman. Intelligence and physical fitness were to be admired in a woman. So, there are two different versions of the ideal Nazi woman. The prolific mother, which harkens back to romanticism, and the fit, self-sufficient woman that hailed the new modern, technological utopia sat alongside one another in Nazi symbolism of the ideal, and each targeted its own specific audience. I propose that the image of the self-sufficient woman may have been more effective in mobilizing women to support the Nazis. However, it is likely that the self-sufficient women targeted by that symbol were more apt to have the time and impetus to join as opposed to the prolific mother who was likely to be caring for a home and children. Besides, the evidence suggests that fecundity did not increase during the years of Nazi propaganda or financial loans to have children. (Czarnowski 1997)

Regardless of the reasons, this example begins to point out the way in which contradictory images and rituals, not to mention ideologies and actions, often existed side-by-side. It also begins to illustrate the way in which specific groups were targeted. Goebbels had a system of rating party speakers according to their personality and proficient oratory skills

in which he matched the speaker with the target audience. The Fichte League, a publicly supported group that produced propaganda in foreign countries, illustrates another example. The leader of the group instructed the members to never give someone more than one pamphlet at a time because of the possibility of contradictory messages. (Laswell et al. 1980: 280-282)

With the National Socialists in power, firm control over the arts and entertainment was quickly established. Visual images were not controlled just through overt propaganda. Theatre, film, painting, and other artistic endeavors, like every other area of German intellectual and popular life, came under the scrutiny of the Nazis. In the end, all work had to be state sanctioned or the material was simply not allowed to proceed. As Kracauer (1947:275) notes, “all Nazi films were more or less propaganda films- even the mere entertainment pictures which seem to be remote from politics.”

In many cases, thinly disguised Nazi heroes and sometimes overtly Nazi heroes clash with never disguised foes. While the Nazis embody virtue, loyalty, and courage, the villains embody greediness, treachery, and idleness. One example of this is *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1933). Using the common Nazi film devices of close-ups of flags and rousing music, the film depicts the heroics of Heini as he works for the Nazi cause just before Hitler’s appointment as chancellor. He is the son of a violent and drunken communist, but Heini has seen the error in his father’s logic.

Unfortunately, in the last scene, he is distributing Nazi pamphlets when he is stabbed by a Communist. Found by other Nazis, Heini is dying but his last words are “Our flags billow before...” These are the words to the “Youth Song”. (Kracauer 262) The words of the song serve as a proud tribute to the Hitler Youth:

Our flag flies before us.
 As one man we march into the future.
 For Hitler we march through night and through dread.
 With the flag of youth for freedom and bread.
 Our flag flies before us, the flag is a new age.
 And the flag will lead us to eternity.
 Yes, the flag means more than death! (Leiser 1975: 24)

In an attempt to familiarize the masses with their Fuehrer and build the connection between him and the great heroic past, films were produced in which the main character was a noble, wise king who nearly paralleled Adolf Hitler in amazing accuracy. It was also quite popular to present Hitler as Frederick the Great. (Kracauer 1947) In using film’s extraordinary power to influence the masses’ assumptions, Hitler’s charismatic authority was doubled and reinforced. Also, in depicting him as a king and linking him with Frederick the Great, Hitler becomes a symbol of the nation itself and gets connected with the idea of restoring Germany’s vitality. Kracauer also notes “these films imply the Germans have all the traits of a master race entitled to take over Europe and tomorrow the world.” (268)

As mentioned above, films served not only to depict whom the “good guys” were in Germany they also delineated who was the antithesis

of the Nazi heroes. In the example of *Hitlerjunge Quex*, the courageous Heini is murdered by a treacherous communist. In one of the most striking depictions of German's arch-enemy, *Jud Suss* (1940) characterizes typical Jewish behavior. Greediness, filth, swindling, and rape are the standard Jewish traits depicted by the film. In this film, most of the Jewish characters are played by the same person. The director explains that this is done "to show how all these different temperaments and characters-the pious Patriarch, the wily swindler, the penny-pinching merchant and so on- are ultimately derived from the same root." (Leiser 1975: 152) That same root was a degenerate racial make-up. The Jews (and the other sub-humans) were biologically driven to these corruptions.

In analyzing the Nazi propaganda film, *Triumph of Will*, the symbols central to the movement emerge and a sense of the use of ritual is gained. This film, produced in 1935, was a chronicle of the 1934 party rally and other mass meetings. Standard propaganda techniques were evident throughout. Close-ups of billowing flags, marching columns, cheering audiences, smiling and laughing faces, imposing monuments and architecture during mass meetings, and huge eagle and swastika banners all litter the visual landscape. The symbolism is unmistakable, and it does not appear there was any attempt to cloak it.

From the very first images of Hitler in an airplane soaring above Nuremberg and descending out of the clouds, the Fuehrer is ascribed the

status of almost supernatural. He is continually depicted addressing the crowd from above as if separating himself from the ordinary world.

Sometimes it is from a window or a balcony, but usually it is from an exaggerated platform. However, it should be mentioned that this also serves the practical concern of allowing him to be seen by the maximum number of individuals in the enormous audiences, but the exaggerated platforms go beyond the required practical considerations to produce a pronounced symbolic effect.

Hitler has become more than just himself. He has become the symbol of Germany. This is not only implied symbolically, but it is said outright through the entire film. At the Sixth Party Congress, Rudolph Hess introduces Hitler as “My Fuehrer!...You are Germany! When you act the nation acts! When you judge the people judge! Under your guidance Germany will become the home for Germans all over the world.”

In another example, the labor-servicemen shout in unison “One Fuehrer! One people! One Country!” This particular scene is one of the most pointed examples of the use of ritual and symbolism to express the idea of unity. Hitler is standing on an exaggeratedly high platform before squadron after squadron of labor-servicemen. These are the farmers of the nation, but these young men are in militaristic regalia and using the formations of soldiers, even presenting arms with their spades.

The spokesman of the labor-servicemen calls out to the others and asks where each is from. The response is from the Black Forest, the Rhine, and all across Germany. Yet, they are all Germans working for the same goal, wearing the same attire and swastika. It is after this presentation that the labor-servicemen shout “One Fuehrer! One people! One country!”

One of the ways in which Hitler was demonstrated symbolically and practically to be the center and focus of German political and social life is in the structure of the government. National Socialism was politically structured like medieval feudalism, and the notion of Nazi Germany, as a police state is misleading. As Koehl (1960) noted, the very structure of politics within National Socialism was based upon loyalty to the Fuehrer. All power was vested in him from the *Volk*, the people. He was trusted to direct Germany in every way. Like the medieval king he was depicted as in the films, Hitler was both the symbolic and practical center of German politics and culture. Under him were his vassals, who were chosen for their loyalty to him and to German ideals. This structure mirrors the symbolic and actual unity and cohesion Nazi rituals and propaganda were trying to create.

The political structure is important to understand also because contrasted with the Weimar Republic’s structure it underscores ideas of unity and cohesion. Weimar was based upon rational-legal authority with no identifiable historical legitimation. Hindenberg was supposed to

be a unifying symbol as president, but this proved to be ineffective. Other than Hindenberg, there was a tremendous lack of any unifying symbolism or public rituals. Political interests were characterized by splintered groups each targeting their own specific factions. In contrast to this, National Socialism rested on charismatic authority with an easily identifiable unifying symbol in Hitler. The Nazi platform cut across classes and was broad-based; it targeted everyone except for groups like the Jews and Communists. There was a plethora of symbolism and ritual for the people to get behind.

Perhaps most importantly, the symbolism was the legitimation for their aims. It was their argument for their party goals. If every political, cultural, and economic aim explicated by the National Socialists in their party program is examined, almost every point has an obvious counterpart in Nazi symbolism. This was brilliant on the part of the Nazis because it is nearly impossible to argue against a symbol. The meanings generated by symbols are difficult to articulate at best. If you cannot clearly define something, it becomes even harder to formulate an argument against it. This is especially true when shadows of the image can be held as true in any way in physical reality. If you are an unemployed worker and see several businesses owned by Jews, it lends validity to the images of Jews as greedy, rich bourgeoisie. It does not matter that perhaps every other business on the street is owned by a non-Jew or that the Jewish businesses are only turning a small profit.

There only need be a few examples that can be used to support the image. This type of confirmation or verification of the symbol's truth is particularly potent when it is personal or directly experienced, and there were great numbers returning from the war for whom the symbols used by the National Socialists were personal.

This direct experience was the whole point of the mass meeting. If the participant could be caught up in the spectacle of the event and become part of the event, then the idea of the Volk could become real for that person. The symbols gained a reality and a meaning for those who did not have personal contact with the meanings already. Albert Speer, who had no connection personally with the generation of men in World War I and who had never known deprivation, is a prime example of this phenomenon.

One of the first things a regime must do is legitimate its power. Hitler's power was originally legitimated by his appointment as chancellor and the Enabling Act. However, as he began to act on his own and destroy Weimar, another source of legitimation had to be utilized. Without reverting to the Great Man Theory of History, the importance of men like Adolf Hitler Joseph Goebbels cannot be underestimated. Underlying all the symbolism and ritual used by the Nazis is a conscious and brilliant understanding and implementation of its theory and power to shape ideas and actions. Clearly utilizing symbolism and ritual to legitimate their power and, most importantly,

their use of this power was the source of the people's acceptance and even enthusiasm for the party. What strikes the observer again and again when analyzing Nazi rituals and symbolism is the theme of unity and order, which is central to their consolidation of power. However, because of the Nazi's understanding of symbolism and ritual and deliberate use of it in consolidation power, the areas of German society targeted can tell us quite a lot about the most important factors in the party's rise.

The image of one Germany united behind Hitler, focused on one thing is the dominant theme throughout. Whether the subject is economics, political strength, or culture in the mass meetings or propaganda or their appropriation of words, the underlying or overt message is cohesion and German solidarity. Some of the most dominant visual images are of the endless columns of Nazis marching in perfect unison, wearing the same clothes and serving the same Fuehrer, united by the same cause. Images of young workers depict them in nearly identical poses with nearly identical clothing. Hitler becomes the personification of Germany. In him, Germany finds its unity to work as a coherent orderly organism. This is the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the People's Community.

There is the element in National Socialist symbolism and ritual that suggest sameness between the masses and the party leaders. A certain pointed unity and link is demonstrated by both leaders and

followers wearing the same brown uniform. Now, there is no doubt Hitler was different from everyone else. However, in wearing the same uniform as everyone else, he represented the ideal that every German aspired to be. In *Triumph of Will*, there are scenes in which equality and German classless society are the central theme of the speeches. The classless German society is demonstrated once again in the sameness of uniform. The Nazi Party leaders cultivated this image of coming from the people because ostensibly their power and Hitler's in particular were said to be derived from the people's confidence. This presentation of the Party did allow people to identify themselves with the leaders and aided in generating mass support for the regime.

With a few exceptions, the symbols used targeted everyone in Germany. Diverse and often contradictory messages assured that most people had something to identify with in the Nazi party platform. The example cited earlier targeting women, the image of the independent and athletic woman versus the prolific mother, highlights this use of symbolism. One was aimed at more traditional feminine values while the other reached out to the emerging modern women who were increasingly demanding more equal rights with men. By targeting both sides, the Nazi's eliminated the problems faced by parties that had been based on specific groups.

The images generated by the racial mythology are the foundation of National Socialist ideology and actions, and they are as well concerned

with unity and cohesion. However, there is the notion of superiority deeply embedded within its framework. The word *Volk* invokes a powerful image of German cohesion and focus and establishes the idea of the German spirit. With words like *Blut* and *Boden* suggest cohesion and inherited superiority as well but they also incorporate stability and grounding of energy. The superiority theme is continued in both *Kultur* and *Lebensraum*. Over and over, the virtues of Germans and its rights are enthroned in the symbols.

The dominant themes inherent in the symbolism and ritual of National Socialism are unity, order, superiority, and the rights that go along with that superiority. Unfortunately, because of the broad question investigated and the limited scope of this thesis, it is difficult to make a firm conclusion about what were the most important factors and arrange them according to significance. However, a few preliminary conclusions can be reached although not weighted as to which is more important.

Because the dominant themes were unity, order, superiority, and the rights stemming from that superiority, the National Socialists rose to and consolidated their power largely due to the ensuing political and social chaos following the defeat in World War I. The void left after the collapse of the Kaiser's government was filled neither actually nor symbolically by the Weimar Republic. There was, in effect, no government for the German people after the end of the war. Suddenly,

Germany was unstable. As noted earlier in the thesis, Weimar was ineffective on every front. All of the political dissent that had been kept at bay during the Imperial days was unleashed, and Germany culturally underwent the social liberalization that the rest of the West experienced during the twenties. Communists planned and attempted coups while jazz clubs sprang up, and clothing changed drastically for women.

(Marcus 1989)

Political and social disorganization was new to Germany. Despite Germany existing only as a collection of loosely organized states prior to 1871, each state had a stable authoritarian government (usually a monarchy). Within each state or province, there was a high degree of homogeneity. The revolutions that had touched other European countries had been squelched or buffered in Germany. There had never really been a social or political revolution in Germany. Reforms had always been preemptive strikes against potential revolutionary forces. Bismarck had been a genius at this. If the very ideas that the opposition is clamoring for are incorporated into the national program, then there is little or no danger of revolution. Even the national constitution had been at the hands of Junkers and politicians, not a liberal movement.

The culture of the battlefield had also left a distinct impression on this particular generation of German men. Those who had participated in the war and even those who had not glorified the sense of unity and order found within the ranks of the military. Not only did they return

home from that extreme order and single focus, but they also returned home defeated and to political and social disorganization. This was a singular shock exacerbated by the belief that they had not really lost the war (Herf 1984).

The loss of the war and the harsh conditions imposed by the Versailles Treaty left Germany at the bottom of the power scale in Europe. This resultant anomie stemming from the defeat led to the need for superiority, to gain what was in reality already theirs. Germany had a long and proud military tradition that made the defeat had to swallow. With the “stab in the back” myth that Germany really did not lose the war, Germany had difficulty assuming the role of a subjugated nation.

The Weimar Republic was really more of an anomaly than the National Socialist government in the course of German history. Politically, militarily, and socially, the latter was a return to a more familiar ground. However, this is not to suggest that the Nazi seizure of power was inevitable. It was imperative that the Nazis restore political stability, economic viability, and social cohesion. Had they not been able to accomplish these things, it is questionable they could have held on to power for long. If other European nations had not stepped aside when the National Socialists stopped paying reparations or annexed the various provinces surrounding Germany, the nation might not have bought into the symbolism so much. However, the Nazis were effective in their actions and their use of symbolism and ritual.

The National Socialists consciously utilized symbolism and ritual to their advantage. Through the use of mass rituals in which the individual became part of the whole and acquired direct experience with the symbols, the Nazis legitimated and consolidated their power. It is undeniable that the Nazis used symbolism and ritual for this purpose. Unfortunately, there is less evidence from which to deduce what the most important factors were in the Nazis' rise. From the emphasis on the unity and superiority of the German people along with order, the implications are that the ensuing political and social disorganization was the prime factor in the National Socialists' rise to power and that this creative use of symbols and ritual aided them immensely in this endeavor.

Chapter V

Implications and Limitations of the Study

It is easy to dismiss such seemingly intangible items such as ritual and symbolism and their effects on power, especially when it is so difficult to measure empirically. One can argue that because it falls into the category of vagueness it should not be treated as a valid argument or explanation. However, just because something is vague, does that mean its impact on social events and interactions should be ignored? Because a concept is difficult to model, should it be argued out of existence or assumed away? Unfortunately, this happens more than one would like to admit. It simply is not satisfying intellectually, emotionally, or financially for most academic disciplines or publishers to have to acknowledge the understanding or explanation is incomplete. Culturally and academically, the push is for hard conclusions and results. However, our understanding of human behavior and interaction is incomplete. The only way to make it more complete is to explore those vague concepts and try to define them. Avoiding those unknown regions does nothing to advance our understanding and knowledge.

However, it is difficult to model such complex interactions. The dialectic between the various levels is extraordinarily hard to comprehend and explain. One of the most obvious limitations of this study is that the nature of the inquiry does not lend itself to neat cause and effect models, which was something this was intending to avoid in

the first case. However, one of the nice things about direct causation-direct result models is that argumentation can be linear and easy to follow. Conclusions are more easily “tested”; that is, they are more readily refuted or supported by other evidence. Reliability is somewhat difficult to establish in an exploratory study like this. However, with this subject, the methodology required a more descriptive and interpretive approach, and establishing validity was a more important task.

Another obvious criticism of this study is that by looking at symbolism and ritual the overriding theme is always going to be one of unity and social cohesion. This criticism does have some merit because the purpose of most ritual and symbols is to create a sense of oneness within the group or with the ideals of the group (deity, charismatic leader, the spirit of the nation, etc). Yet, the Nazis used their set of symbols and rituals in opposition to established authority and other symbol systems. Also, the extent to which the National Socialists went to use symbolism and ritual in their ascension to and maintenance of power underscores the need in German political and social life for unity. The conscious intent of the Nazi party was to create cohesion. The party leaders were certainly adroit enough to target the weaknesses within German society and capitalize on them. That the regime was so heavily dependent on symbolism and ritual, regardless of what the specific messages were, sends a very strong message about how important political and social cohesion were to the German people and to the

ascension and consolidation of National Socialists power. This also negates, at least to some degree, the image of the regime as a totalitarian, monolithic, omnipotent force in the life of German society.

This thesis could have also benefited from another couple of years to research the symbols and rituals used by the National Socialists and to perhaps compare with other uses of ritual and symbolism in other periods and cultures. It would most likely be instructive to not only look at successful uses but failed attempts as well. However, this was not practical. Therefore, the conclusions reached need to be viewed as tentative. Obviously, there is much that could be done to make this a more viable investigation.

Another drawback, related to the time constraint, is the broad scope covered by this thesis. In order to produce a work that was short enough to become manifest with the time limitations and still provide an adequate portrait of the subject, the depth of description and analysis are far from complete. It became necessary to choose a miniscule number of cases as illustrations and merely touch upon ideas rather than fully developing them. Unfortunately, this is really a survey more than anything. It is the description of a long-standing problem, formulation of a question and hypothesis, and the initial inquiries to see if there is any merit in pursuing this course of study. The conclusions reached in this study are preliminary and should be viewed as such.

While this particular thesis reached few conclusions, there is quite plainly merit in the use of symbolism and ritual for analysis of cultures. It has been used for quite some time by a number of academic disciplines. Symbolism and ritual are pivotal links in the chain connecting ideas and actions, ideas with ideas, and actions with actions. By understanding the relationship, we come closer to the true goal of understanding how ideas and actions transform from one to the other or do not transform from one to another. It is my assertion that more research needs to be done on how symbols acquire their meanings and how rituals generate cohesion and solidarity. Only when that task is undertaken can we begin to make real assertions about what symbolism and ritual tell us about the construction of our societies. Then, it will be truly possible to use symbolism and ritual as a template for understanding how the factors interwove to create such historical events as the rise of National Socialism.

The problem really reduces to the difficulties of modeling such complex relationships that are often multicausal and have varying impacts on the other factors. It is like an equation with forty variables and the only real constant is the human being, which might as well be another variable. This is why the best one can get at present with studies like this is descriptive analysis and the development of sensitizing concepts, and the limitations of this have already been discussed. However, with the advent of computer-generated images and

animation, using this technology for modeling these complex interrelationships provides possibilities for remedying this. Although in its infancy in the social sciences and in sociology in particular, the implications are exciting. (Rauch 2002) There is nothing right now similar to what I am proposing for a myriad of reasons. However, the movement is towards this type of computer-assisted modeling for social science theories.

Obviously, this thesis has generated more questions than it has answered. However, perhaps that is the point of exploratory studies to raise interest in a topic so that enough information and analysis can be produced to provide answers. National Socialism arose out of a complex web of human interactions, historical events, and social structures. The central position of symbolism and ritual in the regime signals that the social and political disorganization were paramount factors in explaining the Nazi's ascension to and maintenance of power. Specifically, the degradation and immobilization of the nation in the world arena and the concurrent impotence of the national republic were the deciding factors as evidenced from the central position in the Nazi's symbolism on the *Volk* and other symbols of unity and order. In utilizing symbolism and ritual to legitimate their regime, the Nazi party effectively consolidated their hold on Germany and generated the support they needed.

Appendix A

The following is adapted from Herf's *Reactionary Modernism* (1984). It is a point-by-point comparison of differences between Germany and other nations.

Germany	Other Nations
<i>Kultur and Technik</i>	<i>Zivilisation and Wirtschaft</i>
Concrete immediacy	Abstraction
Experience	Analysis
Soul	Mind
Feeling	Intellect
Visualizing thinking	Conceptual thinking
Blood	Intellect and/or money
Life	Death
Community	Society
Form	Chaos-formlessness
Order	Chaos-formlessness
Gestalt	Chaos-formlessness
Will	Passivity
Will toward form	Parliamentary confusion
Beauty	Ugliness
Permanence	Transience
Ruin value	Exchange value
Productivity	Parasitism
Production	Circulation
Entrepreneur	Merchant
German	Jew
Germany the <i>Kulturnation</i>	America and Russia
Creative labor	Finance capital
Worker-soldier	Citizen
Anti-capitalism	Capitalism
German socialism	International socialism
General welfare	Private selfish interest
Production for use	Production for profit
Primacy of politics	Primacy of the economy
Use value	Exchange value
Quality	Quantity
Masculine domination over nature	Feminine reconciliation with nature
Sacrifice	Self-interest

Appendix B

The following is the party program for the National Socialists. Originally, it was believed to have been constructed by Gottfried Feder; however, authorship is now commonly ascribed to Adolf Hitler and Anton Drexler. (Noakes and Pridham 1974) Following the party program, I have matched some of the aims with some of the symbols as examples of how symbols were used as legitimations.

The programme of the German Workers' Party is designed to be of limited duration. The leaders have no intention, once the aims announced in it have been achieved, of establishing fresh ones, merely to increase, artificially, the discontent of the masses and so ensure the continued existence of the Party.

- 1. We demand the union of all Germans in a Greater Germany on the basis of the right of national self-determination.*
- 2. We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and the revocation of the peace treaties in Versailles and Saint-Germain,*
- 3. We demand land and territory (colonies) to feed our people and to settle out surplus population.*
- 4. Only members of the nation may be citizens of the State, Only those German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. Accordingly, no Jew may ever be a member of the nation.*
- 5. Non-citizens may live in Germany only as guests and must be subject to laws for aliens.*
- 6. The right to vote on the State's government and legislation shall be enjoyed by citizens of the State alone. We demand therefore that all official appointments, of whatever kind, whether in the Reich, in the States or in the smaller localities, shall be held by none but citizens.*
- 7. We demand that the State shall make it its primary duty to provide a livelihood for its citizens. If it should prove impossible to feed the entire population foreign nationals (non-citizens) must be deported from the Reich.*
- 8. All non-German immigration must be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans who entered Germany after 2 August 1914 shall be required to leave the Reich forthwith.*
- 9. All citizens shall have equal rights and duties.*
- 10. It must be the first duty of every citizen to perform physical or mental work. The activities of the individual must not clash with the general interest but must proceed within the framework of the community and be for the general good. We demand therefore:*
- 11. The abolition of incomes unearned by work.*
- 12. In view of the enormous sacrifices of life and property demanded of a nation in any war, personal enrichment from war must be regarded as a crime against the nation. We demand therefore the ruthless confiscation of all war profits.*
- 13. We demand the nationalization of all businesses which have been formed into corporations (trusts).*
- 14. We demand profit-sharing in large industrial enterprises.*

15. *We demand the extensive development of insurance for old age.*

16. *We demand the creation and maintenance of a healthy middle class the immediate communalizing of big department stores, and their lease at a cheap rate to small traders, and that the utmost consideration shall be shown to all small traders in the placing of State and municipal orders.*

17. *We demand a land reform suitable to our national requirements, the passing of a law for the expropriation of land for communal purposes without compensation; the abolition of ground rent, and prohibition of all speculation in land.*

18. *We demand the ruthless prosecution of those whose activities are injurious to the common interest, Common criminals, usurers, profiteers, etc., must be punished with death, whatever their creed or race.*

19. *We demand that Roman law, which serves a materialistic world order, be replaced by a German common law.*

20. *The State must consider thorough reconstruction of our national system of education (with the aim of opening up to every able and hard-working German the possibility of higher education and of thus obtaining advancement). The curricula of all educational establishments must be brought into line with the requirements of practical life. The aim of the school must be to give the pupil beginning with the first sign of intelligence a grasp of the notion of State (through the study of civic affairs). We demand the education of gifted children of poor parents, whatever their class or occupation at the expense of the State.*

21. *The State must ensure that the nation's health standards are raised by protecting mothers and infants, by prohibiting child labour, by promoting physical strength through legislation providing for compulsory gymnastics and sports, and by extensive support of clubs engaged in the physical training of youth.*

22. *We demand the abolition of the mercenary army and the formation of a people's army.*

23. *We demand legal warfare on the deliberate political mendacity and its dissemination in the press. To facilitate the creation of a German national press we demand:*

a) that all editors of, and contributors to newspapers appearing in the German language must be members of the nation;

b) that no non-Germans newspapers may appear without the express permission of the State. They must not be printed in the German language.

c) that non-Germans shall be prohibited from participating financially in or influencing German newspapers, and that the penalty for contravening such a law shall be the suppression of any such newspaper, and the immediate deportation of the non-Germans involved.

The publishing of papers which are not conducive to national welfare must be forbidden. We demand the legal prosecution of all those tendencies in art and literature which corrupt our national life, and the suppression of cultural events which violate this demand.

24. *We demand freedom for all religious denominations in the State, provided they do not threaten its existence nor offend the moral feelings of the German race.*

The Party, as such, stands for positive Christianity, but does commit itself to any particular denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialist spirit within and without us, and is convinced our nation can achieve permanent health only from within on the basis of the principle: The common interest before self-interest.

25. To put the whole of this programme into effect, we demand the creation of a strong central state power for the Reich; the unconditional authority of the political central Parliament over the entire Reich and its organizations; and the formation of Corporations based in estate and occupation for the purpose of carrying out the general legislation passed by the Reich in the various German states.

The leaders of the Party promise to work ruthlessly-if need be to sacrifice their very lives-to translate this programme into action.

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