

# Collectives

BY [OLMO GÖLZ](#)

VERSION 1.0 | PUBLISHED 5 SEPTEMBER 2022

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## 1. Subject

Under [heroes](#) we understand individuals in whom discourses about exceptionality, exemplarity, agonality, and [transgressiveness](#) are condensed and brought together within a single person through social [constitutive processes](#) (of heroization) by means of ideas and representations. The heroic figure thus refers to phenomena of singularity. Heroic figures “demand to be regarded as unique individuals. A deed is only considered heroic if it is singular and thus elevates the hero above the crowd.”<sup>[1]</sup> It is tempting, therefore, to think about heroes and collectives only in terms of complementary opposites and thus to dismiss the ‘heroic collective’ as a paradox that cannot exist on account of the very nature of these two entities. At the same time, various forms of collectives are in fact associated with semantics of the heroic, and they are by no means exotic exceptions to the rule. Therefore, this article will present a systematic consideration of the question of how to understand the intertwining of singularity and plurality – that is, in their most extreme form, the hero and the masses – that goes beyond the dichotomy of one heroic figure versus the collective of ordinary people. This takes the

form of a typology that distinguishes between the *collective of heroes*, the *heroic collective*, and *collective heroism*. The order in which these types are presented is based on the logic of each of these phenomena, namely, the degree to which the identity of the individual disappears behind the collective.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 2. Typology

It is useful to begin with a basic differentiation of the phenomena in which the hero and the many coincide for the sake of terminological clarity. To make a very broad topic manageable, it is proposed here to distinguish between three types: the *collective of heroes*, the *heroic collective*, and *collective heroism*. This order is not intended to suggest a historical chronology in which an earlier type is succeeded by the next.<sup>[3]</sup> Rather, it reflects a progression that is analogous to the conjunction of the one and the many, moving qualitatively (not quantitatively!) from the distinct figure of the hero to the indistinguishable masses.

### 2.1. Collectives of heroes

*Collectives of heroes* are to be understood as the alliance of multiple heroic figures in a collective.

#### 2.1.1. *ex-ante* heroization

Typically, this follows an *ex-ante* logic in relation to their [heroization](#): It involves joint action by figures who have been presented as heroes at the outset of the narrative. The hero status of the individual figures within this collective is thus established prior to the construction of a group identity, so that the identity of the group derives from that of its members and is determined by the totality of its individual parts. In this case the logic of the heroic is not called forth by their being brought together into a collective, but merely bundled. The heroes continue to be presented as subjects. The collective of heroes is therefore theoretically not necessarily addressed as a collective subject (even if it is given a collective name), but rather merely forms the temporal framework for the joint action of the heroes.

The phenomenon of the collective of heroes is particularly salient at the level of fiction – paradigmatic alliances of modern comic-book superheroes come to mind, represented by countless collectives such as the *X-Men*, *Avengers*, or *Justice League*. A collective of heroes develops its particular effectiveness and sociological relevance when it is presented as a [prefiguration](#) and incorporated into mythological epic narratives. In such a case it is capable of decisively shaping or even defining the discourses on the values and norms of a particular society. In the saga of the Argonauts, Jason summons the most famous heroes of Greece to take part in the quest for the Golden Fleece, making the Argonauts a paradigm of the prefigurative collective of heroes; the same is the case for the Greeks besieging Troy in the *Iliad*. These narratives are significant in that they provide a catalogue of norms for the society commemorating the heroes, and the norms' effectiveness derives particularly from the way that the discourses negotiated for the individual figures mutually legitimise each other. The story of a collective of heroes can thus serve as a catch-all for all the disruptions presented by the transgressive which every society has a need to explain but which are not always compatible with the shining example of the exceptional individual, the charismatic and triumphant hero, or which cannot be represented

through them.

When Luhmann insists that moral judgement is only possible through deviance, this applies not only to the morally good, but also to the bad, to that which is qualified as malign and reprehensible.<sup>[4]</sup> The deeds of the 'bad' thus define the catalogue of values just as much as those of the 'good'. But since the bad do not invite use as a reference point for the construction of one's own identity, but rather are supposed to represent the 'other', a certain intolerance of ambiguity must become established regarding oneself: Misconduct within the ranks of one's own is practically unbearable and cannot be forgiven unless it is communicated as a known and familiar problem.

The construction of collectives of heroes brings the deeds of a multitude of representatives of morally regulated deviance into relations with one another. They become interwoven, mutually dependent, and legitimise each other. The rage of Achilles and his desecration of the corpse of noble Hector becomes suitable for narration because he was a member of collective of Greek heroes fighting at Troy. In the example of Achilles, a phenomenon known to all societies, namely the escalation and overstepping of what is considered legitimate in the context of wartime violence is legitimised and related to one's own identity. The same also applies to the Wolverine in the collective of heroes *X-Men* and to similar ambiguous figures within other collectives. The construction of collectives of heroes thus defines the moral order and simultaneously integrates narratives of 'black sheep' into one's own system, enabling the transgression of this order's limits to at least be made excusable.

In that double movement in which, first, the disruptions created by the transgressiveness are externalised in an individual figure, and second, that figure's strengths are incorporated into the idealised traits of the collective, seems to be the central offering of the construction of a collective of heroes. This process is ultimately the source of the relevance of the collective of heroes for the cultural sciences. Following the premise that a prefigurative collective of heroes makes available a collection of values and norms, the following question can be posed: Is it possible to draw conclusions about the society commemorating such a collective of heroes by analysing the processes of valorisation or suppression connected with individual protagonists within the collective?

### 2.1.2. *ex-post* heroization

An additional type of collective of heroes is conceivable in connection with *ex-post* cases of heroization. A group of individuals is imbued with semantics of the heroic as a result of the collective actions of its members; their cooperative action is emphasised even while they remain identifiable as individuals. Here a group such as a collective of athletes comes to mind, exemplified by the German national football team, whose victory in 1954 against the superior Hungarians was celebrated as the 'Miracle of Bern' and eventually became a central myth in the narrative of West Germany's new beginning after the Second World War. It is to be noted that the accomplishment of the collective is constructed, analogously with familiar heuristics of the heroic, according to the paradigm of the *agon*. The 'Hungarians' are likewise presented as a collective subject so that the competitive aspect can be emphasised within the semantics of the heroic. The *team* is victorious against the *Hungarians*. At the same time, we are familiar with the individual players and their stories, so that the team and its members have become virtually inseparable in our minds and therefore are distinct from the collectives of heroes presented previously and follow an *ex-ante* logic of heroization. Through the

shifting of the identity of the individual heroic figures towards the phenomenon of group identity, this type of collective brings us to the necessity of distinguishing between the *collective of heroes* and the *heroic collective*.

## 2.2. Heroic collectives

Heroic collectives are to be understood as configurations whose presence is dominated by a group identity, while the identity of the members fades into the background. If the collective of heroes is defined by the membership of specific individuals that constitute it, the converse is true for the heroic collective: the individuals are defined by their membership in the group. The aggregate of the members itself is heroized. These collectives are characterised by their potential for perpetual recombination and “are thus characterised by the fact that their composition is contingent and heterogeneous and their elements are nonetheless somehow connected to one another.”<sup>[5]</sup> The phenomenon of the collective understood in this way permits internal differences and hierarchies. Borrowing from Canetti’s reflections on “crowd crystals,” stable groupings that are characterised by great durability and *unity*, it can be said that “a uniform or a definite sphere of operation serves to promote this.”<sup>[6]</sup> Canetti describes such a collective as constant and notes that “its members are trained in both action and faith. They may be allotted different parts, as in an orchestra, but they must appear as a unit, and the first feeling of anyone seeing or experiencing them should be that this is a unit which will never fall apart. Their life outside the crystal does not count.”<sup>[7]</sup>

This last sentence points to a key way the *heroic collective* differs from the *collective of heroes*: One does not give any thought to the private existence of the members of a heroic collective, but only at most to the role of the individual within the collective. For a collective conceived of in such a way – that is, as an entity that is to endure over time and has a stable purpose, but at the same time is constantly being newly configured through the recombination of its members and, additionally, points its own members to their place within it – drawing on discourses of the heroic makes it possible to find answers to challenges that exist on the communal level due to the nature of this collective, as well as on the level of the individuals aggregated within it.

The first level is dominated by the need of the collective to be perceived as a unit. The subjectification of individuals requires the fiction of a unity, that, even while it must be regularly reaffirmed, “already has a certain evidential force through the visible contours of the boundaries of its body.”<sup>[8]</sup> In the case of collective subjects, this fiction of unity must first be laboriously won.<sup>[9]</sup> In heroic collectives, it is the discourses of the heroic and their appeal to singularity which serve as a surrogate for the body, since the relevant discourses of the heroic always inherently contain a fiction of the individual.

But if the collective cannot appear in the form of a person, its accomplishments must, at the very least, evoke the idea of *more-than-can-be-expected* that is part of the rhetoric of the hero.<sup>[10]</sup> At the same time, the “constitutive moment is even more important for collectives than for people whose bodies, words, and actions encourage the suggestion of unity which the practices of subjectification can tap.”<sup>[11]</sup> The heroic collective is therefore even more dependent than the hero upon the association with a specific deed – the **heroic deed**. This typical action must be clearly defined, for heroization requires that the collective be associated with this particular (heroic) deed. Nor can it feign its deeds or rest content after a one-time action; rather, it must continually re-certify its status by repeated

performance. Another consequence of this quality is that the *heroic collective* does not require the participation of an *individual*, but of a *type*. A fire fighter of the FDNY (Fire Department City of New York) fights a fire and risks their life; the police officer of the German elite unit GSG 9 (Grenzschutzgruppe 9, Border Protection Group 9 of the German Federal Police) carries out special assignments to fight terrorism. Their roles cannot be switched.

Consequently, the heroic collective exists *prior to the deed, through the deed, and because of the deed* with which it is associated. In light of this, the heroization involves a double summons: The demand is made of the heroic collective to maintain its status as an entirety by fulfilling the requirements of its profession. By invoking the heroic within the collective, the heroic deed is discursively professionalised. It gives rise to a call to action, which in turn is passed on to the individual as a member of the community. This points to the second aspect. Not only is a duty imposed upon the individual to make a contribution to the collective through their actions and thereby help secure its status; an offer is simultaneously conveyed to the individual: Their deed may not be identifiable and may even have been unimportant, but as a member of the heroic collective they participate in the heroism and thus have a share in the attractive power that is transported via the semantics of singularity and extraordinariness. They can adorn themselves with heroism and access that semantic field which indicates morally legitimated deviance and “individualises more strongly than conformity.”<sup>[12]</sup>

### 2.3. Collective heroism

In this paradoxical *demand* for heroic action, the dialectical effect of the socialisational-paedagogical function of the hero manifests itself: by serving as an example to be imitated, heroes abolish themselves. Not only because, in a Hegelian sense, they create an order in which there is no place for them<sup>[13]</sup>, but also because *exceeding the deed that can be expected* becomes, through the example they set, something that can indeed be expected. This paradox becomes clear when the rhetoric of deviance which culminates in the hero is translated into an ideal of conformity – namely, that everyone should be equal and not only find their uniqueness within this but determine the moral alignment of this ideal in the first place. If morality is an order of exceptionality, this must of course also apply to collectives. The phenomenon of *collective heroism* draws upon this logic and at the same time illustrates how the exceptional is suspended within the general. The category of *collective heroism* refers to such attempts to translate discourses of the heroic onto the entirety of the members of a community.

The attractive power of heroic semantics is expressed most clearly where the status of the hero is *awarded*, either discursively or systematically. This includes designations such as “Heroes of Labour” or “everyday heroes” and similar, which appropriate semantics of the extra-ordinary in order to demand ideal behaviour from members of a community in the interest of this whole, thereby making it routine and ordinary. The central question regarding these forms of collective heroism is whether it is still possible to identify those phenomena of the heroic that refer to the rhetoric of the hero and its supererogatory implications. These phenomena are at the very least suitable for depicting the appeal of heroic semantics in cases where the seriality of the hero no longer seems conceivable, but where precisely this idea contains sufficient potential to mobilise the multitude of the ordinary.

### 2.3.1. Heroization of the closed crowd

This leads us to consider in conjunction the phenomena of the *hero* and of the *masses*. Studies of crowd psychology that consider the relationship between the hero and the masses assume that the crowd is the mob that desires to be ruled, that needs to be stirred up and thus requires its hero.[14] These conceptualisations treat the masses as something that can be summoned up at any time; however, this does not do justice to the phenomenon of the crowd, for it can only be conceptualised during that period in which it physically exists. The crowd that has ceased to grow and lacks direction, falls apart and dissolves. As a consequence, Canetti notes, “[...] the people who suddenly feel equal have not really become equal; nor will they *feel* equal for ever. They return to their separate houses, they lie down on their own beds, they keep their possessions and their names. They do not cast out their relations nor run away from their families.”[15] The “standing crowd” – analogous to a “standing army” – does not exist, although it is nonetheless imagined in mass ideologies. And it is the *closed crowd* that is thus invoked:

“The closed crowd renounced growth and puts the stress on permanence. The first thing to be noticed about it is that it has a boundary. It establishes itself by accepting its limitation. [...] [I]t sets its hope on *repetition*. It is the expectation of reassembly which enables its members to accept each dispersal. The building is waiting for them; it exists for their sake and, so long as it is there, they will be able to meet in the same manner.”[16]

The Nazi Party Rally Grounds (Reichsparteitagsgelände), which were created 1933 in Nuremberg in order to demonstrate the repeatability and summonability of the masses, are just such an attempt to conceal the dispersion of the crowd. They offer an infrastructure of the collective that is meant to enable “the re-convening and the repetition of movement flows of the collective” and make “the experience of collective movement reproducible.”[17] Analogous to such visible infrastructures, the heroic provides a discursive device capable of drawing the boundary between the ‘we’ that can assert its will over time and the ‘other’ that cannot do so.

In such cases the crowd experience is to be made enduring by means of implementing discourses of moral appeal and duty. We can speak of *collective heroism*, which in modernity can be circulated via mass media and is intended to train the open crowd to become a closed one. Thus, by determining the attributes of those who are entitled to participate, a mental barrier is erected which not only separates the collective from others, but also disguises the de facto dissolution of the crowd. Rhetorically this exercise, which not only calls upon exemplary behaviour but also the construction of an organic unit – a body – can be seen, for example, in the writings of Werner Sombart during the First World War. In *Händler und Helden* (“Merchants and Heroes”, 1915) Sombart describes a ‘body of the people’ (*Volkskörper*) that is to represent “a strong German people” and is to grow “within the limits of the organic.”[18] Invoking this symbolic nation-as-body (heroic body) as different from all other peoples and thus emphasising its exceptional character, he writes:

“Germany is the last dam holding back the muddy flood of commercialism that has either already poured out over all other nations or is in the process of doing so, because none of them are armoured against the pressing danger with the heroic worldview which alone, as we have seen, promises salvation and protection. May my words, my dear young friends to

whom I dedicate these pages, penetrate into your hearts and strengthen in you the spirit that will lead us to victory: the German heroic spirit!"[19]

Adolf Hitler made use of the same rhetoric 20 years later at the Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg. In Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 film *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*), produced during the Party Congress, Hitler addresses homogeneous columns of Nazi party members, invoking "the movement" that "lives. And it stands unshakeable. And as long as even one of us still breathes, he will lend his strength to this movement." This *living* and *breathing* movement will grow, Hitler says, and a unified nation will succeed the once fragmented people. He closes with the words: "And let this be our vow on this evening: At every hour, every day, to think only of Germany, of the people and the Reich, of our German nation and the German Volk. Sieg Heil!"[20] The attempt to bring about a closed crowd can hardly be formulated more clearly. Party rally grounds, mass experiences, uniforms, suggestion of a living movement, construction of a collective subject and the invocation of the heroic create a comprehensive image that uses the establishment of collective heroism as one of many strategies to insinuate the repeatability of the crowd.

### 2.3.2. Heroization in the open crowd

After this examination, it seems that nothing more can be said about the phenomena of collective heroism than that the rhetoric of the heroic is being used strategically. It is meant to demonstrate the exceptionality, and with this the moral dimension, of the collective and oblige its members to conformity through the shared exaltation of the whole.

But this observation does not do justice to the anthropological phenomenon of the experience of being part of an *open* crowd that serves as the starting point for Canetti's essay *Crowds and Power*. Canetti is interested in the experiences of the individual within the crowd and with the search for equality that is connected with this, for "[a] head is a head, an arm is an arm, and differences between individual heads and arms are irrelevant. It is for the sake of this equality that people become a crowd [...]"[21] At the level of experiences, then – in a transmutation of the question of the subjectification of collectives to the question of subjectification *within* collectives – the heroic also finds a place within open crowds that exist only fleetingly. For before any crowd can exist in time, there is the first, seemingly banal question of all the individuals who make up the crowd in space: "will we, as individuals, choose to cease being individuals and become a crowd?"[22] Underlying this is the observation that a crowd cannot be formed against its will, that it does not, in fact, stand around waiting for a leader to give it direction – even if mass ideologies pretend this in their appeals to the heroic. Consequently, every individual person participates in the creation of a crowd. For his book *Among the Thugs*, Bill Buford stepped away from his role as a non-participating journalist and became part of the crowd as an active observer. He describes his experiences among English football hooligans during a situation immediately following the coalescence of a mob:

"The next stage was characterized by a powerful sense of achievement. A crowd had been made by the people who had stepped into the street, and everyone was aware of what they had done; it was a creative act. Obvious metaphors apply: the members of the crowd were both the crowd and its creators; they were clay and potter, stone and sculptor, voice and music. They had made something out of themselves. This, too – this sense of crowd – was

achieved at a remarkable speed, within *seconds* of the ‘march’ commencing.”[23]

Here, then, in the self-awareness of the individuals within an open crowd, the dialectical suspension of the heroic culminates in collective heroism. Together all members jointly create something unique: through me and in me, through my neighbours and in them.

### 3. Collectives of the heroic in modernity

The typology presented here poses a key question regarding its application to specific historical periods: Is the discursive professionalisation of heroism to be understood as a modern phenomenon, a collective attempt to tame the heroic? Herfried Münkler, for example, speaks explicitly of *heroic fellowships* in post-heroic societies.[24] While he is not referring to heroic collectives in the more specific sense used in this essay, he points out a mechanism of the transformation of the rhetoric of the heroic in phenomena of modernity. Luhmann, too, is concerned with phenomena connected with an era, when he writes in *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik: Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft* regarding the individual in the 18th century that “[o]ne of the most important questions is: whether and since when and with what semantic aids the individual is permitted to emphasise that he or she is different from all others.”[25] Luhmann’s comments point to a temporal dimension of the rhetoric of the hero, which loses its plausibility in certain epochs and may even need to be transferred to collectives in order to survive at all – even if merely in the form of rhetorical catchphrases as in talk of the “labour hero”. [26] The phenomena of the concepts presented here, heroic collectives and collective heroism, thus draw their power from the mechanisms of these catchphrases. They offer the individual person precisely that which has been denied the hero: The individual is allowed to acknowledge his participation in glory, a gain in reputation, or moral regard, and this is even assured him – but at a cost, for his name will recede behind the name of the collective, which claims the lion’s share of the honour due to the interchangeability of the individual.

Following this observation, one might be tempted to follow a diachronic logic and see the order of the typology – *hero*, *collective of heroes*, *heroic collective*, and *collective heroism* – as a succession, suggesting, for example, that the hero is to be located in an ‘age of heroes’ like that envisioned by Hegel[27], an era which also is home to collectives of heroes, while we in modernity are acquainted with the latter two phenomena. This line of thought can be given consideration at least to the extent that there are observable differences in the weight given to different concepts in various eras; however, a teleological perspective, which would posit a progression from the heroes of antiquity to the collective heroism of modernity, must be unequivocally rejected. Rather, the present typology is to be thought of as a generalising heuristic on the interdependence of heroes and the many, which can provoke context-specific questions (such as epochal specificities in a given cultural setting).

### 4. References

- 1 Schlechtriemen, Tobias: “The Hero as an Effect: Boundary Work in Processes of Heroization”. In: *helden.heroes.héros*. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen. Special Issue 5 (2019), 17-26, 17. DOI: [10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/APH/03](https://doi.org/10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/APH/03).
- 2 The typology outlined here is presented in more depth in my article “Heroes and the Many:



- Typological Reflections on the Collective Appeal of the Heroic". In: Thesis Eleven 165.1 (2021), 53-71. DOI: [10.1177/07255136211033168](https://doi.org/10.1177/07255136211033168). The article, which provides more theoretical background and uses revolutionary Iran as a case study, examines the rhetoric of heroes and the resulting paradoxes and dialectical particularities in the relationship between heroes and the many. The article, in turn, is a translation of a German article "Helden und Viele – Typologische Überlegungen zum kollektiven Sog des Heroischen. Implikationen aus der Analyse des revolutionären Iran". In: *helden. heroes. héros. E-Journal zu Kulturen des Heroischen Special Issue 7* (2019), 7-20. DOI: [10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/HK/02](https://doi.org/10.6094/helden.heroes.heros./2019/HK/02).
- 3 See the section "Applications" in Gözl: "Heroes and the Many", 2021.
  - 4 Luhmann, Niklas: "Die Autopoiesis des Bewußtseins". In: Luhmann, Niklas (Ed.): *Soziologische Aufklärung*. Opladen 1995: Westdeutsche, 91.
  - 5 Stäheli, Urs: "Infrastrukturen des Kollektiven: alte Medien – neue Kollektive?" In: *Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung* 3.2 (2012), 99-116, 113.
  - 6 Canetti, Elias: *Crowds and Power*. Transl. by Carol Stewart. New York 1984: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 73.
  - 7 Canetti: *Crowds and Power*, 1984, 73-74.
  - 8 Alkemeyer, Thomas / Bröckling, Ulrich: "Jenseits des Individuums. Zur Subjektivierung kollektiver Subjekte: Ein Forschungsprogramm". In: Alkemeyer, Thomas / Bröckling, Ulrich / Peter, Tobias (Eds.): *Jenseits der Person. Zur Subjektivierung von Kollektiven*. Bielefeld 2018: Transcript, 17-32, 25.
  - 9 Cf. Alkemeyer / Bröckling: "Jenseits des Individuums", 2018, 25.
  - 10 For more detail, see my discussion in Gözl: "Heroes and the Many", 2021 in the section "The Rhetoric of the Hero".
  - 11 Alkemeyer / Bröckling: "Jenseits des Individuums", 2018, 20.
  - 12 Luhmann: "Die Autopoiesis des Bewußtseins", 1995, 90.
  - 13 Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Transl. by T. M. Knox, revised, edited, and introduced by Stephen Houlgate. New York 2008: Oxford University Press, 98: "Once the state has been founded, there can no longer be any heroes. They come on the scene only in uncivilized conditions. Their aim is right, necessary, and political, and this they pursue as their own affair. The heroes who founded states, introduced marriage and agriculture, did not do this as their recognized right, and their conduct still has the appearance of being their particular will. But as the higher right of the Idea against nature, this heroic coercion is a rightful coercion. Mere goodness can achieve little against the power of nature."
  - 14 Compare Buford, Bill: *Among the Thugs*. London 2001: Arrow, 185: "And who do we find in a crowd? Trouble-makers, riff-raff, vagrants and criminals (Taine). The morbidly nervous, excitable and the half-deranged (LeBon). The scum that boils up to the surface of the cauldron of a city (Gibbon). Both honorary barbarians (Hitler) and the vulgar working class who want nothing more than bread and circuses (Hitler). We find people driven by the impulses of the spinal cord and not the brain (LeBon). We find people who have abandoned intelligence, discrimination, judgement, and, unable to think for themselves, are vulnerable to agitators, outside influences, infiltrators, communists, fascists, racists, nationalists, phalangists and spies. We find people with a thirst for obedience (LeBon), an appetite to serve (Freud). A crowd needs to be ruled. A crowd needs its patriarch – its despotic father, chief, tyrant, emperor, commander. It wants its Hitler, its Mussolini. A crowd is like a patient to a doctor, the hypnotized to the hypnotist. A crowd is a rabble – to be

manipulated, controlled, roused.”

- 15 Canetti: *Crowds and Power*, 1984, 18.
- 16 Canetti: *Crowds and Power*, 1984, 17.
- 17 Stäheli: “Infrastrukturen des Kollektiven”, 2012, 115.
- 18 Sombart, Werner: *Händler und Helden. Patriotische Besinnungen*. Munich/Leipzig 1915: Duncker & Humblot, 144. Translation by Brenda Black. In the original: “ein starkes deutsches Volk”; “in den Grenzen des Organischen”.
- 19 Sombart: *Händler und Helden*, 1915, 145. Translation by Brenda Black. In the original:  
“Deutschland ist der letzte Damm gegen die Schlammflut des Kommerzialisismus, der sich über alle anderen Völker entweder schon ergossen hat oder unaufhaltsam zu ergießen im Begriffe ist, weil keines von ihnen gegen die andringende Gefahr gepanzert ist durch die heldische Weltanschauung, die allein, wie wir gesehen haben, Rettung und Schutz verheißt. Möchten Euch, meine lieben, jungen Freunde, denen ich diese Blätter widme, meine Worte zu Herzen dringen und in Euch den Geist stärken, der uns zum Siege führen wird: den deutschen Heldengeist!”
- 20 Cf. Adolf Hitler in Leni Riefenstahl: *Triumph des Willens* (1935), Min. 59:28–59:49. The segment relevant for this article begins at 55:05 min. His speech (as per the English subtitles on archive.org, slightly adapted) is as follows: “A year ago we met for the first time on this field. The first general call of the political leaders of the National Socialist Party. 200,000 men brought together. They were brought here by nothing other than the call of their hearts. They were brought here by nothing other than their loyalty. It was the need of our people which moved us and which brought us together. We wrestled and struggled together. This is not understood by those who have not had similar distress in their nation. It seems puzzling to them what brings these hundreds of thousands together, what allows us to endure need, suffering, deprivation. They cannot understand this as anything but a state order. They are mistaken. It is not the state which commands us, but we who command the state. It is not the state which has created us, but we who have created our state. No. the movement lives. It stands on firm foundations. And as long as just one of us can breathe, he will give his strength to this movement. And he will stand up for it, just as our comrades did in the past. Drums will come before drums, flags will come before flags. Groups will join with groups, and shires with shires [‘zum Gau das Gau’]. And then at last the mighty column of this united nation will lead the nation which was once divided. It would be sinful if we ever allowed to fail that for which we have fought with so much work, so much trouble, so much sacrifice and so much need. We cannot be disloyal to what has given us sense and purpose. Nothing will come from nothing if it is not grounded on a greater order. This order was not given to us by an earthly superior. It was given to us by God who created our people.”
- 21 Canetti: *Crowds and Power*, 1984, 29.
- 22 Buford: *Among the Thugs*, 2004, 324.
- 23 Buford: *Among the Thugs*, 2004, 326.
- 24 Cf. Münkler, Herfried: “Heroische und postheroische Gesellschaften”. In: *Merkur* 61.8/9 (2007), 746-750.
- 25 Luhmann, Niklas: “Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus”. In: Luhmann, Niklas (Ed.): *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik. Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft*. 4th edition. Frankfurt a. M. 2012: Suhrkamp, 159-258, 182.
- 26 Luhmann: “Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus”, 2012, 95, FN 69.

- 27 Hegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm: *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art. Vol. I.* Transl. by T. M. Knox. Oxford 1988: Clarendon Press, 185: "Heroes [...] are individuals who undertake and accomplish the entirety of an action, actuated by the independence of their character and caprice; and in their case, therefore, it appears as the effect of individual disposition when they carry out what is right and moral. But this immediate unity of the substantial with the individuality of inclination, impulses, and will is inherent in Greek virtue, so that individuality is a law to itself, without being subjected to an independently subsisting law, judgement, and tribunal. Thus, for example, the Greek heroes appear in a pre-legal era, or become themselves the founders of states, so that right and order, law and morals, proceed from them and are actualized as their own individual work which remains linked with them."

## 5. Selected literature

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## 6. List of images

Teaser image: Memorial of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising in City Park, Budapest, completed 2006.

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## Citation

Olmo Gözl: Collectives. In: Compendium heroicum, ed. by Ronald G. Asch, Achim Aurnhammer, Georg Feitscher, Anna Schreurs-Morét, and Ralf von den Hoff, published by Sonderforschungsbereich 948, University of Freiburg, Freiburg 2022-09-05. DOI: 10.6094/heroicum/kolle1.0.20220905

## Meta data

DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.6094/heroicum/kolle1.0.20220905">10.6094/heroicum/kolle1.0.20220905</a>
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Category	<a href="#">Culture &amp; Practice</a>
Subject Headings (LOC)	<a href="#">Crowds</a> , <a href="#">Group identity</a> , <a href="#">Heroes</a> , <a href="#">Individuation (Philosophy)</a>
Index	Authors: <a href="#">Olmo Gözl</a>  Persons and Figures: <a href="#">Hector (figure)</a> , <a href="#">Achilles (figure)</a> , <a href="#">Jason (figure)</a> , <a href="#">Homer</a> , <a href="#">Elias Canetti</a> , <a href="#">Leni Riefenstahl</a> , <a href="#">Werner Sombart</a> , <a href="#">Wolverine (figure)</a> , <a href="#">Niklas Luhmann</a> , <a href="#">Helmut Rahn</a> , <a href="#">Toni Turek</a> , <a href="#">Herfried Münkler</a> , <a href="#">Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel</a> , <a href="#">Adolf Hitler</a>  Spaces and Locations: <a href="#">Hungary</a> , <a href="#">Troy</a> , <a href="#">Germany</a> , <a href="#">Greece</a> , <a href="#">Bern</a> , <a href="#">Nuremberg</a> , <a href="#">New York City</a>  Time and Events: <a href="#">Antiquity</a> , <a href="#">Modernity</a> , <a href="#">Nazism</a> , <a href="#">18th century</a> , <a href="#">19th century</a> , <a href="#">20th century</a> , <a href="#">1910s</a> , <a href="#">1930s</a> , <a href="#">1950s</a>

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Das Online-Lexikon des  
Sonderforschungsbereichs 948  
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Gefördert von der Deutschen  
Forschungsgemeinschaft

### Kontakt

Sonderforschungsbereich 948  
„Helden – Heroisierung – Heroismen“  
Albert-Ludwig-Universität Freiburg  
Hebelstraße 25  
D-79104 Freiburg im Breisgau

[www.compendium-heroicum.de](http://www.compendium-heroicum.de)  
[redaktion@compendium-heroicum.de](mailto:redaktion@compendium-heroicum.de)