

CHAPTER TWO

CIVIC IDEOLOGY AND ASSOCIATIONAL FORMATION

2.1 CIVIC IDEOLOGY

Civic ideology, as I use it here, designates a comprehensive system of claims about the nature of a state and its relationship to its subjects, as articulated by both the state and its subjects. In modern political philosophy, especially early Marxism, the term “ideology” designates a system of thought that legitimates the authority of one social group over others.¹ Ideology begins, even in its most sophisticated, coherent forms, as a post-hoc argument for a system of authority that is already in place, by those already in control. It facilitates domination: as governed subjects encounter and internalize state ideology, they adopt a way of viewing the world and social relations that simultaneously obscures the imbalance of power between classes, presents subjects’ political, economic, and material situation as inevitable, and prevents imagining other social systems that might confer greater benefit. To resist the established order is to rebel against a noble history, or to defy divine will, or to go against intrinsic anthropological principles, or a combination of these and other totalizing factors. Subjects thus become unwitting collaborators in their own domination by assenting to the fundamental terms by which those with power claim authority. Weber’s famous definition of “legitimate domination” is analogous: the obedience of the ruled to the ruler’s command results from their behaving “as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake.”² Such assimilation of the values of the ruled to the ruling depends equally upon effective systems of authority—the state’s constitutional organization and legal regulation—and upon systems of belief about the validity of that authority that make obedience seem like voluntary co-participation,

¹ For a brief history of the origins of the concept of ideology in 18th century French philosophy, and its development in Marxism see T. Eagleton, “Introduction,” in idem, ed., *Ideology* (Longman Critical Readers; London: Longman, 1994) 1–13.

² Weber, *Economy and Society* 2.946.

indeed, as a contribution to an obvious, universally acknowledged social good.³

Such analysis has proved valuable for understanding certain aspects of social power;⁴ Marx and Weber's contributions are far from exhausted, as their current re-interpretations and applications across disciplines shows.⁵ But their accounts pay insufficient attention to the varieties of ways in which state ideology is reinterpreted as new, subject-generated ideologies, and neglect the emergence of counter-ideologies that contest the claims of the state.⁶ In more recent political philosophy, the insight that subjects assimilate state ideology and interpret their own activity in accordance with it has been developed further to account for variations in subjects' responses to state ideology. This development is based on two insights. The most fundamental is that the public, systematic articulation of the basis of state authority, a *sine qua non* for rationalized societies, opens the state to critical analysis from within. Subjects can test for consistency between their state's ideology and social experience, and may identify and challenge inconsistencies and contradictions between, e.g., ideals of justice and actual policies, laws, and practices. The ideology of the state can thus impose obligations upon the state itself to bring its laws and practices into conformity with its stated ideals. The second insight is recognition that subjects' interests differ from one social group to another, along

³ See Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2.941–55, for a fuller account. Weber gives preliminary a sketch in *ibid.*, 1.50–52, and an exposition of types of legitimate authority in 1.212–98.

⁴ My own work here owes a particular debt to the insightful appropriations of Marx and Weber, along with Habermas and others, in C. Ando's excellent book, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Classics and Contemporary Thought 6; Berkeley: University of California, 2000).

⁵ See, e.g., the reinterpretations of Marx and Weber in recent Marxian political philosophy, esp. within the Frankfurt School. Jürgen Habermas' devotes most of his first volume of *A Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, tr. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984) to engaging Weber constructively; his second volume, *Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, tr. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1987) concludes with reflections on the contributions of Weber and Marx (pp. 301–404).

⁶ Later Marxian work emphasizes the vulnerability of state ideology and authority to internal critique. See Antonio Gramsci's influential account of hegemony and counter-hegemony, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Q. Hoare and G. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); also J. Femina, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); A. Hunt, "Rights and Social Movements: Counter-Hegemonic Strategies," *Journal of Law and Society* 17 (1990) 309–28.