The Sociology of Georg Simmel

TRANSLATED, EDITED, AND WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY Kurt H. Wolff

Copyright 1950 by The Free Press. All rights in this book are reserved and no part thereof may be reprinted without permission from the copyright owners, except small portions used in connection with a review or notice of the book in a magazine or newspaper. The Sociology of Georg Simmel has been set in Bodoni and Baskerville types, printed on Antique Wove paper supplied for this book by the Perkins and Squier Company. Composition, printing, and binding by Knickerbocker Printing Corp., New York. Manufactured in the United States of America.
Knowledge, Truth, and Falsehood in Human Relations

Obviously, all relations which people have to one another are based on their knowing something about one another. The merchant knows that his correspondent wants to buy at the lowest possible price, and to sell at the highest possible price. The teacher knows that he can tax the student with a certain kind and amount of learning material. Within each social stratum, an individual knows how much culture, approximately, he may expect of every other individual. Without such knowledge, evidently, these and many other kinds of interaction could not take place at all. One may say (with reservations which easily suggest themselves) that in all relations of a personally differentiated sort, intensity and nuance develop in the degree in which each party, by words and by mere existence, reveals itself to the other. How much error and mere prejudice may be contained in all this knowledge, is another question. Yet, just as our apprehension of external nature, along with elusiveness and inadequacies, nevertheless attains the truth required for the life and progress of our species, so everybody knows, by and large correctly, the other person with whom he has to deal, so that interaction and relation become possible.

§1. Knowledge of One Another

The first condition of having to deal with somebody at all is to know with whom one has to deal. The fact that people usually introduce themselves to one another whenever they engage in a conversation of any length or meet on the same
Knowledge, Truth, Falsehood in Human Relations

social level, may strike one as an empty form; yet it is an adequate symbol of the mutual knowledge presupposed by every relationship. We are very often not conscious of this, because for a large number of relations, we need to know only that quite typical tendencies and qualities are present on both sides. The necessary character of these tendencies is usually noted only when, on occasion, they are absent. It would be worthwhile to make a special investigation to find out the kind and degree of reciprocal knowledge required by various relations among people; to find out how the general psychological assumptions, with which everybody approaches everybody else, are interwoven with the special experiences in regard to the particular individual with whom we interact; how, in many fields, reciprocal knowledge does not have to be equal on both sides or is not permitted to be; to discover how the development of existing relations is determined merely by the growing knowledge, on both sides, or on one side, about the other; finally, on the other hand, how our objectively psychological picture of the other individual is influenced by real, practical and sentimental relations.

This last influence is by no means one of mere falsification. It is entirely legitimate that the theoretical conception we have of a particular individual should vary with the standpoint from which it is formed, a standpoint which is the result of the over-all relation between knower and known. One can never know another person absolutely, which would involve knowledge of every single thought and mood. Nevertheless, one forms some personal unity out of those of his fragments in which alone he is accessible to us. This unity, therefore, depends upon the portion of him which our standpoint permits us to see. But such differences by no means arise from differences in the quantity of knowledge alone. No psychological knowledge is a mere stereotype of its object but depends, as does the knowledge of external nature, upon the forms which the cognizing mind brings to it and in which it receives the given. But where the knowledge of individuals is at issue, these forms differ very much individually. They do not attain the scientific generality and super-subjective power of conviction which can be reached with respect to external nature and to merely typical psychological processes.

Knowledge of Nature and of Persons

2. Knowledge of External Nature vs. Knowledge of Persons

If A and B have different conceptions of M, this by no means necessarily implies incompleteness or deception. Rather, in view of the relation in which A stands to M, A’s nature and the total circumstances being what they are, A’s picture of M is true for him in the same manner in which, for B, a different picture is true. It would be quite erroneous to say that, above these two pictures, there is the objectively correct knowledge about M, and that A’s and B’s images are legitimated to the extent to which they coincide with this objective knowledge. Rather, the ideal truth which the picture of M in the conception of A approaches—to be sure, only asymptotically—is something different, even as an ideal, from that of B. It contains an integrating, form-giving pre-condition the psychological peculiarity of A and the particular relation into which A and M are brought by their specific characters and destinies.

Every relationship between persons gives rise to a picture of each in the other; and this picture, obviously, interacts with the actual relation. The relation constitutes the condition under which the conception, that each has of the other, takes this or that shape and has its truth legitimated. On the other hand, the real interaction between the individuals is based upon the pictures which they acquire of one another. Here we have one of the deep-lying circuits of intellectual life, where an element presupposes a second element which yet, in turn, presupposes the first. While, in narrow fields, this is a falsity that invalidates everything, in more general and fundamental fields it is the inevitable expression of the unity into which both elements fuse, a unity which, with our forms of thought, cannot be expressed otherwise than by saying that we build the first upon the second and, at the same time, the second upon the first. Our relationships thus develop upon the basis of reciprocal knowledge, and this knowledge upon the basis of the actual relations. Both are inextricably interwoven. In their alternation within sociological interaction, they reveal interaction as one of the points where being and conceiving make their mysterious unity empirically felt.
§ 3. Truth, Error, and Social Life

Our conduct is based upon our knowledge of total reality. But this knowledge is characterized by peculiar limitations and distortions. That "error alone is life, and knowledge, death", cannot, of course, be valid as a principle, because a person caught in continuous error would continuously act in an inexpedient fashion, and thus inevitably would perish. And yet, in view of our accidental and defective adaptations to our life conditions, there is no doubt that we preserve and acquire not only so much truth, but also so much ignorance and error, as is appropriate for our practical activities. We have only to think of the great insights which transform human life, but which fail to make their appearance or go unnoticed, unless the total cultural situation renders them possible and useful. Or we may think, on the other hand, of the "Lebenslüge" ["vital lie"] of the individual who is so often in need of deceiving himself in regard to his capacities, even in regard to his feelings, and who cannot do without superstition about gods and men, in order to maintain his life and his potentialities. In the sense that the expediency of the external as of the internal life sees to it that we obtain the exact amounts of error and truth which constitute the basis of the conduct required of us, error and truth are psychologically coordinate—although, of course, only by and large, and with a wide latitude for variations and defective adaptations.

§ 4. The Individual as an Object of Knowledge

But within the range of objects, which we may know correctly or about which we may be deceived, there is a section wherein both truth and deception can attain a character that is not found anywhere else. This is the inner life of the individual with whom we interact. He may, intentionally or not, reveal the truth about himself to us, or deceive us by lie and concealment. No other object of knowledge can reveal or hide itself in the same way, because no other object modifies its behavior in view of the fact that it is recognized. This modification, of course, does not occur always; very often, even the other individual is basically no more to us than a piece of nature which poses for our cognition, as it were. Insofar as this cognition goes by utterances made by the other, and particularly by utterances which are not modified by any thought of being utilized for our cognition but which are wholly spontaneous and immediate communications, there becomes apparent an element of fundamental importance for the determination of the individual by his environment. Our psychic process, which runs its course in a purely natural manner, is nevertheless, as far as its content is concerned, almost always, at the same time, in accordance with the norms of logic. This has been declared a problem; and the most far-reaching conclusions have been drawn from it.

§ 5. The Nature of the Psychic Process and of Communication

In fact, it is most remarkable that an event engendered exclusively by natural causes should proceed as it governed by the ideal laws of logic. For, it is exactly as if a tree branch, so connected with a telegraphic apparatus that its movements in the wind set the apparatus in motion, thereby caused signs in it that yield a rational meaning to us. The whole of this problem is not at issue here; but one remark must be made. Our actual psychological processes are governed by logic in a much slighter degree than their expressions make us believe. If we look closely at our conceptions as they pass our consciousness in a continuous temporal sequence, we find that there is a very great distance between any regulation by rational norms and the characteristics of these conceptions: namely, their flaring up, their zigzag motions, the chaotic whirling of images and ideas which objectively are entirely unrelated to one another, and their logically unjustifiable, only so-to-speak probabilistic, connections. But we are only rarely conscious of this; because the accents of our interests lie merely on the "usable" portion of our imaginative life. Usually we quickly pass over, or "overhear," its leaps, its non-rationality, its chaos, in spite of their psychological factuality, in favor of what is logical or otherwise useful, at least to some extent.

All we communicate to another individual by means of words or perhaps in another fashion—even the most subjective,
impulsive, intimate matters—is a selection from that psychological-real whole whose absolutely exact report (absolutely exact in terms of content and sequence) would drive everybody into the insane asylum—if a paradoxical expression is permissible. In a quantitative sense, it is not only fragments of our inner life, which we alone reveal, even to our closest fellowmen. What is more, these fragments are not a representative selection, but one made from the standpoint of reason, value, and relation to the listener and his understanding. Whatever we say, as long as it goes beyond mere interjection and minimal communication, is never an immediate and faithful presentation of what really occurs in us during that particular time of communication, but is a transformation of this inner reality, teleologically directed, reduced, and recomposed. With an instinct automatically preventing us from doing otherwise, we show nobody the course of our psychic processes in their purely causal reality and—from the standpoint of logic, objectivity, and meaningfulness—complete incoherence and irrationality. Always, we show only a selection of them, stylized by selection and arrangement. We simply cannot imagine any interaction or social relation or society, which are not based on this teleologically determined non-knowledge of one another. This intrinsic, a priori, and (as it were) absolute presupposition includes all relative differences which are familiar to us under the concepts of sincere revelations and mendacious concealments.

§ 6. The Lie

Every lie, no matter how objective its topic, engenders by its very nature an error concerning the lying subject. The lie consists in the fact that the liar hides his true idea from the other. Its specific nature is not exhaustively characterized by the fact that the person lied-to has a false conception about the topic or object; this the lie shares with common error. What is specific is that he is kept deceived about the private opinion of the liar.

Truthfulness and lie are of the most far-reaching significance for relations among men. Sociological structures differ profoundly according to the measure of lying which operates in them. In the first place, in very simple circumstances the lie is often more harmless in regard to the maintenance of the group than under more complex conditions. Primitive man who lives in a small group, who satisfies his needs through his own production or through direct cooperation, who limits his intellectual interests to his own experience, and to unilinear tradition, surveys and controls the material of his life more easily and completely than does the man of higher cultures. To be sure, the innumerable errors and superstitions in the life of primitive man are harmful enough to him, but far less so than are corresponding ones in advanced epochs, because the practice of his life is guided in the main by those few facts and circumstances of which his narrow angle of vision permits him to gain directly a correct view. In a richer and larger cultural life, however, existence rests on a thousand premises which the single individual cannot trace and verify to their roots at all, but must take on faith. Our modern life is based to a much larger extent than is usually realized upon the faith in the honesty of the other. Examples are our economy, which becomes more and more a credit economy, or our science, in which most scholars must use innumerable results of other scientists which they cannot examine. We base our gravest decisions on a complex system of conceptions, most of which presuppose the confidence that we will not be betrayed. Under modern conditions, the lie, therefore, becomes something much more devastating than it was earlier, something which questions the very foundations of our life. If among ourselves today, the lie were as negligible a sin as it was among the Greek gods, the Jewish patriarchs, or the South Seas islanders; and if we were not deterred from it by the utmost severity of the moral law; then the organization of modern life would be simply impossible; for, modern life is a "credit economy" in a much broader than a strictly economic sense.

These historical differences are paralleled by distances of other dimensions as well. The farther removed individuals are from our most intimate personality, the more easily can we come to terms with their untruthfulness, both in a practical and in an intimate psychological sense—while if the few persons closest to us lie, life becomes unbearable. This is a banality, but it must
be noted in a sociological light, because it shows that the measures of truthfulness and mendacity which are compatible with the existence of certain conditions, constitute a scale on which the measures of intensity of these conditions can be read off.

In addition to this relative sociological permisibility of the lie under primitive circumstances, there is also its positive expediency. Where a first organization, arrangement, centralization of the group is at stake, this organization will take place through the subordination of the weak under the physically and intellectually superior. The lie which maintains itself, which is not seen through, is undoubtedly a means of ascertaining intellectual superiority and of using it to control and suppress the less intelligent. It is an intellectual club law as brutal, but on occasion as appropriate, as physical club law. It may operate as a selecting factor to breed intelligence or create leisure for the few for whom others must work; for the few who need the leisure for producing higher cultural goods or for giving a leader to the group forces. The more easily these aims can be reached by means whose incidental consequences are only slightly undesirable, the less is there need for lying, and the more is there room for being aware of its ethically objectionable character. Historically this process is by no means completed. Even today, retail trade believes that it cannot do without mendacious claims concerning certain merchandise, and therefore practices them with good conscience. But wholesale business and retail trade on a really large scale, have overcome this stage and can afford to proceed with complete sincerity when offering their goods. Once the business practice of the small and middle-sized merchant reaches the same perfection, the exaggerations and outright falsehoods of advertising and praising, for which it is not usually blamed today, will meet with the same ethical condemnation which already is meted out wherever these falsehoods are no longer required by practice. In general, intra-group interaction based on truthfulness will be the more appropriate, the more the welfare of the many, rather than of the few, constitutes the norm of the group. For, those who are lied to, that is, those who are harmed by the lie, will always constitute the majority over the liars who find their advantage in lying. For this reason, "enlightenment," which aims at the removal of the untruths operating in social life, is entirely democratic in character.

Human interaction is normally based on the fact that the ideational worlds of men have certain elements in common, that objective intellectual contents constitute the material which is transformed into subjective life by means of men's social relations. The type, as well as the essential instrument, of these common elements is shared language. But, on closer examination, it appears that the basis discussed here, by no means consists only in what both of two interacting individuals know, or with what they are acquainted as the psychological content of one another. For, it must also be noted that all of this is interwoven with elements known only to one of the two. This limitation reveals significances even more basic than those which result from the contrast between the non-logical and contingent reality of the ideational process and the logical and telological selection we make of it in order to show it to others. Human nature is dualistic: we feel that each of its expressions flows from a plurality of divergent sources; we consider each measure of it as great or small, according to its comparison with something smaller or greater.

This same dualism also causes sociological relationships to be determined in a twofold manner. Concord, harmony, efficacy, which are unquestionably held to be socializing forces, must nevertheless be interspersed with distance, competition, repulsion, in order to yield the actual configuration of society. The solid, organizational forms which seem to constitute or create society, must constantly be disturbed, disbalanced, gnawed at by individualistic, irregular forces, in order to gain their vital reaction and development through submission and resistance. Intimate relations, whose formal medium is physical and psychological nearness, lose the attractiveness, even the content of their intimacy, as soon as the close relationship does not also contain, simultaneously and alternatingly, distances and intermissions. Finally, and this is the decisive point: although reciprocal knowledge conditions relationships positively, after all, it does not do this by itself alone. Relationships being what they are, they also presuppose a certain ignorance and a measure of mutual concealment, even though this measure varies im-
Types of Social Relationships
by Degrees of Reciprocal Knowledge of Their Participants

§ 1. Interest Groups

Among the various groups still involving direct interaction, the most important is the association based on some particular interest [Zweckverbänd], more especially that which involves completely objective member contributions, determined by mere membership. The purest form here is monetary contribution. In this case, interaction, solidarity, and the pursuit of common purposes do not depend on everybody's psychological knowledge of everybody else. As a group member, the individual is only the executor of a certain function. Questions concerning those individual motives which determine this performance, or the sort of total personality in which his conduct is imbedded, are completely irrelevant. The association based on some particular interest is the discreet sociological form par excellence. Its members are psychologically anonymous. In order to form the association, all they have to know of one another is precisely...
Confidence under Complex Conditions

The fact that they form the increasing objectification and ignorance which must necessarily result from the qualitative and quantitative change of our relationship with the world in the modern era.

Confidence under More and Less Complex Conditions

This development also gives a peculiar evolution to an increasing confidence in the subjective objectification of social relationships. Confidence, certainly, is one of the important factors in the subjective understanding of social relationships. Confidence is formed by the way in which the individual perceives and interprets his social environment and his own role in it. Confidence is a mental attitude which is based on previous experience and which is used to predict the future behavior of others.

The modern merchant, who enters business with an investigatory and reliable attitude, is likely to have confidence in the personal qualities of his business partner. This confidence is based on the personal characteristics of the partner, such as his honesty, reliability, and willingness to cooperate. Confidence in the personal qualities of the partner is important in the establishment of a business relationship.

On the other hand, confidence in the objectivity of social relationships is based on an understanding of the objective conditions that determine the behavior of others. Confidence in the objectivity of social relationships is important in the establishment of a business relationship, as it allows the merchant to predict the behavior of his business partner with a high degree of accuracy.

Confidence in the personal qualities of the partner is more important than confidence in the objectivity of social relationships, but both are necessary for the establishment of a successful business relationship.

The education of the merchant and the ignorance necessary for confidence in the objectivity of social relationships are also important in the establishment of a successful business relationship. The merchant must be able to recognize and interpret the objective conditions that determine the behavior of others, as well as the personal characteristics of his business partner.
know whether he is decent, compatible, and whether he has a
daring or hesitant temperament. Upon such reciprocal knowl-
edge rests not only the beginning of the relationship, but also
its whole development, the daily common actions, and the di-
vision of functions between the partners. Today the secret of the
personality is sociologically more limited. In view of the large
extent to which the interest in the common pursuit is borne by
personal qualities, the personal element can no longer be so
autonomous.

§ 3. “Acquaintance”

Aside from interest groups but aside, equally, from relation-
ships rooted in the total personality, there is the sociologically
highly peculiar relation which, in our times, among educated
strata, is designated simply as “acquaintance.” Mutual “ac-
quaintance” by no means is knowledge of one another; it in-
volves no actual insight into the individual nature of the per-
sonality. It only means that one has taken notice of the other’s
existence, as it were. It is characteristic that the idea of acquain-
tance is suggested by the mere mentioning of one’s name, by
“introducing oneself”: “acquaintance” depends upon the
knowledge of the that of the personality, not of its what. After
all, by saying that one is acquainted, even well acquainted, with
a particular person, one characterizes quite clearly the lack of
really intimate relations. Under the rubric of acquaintance, one
knows of the other only what he is toward the outside, either
in the purely social-representative sense, or in the sense of that
which he shows us. The degree of knowledge coveted by “being
well acquainted with one another,” refers not to the other per se;
not to what is essential in him, intrinsically, but only to what is
significant for that aspect of him which is turned toward others
and the world.

§ 4. Discretion

Acquaintance in this social sense is, therefore, the proper
seat of “discretion.” For, discretion consists by no means only
in the respect for the secret of the other, for his specific will to
conceal this or that from us, but in staying away from the
knowledge of all that the other does not expressly reveal to us.
It does not refer to anything particular which we are not per-
mitted to know, but to a quite general reserve in regard to the
total personality. Discretion is a special form of the typical
contrast between the imperatives, “what is not prohibited is
allowed,” and “what is not allowed is prohibited.” Relations
among men are thus distinguished according to the question of
mutual knowledge—of either “what is not concealed may be
known,” or “what is not revealed must not be known.”

To act upon the second of these decisions corresponds to the
feeling (which also operates elsewhere) that an ideal sphere lies
around every human being. Although differing in size in various
directions and differing according to the person with whom one
entertains relations, this sphere cannot be penetrated, unless
the personality value of the individual is thereby destroyed.
A sphere of this sort is placed around man by his “honor.”
Language very poignantly designates an insult to one’s honor as
“coming too close”: the radius of this sphere marks, as it were,
the distance whose trespassing by another person insults one’s
honor.

Another sphere of the same form corresponds to what is
called the “significance” of a personality. In regard to the
“significant” [“great”] man, there is an inner compulsion which
tells us to keep at a distance and which does not disappear
even in intimate relations with him. The only type for whom
such distance does not exist is the individual who has no organ
for perceiving significance. For this reason, the “valet” knows
no such sphere of distance; for him there is no “hero”; but
this is due, not to the hero, but to the valet. For the same reason,
all impotence is associated with a striking lack of feeling for
differences in the significance of men. The individual who fails
to keep his distance from a great person does not esteem him
highly, much less too highly (as might superficially appear to be
the case); but, on the contrary, his importune behavior reveals
lack of proper respect. The painter often emphasizes the sig-
nificance of a figure in a picture that contains many figures by
arranging the others in a considerable distance from it. In an
analogous fashion, the sociological smile of significance is the
distance which keeps the individual outside a certain sphere that is occupied by the power, will, and greatness of a person.

The same sort of circle which surrounds man—although it is value-accentuated in a very different sense—is filled out by his affairs and by his characteristics. To penetrate this circle by taking notice, constitutes a violation of his personality. Just as material property is, so to speak, an extension of the ego, and any interference with our property is, for this reason, felt to be a violation of the person, there also is an intellectual private-property, whose violation effects a lesion of the ego in its very center. Discretion is nothing but the feeling that there exists a right in regard to the sphere of the immediate life contents. Discretion, of course, differs in its extension with different personalities, just as the positions of honor and of property have different radii with respect to "close" individuals, and to strangers and indifferent persons. In the case of the above-mentioned, more properly "social" relations, which are most conveniently designated as "acquaintances," the point to which discretion extends is, above all, a very typical boundary: beyond it, perhaps there are not even any jealously guarded secrets; but conventionally and discreetly, the other individual, nevertheless, does not trespass it by questions or other invasions.

The question where this boundary lies cannot be answered in terms of a simple principle; it leads into the finest ramifications of societal formation. For, in an absolute sense, the right to intellectual private-property can be affirmed as little as can the right to material property. We know that, in higher civilizations, material private-property in its essential three dimensions—acquisition, insurance, increase—is never based on the individual's own forces alone. It always requires the conditions and forces of the social milieu. From the beginning, therefore, it is limited by the right of the whole, whether through taxation or through certain checks on acquisition. But this right is grounded more deeply than just in the principle of service and counter-service between society and individual: it is grounded in the much more elementary principle, that the part must sustain as great a restriction upon its autonomous existence and possess-

siveness as the maintenance and the purposes of the whole require.

This also applies to the inner sphere of man. In the interest of interaction and social cohesion, the individual must know certain things about the other person. Not does the other have the right to oppose this knowledge from a moral standpoint, by demanding the discretion of the first: he cannot claim the entirely undisturbed possession of his own being and consciousness, since this discretion might harm the interests of his society. The businesswoman who contracts long-range obligations with another; the master who employs a servant (but also the servant before entering the service); the superior who advances a subordinate; the housewife who accepts a new member into her social circle: all these must have the right to learn or infer those aspects of the other's past and present, temperament, and moral quality on the basis of which they can act rationally in regard to him, or reject him. These are very crude instances of the case where the duty of discretion—to renounce the knowledge of all that the other does not voluntarily show us—recedes before practical requirements. But even in subtler and less unambiguous forms, in fragmentary beginnings and unexpressed notions, all of human intercourse rests on the fact that everybody knows somewhat more about the other than the other voluntarily reveals to him; and those things he knows are frequently matters whose knowledge the other person (were he aware of it) would find undesirable.

All this may be considered indiscretion in the individual sense: in the social sense, it is a condition necessary for the concrete density and vitality of interaction. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult to trace the legal limit of this trespass into intellectual private-property. In general, man arrogates to himself the right to know all he can find out through mere observation and reflection, without applying externally illegitimate means. As a matter of fact, however, indiscretion practiced in this fashion can be as violent and morally inadmissible as listening behind closed doors and leering at a stranger's letters. To the man with the psychologically fine ear, people innumerable times betray their most secret thoughts and qualities, not only although, but often because, they anxiously try to guard
them. The avid, slyly grasping every inconspicuous word, the
hunting reflection on what this or that tone of voice might mean,
how much and such utterances might be combined, what blushing
on mentioning a certain name might betray—none of this
transcends the limits of external discretion: it is entirely the
work of one's own intellect and, for this reason, one's appar-
ently indisputably right. And all the more so, since such an
abuse of psychological superiority often occurs quite involun-
tarily: often we simply cannot check our interpretation of the
other, our construction of his inner nature. No matter how
much every decent person tells himself that he must not misuse
what the other hides, that he must not exploit the slips and
helplessnesses of the other; knowledge, nevertheless, occurs often
so automatically, and its result confronts us with such striking
suddenness, that more good will has no power over it. Where
the doubtlessly impermissible can yet be so inevitable, the
boundary between what is allowed and what is not, is all the
more blurred. How far discretion must refrain from touching
even intellectually "all that is his"; how far, on the other hand,
the interests of interaction and the interdependence of the mem-
bers of society limit this duty—this is a question for whose
answer neither moral tact nor knowledge of objective condi-
tions and their requirements alone is sufficient, since both are
needed. The subtlety and complexity of this question relegate
it to the individual decision which cannot be prejudged by any
general norm—to a much higher degree than does the question
of private property in the material sense.

§ 5. Friendship and Love

In this pre form or complementation of the secret, the point
is not the behavior of the individual who keeps a secret, but the
behavior of another individual: within the mixture of recip-
rocical knowledge or ignorance, the accent is more on the degree
of knowledge than of ignorance. We now come to a totally dif-
ferent configuration. It is found in those relationships which,
in contrast to the ones discussed, do not center around clearly
circumscribed interests that must be fixed objectively, if only
because of their "superfluous." Instead, they are built, at least
in their idea, upon the person in its totality. The principal types
here are friendship and marriage.

To the extent that the ideal of friendship was received from
antiquity and (peculiarly enough) was developed in a romantic
spirit, it aims at an absolute psychological intimacy, and is ac-
companied by the notion that even material property should be
common to friends. This entering of the whole undivided ego
into the relationship may be more plausible in friendship than
in love for the reason that friendship lacks the specific concen-
tration upon one element which love derives from its sensuous-
ness. To be sure, by virtue of the fact that one among the total
range of possible reasons for a relation takes the lead, these
reasons attain a certain organization, as a group does through
leadership. A particularly strong relational factor often blazes
the trail on which the rest follow it, when they would otherwise
remain latent; and undoubtedly, for most people, sexual love
opens the doors of the total personality more widely than does
anything else. For not a few, in fact, love is the only form in
which they can give their ego in its totality, just as to the artist
the form of his art offers the only possibility for revealing his
whole inner life. Probably, this observation can be made espe-
cially often of women (although the very differently understood
"Christian love" is also designed to achieve the same result).
Not only because they love do women unreservedly offer the
total remainder of their being and having; but all of this, so to
speak, is chemically dissolved in love, and overflows to the other
being exclusively and entirely in the color, form, and tempera-
ment of love. Yet, where the feeling of love is not sufficiently
expansive, and the remaining psychological content of the rela-
tionship are not sufficiently malleable, the preponderance of the
erotic bond may suppress, as I have already suggested, the other
contacts (practical-moral, intellectual), as well as the opening-up
of those reservoirs of the personality that lie outside the erotic
sphere.

Friendship lacks this vehemence, but also the frequent un-
evenness, of this abandon. It may be, therefore, more apt than
love to connect a whole person with another person in its en-
tirety; it may melt reserves more easily than love does—if not
as strongly, yet on a larger scale and in a more enduring
sequence. Yet such complete intimacy becomes probably more and more difficult as differentiation among men increases. Modern man, possibly, has too much to hide to sustain a friendship in the ancient sense. Besides, except for their earliest years, personalities are perhaps too uniquely individualized to allow full reciprocity of understanding and receptivity, which always, after all, requires much creative imagination and much divination which is oriented only toward the other. It would seem that, for all these reasons, the modern way of feeling tends more heavily toward differentiated friendships, which cover only one side of the personality, without playing into other aspects of it.

Thus a very special type of friendship emerges, which is of the greatest significance for our problem (the degrees of invasion and reserve within the friendship relation). These differentiated friendships which connect us with one individual in terms of affection, with another, in terms of common intellectual aspects, with a third, in terms of religious impulses, and with a fourth, in terms of common experiences—all these friendships present a very peculiar synthesis in regard to the question of discretion, of reciprocal revelation and concealment. They require that the friends do not look into those mutual spheres of interest and feeling which, after all, are not included in the relation and which, if touched upon, would make them feel painfully the limits of their mutual understanding. But the relation which is thus restricted and surrounded by discretions, may yet stem from the center of the total personality. It may yet be reached by the sap of the ultimate roots of the personality, even though it feeds only part of the person's phrenology. In its idea, it involves the same affective depth and the same readiness for sacrifice, which less differentiated epochs and persons connect only with a common total sphere of life, for which reservations and discretions constitute no problem.

§ 6. Marriage

The measures of self-revelation and self-restraint, with their complements of trespass and discretion, are much more difficult to determine in the case of marriage. Their ratio here belongs in a very general problem area of extreme importance to the sociology of intimate relations. This problem area centers around the question whether the maximum of common values can be attained under the condition that the personalities reciprocally relinquish their autonomies altogether, or under the condition of reserve: the question whether, perhaps, they do not belong more to one another qualitatively if, quantitatively, they do so less. This question can be answered, of course, only along with the other question as to how, within the total communicability of man, one can draw the line where restraint and respect of the other begin. The advantage of modern marriage—which, certainly, can answer both questions only from case to case—is that this line is not fixed from the beginning, as it is in other and earlier civilizations. In earlier cultures particularly, marriage is not an erotic but, in principle, only a social and economic institution. The satisfaction of the desire for love is only accidentally connected with it; it is contracted (with exceptions, of course), not only on the basis of individual attraction, but on the ground of family connections, working conditions, and descendants. In this respect, the Greeks achieved a particularly clear differentiation—according to Demosthenes: "We have hetairae for pleasure; concubines for our daily needs; and wives to give us legitimate children and take care of the interior of the house." In such a mechanical relationship, the psychic center is obviously put out of function. Nevertheless (incidentally), this kind of marriage is constantly illustrated, though with certain modifications, by history and by the observation of actual contemporary marriages. There probably exists in it neither the need for any intimate, reciprocal self-revelation, nor the possibility of it. On the other hand, there is probably an absence of certain reserves of delicacy and chastity which, in spite of their seemingly negative character, are yet the flower of a fully internalized and personal, intimate relation.

The same tendency to exclude, a priori and by super-individual decree, certain life-contents from the common features of marriage lies in the variety of marriage forms which may coexist among the same people. Prior to entering marriage, the prospective spouses must choose among these forms, which variously distinguish economic, religious, and domestic-legal interests in their bearing upon matrimony. We find this among
many nature peoples, as well as among the Hindas and Romans. Nobody will deny, of course, that even in modern life, marriage is probably contracted overwhelmingly from conventional or material motives. Yet no matter how often it is actualized, the sociological idea of modern marriage is the commonness of all life-contents, insofar as they determine the value and fate of the personality, immediately or through their effects. Nor is the nature of this ideal requirement without results: often enough it allows, or even stimulates, an initially quite imperfect union to develop into an ever more comprehensive one. But, whereas the very interminability of this process is the instrument of the happiness and inner vitality of the relationship, its reversal usually entails grave disappointments—namely, when absolute unity is anticipated from the beginning, when neither demand nor revelation knows restraint, not even the restraint which, for all finer and deeper natures, remains locked in the obscurity of the soul even where it seems to pour itself out before the other entirely.

During the first stages of the relationship there is a great temptation, both in marriage and in marriage-like free love, to let oneself be completely(absorbed) by the other, to send the last reserves of the soul after those of the body, to lose oneself to the other without reservation. Yet, in most cases, this abandon probably threatens the future of the relationship seriously. Only those individuals can give themselves wholly without danger who cannot wholly give themselves, because their wealth consists in a continuous development in which every abandon is at once followed by new treasures. Such individuals have an inexhaustible reservoir of latent psychological possessions, and hence can no more reveal and give them away at one stroke than a tree can give away next year’s fruits with those of the season. But other individuals are different. With every flight of feeling, with every unconditional abandon, with every revelation of their inner life, they make inroads (as it were) into their capital, because they lack the mainspring of ever renewed psychic affluence which can neither be exhaustively revealed nor be separated from the ego. In these cases, the spouses have a good chance of coming to face one another with empty hands: and the Dionysian bliss of giving may leave behind it an im-

povery which, unjustly, but no less bitterly for that, belies in retrospect even past abandon and their happiness.

We are, after all, made in such a way that we need not only a certain proportion of truth and error as the basis of our lives (as was pointed out earlier), but also a certain proportion of distinctness and indistinctness in the image of our life-elements. The other individual must give us not only gifts we may accept, but the possibility of our giving him—hopes, idealizations, hidden beauties, attractions of which not even he is conscious. But the place where we deposit all this, which we produce, but produce for him, is the indistinct horizon of his personality, the interstitial realm, in which faith replaces knowledge. But it must be strongly emphasized that this is, by no means, only a matter of illusions and optimistic or amorous self-deceptions, but that portions even of the persons closest to us must be offered us in the form of indistinctness and unclarity, in order for their attractiveness to keep on the same high level.

It is in this way that the majority of people replace the attraction values, which the minority possess in the inexhaustibility of their inner life and growth. The mere fact of absolute knowledge, of a psychological having-exhausted, sobering us up, even without prior drunkenness; it paralyzes the vitality of relations and lets their continuation really appear pointless. This is the dangerous and (in more than an external sense) shameless abandon, to which the unlimited possibilities of intimate relations tempt us. These possibilities, in fact, are easily felt as a kind of duty—particularly when there exists no absolute certainty of one’s own feeling, and the fear of not giving the other enough leads to giving him too much. It is highly probable that many marriages founder on this lack of reciprocal discretion—discretion both in taking and in giving. They lapse into a trivial habituation without charm, into a matter-of-facts which has no longer any room for surprises. The fertile depth of relations suspects and honors something even more ultimate behind every ultimate revealed; it daily challenges us to reconquer even secure possessions. But this depth is only the reward for that tenderness and self-discipline which, even in the most intimate relation that comprises the total individual, respects his inner private property, and allows the right to question to be limited by the right to secrecy.
Secrecy

The Sociological Characteristic of all these combinations is that the secret of a given individual is acknowledged by another; that what is intentionally or unintentionally hidden is intentionally or unintentionally respected. The intention of hiding, however, takes on a much greater intensity when it clashes with the intention of revealing. In this situation emerges that provocative hiding and masking, that aggressive defensive, so to speak, against the third person, which alone is usually designated as secret.

§ 1. The Role of the Secret in Social Life

The secret in this sense, the hiding of realities by negative or positive means, is one of man's greatest achievements. In comparison with the childish stage in which every conception is expressed at once, and every undertaking is accessible to the eyes of all, the secret produces an immense enlargement of life: numerous contents of life cannot even emerge in the presence of full publicity. The secret offers, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world; and the latter is decisively influenced by the former.

Whether there is secrecy between two individuals or groups, and if so how much, is a question that characterizes every relation between them. For even where one of the two does not notice the existence of a secret, the behavior of the concealer, and hence the whole relationship, is certainly modified by it. 3 The historical development of society is in many respects characterized by the fact that what at an earlier time was manifest, enters the protection of secrecy; and that, conversely, what once was secret, no longer needs such protection but reveals itself. This is comparable to that other evolution of the mind by which what originally was done consciously, sinks to the level of consciously mechanical routine, and, on the other hand, what at an earlier stage was unconscious and instinctive, rises to the clarity of consciousness. How this is distributed among the various formations of private and public life; how this evolution leads to ever more purposeful conditions inasmuch as, at the beginning, the range of secrecy is often extended much too far, in clumsy and undifferentiated fashion, and, on the other hand, the utility of secrecy is recognized only late with respect to many other items; how the quantum of secrecy is modified in its consequences by the importance or irrelevance of its contents—all this, even as mere question, illuminates the significance of the secret for the structure of human interaction.

This significance must not be overlooked in view of the fact that the secret is often ethically negative; for, the secret is a general sociological form which stands in neutrality above the value functions of its contents. It may absorb the highest values—as, for instance, in the case of the noble individual whose subtle shame makes him conceal his best in order not to have it remunerated by eulogy and other rewards; for, otherwise, he would possess the remuneration, as it were, but no longer the value itself. On the other hand, although the secret has no immediate connection with evil, evil has an immediate connection with secrecy: the immoral hides itself for obvious reasons even where its content meets with no social stigma as, for instance, in the case of certain sexual delinquencies. The intrinsically isolating effect of immorality as such, irrespective of all direct social repulsion, is real and important beyond the many alleged entanglements of an ethical and social kind. Among other things, the secret is also the sociological expression of moral badness, although the facts contradict the classical phrase that nobody is bad enough to want, in addition, to appear bad. For often enough, spite and cynicism do not even let it come to a concealment of badness; in fact, they may exploit badness...
in order to enhance the personality in the eyes of others—to the point where an individual sometimes brags about immoralities he has not even committed.

§ 2. The Fascination of Secrecy

The employment of secrecy as a sociological technique, as a form of action without which certain purposes—since we live in a social environment—can simply not be attained, is understandable immediately. Not quite so evident are the attractions and values of the secret beyond its significance as a mere means—the peculiar attraction of formally secretive behavior irrespective of its momentary content. In the first place, the strongly emphasized exclusion of all outsiders makes for a correspondingly strong feeling of possession. For many individuals, property does not fully gain its significance with mere ownership, but only with the consciousness that others must do without it. The basis for this, evidently, is the impressibility of our feelings through differences. Moreover, since the others are excluded from the possession—particularly when it is very valuable—the converse suggests itself psychologically, namely, that what is denied to many must have special value.

Inner property of the most heterogeneous kinds, thus, attains a characteristic value accent through the form of secrecy, in which the contiguity of meaning of what is concealed recedes, often enough, before the simple fact that others know nothing about it. Among children, pride and bragging are often based on a child’s being able to say to the other: “I know something that you don’t know”—and to such a degree, that this sentence is uttered as a formal means of boasting and of subordinating the others, even where it is made up and actually refers to no secret. This jealousy of the knowledge about facts hidden to others, is shown in all contexts, from the smallest to the largest. British parliamentary discussions were secret for a long time; and, as late as under George III, press communications about them were prosecuted as criminal offenses—explicitly, as violations of parliamentary privileges. The secret gives one a position of exception; it operates as a purely socially determined attraction. It is basically independent of the content it guards but, of course, is increasingly effective in the measure in which the exclusive possession is vast and significant.

For this, a converse notion, analogous to the one mentioned above, is also responsible in part. For the average man, all superior persons and all superior achievements have something mysterious. All human being and doing, to be sure, flows from enigmatic forces. Yet among individuals of the same quality and value level, this does not yet make one a problem in the eyes of the other, particularly because the equality produces a certain direct understanding, not mediated by the intellect. Essential inequality, on the contrary, produces no such understanding, and any particular difference makes the general enigmatic character come to the fore at once. (This is similar to one’s always living in the same landscape and thus never suspecting the problem of influence by scenery—a problem which impresses us, however, as soon as we change our surroundings, and a different life-feeling calls our attention to the causative role of the scenic milieu generally.) From secrecy, which shades all that is profound and significant, grows the typical error according to which everything mysterious is something important and essential. Before the unknown, man’s natural impulse to idealize and his natural fearfulness cooperate toward the same goal: to intensify the unknown through imagination, and to pay attention to it with an emphasis that is not usually accorded to patent reality.

§ 3. The Fascination of Betrayal

Peculiarly enough, these attractions of secrecy are related to those of its logical opposite, betrayal—which, evidently, are no less sociological. The secret contains a tension that is dissolved in the moment of its revelation. This moment constitutes the scene in the development of the secret; all of its charms are once more gathered in it and brought to a climax—just as the moment of dissipation lets one enjoy with extreme intensity the value of the object; the feeling of power which accompanies the possession of money becomes concentrated for the dissipator, most completely and sensuously, in the very instant in which he lets this power out of his hands. The secret, too, is full of the consciousness that it can be betrayed; that one holds the power of
surprises, turns of fate, joy, destruction—if only, perhaps, of self-destruction. For this reason, the secret is surrounded by the possibility and temptation of betrayal; and the external danger of being discovered is interwoven with the internal danger, which is like the fascination of an abyss, of giving oneself away. The secret puts a barrier between men but, at the same time, it creates the tempting challenge to break through it, by gossip or confession—and this challenge accompanies its psychology like a constant overtone. The sociological significance of the secret, therefore, has its practical extent, its mode of realization, only in the individual’s capacity or inclination to keep it to himself, in his resistance or weakness in the face of tempting betrayal. Out of the counterplay of these two interests, in concealing and revealing, spring nuances and fates of human interaction that permeate it in its entirety. In the light of our earlier stipulation, every human relation is characterized, among other things, by the amount of secrecy that is in and around it. In this respect, therefore, the further development of every relation is determined by the ratio of persevering and yielding energies which are contained in the relation. The former rest on the practical interest in secrecy and its formal attraction. The latter are based on the impossibility of bearing the tension entailed by keeping a secret any longer, and on a feeling of superiority. Although this superiority lies in a latent form, so to speak, in secrecy itself, for our feelings it is fully actualized only at the moment of revelation or often, also, in the lust of confession, which may contain this feeling of power in the negative and perverted form of self-humiliation and contrition.

§ 4. Secrecy and Individualization

All these elements which determine the sociological role of the secret are of an individual nature; but the measure in which the dispositions and complications of personalities form secrets depends, at the same time, on the social structure in which their lives are placed. The decisive point in this respect is that the secret is a first-rate element of individualization. It is this in a typical dual role: social conditions of strong personal differentiation permit and require secrecy in a high degree; and, conversely, the secret embodies and intensifies such differentiation. In a small and narrow circle, the formation and preservation of secrets is made difficult even on technical grounds: everybody is too close to everybody else and his circumstances, and frequency and intimacy of contact involve too many temptations of revelation. But further, the secret is not even particularly needed, because this type of social formation usually levels its members, and the peculiarities of existence, activities, and possessions whose conservation requires the form of secrecy, militate against this social form and its leveling.

With the enlargement of the group, evidently, all this changes into its opposite. Here, as elsewhere, the specific traits of the large group are most clearly revealed by the conditions of a money economy. Ever since traffic in economic values has been carried on by means of money alone, an otherwise unattainable secrecy has become possible. Three characteristics of the monetary form of value are relevant here: its compressibility, which permits one to make somebody rich by slipping a check into his hand without anybody’s noticing it; its abstractness and qualitylessness, through which transactions, acquisitions, and changes in ownership can be tendered hidden and unrecognizable in a way impossible where values are owned only in the form of extensive, unambiguously tangible objects; and finally, its effect-at-a-distance, which allows its investment in very remote and ever-changing values, and thus its complete withdrawal from the eyes of the immediate environment. These possibilities of dissimulation develop in the measure in which the money economy expands, and they are bound to show their dangers in economic action involving foreign moneys. They have led to a protective measure, namely, the public character of financial manipulations by joint-stock companies and governments.

This suggests a somewhat more exact phrasing of the evolutionary formula touched upon above. According to it, it will be recalled, the secret is a form which constantly receives and releases contents: what originally was manifest becomes secret, and what once was hidden later sheds its concealment. One could, therefore, entertain the paradoxical idea that under otherwise identical circumstances, human collective life requires a certain measure of secrecy which merely changes its topics; while leaving
one of them, social life seizes upon another, and in all this alternation it preserves an unchanged quantity of secrecy.

But one can find a somewhat more precisely determined content for this general scheme. It seems as if, with growing cultural expediency, general affairs became ever more public, and individual affairs ever more secret. In less developed stages, as has already been noted, the individual and his conditions cannot, to the same extent, protect themselves against being looked into and meddled with as under the modern style of life, which has produced an entirely new measure of reserve and discretion, especially in large cities. In earlier times, functionaries of the public interests were customarily clothed with mystical authority, while, under larger and more mature conditions, they attain, through the extension of their sphere of domination, through the objectivity of their technique, and through their distance from every individual, a certainty and dignity by means of which they can permit their activities to be public. The former secrecy of public affairs, however, showed its inner inconsistency by at once creating the countermovements of betrayal, on the one hand, and of espionage, on the other. Even as late as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, governments kept anxiously silent about the amounts of state debts, the tax situation, and the size of the army. Ambassadors, therefore, often knew no better than to spy on intercepted letters, and to make people who “knew something” talk; domestics not excluded. In the nineteenth century, however, publicity invaded the affairs of state to such an extent that, by now, governments officially publish facts without whose secrecy, prior to the nineteenth century, no regime seemed even possible. Politics, administration, and jurisdiction thus have lost their secrecy and inaccessibility in the same measure in which the individual has gained the possibility of ever more complete withdrawal, and in the same measure in which modern life has developed. In the midst of metropolitan crowdingness, a technique for making and keeping private matters secret, such as earlier could be attained only by means of spatial isolation.

The answer to the question of how far this development may be considered expedient depends on social value axioms. Every democracy holds publicity to be an intrinsically desirable situation, on the fundamental premise that everybody should know the events and circumstances that concern him, since this is the condition without which he cannot contribute to decisions about them; and every shared knowledge itself contains the psychological challenge to shared action. It is a moot question whether this conclusion is quite valid. If, above all individualistic interests, there has grown an objective governing structure which embodies certain aspects of these interests, the formal autonomy of this structure may very well entitle it to function secretly, without thereby belying its “publicity” in the sense of a material consideration of the interests of all. Thus, there is no logical connection which would entail the greater value of publicity. On the other hand, the general scheme of cultural differentiation is again shown here: what is public becomes ever more public, and what is private becomes ever more private. And this historical development is the expression of a deeper, objective significance: what is essentially public and what, in its content, concerns all, also becomes ever more public externally, in its sociological form; and what, in its inner meaning, is autonomous—the centripetal affairs of the individual—gains an ever more private character even in its sociological position, an ever more distinct possibility of remaining secret.

I pointed out earlier that the secret also operates as an adorning possession and value of the personality. This fact involves the contradiction that what recedes before the consciousness of the others and is hidden from them, is to be emphasized in their consciousness; that one should appear as a particularly noteworthy person precisely through what one conceals. But this contradiction proves, not only that the need for sociological attention may indeed resort to intrinsically contradictory means, but also that those against whom the means are actually directed in the given case, satisfy this need by bearing the cost of the superiority. They do so with a mixture of readiness and dislike;
but, in practice, they nevertheless supply the desired recognition. It may thus be appropriate to show that, although apparently the sociological counter-pole of secrecy, adornment has, in fact, a societal significance with a structure analogous to that of secrecy itself. It is the nature and function of adornment to lead the eyes of others upon the adorned. Although, in this sense, it is the antagonist of secrecy, not even the secret (it will be remembered) is without the function of personal emphasis. And this, adornment, too, exercises, by mixing superiority to others with dependence upon them, and their good will with their envy. It does so in a manner which, as a sociological form of interaction, requires its special investigation.

§ 5. Adornment 6

Man’s desire to please his social environment contains two contradictory tendencies, in whose play and counterplay in general, the relations among individuals take their course. On the one hand, it contains kindness, a desire of the individual to give the other joy; but on the other hand, there is the wish for this joy and these “favors” to flow back to him, in the form of recognition and esteem, so that they be attributed to his personality as values. Indeed, this second need is so intensified that it militates against the altruism of wishing to please, by means of this pleasing, the individual desires to distinguish himself before others, and to be the object of an attention that others do not receive. This may even lead him to the point of wanting to be envied. Pleasing may thus become a means of the will to power: some individuals exhibit the strange contradiction that they need those above whom they elevate themselves by life and deed, for they build their own self-feeling upon the subordinates’ realization that they are subordinate.

The meaning of adornment finds expression in peculiar elaborations of these motives, in which the external and internal aspects of their forms are interwoven. This meaning is to single the personality out, to emphasize it as outstanding in some sense—but not by means of power manifestations, not by anything that externally compels the other, but only through the pleasure which is engendered in him and which, therefore, still has some voluntary element in it. One adorns oneself for oneself, but can do so only by adornment for others. It is one of the strangest sociological combinations that an act, which exclusively serves the emphasis and increased significance of the actor, nevertheless attains this goal just as exclusively in the pleasure, in the visual delight it offers to others, and in their gratitude. For even the envy of adornment only indicates the desire of the envious person to win like recognition and admiration for himself; his envy proves how much he believes these values to be connected with the adornment. Adornment is the egoistic element as such: it singles out its wearer, whose self-feeling it embodies and increases at the cost of others (for, the same adornment of all would no longer adorn the individual). But, at the same time, adornment is altruistic: its pleasure is designed for the others, since its owner can enjoy it only so far as he reflects himself in them; he renders the adornment valuable only through the reflection of this gift of his. Everywhere, aesthetic formation reveals that life orientations, which reality juxtaposes as mutually alien, or even pits against one another as hostile, are, in fact, intimately interconnected. In the same way, the aesthetic phenomenon of adornment indicates a point within sociological interaction—the arena of man’s being-for-himself and being-for-the-other—where these two opposite directions are mutually dependent as ends and means.

Adornment intensifies or enlarges the impression of the personality by operating as a sort of radiation emanating from it. For this reason, its materials have always been shining metals and precious stones. They are “adornment” in a narrower sense than dress and coiffure, although these, too, “adorn.” One may speak of human radioactivity in the sense that every individual is surrounded by a larger or smaller sphere of significance radiating from him; and everybody else, who deals with him, is immersed in this sphere. It is an inextricable mixture of physiological and psychic elements: the sensuously observable influences which issue from an individual in the direction of his environment also are, in some fashion, the vehicles of a spiritual fulgur-
tion. They operate as the symbols of such a fulguration even where, in actuality, they are only external, where no suggestive power or significance of the personality flows through them. The radiations of adornment, the sensuous attention it provokes, supply the personality with such an enlargement or intensification of its sphere: the personality, so to speak, is more when it is adorned.

Inasmuch as adornment usually is also an object of considerable value, it is a synthesis of the individual’s having and being: it thus transforms mere possession into the sensuous and empathetic perceivability of the individual himself. This is not true of ordinary dress which, neither in respect of having nor of being, strikes one as an individual particularity; only the fancy dress, and above all, jewels, which gather the personality’s value and significance of radiation as in a focal point, allow the mere having of the person to become a visible quality of its being. And this is so, not although adornment is something "superfluous," but precisely because it is. The necessary is much more closely connected with the individual; it surrounds his existence with a narrower periphery. The superfluous “flows over,” that is, it flows to points which are far removed from its origin but to which it still remains tied: around the precinct of mere necessity, it lays a vaster precinct which, in principle, is limitless. According to its very idea, the superfluous contains no measure. The free and princely character of our being increases in the measure in which we add superfluousness to our having, since no extant structure, such as is laid down by necessity, imposes any limiting norm upon it.

This very accentuation of the personality, however, is achieved by means of an impersonal trait. Everything that “adorns” man can be ordered along a scale in terms of its closeness to the physical body. The “closest” adornment is typical of nature peoples: tattooing. The opposite extreme is represented by metal and stone adornments, which are entirely un-individual and can be put on by everybody. Between these two stands dress, which is not so inexchangeable and personal as tattooing, but neither so un-individual and separable as jewelry, whose very elegance lies in its impersonality. That this nature of stone and metal—solidly closed within itself, in no way alluding to any individuality; hard, unmodifiable—is yet forced to serve the person, this is its subtlest fascination. What is really elegant avoids pointing to the specifically individual; it always lays a more general, stylized, almost abstract sphere around man—which, of course, prevents no finesse from connecting the general with the personality. That new clothes are particularly elegant is due to their being still “stiff”; they have not yet adjusted to the modifications of the individual body as fully as older clothes have, which have been worn, and are pulled and pinched by the peculiar movements of their wearer—thus completely revealing his particularity. This “newness,” this lack of modification by individuality, is typical in the highest measure of metal jewelry: it is always new; in untouched coolness, it stands above the singularity and destiny of its wearer. This is not true of dress. A long-worn piece of clothing almost grows to the body; it has an intimacy that militates against the very nature of elegance, which is something for the “others,” a social notion deriving its value from general respect.

If jewelry thus is designed to enlarge the individual by adding something super-individual which goes out to all and is noted and appreciated by all, it must, beyond any effect that its material itself may have, possess style. Style is always something general. It brings the contents of personal life and activity into a form shared by many and accessible to many. In the case of a work of art, we are the less interested in its style, the greater the personal uniqueness and the subjective life expressed in it. For, it is with these that it appeals to the spectator’s personal core, too—of the spectator who, so to speak, is alone in the whole world with this work of art. But of what we call handicraft—which because of its utilitarian purpose appeals to a diversity of men—we request a more general and typical articulation. We expect not only that an individuality with its uniqueness be voiced in it, but a broad, historical or social orientation and temper, which make it possible for handicraft to be incorporated into the life-systems of a great many different individuals. It is the greatest mistake to think that, because it always functions as the adornment of an individual, adornment must be an individual work of art. Quite the contrary: because it is to serve the individual, it may not itself be of an individual nature—as
little as the piece of furniture on which we sit, or the eating utensil which we manipulate, may be individual works of art. The work of art cannot, in principle, be incorporated into another life—it is a self-sufficient world. By contrast, all that occupies the larger sphere around the life of the individual, must surround it as if it were an ever wider concentric spheres that lead back to the individual or originate from him. The essence of stylization is precisely this dilation of individual poignancy, this generalization beyond the uniqueness of the personality—which, nevertheless, in its capacity of base or circle of radiation, carries or absorbs the individuality as if in a broadly flowing river. For this reason, adornment has always instinctively been shaped in a relatively severe style.

Besides its formal stylization, the material means of its social purpose is its brilliance. By virtue of this brilliance, its wearer appears as the center of a circle of radiation in which every close-by person, every seeing eye, is caught. As the flash of the precious stone seems to be directed at the other—like the lightning of the glance the eye addressed to him—it carries the social meaning of jewels, the being-for-the-other, which returns to the subject as the enlargement of his own sphere of significance. The radii of this sphere mark the distance which jewelry creates between men—"I have something which you do not have." But, on the other hand, these radii not only let the other participate: they shine in his direction: in fact, they exist only for his sake. By virtue of their material, jewels signify, in one and the same act, an increase in distance and a favor.

For this reason, they are of such particular service to vanity—which needs others in order to despise them. This suggests the profound difference which exists between vanity and haughty pride: pride, whose self-consciousness really rests only upon itself, ordinarily disdains adornment in every sense of the word. A word must also be added here, to the same effect, on the significance of "genuine" material. The attraction of the "genuine," in all contexts, consists in its being more than its immediate appearance, which it shares with its imitation. Unlike its falsification, it is not something isolated; it has its roots in a soil that lies beyond its mere appearance, while the unauthentic is only what it can be taken for at the moment. The "genuine" individual, thus, is the person on whom one can rely even when he is out of one's sight. In the case of jewelry, this more-than-appearance is its value, which cannot be guessed by being looked at, but is something that, in contrast to skilled forgery, is added to the appearance. By virtue of the fact that this value can always be realized, that it is recognized by all, that it possesses a relative timelessness, jewelry becomes part of a super-contingent, super-personal value structure. Talmi-gold and similar trinkets are identical with what they momentarily do for their wearer; genuine jewels are a value that goes beyond this; they have their roots in the value ideas of the whole social circle and are ramified through all of it. Thus, the charm and the accent they give the individual who wears them, feed on this super-individual soil. Their genuineness makes their aesthetic value—which, too, is here a value "for the others"—a symbol of general esteem, and of membership in the total social value system.

There once existed a decree in medieval France which prohibited all persons below a certain rank to wear gold ornaments. The combination which characterizes the whole nature of adornment unmistakably lives in this decree: in adornment, the sociological and aesthetic emphasis upon the personality fuses as if in a focus; being-for-one and being-for-others become reciprocal cause and effect in it. Aesthetic excellence and the right to charm and please, are allowed, in this decree, to go only to a point fixed by the individual's social sphere of significance. It is precisely in this fashion that one adds, to the charm which adornment gives one's whole appearance, the sociological charm of being, by virtue of adornment, a representative of one's group, with whose whole significance one is "adorned." It is as if the significance of his status, symbolized by jewels, returned to the individual on the very beams which originate in him and enlarge his sphere of impact. Adornment, thus, appears as the means by which his social power or dignity is transformed into visible, personal excellence.

Centripetal and centrifugal tendencies, finally, appear to be fused in adornment in a specific form, in the following information. Among nature peoples, it is reported, women's private property generally develops later than that of men and,
originally, and often exclusively, refers to adornment. By contrast, the personal property of the male usually begins with weapons. This reveals his active and more aggressive nature; the male enlarges his personality sphere without waiting for the will of others. In the case of the more passive female nature, this result—although formally the same in spite of all external differences—depends more on the others' good will. Every property is an extension of personality; property is that which obeys our wills, that in which our egos express, and externally realize themselves. This expression occurs, earliest and most completely, in regard to our body, which thus is our first and most unconditional possession. In the adorned body, we possess more; if we have the adorned body at our disposal, we are masters over more and nobler things, so to speak. It is, therefore, deeply significant that bodily adornment becomes private property above all: it expands the ego and enlarges the sphere around us which is filled with our personality and which consists in the pleasure and the attention of our environment. This environment looks with much less attention at the unadorned (and thus as if less "expanded") individual, and passes by without including him. The fundamental principle of adornment is once more revealed in the fact that, under primitive conditions, the most outstanding possession of women became that which, according to its very idea, exists only for others, and which can intensify the value and significance of its wearer only through the recognition that flows back to her from these others. In an aesthetic form, adornment creates a highly specific synthesis of the great convergent and divergent forces of the individual and society, namely, the elevation of the ego through existing for others, and the elevation of existing for others through the emphasis and extension of the ego. This aesthetic form itself stands above the contrasts between individual human strivings. They find, in adornment, not only the possibility of undisturbed simultaneous existence, but the possibility of a reciprocal organization that, as anticipation and pledge of their deeper metaphysical unity, transcends the disharmony of their appearance.

The Secret Society

The secret is a sociological determination characteristic of the reciprocal relations between group elements; or, rather, together with other relational forms, it constitutes their relationship as a whole. But it may also characterize a group in its totality; this applies to the case of "secret societies." As long as the existence, the activities, and the possessions of an individual are secret, the general sociological significance of the secret is isolation, contrast, and egoistic individualization. The sociological significance of the secret is external, namely, the relationship between the one who has the secret and another who does not. But, as soon as a whole group uses secrecy as its form of existence, the significance becomes internal: the secret determines the reciprocal relations among those who share it in common. Yet, since even here there is the exclusion (with its specific nuances) of the non-initiates, the sociology of the secret society is confronted with the complicated problem of ascertaining how intra-group life is determined by the group's secretive behavior toward the outside. I do not preface this discussion by a systematic classification of secret societies, which would have only an external, historical interest; even without it, essential categories will emerge by themselves.

§ 1. Protection and Confidence

The first internal relation typical of the secret society is the reciprocal confidence 6 among its members. It is required to a particularly great extent, because the purpose of secrecy is, above all, protection. Of all protective measures, the most radical is to make oneself invisible. In this respect, the secret society

6 "Ferwaven," i.e., both "confidence" and "trust." Both terms are used in this translation, according to context.—Tr.
differs fundamentally from the individual who seeks the protection of secrecy. The individual can properly do so only in regard to particular undertakings or situations; as a whole, he can, to be sure, hide for certain periods of time, but his existence, except for very abstruse combinations, cannot itself be a secret. This is quite possible, however, for a societal unit. Its elements may live in the most frequent interactions; but the fact that they form a society—a conspiracy or a gang of swindlers, a religious conviviality or an association for engaging in sexual orgies—can essentially, as well as permanently, be a secret.

In this type, then, it is not the individuals, but the group they form, which is concealed. It must be distinguished from another type, where the formation of the group is completely known, while the membership, the purpose, or the specific rules of the association remain secret. Examples are many secret orders among nature peoples; also the Freemasons. Secrecy protects this type less than it does the former, since what is known always offers points of attack for further penetration. On the other hand, such relatively secret societies often have the advantage of a certain elasticity. Since their existence is manifest to a certain extent from the beginning, they can bear further revelations more easily than can those societies whose very life is secret, and whose mere discovery frequently spells destruction—their secret usually rests on the radical alternatives of All or Nothing.

The fact that secrets do not remain guarded forever is the weakness of the secret society. It is therefore said quite correctly that the secret known by two is no longer a secret. The protection which secret societies offer is thus absolute, but only temporary. In fact, for contents of a positive social value to be lodged in secret societies is only a transition which, after a certain period of growing strength, they no longer need. Secrecy, therefore, eventually comes to resemble the mere protection which is gained by resisting disturbances; and it is appropriate for it to yield to the other kind of protection, namely, strength, which is capable of coping with disturbances. Under these conditions, the secret society is the suitable social form for contents which still (as it were) are in their infancy, subject to the vulnerability of early developmental stages. A new insight, a young religion, morality, or party, is often still weak and needs protection, and for this reason conceals itself.

Periods in which new contents of life develop against the resistance of existing powers are predestined, therefore, to witness the growth of secret societies. This is shown, for instance, by the eighteenth century. At that time—merely to give an example—the elements of the liberal party already existed in Germany, but their appearance in the form of a permanent structure was still prevented by political conditions. The secret order was the form under whose protection the germ could be preserved and strengthened—a service rendered particularly by the order of the Illuminati.

But the secret society protects the decaying as well as the growing development. The flight into secrecy is a ready device for social endeavors and forces that are about to be replaced by new ones. In these cases, secrecy constitutes a sort of transitional stage between being and not-being. When, by the end of the Middle Ages, the German communal associations began to be suppressed by the strengthened central powers, they developed a far-flung secret life through hidden assemblies and compacts and through the secret exercise of law and violence—like animals seek the protection of a hiding-place when they go to their death. This double function of the secret order as a form of protection—as in an interim arrangement for rising as well as for sinking forces—is perhaps most evident in religious developments. As long as the Christian communities were persecuted by the state, they were often forced to seek refuge for their assemblies, their worship, their whole existence, in concealment. But, once Christianity became a state religion, it was the adherents of the persecuted, dying paganism who had to resort to the same concealment of their cultural associations into which they had previously forced the now dominant religion. In general, the secret society emerges everywhere as the counterpart of despotism and police restriction, as the protection of both the defensive and the offensive in their struggle against the overwhelming pressure of central powers—by no means of political powers only, but also of the church, as well as of school classes and families.

Corresponding to this protective character as an external
§ 2. Silence

It is natural that secret societies should seek means for promoting the secrecy psychologically, since it cannot be directly enforced. Above all, there are the oath and the threat of punishment, which need no discussion. More interesting is a technique that is sometimes encountered, namely, the systematic instruction of the novice in the art of silence. In view of the above-mentioned difficulties of wholly guarding one's tongue and, particularly, in view of the easy connection between thought and utterance that exists in the more primitive stages (among children and many nature peoples. thinking and speaking are almost the same), it is necessary, above all, to learn how to be silent. Before silence regarding any particular item may be expected. Thus it is reported of a secret order in the Moluccan island of Ceram that the young man who seeks admittance, not only is enjoined to keep silent concerning everything he experiences on entering, but also is not permitted for weeks to say a word to anybody, not even to his family. Certainly not merely the educational factor of thoroughgoing silence operates here; it is in line with this psychologically undifferentiated stage that, during a period when something particular must be kept secret, speaking altogether should be prohibited. This is the same radicalism in which primitive peoples often use the death penalty in cases where later a partial sin is met with a partial punishment; or in which, if this is their inclination, they pay for some-

1 If human society is conditioned by the capacity to speak, it is shaped by the capacity to be silent, though this becomes obvious only upon occasion. Where all conceptions, feelings, and impulses gush forth in speech without inhibition, they produce a chaotic helter-skelter, instead of an organic coordination. We rarely realize how necessary this capacity for silence is in the development of any regulated instruction; we rather take it for granted. Nevertheless, it undoubtedly has a historical development, which begins with the chatter of the child and of the Negro for whom ideas gain some sort of concreteness and self-assurance only in the very process of chattering. Correspondingly, the developmental process also begins with the clumsy coupledness of silence mentioned above. It culminates in the urbanity of high societal culture, among whose noblest possessions is the secure feeling of knowing where one must speak, and where one must be silent. Thus, at a social party (for instance), the host must refrain from talk as long as the guests carry the conversation among themselves: he must seize on it immediately, once it flags. An intermediate case is perhaps presented by the medieval guilds which, by statute, punished everybody who interrupted the alderman in his speech.
thing momentarily attractive with a wholly disproportionate part of their possessions.

In all this, there is manifested a specific "lack of skill" whose essence seems to consist in the incapability of engendering the particular innervation needed for a particular purposive movement: the clumsy person moves the whole arm where, for his purpose, he should move only two fingers, or the whole body where a precisely articulated movement of the arm would be appropriate. In the cases quoted, the preponderance of psychological association immensely intensifies the danger of indiscretion and, at the same time, allows its prohibition to grow beyond its particular, teleologically determined content and, instead, to cover the whole function that includes this content. If, on the other hand, the secret order of the Pythagoreans prescribed several years' silence for the novices, the intention, probably here too, went beyond mere education for guarding the secrets of the order—but not because of that "lack of skill" but, on the contrary, because the differentiated purpose itself was enlarged in its own direction: the adept had to learn, not only to keep silent about particular matters, but to master himself generally. The order aimed at a rigorous self-discipline and a stylized purity of life; and, whoever managed to be silent over years, was also able, presumably, to resist temptations other than talkativeness.

Another means for placing discretion upon an objective basis was applied by the secret order of the Gallic Druids. The content of their secrets lay, particularly, in spiritual songs which every Druid had to memorize. But this was so arranged—above all, probably, because of the prohibition to write the songs down—that it required an extraordinary long time, even up to twenty years. By means of this long period of learning before there was anything essential that could have been betrayed, a gradual habituation to silence was developed. The fascination of disclosure did not assail the undisciplined mind all at once, as it were; the young mind was allowed to adapt itself slowly to resisting this fascination. The rule according to which the songs could not be written down, however, was more than a mere protective measure against the revelation of the secrets—it is part of much more comprehensive sociological phenomena. The individual's dependence upon personal instruction, and the fact that the exclusive source of the teaching was within the secret order—not deposited in any objective piece of writing—these facts tied every single member with incomparable closeness to the group, and made him constantly feel that, if he were severed from this substance, he would lose his own and could never find it again anywhere.

It has perhaps not been sufficiently noted how much, in more mature cultures, the objectification of the spirit promotes the growing independence of the individual. So long as immediate tradition, individual teaching, and, above all, establishment of norms through persons in authority, determine the individual's intellectual life, he is wholly integrated with his surrounding, living group. It alone gives him the possibility of a fulfilled and spiritual existence; the direction of all channels, through which his life-contents flow to him, runs only between his social milieu and himself; and he feels this at every moment. But, once the labor of the species capitalizes its results in the form of writing, in visible works, in enduring examples, this immediate, organic flow between the actual group and its individual member is interrupted. The life process of the individual no longer continuously binds him to the group without competition from any other quarter: it can now feed on objective sources which need not be personally present. The fact that this supply actually originates in processes of the social mind, is relatively irrelevant. These processes are not only quite remote, having occurred in generations which are no longer connected with the present feeling of the individual, although his supply is the crystallization of actions by these past generations. Above all, however, it is the objective form of this supply, its separateness from subjective personality, that opens a super-social source of food to the individual. His spiritual content, both in degree and kind, thus comes to depend much more markedly upon his capacity to absorb, than upon any allotted offering. The particularly close association within the secret society (to be discussed later in greater detail), which has its affective category, so to speak, in specific "trust," thus suggests that, where the secret society has as its core the transmission of intellectual contents, it is fit for it to avoid the written fixation of these matters.
§ 3. Written Communication

Some remarks on the sociology of the letter are appropriate here, since the letter, evidently, represents a very peculiar constellation even under the category of secrecy. In the first place, writing is opposed to all secrecy. Prior to its general use, every legal transaction, however simple, had to be concluded before witnesses. The written form replaced this necessity, inasmuch as it involves an unlimited, even if only potential, "publicity": not only the witnesses, but everybody in general, may know of the business concluded.

Our consciousness has a peculiar form at its disposal, which can only be designated as "objective spirit." Natural laws and moral imperatives, concepts and artistic creations lie ready, as it were, for everybody able and willing to use them; but, in their timeless validity, they are independent of whether, when, and by whom they are thus used. Truth, as an intellectual phenomenon, is something quite different from its passing, actual object: it remains true, no matter whether or not it is known and acknowledged. The moral and juridical law is valid, whether lived by or not. Writing is a symbol, or visible vehicle, of this immeasurably important category. In being written down, the intellectual content receives an objective form, an existence which, in principle, is timeless, a successively and simultaneously unlimited reproducibility in the consciousness of individuals. But its significance and validity are fixed, and thus do not depend on the presence or absence of these psychological realizations. Writing, thus, possesses an objective existance which renounces all guarantees of remaining secret.

The letter, more specifically, is likewise wholly unprotected against anybody's taking notice of it. It is for this reason, perhaps, that we react to indiscretion concerning letters as to something particularly ignoble—so that, for superfluous feelings, it is the very defenselessness of the letter which protects its secrecy. The mixture of these two contrasts—the objective elimination of all warranty of secrecy, and the subjective intensification of this warranty—constitutes the letter as a specific sociological phenomenon. The form of expression by letter is an objectification of its content, which involves, on the one hand, the letter's being addressed to one particular person and, on the other hand, the correlate of this first fact, namely, the personal and subjective character in which the letter writer (in contrast to the writer of literature) presents himself. It is particularly in this second respect that the letter is a unique form of communication. Individuals in physical proximity give each other more than the mere content of their words. Inasmuch as each of them sees the other, is immersed in the unverbalizable sphere of his mood, feels a thousand nuances in the tone and rhythm of his utterances, the logical or the intended content of his words gains an enrichment and modification for which the letter offers only very poor analogies. And even these, on the whole, grow only from the memories of direct personal contact between the correspondents.

It is both the advantage and the disadvantage of the letter that it gives, in principle, only the pure, objective content of our momentary ideational life, while being silent concerning what one is unable, or does not wish, to say. But the characteristic of the letter is that it is, nevertheless, something wholly subjective, momentary, solely-personal (except for cases where it is a treatise in unprinced form)—and, by means, only when it is a lyrical outburst, but also when it is a perfectly concrete communication. This objectification of the subjective, this stripping of the subjective element of everything pertaining to the matter at issue and to oneself which one does not (as it happens) want to reveal at the moment, is possible only in periods of high culture. It is then that one adequately masters the psychological technique which enables one to give a permanent form to momentary moods and thoughts, and to consider and receive them with the understanding that they are momentary, commensurate with the requirements of the situation. Where an inner production has the character of a "work," this permanent form is entirely adequate; but, in the letter, there lies a contradiction between the character of its content and that of its form. Only a sovereign objectivity and differentiation can produce, come to terms with, and utilize, this contradiction.

This synthesis finds its further analogy in the mixture of de-
terminateness and ambiguity which is characteristic of written expressions and to, the highest extent, of the letter. Determinateness and ambiguity are sociological categories of the first rank in regard to all utterances between man and man; evidently, all of the discussions in this chapter [part] belong in their general area. Yet here the point is not simply the more or less, which the one lets the other know about himself; but, rather, the fact that, what he does give, is only more or less clear to its recipient, and that this lack of clarity is as if compensated for by a corresponding plurality of possible interpretations. It is almost certain that there exists no enduring relation between individuals in which the changing proportions of clarity and interpretability of utterances do not play an essential role, although we usually become aware of this role only through its practical results. Superficially, the written utterance appears to be safer in the sense that it seems to be the only one from which “no iota can be taken away.” Yet this prerogative of the written word is only the consequence of a lack of all those accompaniments—sound of voice, tone, gesture, facial expression—which, in the spoken word, are sources of both obfuscation and clarification. As a matter of fact, however, the recipient does not usually content himself with the purely logical sense of the words which the letter surely transmits much less ambiguously than speech; innumerable times, indeed, the recipient cannot do so, because even to grasp the mere logical sense, more than the logical sense is required. For this reason, the letter is much more than the spoken word the locus of “interpretations” and hence of misunderstandings—despite its clarity, or more correctly, because of it.

Corresponding to the cultural level at which a relationship (or period of relationship) based on written communication is possible, the qualitative characteristics of such a relation are, likewise, sharply differentiated: what in human utterances is clear and distinct, is more clear and distinct in the letter than in speech, and what is essentially ambiguous, is more ambiguous. Expressed in terms of the categories of freedom and unfreedom on the part of the recipient of the utterance: his understanding, in regard to its logical core, is less free; but, in regard to its deeper and personal significance, his understanding is freer in the case of the letter than in that of speech. One may say that, whereas speech reveals the secret of the speaker by means of all that surrounds it—which is visible but not audible, and which also includes the imponderables of the speaker himself—the letter conceals this secret. For this reason, the letter is clearer than speech where the secret of the other is not the issue; but where it is the issue, the letter is more ambiguous. By the “secret of the other” I understand his moods and qualities of being, which cannot be expressed logically, but on which we nevertheless fall back innumerable times, even if only in order to understand the actual significance of quite concrete utterances. In the case of speech, these helps to interpretation are so fused with its conceptual content that both result in a wholly homogeneous understanding. This is, perhaps, the most decisive instance of the general fact that man is quite incapable of distinguishing what he actually sees, hears, and experiences from what his interpretation makes of it through additions, subtractions, and transformations. It is one of the intellectual achievements of written communication that it isolates one of the elements of this native homogeneity, and thus makes visible the number of fundamentally heterogeneous factors which constitute our (apparently so simple) mutual “understanding.”

§ 4. Secrecy and Societation

In these questions concerning techniques of keeping secrets, it must not be forgotten that the secret is not only a means under whose protection the material purposes of a group may be furthered: often, conversely, the very formation of a group is designed to guarantee the secrecy of certain contents. This occurs in the special type of secret societies whose substance is a secret doctrine, some theoretical, mystical, or religious knowledge. Here, secrecy is its own sociological purpose: certain insights must not penetrate into the masses; those who know form a community in order to guarantee mutual secrecy to one another. If they were a mere sum of unconnected individuals, the secret would soon be lost; but societation offers each of them psychological support against the temptation of disclosure. Societation counterbalances the isolating and individualizing effect of the secret
which I have emphasized. All sorts of sociation shift the needs for individualization and socialization back and forth within their forms, even within their contents—as if the requirement of an enduring mixture were met by the employment of elements constantly changing in quality. The secret society compensates for the separating factor inherent in every secret by the simple fact that it is a society.

Secrecy and individualization are so closely associated that sociation may play two wholly different roles in regard to secrecy. Sociation may be directly sought, as has just been emphasized, in order to compensate, in part, for the isolating consequences of continuing secrecy—in order to satisfy within secrecy the impulse toward communion which the secret destroys in regard to the outside. On the other hand, secrecy greatly loses in significance whenever, for reasons of content, individualization is fundamentally excluded. The Freemasons stress their wish of being the most general society, "the union of unions," the only group which rejects all particularistic elements and wants to appropriate only what is common to all good men. Hand in hand with this ever more decisive tendency, there has developed among them the growing indifference toward the secret character of the lodges, which have come to be limited to mere external formalities. It is thus not contradictory for secrecy to be sometimes favored, sometimes dissolved, by sociation—these are merely different forms in which the relation between secrecy and individualization finds expression. An analogy is the connection between weakness and fear, which shows itself in the weak person's seeking sociation for protection, as well as in his avoiding it for fear of greater dangers from sociation than from isolation.

§ 5. Hierarchy

The gradual initiation of the member into the secret society, which was touched upon above, belongs in a very comprehensive area of sociological forms, within which secret societies are marked in a particular way. This area is the principle of hierarchy, or graduated differentiation, of the elements in a society. Secret societies, above all others, carry through the division of labor and the gradation of their members with great finesse and thoroughness. This is related to a characteristic of them, to be discussed later, namely, the highly developed consciousness of their life. By virtue of it, organically instinctive forces are replaced by a constantly regulating will; and growth from within is exchanged for constructive purposiveness. This rationalistic nature of their organization finds no more visible expression than in its clear-cut and well-balanced structure. An example is the Czech secret society "Omladina," mentioned earlier, which was formed on the model of a group of the Carbonari and became known, in 1893, through a legal process. The directors of the "Omladina" were divided into "thumbs" and "fingers." The "thumb," chosen by the members in secret session, chose four "fingers," who again chose a thumb. This second thumb introduced himself to the first, chose four fingers who chose a thumb; and thus the process of organization continued. The first thumb knew all thumbs, but they did not know one another. Among all fingers, only those four knew one another who were subordinated to a common thumb. All transactions of the "Omladina" were conducted by the first thumb, the "dictator." He informed the other thumbs of all intended actions; the thumbs then issued orders to their subordinate fingers, who relayed the orders to the ordinary members assigned to them.

Evidently, the fact that the secret society must be built up from its basis by means of a conscious, reflective will, gives free reign to the peculiar passion engendered by such arbitrarily disposing, organizational activities of planning important schemata. All system-building, whether of science, conduct, or society, involves the assertion of power: it subjects material outside of thought to a form which thought has cast. If this is true of all attempts at organizing a group according to principles, it is especially true of the secret society, which does not grow but is built, and which can count on fewer pre-formed parts than can any despotic or socialist system. In addition to making plans, in addition to the constructive impulse, both of which, themselves, are expressions of a will to power, there is here the special challenge of completely controlling a large, potentially and ideally subordinated group of human beings, by developing

* Cf. pp. 171-172 above.—Tr.
a scheme of positions with their rank interrelations. Occasionally, this passion is quite characteristically severed from all purposiveness, and revels in wholly fantastic hierarchy constructions, as, for instance, in the "high degrees" of degenerate Freemasonry. I shall only cite some typical details of the organization of the "Order of African Master Builders." It came into existence in Germany and France after the middle of the eighteenth century. Although itself constructed on Masonic principles, it aimed at the destruction of Freemasonry. The administration of the society (which was very small) lay in the hands of fifteen officers: Summus Magister, Summi Magistri Locum Tenens, Prior, Subprior, Magister, etc. There were seven degrees of the order: the Scotch Apprentice, Scotch Brother, Scotch Master, Scotch Knight, Eques Regii, Eques de Secta Consuetu, Eques Silentii Regii, etc.

§ 6. Ritual

The growth of ritual in secret societies stands under the same developmental conditions as does hierarchy. The extraordinary freedom and wealth of forms here, too, derives from the characteristic fact that the organization of the society is not predetermined by historical precedent, but is built up from its own basis. There are no other external traits, which are so typical of the secret society, and so sharply distinguish it from the open society, than the high valuation of usages, formulas, and rites, and their peculiar preponderance over the purposive contents of the group, if not their contrast with them. Sometimes, in fact, the contents are less anxiously guarded than is the secret of the ritual. Progressive Freemasonry maintains explicitly that it is not a secret association, that it has no reason for concealing membership, intentions, and actions; that the vow of secrecy refers exclusively to the form of the Masonic ritual. At the end of the eighteenth century, the student order of the Amidists decreed, in typical fashion, in the first paragraph of its statutes: "The most sacred duty of every member is to keep the deepest silence regarding such matters as concern the welfare of the order. Among these are: signs of the order and of recognition, names of the brothers, ceremonies, etc." Later in the same statute, the purpose and nature of the order are indicated in detail and without any concealment. In a slim book describing the constitution and the nature of the Carbonari, the enumeration of the formulas and usages at the initiation of new members and at meetings covers seventy-five printed pages. Further examples are unnecessary. The role of the ritual in secret societies is sufficiently well known, from the religio-mystical orders of antiquity down to the eighteenth-century Rosicrucians, on the one hand, and, on the other, to the most dastardly criminal gangs. The sociological motivations of the connection between ritual and secret society are approximately as follows.

The striking feature in the treatment of ritual is not only the rigor of its observance but, above all, the anxiousness with which it is guarded as a secret. Its disclosure appears to be as detrimental as that of the purposes and actions, or perhaps of the very existence, of the society. The teleological aspect of this is, probably, that the total action and interest sphere of the secret society becomes a well-rounded unity only through inclusion, in the secret, of a whole complex of external forms. Under its characteristic categories, the secret society must seek to create a sort of life totality. For this reason, it builds round its sharply emphasized purposive content a system of formulas, like a body round a soul, and places both alike under the protection of secrecy, because only thus does it become a harmonious whole in which one part protects the other. The particular emphasis with which the secrecy of the external element is thereby stressed, is necessitated by the fact that this secrecy is not required so obviously and so much by sheer, immediate interest as is the secrecy of the objective group purpose.

This is not different from (for instance) the military organization and the religious community. In both, schematism, formulas, and the precise determination of conduct, play an important role which, quite generally, can be explained in terms of the fact that both of them claim the individual wholly. That is, each projects the totality of life upon a specific plane; each, from a particular viewpoint, fuses a plurality of forces and interests into a closed unit. This, usually, is also the aim of the secret society. To be sure, it may seize upon its members only in regard to partial interests; and, in terms of its content, it may be a
purely purposive association. But even in these cases, it quite
characteristically claims to a greater extent the whole individual,
connects its members in more of their totality, and mutually
obligates them more closely, than does an open society of identi-
cal content. Through the symbolism of the ritual, which excites
a whole range of vaguely delimited feelings beyond all particu-
lar, rational interests, the secret society synthesizes those interests
into a total claim upon the individual. By means of the ritual
form, the particular purpose of the secret society is enlarged
to the point of being a closed unit, a whole, both sociological
and subjective.

It must be added that, through such formalism, as well as
through the hierarchical organization itself, the secret society
makes itself into a sort of counter-image of the official world,
which it places itself in contrast. Here we find the ubiquitous
sociological norm: that structures which resist larger, encom-
passing structures through opposition and separation, nevertheless
themselves repeat the forms of these structures. Only a
structure that somehow can be considered a whole is capable
of strongly tying its members to itself. The kind of organic self-
sufficiency by virtue of which the same stream of life flows
through all group members, is borrowed by the group from the
larger whole, to whose forms the members had been adapted.
The smaller structure can meet this whole most viably, pre-
cisely by imitating it.

§ 7. Freedom

The same conditions, finally, involve still another motive in
the sociology of the ritual in secret societies. Every secret society
contains a measure of freedom, which the structure of the society
at large does not have. Whether the secret society, like the
fehme, supplements the inadequate judicature of the political
community; or like the conspiratory or criminal band, rebels
against its law; or like the Mysteries, stands beyond the com-
mands and prohibitions of the general society—the singling-out,
so characteristic of the secret society, always has a note of free-
dom: the society lives in an area to which the norms of the
environment do not extend.

The essence of the secret society, as such, is autonomy. But
this autonomy approaches anarchy: the consequences of leaving
the general normative order easily are rootlessness and the ab-
sence of a stable life-feeling and of a norm-giving basis. The fixed
and minute character of the ritual helps to overcome this lack. In
this, we see once more how much man needs a certain ratio
between freedom and law; and how, when he does not receive
it from one source, he seeks to supplement what he obtains of
the one by the missing quantity of the other, no matter from
what additional source, until he has the ratio he needs. In ritual,
the secret society voluntarily imposes upon itself a formal coer-
cion, a complement required by its material separateness and
autonomy. It is characteristic that, among the Freemasons, pre-
cisely those who enjoy the greatest political freedom, namely,
the Americans, request of all their lodges the most rigorous
uniformity of work procedure and ritual, whereas in Germany
the practice involves a greater autonomy of the individual lodge:
here, Freemasonry is so integrated with the general society that
it does not demand such freedoms as would easily lead to the
counterclaim of their being curtailed. In short, in the secret
society the nature of ritual—objectively often quite senseless
and schematically coercive—is by no means inconsistent with
that group freedom which resembles anarchy, with severance
from the norms of the inclusive society. On the contrary: just
as the widespread diffusion of secret societies is usually a proof
of public un-freedom, of a tendency toward police regimenta-
tion, and of political oppression, in short, just as it is a reaction
stemming from the need for freedom—so, conversely, the in-
ternal, ritual regimentation of secret societies reflects a measure
of freedom and severance from society at large which entails
the counter-norm of this very schematism, in order to restore
the equilibrium of human nature.

§ 8. Features of the Secret Society as
Quantitative Modifications of
General Group Features

These last considerations suggest the methodological prin-
ciple on the basis of which I wish to analyze those traits of the
secret society which have not yet been discussed. The question is, to what extent can they be shown to be essentially quantitative modifications of the typical features of sociation in general? The justification of this conception of the secret society leads once more to a consideration of its position in the whole complex of sociological forms.

The secret element in societies is a primary sociological fact, a particular kind and shading of togetherness, a formal quality of relationship. In direct or indirect interaction with other such qualities, it determines the shape of the group member or of the group itself. Yet, from a historical standpoint, the secret society is a secondary phenomenon; that is, it always develops only within a society already complete in itself. To put it differently: the secret society is characterized by its secrecy in the same way in which other societies (or even secret societies themselves) are characterized by their superordination and subordination, or by their aggressive purposes, or by their imitative character; but, that it can develop with these characteristics is possible only on the condition that a society already exists. Within this larger circle, it opposes it as a narrower one; wherever the purpose of the society, this opposition has, at any rate, the sense of exclusion. Even the altruistic secret society, which merely wants to render a certain service to the total group and intends to disband after achieving it, evidently considers temporary separation from this total group a technique unavoidable in view of its purpose.

[a] SEPARATENESS, FORMALITY, CONSCIOUSNESS

Among the many smaller groups which are included in larger ones, there is none whose sociological constellation forces it to emphasize its formal self-sufficiency to the same extent as it does the secret society. Its secret surrounds it like a boundary outside of which there is nothing but materially, or at least formally, opposite matter, a boundary which therefore fuses within itself, the secret society into a perfect unity. In groups of every other sort, the content of group life, the actions of the members in terms of rights and duties, can so occupy the members' consciousness that, normally, the formal fact of sociology plays scarcely any role at all. The secret society, on the other hand, cannot allow its members to forget the distinct and emphatic consciousness that they form a society. In comparison with other associations, here is the passion of secrecy—always felt and always to be preserved—which gives the group-form, depending on it, a significance that is far superior to the significance of content. The secret society completely lacks organic growth, instinctive expansions, and, on the part of its members, all naive, matter-of-fact feeling of belonging together and forming a unit. However irrational, mystical, or emotional its contents may be, the way in which it is formed is thoroughly conscious and intentional. In its consciousness of being a society—a consciousness which is constantly emphasized during its formative period and throughout its lifetime—it is the opposite of all spontaneous groups, in which the joining is only the expression, more or less, of elements which have grown together like roots. Its social-psychological form clearly is that of the interest group [Zweckverband]. This constellation makes it understandable why the formal characteristics of group formation in general are specifically pointed up in the secret society, and why some of its essential sociological traits develop as mere quantitative intensifications of very general types of relationship.

[b] SECLUSION: SIGNS OF RECOGNITION

One of these has already been indicated, namely, the characterization as well as the cohesion of the secret society by means of seclusion against the social environment. This is the function of the often complicated signs of recognition through which the individual legitimates himself as a member. It should be noted that, prior to the more general diffusion of writing, these signs were more indispensable than later, when their other sociological uses became more important than those of mere legitimation. As long as there were no credentials of acceptance, notifications, or written descriptions of persons, an association with branches in several different places, had nothing but such signs for excluding unauthorized persons, and for having only individuals entitled to them receive its benefits or communications. These signs were revealed only to the legitimate members who,
by means of them, were able to legitimate themselves wherever the group existed, and who had the duty to keep them secret.

The *purpose of seclusion* is clearly illuminated by the development of certain secret orders among native peoples, especially in Africa and among the Indians. These orders are composed only of men. Their essential purpose is to emphasize the differentiation of men from women. Whenever their members act in this capacity, they appear in masks, and women are usually forbidden or severe penalty to approach them. Yet sometimes women succeed in discovering the secret that the horrible apparitions are not ghosts but their husbands. When this happens, the order often loses their whole significance and become harmless mummeries. The man of nature with his undifferentiated, sensuous conception, cannot imagine a more perfect separation, such as he wants to emphasize, than for those who wish it and are entitled to it to hide themselves, to make themselves invisible. This is the crudest and, externally, most radical manner of concealment: not only a particular act of man, but all of man at once, is concealed—the group does not do something secret, but the totality of its members makes itself into a secret. This form of the secret society is perfectly in line with that primitive stage of mind in which the whole personality is still absorbed in every particular activity, and in which the activity is not yet sufficiently objectified to have any character that the whole personality does not automatically share. It is also understandable, therefore, why the whole separateness becomes invalid once the secret of the mask is broken, and why, then, the secret society loses its inner significance along with its means and its expression.

**[c] The Aristocratic Motive; Aristocracy**

The separateness of the secret society expresses a value: people separate from others because they do not want to make common cause with them, because they wish to let them feel their superiority. This motive leads everywhere to group formations, which evidently are very different from those undertaken for objective purposes. By joining one another, those who want to distinguish themselves give rise to the development of an aristocracy, which strengthens and (so to speak) enlarges their position and self-consciousness by the weight of their own sum. Separation and group formation are thus connected through the aristocratizing motive. In many cases, this connection gives separation itself the stamp of something "special," in an honorific sense. Even in school classes, it can be observed how small, closely integrated cliques of classmates think of themselves as the elite over against the others who are not organized—merely because of the formal fact of constituting a special group; and the others, through their hostility and envy, involuntarily acknowledge this higher value. In these cases, secrecy and mystification amount to heightening the wall toward the outside, and hence to strengthening the aristocratic character of the group.

This significance of the secret society as the intensification of sociological exclusiveness in general, is strikingly shown in political aristocracies. Secrecy has always been among the requisites of their regime. In the first place, by trying to conceal the numerical insignificance of the ruling class, aristocracies exploit the psychological fact that the unknown itself appears to be fearsome, mighty, threatening. In Sparta, the number of warriors was kept secret as much as possible. In Venice, the same end was intended by the decree that all nobili [noblemen] had to wear a simple black costume: no striking dress was to call the small number of men in power to the attention of the people. This was even carried to the point where the group of the highest elite was concealed completely: the names of the three state inquisitors were unknown to everybody except the council of ten who elected them. In some Swiss aristocracies, one of the most important authorities was simply called "the Secret Ones"; and in Freiburg, the aristocratic families were known as "the secret lineages" [die heimlichen Geschlechter]. The democratic principle, on the contrary, is associated with the principle of publicity and, in the same sense, with the tendency toward general and basic laws. For, these laws apply to an unlimited number of subjects and are, therefore, public in their very essence. Conversely, the use of secrecy by aristocratic regimes is only the extreme intensification of the social exclusiveness and exemption which, ordinarily, make aristocracies opposed to general, fundamentally fixed legislations.
Where the aristocratic idea does not characterize the policies of a group but the disposition of an individual, the relation between exclusiveness and secrecy manifests itself on a very different plane. The morally and intellectually distinguished person despises all concealment, because his inner certainty makes him indifferent to what others know or do not know of him, and to the question whether he is appraised correctly or falsely by them, or held in high or low esteem. For him, secrecy is a concession to outsiders; secrecy is dependence of conduct upon regard for others. For this reason, the "mask" which many consider sign and proof of an aristocratic personality that is turned away from the multitude, on the contrary proves the importance of the multitude to the wearer of the mask. The "mask" of the truly noble person is that even when he shows himself without disguise, the many do not understand him, do not even see him, so to speak.

**[d] Degrees of Initiation: Formal and Material Separation from the Outside**

This exclusion of everything outside the group is a general formal-sociological fact, which merely uses secrecy as a more pointed technique. It attains a particular nuance in the plurality of degrees in which it is customary for initiation into the secret society, down to its last mysteries, to take place. The existence of such degrees throw light earlier upon another sociological feature of the secret society. As a rule, before he is even accepted into the first degree, the novice must give a solemn promise of secrecy concerning everything he may experience, whereby the absolute, formal separation, achievable by secrecy, is effected. Yet, inasmuch as the actual content or purpose of the society becomes accessible to the neophyte only gradually—as among the Assassins and other criminal societies—the material separation is achieved differently, in a more continuous, relative manner. In this material respect, the neophyte is still closer to the status of non-participant, from which testing and education eventually lead him to grasp the totality or core of the association. This core, evidently, thus gains a protection and isolation from the outside far beyond those by means of the oath upon entrance. It is seen to (as has already been shown in the example of the Druids) that the still untried neophyte does not have much he could betray: within the general secrecy that encompasses the group as a whole, the graduated secrecy produces an elastic sphere of protection (as it were) around its innermost essence.

The contrast between exoteric and esoteric members, such as is attributed to the Pythagorean order, is the most poignant form of this protective measure. The circle composed of those only partially initiated formed a sort of barrier region against the non-initiates. It is everywhere the dual function of the "middler" to connect and to separate, or, actually, rather to play only one role which, according to our perceptual categories and our viewpoint, we designate as connecting or as separating. In the same way, the real unity of superficially contradictory activities is here seen in its clearest light: precisely because the lower grades of the order mediate the transition to the center of the secret, they create a gradual densification of the sphere of repulsion which surrounds this center and which protects it more securely than could any abrupt and radical alternative between total inclusion and total exclusion.

**[e] Group Egoism**

In practice, sociological autonomy presents itself as group egoism: the group pursues its own purposes with the same inconsiderateness for all purposes outside itself which, in the case of the individual, is precisely called egoism. Usually, to be sure, this inconsiderateness is morally justified in the consciousness of the individual members by the fact that the group purposes themselves have a super-individual, objective character: that it is often impossible to name any particular individual who profits from the group's egoistic behavior; and that, as a matter of fact, this behavior often requires the group members' selflessness and sacrifice. But the point here is not to make any ethical valuation, but only to stress the group's separation from its environment, which is brought about or characterized by the
egoism of the group. However, in the case of a small circle, which
intends to preserve and develop itself within a larger one, this
egoism has certain limits as long as it exists publicly. An open
association, no matter how violently it fights against other asso-
ciations within the same larger society, or against the general
foundations of this society itself, must always maintain that
the realization of its own ultimate purposes is to the advantage
of the whole; and the necessity of this outward assertion some-
what restricts the actual egoism of its actions. This necessity does
not exist in the case of secret societies, which always therefore,
at least potentially, can afford to be hostile to other groups or
to the whole. Non-secret groups cannot admit such a hostility,
and, therefore, cannot unconditionally practice it. Nothing
symbolizes, or possibly promotes, the separation of the secret society
from its social environment as decisively as the elimination of
the hypocrisy, or of the actual condensation, by means of
which the non-secret society is inevitably integrated with the
teology of its environment.

[F] INCLUSIVENESS AND EXCLUSIVENESS AS GROUP PRINCIPLES

In spite of the actual quantitative delimitation of every true
community, there exists a considerable number of groups whose
inner tendency is to include all those who are not explicitly
excluded. Within certain political, religious, and status limits,
everybody is considered immediately as "belonging" so long
as he satisfies certain external conditions, which are usually not
a matter of his will, but are given with his existence itself. All
people, for instance, who are born within the territory of a given
state, are members, unless particular circumstances make ex-
ceptions of them, of the (often very complex) civic society. The
member of a given social class is included, as a matter of course,
in the social conventions and forms of connection of this class,
unless he becomes a voluntary or involuntary outsider. The
extreme case is the claim of a church that it includes all man-
kind; and that, if any individuals are excluded from the religious
association, which, ideally, is valid also for them, it is only
through historical accident, sinful stubbornness, or God's special
intention.

We note here the distinction of two principles, which clearly
indicate a basic differentiation of the sociological significance
of groups generally, no matter how much practice may mix them
and make the difference lose some of its sharpness. On the one
hand, there is the principle of including everybody who is not
explicitly excluded; and, on the other, there is the principle of
excluding everybody who is not explicitly included. The second
type is represented in greatest purity by the secret society. The
unconditional character of its separation, which is borne by
the consciousness of it at every step of the group's development,
causes, and is caused by, the fact that those who are not ex-
plitcily accepted, are for this simple reason explicitly excluded.
The Masonic order could no better have supported its recent
emphatic assertion that it is not a "secret order," properly
speaking, than by simultaneously professing its ideal of including
all men, of representing humanity.

[k] SECLUSION AGAINST THE OUTSIDE AND INTERNAL COHESION

Here, as everywhere else, the intensified seclusion against the
outside is associated with the intensification of cohesion in-
ternally: we have here two sides, or external forms, of the same
sociological attitude. A purpose which occasions an individual
to enter into secret association with others, excludes almost
always such an overwhelming part of his general social circle
from participation, that the potential and real participants gain
rarity value. He must keep on good terms with them because it
is much more difficult to replace them here than (other things
being equal) in a legitimate association. Furthermore, every
discord inside the secret society brings danger of betrayal, which
usually both the self-preservation of the individual and that of
the group are interested in avoiding.

Finally, the isolation of the secret society from the surround-
ing social syntheses removes a number of occasions for conflict.
Among all the bords of the individual, the bond of secret socia-
tion always has an exceptional position. In comparison with it,
the official bonds—familial, civic, religious, economic, through
rank and friendship—no matter how varied their contents,
touch contact surfaces of a very different kind and measure.
Only the contrast with the secret societies makes it clear that their claims cross each other, because they lie (so to speak) in the same plane. Since these claims openly compete for the individual's strength and interests, individuals collide within any one of these circles: each individual is simultaneously claimed by the interests of other groups.

The sociological isolation of the secret society greatly limits such collisions. In accordance with its purpose and operation, competing interests of open-society origin are shut out. Every secret society—if only because it usually fills its own sphere alone (the same individual hardly ever belongs to more than one secret society)—exercises over its members a sort of absolute domination, which gives them little opportunity to engage in conflicts such as result from the coordination of the plurality of spheres that represent open groups. The "king's peace," which really ought to reign within every association, is promoted, in a formally unsurpassable manner, by the peculiar and exceptional conditions of the secret society. In fact, it seems as if, aside from the more realistic reason in favor of the "king's peace," the mere form of secrecy itself kept the members freer from other influences and disturbances, and thus facilitated their accord. A certain English politician found the basis for the strength of the English cabinet in the secrecy which surrounds it: everybody who has ever been active in public life, he suggested, knows that a small number of people can be brought to agree the more easily, the more secret are its negotiations.

Features of the Secret Society

Centralization

Corresponding to the outstanding degree of cohesion within the secret society is the thoroughness of its centralization. The secret society offers examples of unconditional and blind obedience to leaders who—although, naturally, they may also be found elsewhere—are yet particularly remarkable in view of the frequent anarchic character of the secret society that negates all other law. The more criminal its purposes, the more unlimited, usually, is the power of the leaders and the cruelty of its exercise. The Assassins in Arabia; the Chauffeurs, a predatory band with a widely ramified organization which raged, particularly, in eighteenth-century France; the Gardunos in Spain, a criminal society that had relations with the Inquisition from the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century—all these, whose very nature was lawlessness and rebellion, unconditionally and without any criticism submitted to chiefs whom they themselves (as least in part) appointed.

The interrelation between the needs for freedom and for a bond operates here; it appears in the rigor of ritual, which combines the extremes of both: for the sake of a balanced life-feeling, the excess of freedom from all otherwise valid norms must be brought into equilibrium by a similarly excessive submission and renunciation of the will. Yet more essential, probably, is the necessity of centralization, which is the life condition of the secret society. It is especially important for that type—for instance, the criminal band—which lives off surrounding groups, interferes with them through all kinds of radiations and actions, and thus is gravely threatened by treason and the distraction of interests, once it is no longer governed by the most intransigent cohesion with its point of origin in its own center.

Secret societies which, for whatever reasons, fail to develop a tightly solidifying authority are, therefore, typically exposed to very grave dangers. Originally, the Waldenses were not a secret society; they became one in the thirteenth century, only because of external pressure to keep themselves hidden. This made it impossible for them to meet regularly, which in turn deprived their doctrine of its unity. A number of branches arose, which lived and developed separately, and were often hostile to one another. The order declined because it lacked the necessary complement of the secret society; uninterruptedly effective centralization. Freemasonry, probably, owes the evident lag in its power behind its diffusion and means, to the considerable autonomy of its parts, which have neither a unified organization nor a central authority. Their common features merely cover principles and signs of recognition, and thus are traits of equality and of relations between person and person only, not of centralization, which holds the energies of the members together and is the complement of separation.

It is merely an exaggeration of this formal motive of centralization that secret societies are often directed by unknown
leaders: the lower echelons are not to know whom they obey. To be sure, this occurs, above all, for the sake of preserving the secret. With this intention, it was developed to an extraordinary degree in the organization of an early nineteenth-century Italian secret society, the Welsh Knights, which worked for the liberation and unification of Italy. At each of their various branches, the Knights had a highest council of six persons, who did not know one another and communicated only by means of an intermediary, called "The Visible One." But the preservation of secrecy is by no means the only purpose of unknown leaders. Instead, they exemplify the most extreme and abstract sublimation of dependence upon a center: the tension between dependent and leader reaches the highest degree when the leader becomes invisible. All that remains then, is the pure fact of obedience—merciless, as it were, and unmodified by any personal nuances—out of which the superordinate as a subject has vanished. If obedience to impersonal authority, to mere office, to the executor of an objective law, has the character of invincible strength, it is intensified to the point of an uncanny absoluteness when the ruling personality remains, in principle, hidden. For it, with the visibility and familiarity of the ruler, the individual suggestion and the power of personality are removed from the relationship of domination, domination also loses all attenuations, all relative and "human" elements inherent in the empirical, unique personality. Obedience is thus colored by the feeling of submission to an intangible power, whose limits cannot be traced, and which can nowhere be seen, but must, for this reason, be suspected everywhere. In the secret society with an unknown leader, the general sociological cohesion of a group through the unity of its ruling authority is transferred, as it were, into an imaginary focus, and thus attains its purest, most intense form.

[1] DE-INDIVIDUALIZATION

De-individualization is the sociological character which, in the individual member, corresponds to this centralistic subordination. Where the immediate concern of the society is not the interests of its elements, where the society rather transcends itself (as it were) by using its members as means for purposes and actions extraneous to them—the secret society shows, once more, a heightened measure of leveling of the individuality, of "de-selling" [Entsellbung]. Some measure of this is characteristic of everything social, generally. But the secret society uses de-individualization to compensate for the above-mentioned individualizing and differentiating character of the secret. This begins with the secret orders of nature peoples, whose appearance and activities are accompanied almost everywhere by the wearing of masks—so that an outstanding expert suggested that the presence of masks among a nature people should at once make one suspect the existence of secret societies. It is, of course, in the nature of the secret order for its members to conceal themselves. But, when a particular individual appears and acts unambiguously as a member of a secret order, and merely does not show what individuality (which is normally well known) is associated with him, the disappearance of personality behind its role is most strongly emphasized. In the Irish conspiracy which was organized under the name of Clan-na-gaol in America in 1870, the individual members were never designated by their names, but only by numbers. This, too, of course, was done for the practical purpose of secrecy; but, at the same time, it proves how much this purpose suppresses individuality. Leadership can proceed with much greater inconsiderateness and indifference to individual wishes and capacities of persons who appear only as numbers and who may not be known by their personal names even to the other members (which at least occurred in groups similar to the Clan-na-gaol), than it can if the group includes each member as a personal entity. No less effective, toward the same end, is the comprehensive role and strength of ritual, which always indicates the fact that the objective organization has overcome the personal element in the members' activities and contributions to the group. The hierarchical order admits the individual only as the discharger of a predetermined role; for each member, it holds ready a stylized garb in which his personal outlines disappear.
EQUALITY OF MEMBERS

It is merely another name for this elimination of the differentiated personality if secret societies practice great relative equality among their members. This does not contradict the despotic character of their organization: in all kinds of other groups, too, despotism is correlated with the leveling of the ruled. Within the secret society, there often is a brotherly equality among the members, which constitutes a sharp and tendentious contrast to their differences in their other life situations. Characteristically, this is most noticeable in secret societies of a religio-ethical nature—which strongly accentuate brotherhood—and, on the other hand, in those of an illegal character. In his memoirs, Bismarck writes of a pederastic organization, widespread in Berlin, with which he became acquainted as a young justiciary; he stresses "the equalizing effect throughout all strata of the collective practice of the forbidden."

This de-personalization, wherein the secret group exaggerates in a one-sided manner a typical relationship between individual and society, appears, finally, as characteristic irresponsibility. Here, too, the mask is the most primitive phenomenon. Most African secret orders are represented by a man disguised as a spirit of the woods, who commits all violations, including robbery and murder, against anyone he happens to meet. He is not held responsible for his crimes—obviously, only because of his mask. The mask is the somewhat clumsy form in which these groups let the personalities of their members disappear, and without which the members would undoubtedly be overtaken by revenge and punishment. But responsibility is so immediately connected with the ego (philosophically, too, the whole problem of responsibility belongs in the problem of the ego), that, for such naive feeling, the disguise of the person suspends all responsibility.

This connection is used no less in political fineness. In the North American House of Representatives, actual decisions are made in the standing committees, with which the House is almost always in agreement. But the transactions of these committees are secret; thus, the most important part of legislative activity is hidden from the public. In large measure, this seems to extinguish the political responsibility of the delegates, since nobody can be held responsible for uncontrollable procedures. Inasmuch as individual contributions toward a particular decision remain hidden, the decision appears to be made by some super-individual authority. Here, too, irresponsibility is the consequence of the symbol of the intensified sociological de-individualization, which corresponds to the secrecy of group action. This also holds for all directorates, faculties, committees, administrations, etc., whose transactions are secret: the individual, as a person, disappears as the quasi-nameless group member, and with his disappearance as a person disappears the responsibility that cannot be imagined to inhere in a being whose concrete activities are intangible.

THE SECRET SOCIETY AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

This one-sided intensification of general sociological features is confirmed, finally, by the danger with which society at large believes, rightly or wrongly, secret societies threaten it. Where the over-all aim of the general society is strong (particularly political) centralization, it is antagonistic to all special associations, quite irrespective of their contents and purposes. Simply by being units, these groups compete with the principle of centralization which alone wishes to have the prerogative of fusing individuals into a unitary form. The preoccupation of the central power with "special associations" travels through all of political history—a point which is relevant in many respects to the present investigations and has already been stressed. A characteristic type of this preoccupation is suggested, for instance, by the Swiss Convention of 1481, according to which no separate alliances were permitted between any of the ten confederated states. Another example is the persecution of apprentices' associations by the despotism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A third is the tendency to disenfranchise local political communities which is so often demonstrated by the modern state.

The secret society greatly increases this danger which the special association presents to the surrounding totality. Man has rarely a calm and rational attitude toward what he knows
only little or vaguely. Instead, his attitude consists in part in
levity, which treats the unknown as if it did not exist, and in
part in anxious fantasy, which, on the contrary, inflates it into
immense dangers and terrors. The secret society, therefore,
appears dangerous by virtue of its mere secrecy. It is impossible
to know whether a special association might not one day use its
energies for undesirable purposes, although they were gathered
for legitimate ones: this fear is the main source of the basic
suspicion which central powers have of all associations among
their subjects.

In regard to groups which make it their principle to conceal
themselves, the suspicion that their secrecy hides dangers is all
the more readily suggested. The Orange Societies which were
organized in England, in the beginning of the nineteenth cen-
tury, for the suppression of Catholicism, avoided all public dis-
cussion, working only in secret, through personal connections
and correspondence. But this very secrecy let them appear as a
public danger: the suspicion arose “that men, who shrank from
appealing to public opinion, meditated a resort to force.” Purely
on the grounds of its secrecy, the secret order thus appears dan-
gerously close to a conspiracy against the reigning powers. How
much this is only an intensification of the general political
questionability of special associations is clearly shown in a case
like the following. The oldest German guilds offered their
members effective legal protection, and thus replaced the pro-
tection of the state. For this reason, the Danish kings promoted
them, since they saw in them a support of the public order.
But, on the other hand, for the very same reason, the guilds
also were considered to be competitors of the state: they were
condemned in this capacity by the Frankish capitularies—more
particularly, because they were designated as conspiracies. The
secret society is so much considered an enemy of the central
power that, even conversely, every group that is politically re-
jected, is called a secret society.