

GEORGE SIMMEL

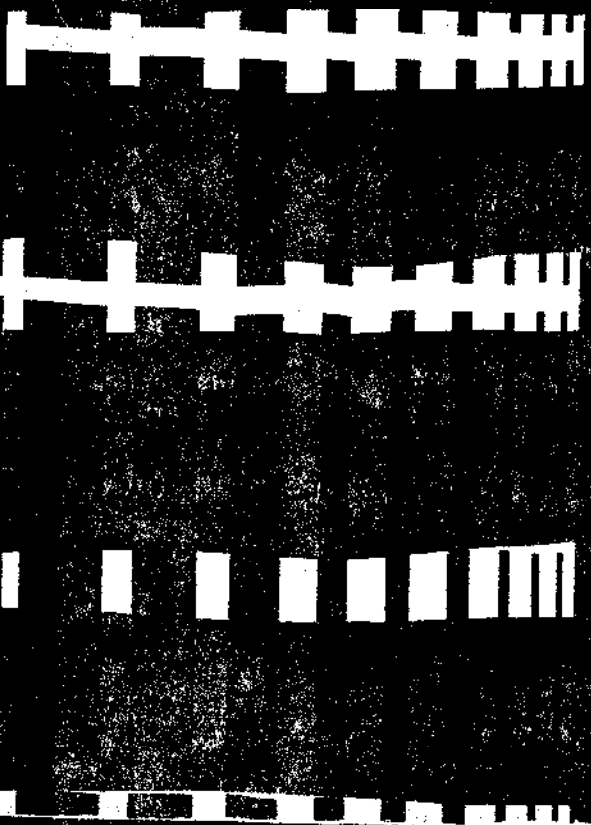
*Two major essays on the dynamics of social organization
by the great German philosopher and social theorist*

Conflict

The Web of

Group-Affiliations

Translated by Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix



war]; it is something quite general, of which this maxim only describes a special case. Conflict itself resolves the tension between contrasts. The fact that it aims at peace is only one, an especially obvious, expression of its nature: the synthesis of elements that work both against and for one another. This nature appears more clearly when it is realized that both forms of relation—the antithetical and the convergent—are fundamentally distinguished from the mere indifference of two or more individuals or groups. Whether it implies the rejection or the termination of sociation, indifference is purely negative. In contrast to such pure negativity, conflict contains something positive. Its positive and negative aspects, however, are integrated; they can be separated conceptually, but not empirically.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF CONFLICT

SOCIAL PHENOMENA appear in a new light when seen from the angle of this sociologically positive character of conflict. It is at once evident then that if the relations among men (rather than what the individual is to himself and in his relations to objects) constitute the subject matter of a special science, sociology, then the traditional topics of that science cover only a subdivision of it: it is more comprehensive and is truly defined by a principle. At one time it appeared as if there were only two consistent subject matters of the science of man: the individual unit and the unit of individuals (society); any third seemed logically excluded. In this conception, conflict itself—irrespective of its contributions to these immediate social units—found no place for study. It was a phenomenon of its own, and its subsumption under the concept of unity would have been arbitrary as well as useless, since conflict meant the negation of unity.

A more comprehensive classification of the science of the

relations of men should distinguish, it would appear, those relations which constitute a unit, that is, social relations in the strict sense, from those which counteract unity.³ It must be realized, however, that both relations can usually be found in every historically real situation. The individual does not attain the unity of his personality exclusively by an exhaustive harmonization, according to logical, objective, religious, or ethical norms, of the contents of his personality. On the contrary, contradiction and conflict not only precede this unity but are operative in it at every moment of its existence. Just so, there probably exists no social unit in which convergent and divergent currents among its members are not inseparably interwoven. An absolutely centripetal and harmonious group, a pure "unification" (*"Vereinigung"*), not only is empirically unreal, it could show no real life process. The society of saints which Dante sees in the Rose of Paradise may be like such a group, but it is without any change and development; whereas the holy assembly of Church Fathers in Raphael's *Disputa* shows if not actual conflict, at least a considerable differentiation of moods and directions of thought, whence flow all the vitality and the really organic structure of that group. Just as the universe needs "love and hate," that is, attractive and repulsive forces, in order to have any form at all, so society, too, in order to attain a determinate shape, needs some quantitative ratio of harmony and disharmony⁴ of association and competition, of favorable and unfavorable tendencies. But these discords are by no means mere sociological liabilities or negative instances. Definite, actual society does not result only from other social forces which are positive, and only to the extent that the negative factors do not hinder them. This common conception is quite superficial: society, as we know it, is the result of both cate-

3. *"Einheit"* is both "unity" and "unite," and Simmel uses the term promiscuously in both senses.—Tr.

gories of interaction, which thus both manifest themselves as wholly positive.⁴

UNITY AND DISCORD

There is a misunderstanding according to which one of these two kinds of interaction tears down what the other builds up, and what is eventually left standing is the result of the subtraction of the two (while in reality it must rather be

4. This is the sociological instance of a contrast between two much more general conceptions of life. According to the common view, life always shows two parties in opposition. One of them represents the positive aspect of life, its content proper, if not its substance, while the very meaning of the other is non-being, which must be subtracted from the positive elements before they can constitute life. This is the common view of the relation between happiness and suffering, virtue and vice, strength and inadequacy, success and failure—between all possible contents and interruptions of the course of life. The highest conception indicated in respect to these contrasting pairs appears to me different: we must conceive of all these polar differentiations as of one life, we must sense the pulse of a central vitality even in that which, if seen from the standpoint of a particular ideal, ought not to be at all and is merely something negative; we must allow the total meaning of our existence to grow out of both parties. In the most comprehensive context of life, even that which as a single element is disturbing and destructive, is wholly possible; it is not a gap but the fulfillment of a role reserved for it alone. Perhaps it is not given to us to attain, much less always to maintain, the height from which all phenomena can be felt as making up the unity of life, even though from an objective or value standpoint, they appear to oppose one another as pluses and minuses, contradictions, and mutual eliminations. We are too inclined to think and feel that our essential being, our true, ultimate significance, is identical with one of these factions. According to our optimistic or pessimistic feeling of life, one of them appears to us as surface or accident, as something to be eliminated or subtracted, in order for the true and intrinsically consistent life to emerge. We are everywhere enmeshed in this dualism (which will presently be discussed in more detail in the text above)—in the most intimate as in the most comprehensive provinces of life, personal, objective, and social. We think we have, or are, a whole or unit which is composed of two logically and objectively opposed parties, and we identify this totality of ours with one of them, while we feel the other to be something alien which does not properly belong and which denies our central and comprehensive being. Life constantly moves between these two tendencies. The one has just been described. The other lets the whole really be the whole. It makes the unity, which after all comprises both contrasts, alive in each of these contrasts and in their juncture. It is all the more necessary to assert the right of this second tendency in respect to the sociological phenomenon of conflict, because conflict impresses us with its socially destructive force as with an apparently indisputable fact.

designated as the result of their addition). This misunderstanding probably derives from the twofold meaning of the concept of unity. We designate as "unity" the consensus and concord of interacting individuals, as against their discords, separations, and disharmonies. But we also call "unity" the total group-synthesis of persons, energies, and forms, that is, the ultimate wholeness of that group, a wholeness which covers both strictly-speaking unitary relations and dualistic relations. We thus account for the group phenomenon which we feel to be "unitary" in terms of functional components considered *specifically* unitary; and in so doing, we disregard the other, larger meaning of the term.

This imprecision is increased by the corresponding twofold meaning of "discord" or "opposition." Since discord unfolds its negative, destructive character between particular individuals, we naively conclude that it must have the same effect on the total group. In reality, however, something which is negative and damaging between individuals if it is considered in isolation and as aiming in a particular direction, does not necessarily have the same effect within the total relationship of these individuals. For, a very different picture emerges when we view the conflict in conjunction with other interactions not affected by it. The negative and dualistic elements play an entirely positive role in this more comprehensive picture, despite the destruction they may work on particular relations. All this is very obvious in the composition of individuals within an economic unit.

CONFLICT AS AN INTEGRATIVE FORCE IN THE GROUP

Here, among the more complex cases, there are two opposite types. First, we have small groups, such as the marital couple, which nevertheless involve an unlimited number of vital relations among their members. A certain amount of discord, inner divergence and outer controversy, is organ-

and feelings of mutual alienness and repulsion which upon more intimate contact, no matter how occasioned, immediately change into positive hatred and fight.

Without such aversion, we could not imagine what form modern urban life, which every day brings everybody in contact with innumerable others, might possibly take. The whole inner organization of urban interaction is based on an extremely complex hierarchy of sympathies, indifference, and aversions of both the most short-lived and the most enduring kind. And in this complex, the sphere of indifference is relatively limited. For, our psychological activity responds to almost every impression that comes from another person with a certain determinate feeling. The subconscious, fleeting, changeful nature of this feeling only seems to reduce it to indifference. Actually, such indifference would be as unnatural to us as the vague character of innumerable contradictory stimuli would be unbearable. We are protected against both of these typical dangers of the city by antipathy, which is the preparatory phase of concrete antagonism and which engenders the distances and aversions without which we could not lead the urban life at all. The extent and combination of antipathy, the rhythm of its appearance and disappearance, the forms in which it is satisfied, all these, along with the more literally unifying elements, produce the metropolitan form of life in its irresolvable totality; and what at first glance appears in it as dissociation, actually is one of its elementary forms of sociation.

HOMOGENEITY AND HETEROGENEITY IN SOCIAL RELATIONS

RELATIONS OF CONFLICT do not by themselves produce a social structure, but only in cooperation with unifying forces. Only both together constitute the group as a concrete, living unit. In this respect, conflict thus is hardly different from any other form of relation which sociology abstracts out of

the complexity of actual life. Neither love nor the division of labor, neither the common attitude of two toward a third nor friendship, neither party affiliation nor superordination of subordination is likely by itself alone to produce or permanently sustain an actual group. Where this seems so nevertheless, the process which is given one name actually contains several distinguishable forms of relation. Human nature does not allow the individual to be tied to another by one thread alone, even though scientific analysis is not satisfied until it has determined the specific cohesive power of elementary units.

Yet perhaps this whole analytic activity is purely subjective in a higher and seemingly inverse sense of the word: perhaps the ties between individuals are indeed often quite homogeneous, but our mind cannot grasp their homogeneity. The very relations that are rich and live on many different contents are apt to make us most aware of this mysterious homogeneity; and what we have to do is to represent it as the co-efficiency of several cohesive forces which restrict and modify one another, resulting in the picture which objective reality attains by a much simpler and much more consistent route. Yet we cannot follow it with our mind even though we would.

Processes within the individual are, after all, of the same kind. At every moment they are so complex and contain such a multitude of variegated and contradictory oscillations that to designate them by any one of our psychological concepts is always imperfect and actually misleading. For, the moments of the individual life, too, are never connected by only one thread—this is the picture analytic thought constructs of the unity of the soul, which is inaccessible to it. Probably much of what we are forced to represent to ourselves as mixed feelings, as composites of many drives, as the competition of opposite sensations, is entirely self-consistent. But the calculating intellect often lacks a paradigm for this unity and

thus must construe it as the result of several elements. When we are attracted and at the same time repelled by things; when nobler and baser character traits seem mixed in a given action; when our feeling for a particular person is composed of respect and friendship or of fatherly, motherly, and erotic impulses, or of ethical and aesthetic valuations—then certainly these phenomena in themselves, as real psychological processes, are often homogeneous. Only we cannot designate them directly. For this reason, by means of various analogies, antecedent motives, external consequences, we make them into a concert of several psychological elements.

If this is correct, then apparently complex relations between several individuals, too, must actually often be unitary. For instance, the distance which characterizes the relation between two associated individuals may appear to us as the result of an affection, which ought to bring about much greater closeness between them, and of a repulsion, which ought to drive them completely apart; and in as much as the two feelings restrict one another, the outcome is the distance we observe. But this may be entirely erroneous. The inner disposition of the relation itself may be those particular distances; basically the relation, so to speak, has a certain temperature which does not emerge as the balance of two temperatures, one higher, the other lower. We often interpret the quantity of superiority and suggestion which exists between two persons as produced by the strength of one of them, which is at the same time diminished by a certain weakness. While such strength and weakness may in fact exist, their separateness often does not become manifest in the actually existing relation. On the contrary, the relation may be determined by the total nature of its elements, and we analyze its immediate character into those two factors only by hindsight.

Erotic relations offer the most frequent illustrations. How often do they not strike us as woven together of love and

respect, or disrespect; of love and the felt harmony of the individuals and, at the same time, their consciousness of supplementing each other through opposite traits; of love and an urge to dominate or the need for dependence. But what the observer or the participant himself thus divides into two intermingling trends may in reality be only one. In the relation as it actually exists, the total personality of the one acts on that of the other. The reality of the relation does not depend on the reflection that if it did not exist, its participants would at least inspire each other with respect or sympathy (or their contraries). Any number of times we designate such relations as mixed feelings or mixed relations, because we construe the effects the qualities of one individual would have upon the other if these qualities exerted their influence in isolation—which is precisely what they do *not* do in the relation as it exists. Aside from all this, the "mixture" of feelings and relations, even where we are fully entitled to speak of it, always remains a problematic expression. It uses a dubious symbolism to transfer a process which is represented spatially into the very different realm of psychological conditions.

This, then, probably is often the situation in respect to the so-called mixture of converging and diverging currents within a group. That is, the structure may be *sui generis*, its motivation and form being wholly self-consistent, and only in order to be able to describe and understand it, do we put it together, *post factum*, out of two tendencies, one monistic, the other antagonistic. Or else, these two do in fact exist, but only, as it were, *before* the relation itself originated. In the relation itself, they have fused into an organic unity in which neither makes itself felt with its own, isolated power.

This fact should not lead us to overlook the numerous cases in which contradictory tendencies really co-exist in separation and can thus be recognized at any moment in the

over-all situation. As a special form of historical development, relations sometimes show at an early stage undifferentiated unity of convergent and divergent forces which separate only later with full distinctness. At courts in Central Europe we find, up to the thirteenth century, permanent bodies of noblemen who constitute a kind of council to the prince and live as his guests; but at the same time, almost like an estate, they represent nobility and must guard its interests even *against* the prince. The interests in common with those of the king (whose administration these nobles often serve) and the oppositional vigilance of their own rights as an estate exist in these councils not only separately side by side but in intimate fusion; and it is most likely that the position was felt as self-consistent, no matter how incompatible its elements appear to us now. In the England of that period, the baronial parliament is hardly yet distinguished from an enlarged royal council. Loyalty and critical or partisan opposition are still contained in germ-like unity. In general, as long as the problem is the crystallization of institutions whose task it is to solve the increasingly complex and intricate problem of the equilibrium within the group, it often is not clear whether the cooperation of forces for the benefit of the whole takes the form of opposition, competition, and criticism, or of explicit unity and harmony. There thus exists an initial phase of undifferentiation which, seen from a later, differentiated phase, appears as logically contradictory, but which is thoroughly in line with the undeveloped stage of the organization.

Subjective or personal relations often develop in an inverse manner. For it is usually in early cultural periods that the decisiveness of amity or enmity is relatively great. Halfway, unclear relations between persons—relations which have their roots in a twilight condition of feeling whose outcome might be hatred almost as easily as love, or whose undifferentiated character is even sometimes betrayed by oscillation

between the two—such relations are more often found in ripe and overripe than in youthful periods.

ANTAGONISM AS AN ELEMENT IN SOCIATION

WHILE ANTAGONISM by itself does not produce sociation, it is a sociological element almost never absent in it. Its role can increase to infinity, that is, to the point of suppressing all convergent elements. In considering sociological phenomena, we thus find a hierarchy of relationships. This hierarchy can also be constructed from the viewpoint of ethical categories, although ethical categories are generally not very suitable points of departure for the convenient and complete isolation of sociological elements. The value-feelings with which we accompany the actions of individual wills fall into certain series. But the relation between these series, on the one hand, and constructs of forms of social relation according to objective-conceptual viewpoints, on the other, is completely fortuitous. Ethics conceived of as a kind of sociology is robbed of its deepest and finest content. This is the behavior of the individual soul in and to itself, which does not enter at all into its external relations: its religious movements, which exclusively serve its own salvation or damnation; its devotion to the objective values of knowledge, beauty, significance, which transcend all connections with other people. The intermingling of harmonious and hostile relations, however, presents a case where the sociological and the ethical series coincide. It begins with A's action for B's benefit, moves on to A's own benefit by means of B without benefiting B but also without damaging him, and finally becomes A's egoistic action at B's cost. In as much as all this is repeated by B, though hardly ever in the same way and in the same proportions, the innumerable mixtures of convergence and divergence in human relations emerge. To be sure, there are conflicts which seem to exclude all

other elements—for instance, between the robber or thug and his victim. If such a fight simply aims at annihilation, it does approach the marginal case of assassination in which the admixture of unifying elements is almost zero. If, however, there is any consideration, any limit to violence, there already exists a socializing factor, even though only as the qualification of violence. Kant said that every war in which the belligerents do not impose some restrictions in the use of possible means upon one another, necessarily, if only for psychological reasons, becomes a war of extermination. For where the parties do not abstain at least from assassination, breach of word, and instigation to treason, they destroy that confidence in the thought of the enemy which alone permits the materialization of a peace treaty following the end of the war. It is almost inevitable that an element of commonness injects itself into the enmity once the stage of open violence yields to any other relationship, even though this new relation may contain a completely undiminished sum of animosity between the two parties. After conquering Italy in the sixth century, the Lombards imposed on the conquered a tribute of one-third on the ground yield, and they did so in such a fashion that every single individual among the conquerors depended upon the tribute paid him by particular individuals among the conquered. In this situation, the conquered's hatred of their oppressors may be as strong as it is during the war itself, if not stronger, and it may be counteracted no less intensely by the conquerors—either because the hatred against those who hate us is an instinctive protective measure, or because, as is well known, we usually hate those whom we have caused to suffer. Nevertheless, the situation had an element of commonness. The very circumstance which had engendered the animosity—the enforced participation of the Lombards in the enterprises of the natives—at the same time made for an undeniable convergence of interests. Diversion and harmony became inextricably interwoven, and

the content of the animosity actually developed into the germ of future commonness.

This formal type of relationship is most widely realized in the enslavement—instead of the extermination—of the imprisoned enemy. Even though slavery very often represents the extreme of absolute inner hostility, its occasion nevertheless produces a sociological condition and thus, quite frequently, its own attenuation. The sharpening of contrasts may be provoked directly for the sake of its own diminution, and by no means only as a violent measure, in the expectation that the antagonism, once it reaches a certain limit, will end because of exhaustion or the realization of its futility. It may also happen for the reason which sometimes makes monarchies give their own opposition princes as leaders—as did, for instance, Gustavus Vasa. To be sure, opposition is strengthened by this policy; elements which would otherwise stay away from it are brought to it by the new equilibrium; but at the same time, opposition is thus kept within certain limits. In apparently strengthening it on purpose, government actually blunts it by this conciliating measure.

Another borderline case appears to be the fight engendered exclusively by the lust to fight. If the conflict is caused by an object, by the will to have or control something, by rage or revenge, such a desired object or state of affairs make for conditions which subject the fight to norms or restrictions applying to both warring parties. Moreover, since the fight centered in a purpose outside itself, it is qualified by the fact that, in principle, every end can be attained by more than one means. The desire for possession or subjugation, even for the annihilation of the enemy, can be satisfied through substitutions and events other than fight. Where conflict merely a means determined by a superior purpose, there is reason not to restrict or even avoid it, provided it can be replaced by other measures which have the same promise of success. Where, on the other hand, it is exclusively deter-

mined by subjective feelings, where there are inner energies which *can* be satisfied only through fight, its substitution by other means is impossible; it is its own purpose and content and hence wholly free from the admixture of other forms of relation. Such a fight for its own sake seems to be suggested by a certain formal hostility drive which sometimes urges itself upon psychological observation. Its different forms must now be discussed.

THE PRIMARY NATURE OF HOSTILITY

SKEPTICAL MORALISTS speak of natural enmity between men. For them, *homo homini lupus* (man is wolf to man), and "in the misfortune of our best friends there is something which does not wholly displease us." But even the diametrically opposed moral philosophy, which derives ethical selflessness from the transcendental foundations of our nature, does not thereby move very far from the same pessimism. For after all, it admits that devotion to the Thou cannot be found in the experience and observation of our will. Empirically, rationally, man is pure egoist, and any deflection of this natural fact can occur in us, not through nature, but only through the *deus ex machina* of a metaphysical being. Hence natural hostility as a form or basis of human relations appears at least side by side with their other basis, sympathy. The strange lively interest, for instance, which people usually show in the suffering of others, can only be explained on the basis of a mixture of the two motivations. This deep-lying antipathy is also suggested by the phenomenon, not at all rare, of the "spirit of contradiction" (*Widerspruchsgeist*). It is found not only in those nay-sayers-on-principle who are the despair of their surroundings among friends, in families, in committees, and in the theatre public. Nor does this spirit celebrate its most characteristic triumphs in the realm of politics, in those men of opposition whose classical type Macaulay has described in the person of Robert Ferguson:

"His hostility was not to Popery or to Protestantism, to monarchical government or to republican government, to the house of Stuarts or to the house of Nassau, but to whatever was at the time established." All these cases which are usually considered to be types of "pure opposition" do not necessarily have to be such: ordinarily, the opponents conceive of themselves as defenders of threatened rights, as fighters for what is objectively correct, as knightly protectors of the minority.

It appears to me that much less striking phenomena reveal more clearly an abstract impulse to opposition—especially the quiet, often hardly known, fleeing temptation to contradict an assertion or demand, particularly a categorical one. This instinct of opposition emerges with the inevitability of a reflex movement, even in quite harmonious relationships, in very conciliatory persons. It mixes itself into the over-all situation even though without much effect. One might be tempted to call this a protective instinct—just as certain animals, merely upon being touched, automatically use their protective and aggressive apparatus. But this would precisely prove the primary, basic character of opposition. It would mean that the individual, even where he is not attacked but only finds himself confronted by purely objective manifestations of other individuals, cannot maintain himself except by means of opposition. It would mean that the first instinct with which the individual affirms himself is the negation of the other.

It seems impossible to deny an *a priori* fighting instinct, especially if one keeps in mind the incredibly picaresque, even silly, occasions of the most serious conflicts. An English historian reports that not long ago two Irish parties, whose enmity developed from a quarrel over the color of a cow, fought each other furiously throughout the whole country. Some decades ago, grave rebellions occurred in India as the consequence of a feud between two parties which knew nothing about one another except that they were, respectively,

the party of the right hand and the party of the left. And this triviality of the causes of conflicts is paralleled by the childish behavior in which conflicts often end. In India, Mohammedans and Hindus live in a constant latent enmity which they document by the Mohammedans buttoning their outer garments to the right, and the Hindus to the left; by the Mohammedans, at common meals, sitting in a circle, and the Hindus in a row; by the poor Mohammedans using one side of a certain leaf for a plate, and the Hindus the other. In human hostility, cause and effect are often so heterogeneous and disproportionate that it is hard to determine whether the alleged issue really is the cause of the conflict or merely the consequence of long-existing opposition. The impossibility of ascertaining any rational basis of the hostility presents us with this uncertainty in regard to many details of the conflicts between the Roman and Greek circus parties, between the Homousians and the Homousians, and of the Wars of the Roses and of the Guelfs and Ghibelines. The general impression is that human beings never love one another because of such picayunish trivia as lead them to violent hatred.

THE SUGGESTIBILITY OF HOSTILITY

THERE IS FINALLY another phenomenon which seems to me to point to a wholly primary need for hostility. This is the uncanny ease with which hostility can be suggested. It is usually much easier for the average person to inspire another individual with distrust and suspicion toward a third, previously indifferent person than with confidence and sympathy. It is significant that this difference is particularly striking in respect to these favorable or unfavorable moods and prejudices if they are at their beginning or have developed only to a slight degree. For, higher degrees, which lead to practical application, are not decided by such fleeting leanings (which, however, betray the fundamental instinct)

but by more conscious considerations. The same fundamental fact is shown in merely another version, as it were, by the circumstance that quite indifferent persons may successfully suggest those slight prejudices which fly over the image of another like shadows, whereas only an authoritative or emotionally close individual succeeds in causing us to have the corresponding favorable prejudice.

Without this ease or irresponsibility with which the average person reacts to suggestions of an unfavorable kind, the *aliquid haeret* [social, emotional inertial] would perhaps not be so tragically true. The observation of certain antipathies, factions, intrigues, and open fights might indeed lead one to consider hostility among those primary human energies which are not provoked by the external reality of their objects but which create their own objects out of themselves. Thus it has been said that man does not have religion because he believes in God but that he believes in God because he has religion, which is a mood of his soul. In general, it is probably recognized that love, especially in youth, is not a mere reaction evoked by its object (as a color sensation is evoked in our optical apparatus), but that on the contrary, we have a need for loving and ourselves seize upon some object which satisfies this need—sometimes bestowing on it those characteristics which, we alleged, have evoked our love in the first place.

THE HOSTILITY DRIVE AND ITS LIMITED POWER

THERE IS NOTHING to suggest that all this does not also hold of the development of the opposite emotion (except for a qualification, of which presently). There is nothing to suggest that the soul does not also have an inborn need for *loving* and *fighting*, and that often this need alone injects into the objects it takes for itself their hate-provoking qualities. This interpretation of hatred is not so obvious as is that

of love. The reason probably is that the need for love, with its tremendous physiological pointedness in youth, is so palpably spontaneous, that is, so palpably determined by the actor (lover) rather than by the beloved, that, by comparison, the hate drive is only seldom found in stages of comparable acuteness which would make us equally conscious of its subjective, spontaneous character.⁵

Assuming that there indeed exists a formal hostility drive as the counterpart of the need for sympathy, it seems to me that historically it stems from one of those processes of distillation by which intra-individual movements leave an independent impulse as the residue of the forms which are commingled, them. All kinds of interests so often lead to conflicts over particular objects or to opposition against particular persons that, possibly as a residue of these conflicting interests, a general state of irritation, which by itself presses for manifestations of antagonism, has become part of the hereditary inventory of our species. It is well known that (for reasons often discussed) the mutual relation of primitive groups is almost always one of hostility. Perhaps the most decisive example comes from the American Indians, among whom every tribe was on principle considered in a state of war with every other tribe with which it had not concluded an explicit peace treaty. It must not be forgotten, however,

⁵ Fundamentally, all relations to others are distinguished according to the following questions (even though with innumerable answers ranging from the clear-cut affirmative to the clear-cut negative): (1) Is the psychological basis of the relation a drive (of the subject) which would develop even without external stimulus and on its own seeks an adequate object, either finding it in adequate form or making it so through imagination and necessity? Or (2) does the psychological basis of the relation consist in the response evoked by the nature or action of another person—whereby this response, too, of course, presupposes the possibility of being evoked? but this possibility would have remained latent without the stimulus and would not by itself have developed into a need. Intellectual and aesthetic, sympathetic and antipathetic relations are subject to this contrast from which alone they draw the forms of their development, intensity, and changes.

that in early stages of culture, war is almost the only form in which contact with alien groups is brought about at all. As long as inter-territorial commerce remains undeveloped, individual travel is something unknown, and intellectual communities do not transcend the boundaries of the group, war is the only sociological relation between different peoples. At such a stage, relations of the group members with one another have forms which are diametrically opposed to the interrelations among the groups. Within the closed circle, hostility usually means the termination of relations, withdrawal, or avoidance of contact, and these negative characteristics even accompany the passionate interaction of open fight. By contrast, these groups, as whole units, live in mutual indifference side by side as long as there is peace, while they gain active reciprocal significance for one another only in war. For this reason, the same drive to expand and to act, which within the group requires unconditional peace for the integration of interests and for unfettered interaction, may appear to the outside as a tendency toward war.

No matter how much psychological autonomy one may be willing to grant the antagonistic drive, this autonomy is not enough to account for all phenomena involving hostility. For in the first place, even the most spontaneous drive is restricted in its independence in as much as it does not apply to all objects but only to those which somehow appeal to it. Although hunger certainly originates in the subject without being actualized by the object, it nevertheless does not act on stones and wood but only on what is edible. Similarly, love and hate, too, however little their drives may derive from external stimuli, nevertheless seem to need some thing structure of their objects with whose cooperation they yield the total phenomena that go by their names. On the other hand, it seems probable to me that on the one hand, because of its formal character, the hostility drive itself adds itself as a reinforcement (like the pedal on the

piano, as it were) to controversies which are due to concrete causes. And where a conflict springs from the purely formal lust to fight—that is, from something entirely impersonal, fundamentally indifferent toward any content, even toward the adversary—even there, hatred and rage against the enemy as a person, and if possible interest in a prize for victory, inevitably grow in the course of the conflict because such emotions feed and increase its psychological strength. It is *expedient* to hate the adversary with whom one fights (for any reason), just as it is expedient to love a person whom one is tied to and has to get along with. The truth expressed by a popular Berlin song, "What one does out of love goes twice as well" ("*Was man aus Liebe tut, Das geht noch mal so gut*"), also goes for what one does out of hatred. The mutual behavior between people can only be understood by appreciating the inner adaptation which trains in us feelings most suitable to a given situation, whether they are to exploit or assert this situation, or are to bear or end it. By means of psychological connections, these feelings produce the forces which are necessary to execute the given task and to paralyze inner countercurrents. Hence no serious conflict probably lasts any length of time without being sustained by a *complex* of psychological impulses, even though this complex grows only gradually. This is of great sociological significance: the purity of conflict for the sake of conflict thus is seen to become interspersed partly with more objective interests, partly with impulses which can be satisfied by other means than fight, and which in practice form the bridge between conflict and other forms of interaction.

ANTAGONISTIC GAMES

I REALLY KNOW only a single case in which the fascination of fight and victory itself—elsewhere only an *element* in the antagonisms over particular contents—is the exclusive motivation: this is the antagonistic game (*Kampfspiel*), more

precisely, the game which is carried on without any prize for victory (since the prize would lie outside of it). The purely sociological attraction of becoming master over the adversary, of asserting oneself against him, is combined here, in the case of games of skill, with the purely individual enjoyment of the most appropriate and successful movement; and in the case of games of luck, with favor by fate which blesses us with a mystical, harmonious relation to powers beyond the realm of the individual and social. At any rate, in its *sociological motivation*, the antagonistic game contains absolutely nothing except fight itself. The worthless chip which is often contested as passionately as is a gold piece, suggests the formal nature of this impulse, which even in the quarrel over gold often greatly exceeds any material interest.

But there is something else most remarkable: the realization of precisely this complete dualism presupposes sociological forms in the stricter sense of the word, namely, unification. *One unites* in order to fight, and one fights under the mutually recognized control of norms and rules. To repeat, these unifications do not enter into the *motivation* of the undertaking, even though it is through them that it takes shape. They rather are the technique without which such a conflict that excludes all heterogeneous or objective justifications could not materialize. What is more, the norms of the antagonistic game often are rigorous and impersonal and are observed on both sides with the severity of a code of honor—to an extent hardly shown by groups which are formed for cooperative purposes.

LEGAL CONFLICT

THE PRINCIPLES of conflict and of unification, which holds the contrasts together in one whole, are shown in this example with the purity of almost an abstract concept. It thus reveals how each principle attains its full sociological meaning and effect only through the other. The same form which

dominates the antagonistic game also governs legal conflict, even though not with the same nearness and separateness of the two factors involved. For legal conflict has an *object*, and the struggle can be satisfactorily terminated through the voluntary concession of that object. This does not occur in fights for the lust of fighting. In most cases, what is called the lust and passion of legal quarrels, is probably something quite different, namely, a strong feeling of justice or the impossibility of bearing an actual or alleged interference with the sphere of law with which the ego feels identified.

All the uncompromising stubbornness and obstinacy with which parties at a trial so often bleed themselves to death has, even on the defendant's part, hardly the character of an offensive but, in a deeper sense, that of a defensive, since the question is the self-preservation of the person. This self-preservation is so inseparable from the person's possessions and rights that any inroad on them destroys it. It is only consistent to fight with the power of one's whole existence. Hence it probably is this individualistic drive, rather than the sociological drive to fight, which determines such cases.

In respect to the *form* of conflict, however, legal quarrel is indeed absolute. That is, on both sides the claims are put through with pure objectivity and with all means that are permitted; the conflict is not deflected or attenuated by any personal or in any other sense extraneous circumstances. Legal conflict is pure conflict in as much as nothing enters its whole action which does not belong to the conflict *as such* and serves its purpose. Elsewhere, even in the wildest struggles, something subjective, or some mere turn of fate, or interference by a third party is at least possible. In legal conflict, all this is excluded by the objectivity with which only the fight and absolutely nothing else proceeds.

This elimination of all that is not conflict can of course lead to a formalism which becomes independent of all contents. On the one hand, we here have legal pettifoggery. In

legal pettifoggery, it is not objective points which are weighed against one another; instead, concepts lead an entirely abstract fight. On the other hand, the conflict is sometimes delegated to agents which have no relation to what their contest is to decide. The fact that in higher cultures, legal quarrels are carried out by professional counsels, certainly serves the clean separation of the controversy from all personal associations which have nothing to do with it. But if Otto the Great decrees that a legal question must be decided through ordeal by combat, only the mere form—the occurrence of fighting and winning itself—is salvaged from the whole conflict of interests; only the form is the element common to the fight to be decided and to the individuals who decide it.

This case expresses in exaggeration or caricature the reduction and restriction of legal conflict to the mere element of fight itself. It is the most merciless type of contestation because it lies wholly outside the subjective contrast between charity and cruelty. But precisely because of its pure objectivity, it is grounded entirely in the premise of the unity and commonness of the parties—and this to a degree of severity and thoroughness hardly required by any other situation. Legal conflict rests on a broad basis of unities and agreements between the enemies. The reason is that both parties are equally subordinated to the law; they mutually recognize that the decision is to be made only according to the objective weight of their claims; they observe the forms which are unbreakably valid for both; and they are conscious that they are surrounded in their whole enterprise by a social power which alone gives meaning and certainty to their undertaking. The parties to a negotiation or a commercial affair form a unity in the same manner, even though to a less extent, for they recognize norms binding and obligatory to both, irrespective of the opposition of their interests. The common premises which exclude everything personal from

legal conflict have that character of pure objectivity to which (on the other hand) correspond the inexorability and the acute and unconditional character of the conflict itself. Legal conflict thus shows the interaction between the dualism and the unity of sociological relations no less than antagonistic games do. The extreme and unconditional nature of conflict comes to the fore in the very medium and on the very basis of the strict unity of common norms and conditions.

CONFLICTS OVER CAUSES

THIS SAME PHENOMENON is characteristic, finally, of all conflicts in which both parties have objective interests. In this case, the conflicting interests, and hence the conflict itself, are differentiated from the personalities involved. Here two things are possible. The conflict may focus on purely objective decisions and leave all personal elements outside itself and in a state of peace. Or on the contrary, it may involve precisely the persons in their subjective aspects without, however, thereby leading to any alteration or disharmony of the co-existing objective interests common to the two parties. The second type is characterized by Leibnitz's saying that he would run even after a deadly enemy if he could learn something from him. Such an attitude can obviously soften and attenuate the hostility itself; but its possible opposite result must also be noted. Hostility which goes along with solidarity and understanding in objective matters is indeed, so to speak, clean and certain in its justification. The consciousness of such a differentiation assures us that we do not harbor personal antipathy where it does not belong. But the good conscience bought with this discrimination may under certain circumstances lead to the very intensification of hostility. For where hostility is thus restricted to its real center, which at the same time is the most subjective center of personality, we sometimes abandon ourselves to it extensively, passionately, and with more concentration

than when the hostile impulse carries with it a ballast of secondary animosities in areas which actually are merely infected by that center.

In the case in which the same differentiation inversely limits the conflict to impersonal interests, there too are two possibilities. On the one hand, there may be the elimination of useless embitterments and intensifications which are the price we pay for personalizing objective controversies. On the other hand, however, the parties' consciousness of being mere representatives of supra-individual claims, of fighting not for themselves but only for a cause, can give the conflict a radicalism and mercilessness which find their analogy in the general behavior of certain very selfless and very idealistically inclined persons. Because they have no consideration for themselves, they have none for others either; they are convinced that they are entitled to make anybody a victim of the idea for which they sacrifice themselves. Such a conflict which is fought out with the strength of the whole person while the victory benefits the cause alone, has a noble character. For, the noble individual is wholly personal but knows nevertheless how to hold his personality in reserve. This is why objectivity strikes us as noble. But once this differentiation has been achieved and the conflict thus objectified, it is, quite consistently, not subjected to a second restriction, which in fact would be a violation of the objective interest to which the fight has been limited. On the basis of this mutual agreement of the two parties, according to which each of them defends only his claims and his cause, renouncing all personal or egoistic considerations, the conflict is fought with unattenuated sharpness, following its own intrinsic logic, and being neither intensified nor moderated by subjective factors.

The contrast between unity and antagonism is perhaps most visible where both parties really pursue an identical aim—such as the exploration of a scientific truth. Here any

yielding, any polite renunciation of the merciless exposure of the adversary, any peace prior to the wholly decisive victory would be treason against that objectivity for the sake of which the personal character has been eliminated from the fight. Ever since Marx, the social struggle has developed into this form, despite infinite differences in other respects. Since it has been recognized that the condition of labor is determined by the objective conditions and forms of production, irrespective of the desires and capacities of particular individuals, the personal bitterness of both general and local battles has greatly decreased. The entrepreneur is no longer a bloodsucker and damnable egoist, nor does the worker suffer from sinful greediness under all circumstances. Both parties have at least begun no longer to burden each other's consciences with their mutual demands and tactics as acts of personal meanness. In Germany, this objectification was started more nearly by means of theory, in as much as the personal and individualistic nature of antagonism was overcome by the more abstract and general character of the historical and class movement. In England, it was launched by the trade unions and was furthered by the rigorously supra-individual unity of their actions and those of the corresponding federations of entrepreneurs. The violence of the fight, however, has not decreased for that. On the contrary, it has become more pointed, concentrated, and at the same time more comprehensive, owing to the consciousness of the individual involved that he fights not only for himself, and often not for himself at all, but for a great super-personal aim.

An interesting example of this correlation is the workers' boycott of the Berlin breweries in 1894. This was one of the most violent local fights in recent decades,⁶ carried out with the utmost force by both sides, but without any personal hatred of the brewers by the leaders of the boycott, or of

6. Written, presumably, shortly after 1900. Cf. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, *loc. cit.*, pp. lviii, (8), and lxi, IV.—Tr.

the workers by the business leaders. In fact, in the middle of the fight, two leaders of the two parties published their opinions of the struggle in the same periodical, both being objective in their presentations of the facts and hence agreeing on them, but differing, in line with their respective parties, on the practical consequences that were to be drawn from the facts. It thus appears that conflict can exclude all subjective or personal factors, thus quantitatively reducing hostility, engendering mutual respect, and producing understanding on all personal matters, as well as the recognition of the fact that both parties are driven on by historical necessities. At the same time, we see that this common basis increases, rather than decreases, the intensity, irreconcilability, and stubborn consistency of the fight.

The objective common to the conflicting parties on which alone their fight is based, can show itself in a much less noble manner than in the cases just discussed. This is true when the common feature is not an objective norm, an interest that lies above the egoism of the fighting parties, but their secret understanding in respect to an egoistic purpose which they both share. To a certain extent this was true of the two great English political parties in the eighteenth century. There was no basic opposition of political convictions between them, since the problem of both equally was the maintenance of the aristocratic regime. The strange fact was that two parties which between themselves completely dominated the area of political struggle, nevertheless did not fight each other radically—because they had a silent mutual pact against something which was not a political party at all. Historians have connected the parliamentary corruptibility of that period with this strange limitation of the fight. Nobody thought too badly of a party's selling its conviction in favor of the opposing party because the conviction of that opposing party had a rather broad, even though hidden common basis, and the fight lay elsewhere. The case of

corruption showed that here the restriction of the antagonism through a common feature did not make the conflict more fundamental and objective. On the contrary, it blurred it and contaminated its meaning as necessarily determined by objective circumstances.

In other, purer cases, when unity is the point of departure and the basis of the relationship, and conflict arises over this unity, the synthesis between the monism and antagonism of the relation can have the opposite result. A conflict of this sort is usually more passionate and radical than when it does not meet with a prior or simultaneous mutual belongingness to the parties. While ancient Jewish law permitted bigamy, it forbade marriage with two sisters (even though after the death of one her husband could marry the other), for this would have been especially apt to arouse jealousy. In other words, this law simply assumes as a fact of experience that antagonism on the basis of a common kinship tie is stronger than among strangers. The mutual hatred of very small neighboring states whose whole outlooks, local relations, and interests are inevitably very similar and frequently even coincide, often is much more passionate and irreconcilable than between great nations, which both spatially and objectively are complete strangers to one another. This was the fate of Greece and of post-Roman Italy, and a more intensive degree of it shook England after the Norman Conquest before the two races fused. These two lived scattered among one another in the same territory, were mutually bound by constantly operating vital interests, and were held together by one national idea—and yet intimately, they were complete mutual strangers, were, in line with their whole character, without reciprocal understanding, and were absolutely hostile to one another in regard to their power interests. Their reciprocal hatred, as has rightly been said, was more bitter than it can ever be between externally and internally separate groups.

Some of the stronger examples of such hatred are church relations. Because of dogmatic fixation, the minutest divergence here at once comes to have logical irreconcilability—if there is deviation at all, it is conceptually irrelevant whether it be large or small. A case in point are the confessional controversies between Lutherans and Reformed, especially in the seventeenth century. Hardly had the great separation from Catholicism occurred, when the whole, over the most trivial matters, split into parties which frequently said about one another that one could more easily make peace with the Popists than with the members of the other Protestant group. And in 1875 in Berne, when there was some difficulty over the place where Catholic services were to be held, the Pope did not allow them to be performed in the church used by the Old-Catholics, but in a Reformed church.

COMMON QUALITIES VS. COMMON MEMBERSHIP IN A LARGER SOCIAL STRUCTURE AS BASES OF CONFLICT

TWO KINDS of commonness may be the bases of particularly intense antagonisms: the common qualities and the common membership in a larger social structure. The first case goes back simply to the fact that we are discriminating beings (*Unterschiedswesen*). A hostility must excite consciousness the more deeply and violently, the greater the parties' similarity against the background of which the hostility rises. Where attitudes are friendly or loving, this is an excellent protective measure of the group, comparable to the warning function of pain in the organism. For it is precisely the keen awareness of dissonance against the prevailing general harmony which at once warns the parties to remove the grounds of conflict lest conflict half-consciously creep on and endanger the basis of the relation itself. But where this fundamental intention to get along under all circumstances is lacking, the consciousness of antagonism, sensitized as this

consciousness is by similarity in other respects, will sharpen the antagonism itself. People who have many common features often do one another worse or "wronger" wrong than complete strangers do. Sometimes they do this because the large area common to them has become a matter of course, and hence what is temporarily different, rather than what is common, determines their mutual positions. Mainly, however, they do it because there is only little that is different between them; hence even the slightest antagonism has a relative significance quite other than that between strangers, who count with all kinds of mutual differences to begin with. Hence the family conflicts over which people profoundly in agreement sometimes break up. That they do so does by no means always prove that the harmonizing forces had weakened before. On the contrary, the break can result from so great a similarity of characteristics, leanings, and convictions that the divergence over a very insignificant point makes itself felt in its sharp contrast as something utterly unbearable.

We confront the stranger, with whom we share neither characteristics nor broader interests, objectively; we hold our personalities in reserve; and thus a particular difference does not involve us in our totalities. On the other hand, we meet the person who is very different from us only on certain points within a particular contact or within a coincidence of particular interests, and hence the spread of the conflict is limited to those points only. The more we have in common with another *as whole persons*, however, the more easily will our totality be involved in every single relation to him. Hence the wholly disproportionate violence to which normally uncontrolled people can be moved within their relations to these closest to them. The whole happiness and depth of the relation to another person with whom, so to speak, we feel identical, lies in the fact that not a single contact, not a single word, not a single common activity or pain remains

isolated but always clothes the whole soul which completely gives itself in it and is received in it. Therefore, if a quarrel arises between persons in such an intimate relationship, it is often so passionately expansive and suggests the schema of the fatal "Not you" ("*Da-ihberbermt!*"). Persons tied to one another in this fashion are accustomed to invest every direction in which they may turn with the totality of their being and feeling. Hence they also give conflicting accents and, as it were, a periphery by virtue of which it far outgrows its occasion and the objective significance of that occasion, and drags the total personalities into it.

CONFLICT IN INTIMATE RELATIONS

AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL of spiritual cultivation it is possible to avoid this, for it is characteristic of this level to combine complete mutual devotion with complete mutual differentiation. Whereas undifferentiated passion involves the totality of the individual in the excitement of a part or an element of it, the cultivated person allows no such part or element to transcend its proper, clearly circumscribed domain. Cultivation thus gives relations between harmonious persons the advantage that they become aware, precisely on the occasion of conflict, of its trifling nature in comparison with the magnitude of the forces that unify them.

Furthermore, the refined discriminatory sense, especially of deeply sensitive persons, makes attractions and antipathies more passionate if these feelings contrast with those of the past. This is true in the case of unique, irrevocable decisions concerning a given relationship, and it must be sharply distinguished from the everyday vacillations within a mutual belongingness which is felt, on the whole, to be unquestionable. Sometimes between men and women a fundamental aversion, even a feeling of hatred—not in regard to certain particulars, but the reciprocal repulsion of the total person—is the first stage of a relation whose second phase is passionate love. One might entertain the paradoxical suspicion that when indi-

viduals are destined to the closest mutual emotional relationship, the emergence of the intimate phase is guided by an instinctive pragmatism so that the eventual feeling attains its most passionate intensification and awareness of what it has achieved by means of an opposite prelude—a step back before running, as it were.

The inverse phenomenon shows the same form: the deepest hatred grows out of broken love. Here, however, not only the sense of discrimination is probably decisive but also the denial of one's own past—a denial involved in such change of feeling. To have to recognize that a deep love—and not only a sexual love—was an error, a failure of intuition (*Instink*), so compromises us before ourselves, so splits the security and unity of our self-conception, that we unavoidably make the object of this intolerable feeling pay for it. We cover our secret awareness of our own responsibility for it by hatred which makes it easy for us to pass all responsibility on to the other.

This particular bitterness which characterizes conflicts within relationships whose nature would seem to entail harmony is a sort of positive intensification of the platitude that relations show their closeness and strength in the absence of differences. But this platitude is by no means true without exception. That very intimate groups, such as marital couples, which dominate, or at least touch on, the whole content of life, should contain no occasions for conflict is quite out of the question. It is by no means the sign of the most genuine and deep affection never to yield to those occasions but instead to prevent them in far-ranging anticipation and to cut them short immediately by mutual yielding. On the contrary, this behavior often characterizes attitudes which though affectionate, moral, and loyal, nevertheless lack the ultimate, unconditional emotional devotion. Conscious of this lack, the individual is all the more anxious to keep the relation free from any shadow and to compensate his partner for that lack

through the utmost friendliness, self-control, and consideration. But another function of this behavior is to soothe one's own consciousness in regard to its more or less evident untruthfulness which even the most sincere or even the most passionate will cannot change into truthfulness—because feelings are involved which are not accessible to the will but, like fate itself, exist or do not exist.

The felt insecurity concerning the basis of such relations often moves us, who desire to maintain the relation at all cost, to acts of exaggerated selflessness, to the almost mechanical insurance of the relationship through the avoidance, on principle, of every possibility of conflict. Where on the other hand we are certain of the irrevocability and unreservedness of our feelings, such peace at any price is not necessary. We know that no crisis can penetrate to the foundation of the relationship—we can always find the other again on this foundation. The strongest love can stand a blow most easily, and hence it does not even occur to it, as its characteristic of a weaker one, to fear that the consequences of such a blow cannot be faced, and it must therefore be avoided by all means. Thus, although conflict among intimates can have more tragic results than among less intimate persons, in the light of the circumstances discussed, precisely the most firmly grounded relation may take a chance at discard, whereas good and moral but less deeply rooted relationships apparently follow a much more harmonious and conflictless course.

This sociological sense of discrimination and the accentuation of conflict on the basis of similarity have a special nuance in cases where the separation of originally homogeneous elements occurs on purpose. Here separation does not follow from conflict but, on the contrary, conflict from separation. Typical of this is the way the renegade hates and is hated. The recall of earlier agreement has such a strong effect that the new contrast is infinitely sharper and bitterer than

if no relation at all had existed in the past. Moreover, often both parties realize the difference between the new phase and the similarity remembered (and the unambiguousness of this difference is of the greatest importance to them) only by allowing it to grow far beyond its original locus and to characterize every point which is at all comparable. This aim of securing the two respective positions transforms theoretical or religious defection into the reciprocal charge of heresy in respect to all moral, personal, internal and external matters—a charge not necessarily ensuing where the same difference occurs between strangers. In fact, the degeneration of a difference in *convictions* into hatred and fight ordinarily occurs only when there were essential, original similarities between the parties. The (sociologically very significant) "respect for the enemy" is usually absent where the hostility has arisen on the basis of previous solidarity. And where enough similarities continue to make confusions and blurred borderlines possible, points of difference need an emphasis not justified by the issue but only by that danger of confusion. This was involved, for instance, in the case of Catholicism in Berne, mentioned earlier. Roman Catholicism does not have to fear any threat to its identity from external contact with a church so different as the Reformed Church, but quite from something as closely akin as Old-Catholicism.

CONFLICT AS A THREAT TO THE GROUP

THIS EXAMPLE already touches upon the second type which is relevant here, although in practice it more or less coincides with the first. It is the case of hostility whose intensification is grounded in a feeling of belonging together, of unity, which by no means always means similarity. The reason for treating this type separately is that instead of the sense of discrimination, it shows a very different fundamental factor, namely, the peculiar phenomenon of social hatred. This hatred is directed against a member of the group, not from

personal motives, but because the member represents a danger to the preservation of the group. In so far as intra-group conflict involves such a danger, the two conflicting parties hate each other not only on the concrete ground which produced the conflict but also on the sociological ground of hatred for the enemy of the group itself. Since this hatred is mutual and each accuses the other of responsibility for the threat to the whole, the antagonism sharpens—precisely because both parties to it belong to the same social unit.

Most characteristic here are the cases which do not lead to the proper break-up of the group. For once the group is dissolved, there is a certain release of the conflict; personal differences have been discharged sociologically; the thorn of ever new irritation has been removed. The tension between intra-group antagonism and group continuation must, on the contrary, lead to continued conflict. Just as it is terrible to be in conflict with a person to whom one is tied—externally or, in the most tragic cases, by an internal bond—but from whom one cannot tear oneself loose even if one wished to, so the bitterness is equally intensified when one does not want to leave the group because one feels this unit to be an objective value, a threat to which calls for fight and hatred. From this constellation springs the violence characteristic of conflicts within a political faction, a labor union, a family, etc.

Here, conflicts within the individual offer an analogy. In certain cases, they may be held down by the feeling that a struggle between sensuous and ascetic, egoistic and moral, practical and intellectual tendencies not only does injustice to one or both of these contrasting claims—not allowing full life to either of them—but menaces the very unity, equilibrium, and strength of the whole individual. Where on the contrary this feeling is not enough to check the conflict, it gives it a bitter and desperate accent—as if the fight were about something much more essential than the immediate issue in question. The energy with which each of the

conflicting tendencies wishes to subjugate the other, feels not only on its own egoistic interest, so to speak, but on the much more comprehensive interest in the maintenance of the ego which is torn apart and destroyed by the conflict, unless the conflict ends in unambiguous victory. Just so, conflict within a closely knit group often enough grows beyond the extent justified by its occasion and by the interest to the group immediately attendant on this occasion; for in addition, this conflict is associated with the feeling that the discord is not a matter only of the two parties but of the group as a whole. Each party fights, as it were, in the name of the whole group and must hate in its adversary not only its own enemy but at the same time the enemy of the higher sociological unit.

JEALOUSY

FINALLY, there is a fact by which the extreme violence of antagonistic excitement is linked to the closeness of belonging together. This fact, though apparently quite individual, actually is of great sociological significance. It is jealousy. Linguistic usage is ambiguous in regard to this concept; often it does not distinguish it from envy. Both affects are undoubtedly of the greatest importance for the shaping of human conditions. In both a value is at stake which a third party actually or symbolically prevents us from attaining or keeping. Where it is a matter of attaining, we shall here speak of envy; where of keeping, of jealousy. But the use of definitions is of course quite irrelevant as long as the psychological-sociological processes are clearly distinguished. It is characteristic of the jealous individual to have a rightful claim to possession, whereas envy refers to the desirability of what is denied it, not to the legitimacy of any claim. To the envious individual it is irrelevant whether the good is denied him because somebody else possesses it or whether even its loss or renunciation by that other individual would

not let him obtain it. Jealousy, on the contrary, is determined in its inner direction and color precisely by the fact that we are prevented from possession because the possession is in somebody else's hands, and that if this were otherwise, we would become the possessors at once. The feeling of the envious individual turns more around possession, that of the jealous person more around the possessor. One can envy somebody's fame even though one has not the slightest claim to fame, but one is jealous of a famous man if one thinks that one deserves fame as much or more than he does. What is embittering and gnawing to the jealous individual is a certain fiction of feeling—no matter how unjustified or even nonsensical it may be—that the other has, so to speak, stolen the fame from him. Jealousy, whatever the exceptional psychological constellation from which it may have arisen, is a sensation of such a specific kind and power that it internally complements its typical situation.

Midway on the continuum between the phenomena of envy and jealousy thus described, there is a third one which may be designated as begrudging (*Misgunst*). "Begrudging" is the envious desire of an object, not because it is especially desirable but because the other has it. This kind of feeling may grow to either of two extremes, both of which end up by negating one's own possession. One form is that passionate begrudging, which dispenses with the object or in fact destroys it, rather than leaving it in the hands of the other. The second form is complete indifference or even aversion toward the object, accompanied by the utter unbearability of the thought that the other possesses it. Such forms of begrudging are annexed in a thousand degrees and mixtures in the reciprocal behavior of human beings. They cover considerable portions of the large problem area in which people's relations to things are revealed as causes or effects of their relations to one another. For here it is not only the question of desiring money or power, affection or social position, through com-

peating with another person or through surpassing or dominating him, whereby these activities are techniques, identical in their inner meaning with conquering physical obstacles. Rather, in these modifications of begrudging, the feeling which accompanies such external and secondary relations among persons develops into autonomous sociological forms in which the desire for the object has become mere *content*. That this is so can be seen in the fact that the interest in the objective purpose has been slouched off or, rather, has been reduced to the intrinsically irrelevant material around which the personal relation crystallizes.

This is the general basis on which emerges the significance of jealousy for our problem, conflict. More particularly, this is so when the content of jealousy is a person or the relation of a given individual to that person. In fact, it seems to me linguistic usage does not recognize jealousy in regard to a purely impersonal object. What concerns us here is the relation between a jealous individual and the person for whose sake his jealousy is directed toward a third individual. The relation to that third individual itself has a very different, sociologically much less specific and complicated, formal character. For, the rage and hatred, contempt and cruelty against *him* are built precisely on the premise of a *belonging together*, of an external or internal, real or presumed claim to love, friendship, recognition, union of some sort. Whether felt on both sides or on one only, the antagonism is the more intensive and extensive, the more unconditional the unity from which it started and the more passionate the longing to overcome it. The frequent, apparent vacillation of the jealous person between love and hate means that these two layers (of which the second covers the first in its whole expanse) alternately command his stronger awareness.

Here it is very important to remember the condition indicated earlier, namely, the *right* that the jealous individual believes he has to the psychological or physical possession,

the love or the veneration of the person who is the object of his jealousy. A man may *envy* another's possession of a woman, but he is jealous only if he himself has some *claim* to possessing her. This claim may well consist exclusively in the mere passion of his desire, for it is a general human trait to derive a right from such a desire. The child excuses himself for taking something forbidden to him by saying that he "wanted it so much." At a duel, the adulterer, if he has the slightest trace of conscience, could not aim at the offended husband if he did not see in his own love for the other's wife a right to her, which he defends against the husband's merely legal right. Everywhere the mere fact of possession is considered the right to possession.

Just so, the stage preceding possession, namely, the desire for it, may grow into such a right. In fact, the double meaning of "claim"—simple desire and legally grounded desire—alludes to the fact that the will likes to increase the right of its strength by the strength of its right. To be sure, precisely because of this legal claim, jealousy often is the most pitiful spectacle; for to make *legal* claims to such feelings as love and friendship is to make an attempt with wholly inadequate means. The level on which one can operate on the basis of any right, external or internal, does not even touch the level on which these feelings lie. To wish to enforce them through a right, no matter how profound and well-acquired in other respects, is as senseless as if one wanted to order back to its cage a bird which has escaped from it beyond the reach of sight and hearing. This hopelessness of the right to love produces the phenomenon characteristic of jealousy, that is, the essential hanging on to the *external proofs* of feeling, which can indeed be enforced by an appeal to duty. By means of this miserable satisfaction and self-deception, jealousy preserves the "body" of the relationship—and does as if it had caught in it something of its "soul."

The claim advanced by the jealous person is often fully

recognized by the other party. Like every right between persons, this claim means or produces a sort of unity. It is the ideal or legal content of a group, or a positive relationship of some sort, or at least their subjective anticipation. To this existing and continuing unity is added its simultaneous negation, and thus the situation ripe for jealousy is created. Contrary to other situations in which unity and antagonism interact, in the situation conducive to jealousy these two forces are not distributed among different areas, being held together and against one another only by the total personality. On the contrary, there is the denial of the very unity which still exists in some inner or outer form and is felt by at least one of the two parties so to exist, actually or ideally. The feeling of jealousy interjects a very peculiar, blinding, irreconcilable bitterness between two persons. For, the separation between them revolves precisely around the point of their *connection*, and the negative element in the tension between them thus attains the highest possible sharpness and accentuation.

The complete control of the inner situation by this formal-sociological constellation explains the strange, actually unlimited, range of motives upon which jealousy may feed. It also explains why its development is often incomprehensible as far as its content is concerned. Where either the very structure of the relation or the psychology of the individual is disposed toward such a synthesis of synthesis and antithesis, any occasion will develop the consequences—and these consequences, obviously, will be the more appealing, the more often they have been developed in the past. The jealous person can never see more than *one* interpretation. Thus, jealousy finds a completely malleable instrument in the fact that all human deeds and words admit of *several* interpretations of their intentions and attitudes. Jealousy can combine the most passionate hatred with the continuation of the most passionate love, and the lingering of the most intimate unity

with the destruction of both parties—for, the jealous individual destroys the relation just as much as that relation invites him to destroy his partner. Thus, jealousy is perhaps that sociological phenomenon in which the building of antagonism upon unity attains its subjectively most radical form.