The Sociology of Georg Simmel

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Chapter 3

The Isolated Individual and the Dyad

§ 1. Introduction

Our statements up to this point concerned social formations which depend on the number of their component elements. But our insight was incapable of formulating this dependence in a way which would have allowed us to derive sociological consequences from certain specific numbers. This is not impossible, however, if we content ourselves with sufficiently simple structures. If we begin with the lower limit of the numerical series, there appear arithmetically definite magnitudes as the unequivocal pre-suppositions of characteristic sociological formations.

§ 2. The Isolated Individual

The numerically simplest structures which can still be designated as social interactions occur between two elements. Nevertheless, there is an externally even simpler phenomenon that belongs among sociological categories, however paradoxical and in fact contradictory this may seem—namely, the isolated individual. As a matter of fact, however, the processes that shape elements in the dual are often simpler than those required for the sociological characterization of the singular. For this, two phenomena are above all relevant here: isolation and freedom. The mere fact that an individual does not interact with others is, of course, not a sociological fact, but neither does it express the whole idea of isolation. For, isolation, insofar as it is important to the individual, refers by no means only to the absence of society. On the contrary, the idea involves the somehow imagined, but then rejected, existence of society. Isolation attains its unequivocal, positive significance only as society's effect at a distance—whether as lingering-on of past relations, as anticipation of future contacts, as nostalgia, or as an intentional turning away from society. The isolated man does not suggest a being that has been the only inhabitant of the globe from the beginning. For his condition, too, is determined by sociation, even though negatively. The whole joy and the whole bitterness of isolation are only different reactions to socially experienced influences. Isolation is interaction between two parties, one of which leaves, after exerting certain influences. The isolated individual is isolated only in reality, however; for ideally, in the mind of the other party, he continues to live and act.

A well-known psychological fact is very relevant here. The feeling of isolation is rarely as decisive and intense when one actually finds oneself physically alone, as when one is a stranger, without relations, among many physically close persons, at a "party," on a train, or in the traffic of a large city. The question whether a group favors or even permits such loneliness in its midst is an essential trait of the group structure itself. Close and intimate communities often allow no such intercellular vacuums. When we speak of anti-social phenomena like wretched persons, criminals, prostitutes, suicides, etc., we may refer to them as a social deficit that is produced in a certain proportion to social conditions. In a similar way, a given quantity and quality of social life creates a certain number of temporarily or chronically lonely existences, although they cannot as easily be ascertained by statistics as can these others.

§ 3. Isolation

Isolation thus is a relation which is lodged within an individual but which exists between him and a certain group or group life in general. But it is sociologically significant in still another way: it may also be an interruption or periodic occurrence in a given relationship between two or more persons. As such, it is especially important in those relations whose very nature is the denial of isolation. This applies, above all, to monogamous mar-
The structure of a particular marriage, of course, may not even involve the finest and most intimate nuances of the mates. But where it does, there is an essential difference between the case in which they have preserved the joy of individual isolation in spite of the perfect happiness of their life in common, and the case in which the relation is never interrupted by devotion to solitude. The second case may have various reasons. Habituation to the life in common may have deprived isolation of its attractiveness, or insufficient certainty of love may make interruption by solitude feared as unfaithfulness or, what is worse, as a danger to faithfulness. At any rate, it is clear that isolation is not limited to the individual and is not the mere negation of association. It also has a positive sociological significance. As a conscious feeling on the part of the individual, it represents a very specific relation to society. And furthermore, its occurrence changes the nature of both large and very intimate groups, whereby it may be the cause as well as the effect of this change.

§ 4. Freedom

Here, too, belongs one of the many sociological aspects of freedom. At first glance, freedom, like isolation, seems to be the mere negation of sociation. For, while every sociation involves a tie, the free man does not form a unit with others, but is a unit by himself. It may be that there is a kind of freedom which is actually nothing but the lack of relations or the absence of restrictions by others. A Christian or Hindu hermit, a lonely settler in the old Germanic or, more recently, in the American forests, may enjoy freedom in the sense that his existence is completely filled by non-social contents; and something similar may be said of a collectivity (a house community or a state, for instance) that exists, like an island, with no neighbors and with no relations to other collectivities. But for an individual who does have relations to other individuals, freedom has a much more positive significance. For him, freedom itself is a specific relation to the environment. It is a correlative phenomenon which loses its very meaning in the absence of a counterpart. In regard to this counterpart, freedom has two aspects that are of the greatest importance for the structure of society.

(1) For social man, freedom is neither a state that exists always and can be taken for granted, nor a possession of a material substance, so to speak, that has been acquired once and all. One reason why freedom is none of these things we shall see in a moment. It should be noted that every important claim which engages the strength of the individual in a certain direction has the tendency to go on indefinitely, to appear completely autonomous. Almost all relations—of the state, the party, the family, of friendship or love—quite naturally, as it were, seem to be on an inclined plane: if they were left to themselves, they would extend their claims over the whole of man. They are, often uncannily, surrounded by an ideal halo from which the individual must explicitly mark off some reserve of forces, devotions, and interests that he has taken away from these relations. But it is not only through the extensity of claims that the egoism of every sociation threatens the freedom of the individuals engaged in it. It does so also through the relentlessness of the claim itself, which is one-tracked and monopolistic. Usually, each claim presses its rights in complete and pitiless indifference to other interests and duties, no matter whether they be in harmony or in utter incompatibility with it. It thus limits the individual’s freedom as much as does the large number of the claims on him. In the face of this nature of our relations, freedom emerges as a continuous process of liberation, as a fight, not only for our independence, but also for the right, at every moment and of our own free will, to remain dependent. This fight must be renewed after every victory. Thus, the absence of relations, as a negative social behavior, is almost never a secure possession but an incessant release from ties which actually limit the autonomy of the individual or which ideally strive to do so. Freedom is not solipsistic existence but sociological action. It is not a condition limited to the single individual but a relationship, even though it is a relationship from the standpoint of the individual.

(2) Freedom is something quite different from rejection of relations or immunity of the individual sphere from adjacent spheres—not only in the function described, but also in its content. This is suggested by the simple recognition of the fact that man does not only want to be free, but wants to use his freedom for some purpose. In large part, however, this use is
nothing but the domination and exploitation of other men. To the social individual, that is, the individual who lives in constant interaction with others, freedom is very often without any content and purpose if it does not permit, or even consist in, the extension of his will over others. Our idiom correctly characterizes certain brusque and violent acts as “taking liberties with somebody.” In related fashion, many languages use their word for “freedom” in the sense of “right” or “privilege.” The purely negative character of freedom, as a relation of the individual to himself, is thus supplemented in two directions by a very positive character. To a great extent, freedom consists in a process of liberation; it rises above a bond, contrasts with a bond; it finds its meaning, consciousness, and value only as a reaction to it. But it no less consists in a power relation to others, in the possibility of making oneself count within a given relationship, in the obligation or submission of others, in which alone it finds its value and application. The significance of freedom as something limited to the subject himself, thus, appears as the watershed between its two social functions, as it were; and they are based on the simple fact that the individual is tied by others and ties others. The subjective significance of freedom hence approximates zero, but it reveals its real significance in this twofold sociological relation, even where freedom is conceived as an individual quality.

§ 5. The Dyad

We see that such phenomena as isolation and freedom actually exist as forms of sociological relations, although they often do so only by means of complex and indirect connections. In view of this fact, the simplest sociological formation, methodologically speaking, remains that which operates between two elements. It contains the scheme, germ, and material of innumerable more complex forms. Its sociological significance, however, by no means rests on its extensions and multiplications only. It itself is a sociation. Not only are many general forms of sociation realized in it in a very pure and characteristic fashion; what is more, the limitation to two members is a condition under which alone several forms of relationship exist. Their typically sociological nature is suggested by two facts. One is that the greatest variation of individualities and unifying motives does not alter the identity of these forms; the other is that occasionally these forms exist as much between two groups—families, states, and organizations of various kinds—as between two individuals.

Everyday experiences show the specific character that a relationship attains by the fact that only two elements participate in it. A common fate or enterprise, an agreement or secret between two persons, ties each of them in a very different manner than if even only three have a part in it. This is perhaps most characteristic of the secret. General experience seems to indicate that this minimum of two, with which the secret ceases to be the property of the one individual, is at the same time the maximum at which its preservation is relatively secure. A secret religious-political society which was formed in the beginning of the nineteenth century in France and Italy, had different degrees among its members. The real secrets of the society were known only to the higher degrees; but a discussion of these secrets could take place only between any two members of the high degrees. The limit of two was felt to be so decisive that, were it not preserved in regard to knowledge, it was kept at least in regard to the verbalization of this knowledge. More generally speaking, the difference between the dyad and larger groups consists in the fact that the dyad has a different relation to each of its two elements than have larger groups to their members. Although, for the outsider, the group consisting of two may function as an autonomous, super-individual unit, it usually does not do so for its participants. Rather, each of the two feels himself confronted only by the other, not by a collectivity above him. The social structure here rests immediately on the one and on the other of the two, and the secession of either would destroy the whole. The dyad, therefore, does not attain that super-personal life which the individual feels to be independent of himself. As soon, however, as there is a sociation of three, a group continues to exist even in case one of the members drops out.

This dependence of the dyad upon its two individual members causes the thought of its existence to be accompanied by

Never Simmel's term, but shorter and more convenient than his, which here, for instance, is "Zweierverbund" ("union of two").—Tr.
the thought of its termination much more closely and impressively than in any other group, where every member knows that even after his retirement or death, the group can continue to exist. Both the lives of the individual and that of the sociation are somehow colored by the imagination of their respective deaths. And "imagination" does not refer here only to theoretical, conscious thought, but to a part or a modification of existence itself. Death stands before us, not like a fate that will strike at a certain moment but, prior to that moment, exists only as an idea or prophecy, as fear or hope, and without interfering with the reality of this life. Rather, the fact that we shall die is a quality inherent in life from the beginning. In all our living reality, there is something which merely finds its last phase or revelation in our death: we are, from birth on, beings that will die. We are this, of course, in different ways. The manner in which we conceive this nature of ours and its final effect, and in which we react to this conception, varies greatly. So does the way in which this element of our existence is interwoven with its other elements. But the same observations can be made in regard to groups. Ideally, any large group can be immortal. This fact gives each of its members, no matter what may be his personal reaction to death, a very specific sociological feeling. A dyad, however, depends on each of its two elements alone—in its death, though not in its life: for its life, it needs both, but for its death, only one. This fact is bound to influence the inner attitude of the individual toward the dyad, even though not always consciously nor in the same way. It makes the dyad into a group that feels itself both endangered and irreplaceable, and thus into the real locus not only of authentic sociological tragedy, but also of sentimentalism and elegiac problems.

This feeling tone appears wherever the end of the union has become an organic part of its structure. Not long ago, there came news from a city in northern France regarding a strange "Association of the Broken Dish." Years ago, some industrialists met for dinner. During the meal, a dish fell on the floor and broke. One of the diners noted that the number of pieces was identical with that of those present. One of them considered this

§ 6. Characteristics of the Dyad

[a] Triviality

It is for the same structural reason that in reality dyads alone are susceptible to the peculiar coloration or discoloration which we call triviality. For only where there is a claim on the irreplaceable individuality of appearance or performance, does its failure to materialize produce a feeling of triviality. We have hardly paid sufficient attention to the way in which relationships of like content take on a different color, according to whether their members think that there are many, or only very few, similar ones. And it is by no means only erotic relations which attain a special, significant timbre, beyond their describable content and value, through the notion that an experience like theirs has never existed before. Quite generally in fact, there is perhaps hardly any object of external possession whose value—not only its economic value—is not co-determined, consciously or no, by its rarity or frequency. And so, perhaps no relation is independent, in its inner significance for the participants, of the factor of "how many other times, too"; and this factor may even refer to the repetition of the same contents, situations, excitations within the relationship. "Triviality" connotes a certain measure of frequency, of the consciousness that a content of life is repeated, while the value of this content depends on its very opposite—a certain measure of rarity. In regard to the life
of a super-individual societal unit and the relation of the individual to such a unit, this question seems not to emerge. Here, where the content of the relation transcends individuality, individuality in the sense of uniqueness or rarity seems to play no role, and its non-existence, therefore, seems not to have the effect of triviality. But in dyadic relations—love, marriage, friendship—and in larger groupings (often, for instance, “social parties”) which do not result in higher units, the tone of triviality frequently becomes desperate and fatal. This phenomenon indicates the sociological character of the dyad: the dyad is inseparable from the immediacy of interaction; for neither of its two elements is it the super-individual unit which elsewhere confronts the individual, while at the same time it makes him participate in it.

[b] Intimacy

In the dyad, the sociological process remains, in principle, within personal interdependence and does not result in a structure that grows beyond its elements. This also is the basis of “intimacy.” The “intimate” character of certain relations seems to me to derive from the individual’s inclination to consider that which distinguishes him from others, that which is individual in a qualitative sense, as the core, value, and chief matter of his existence. The inclination is by no means always justifiable; in many people, the very opposite—that which is typical, which they share with many—is the essence and the substantial value of their personality. The same phenomenon can be noted in regard to groups. They, too, easily make their specific content, that is shared only by the members, not by outsiders, their center and real fulfillment. Here we have the form of intimacy.

In probably each relation, there is a mixture of ingredients that its participants contribute to it alone and to no other, and of other ingredients that are not characteristic of it exclusively, but in the same or similar fashion are shared by its members with other persons as well. The peculiar color of intimacy exists if the ingredients of the first type, or more briefly, if the “internal” side of the relation, is felt to be essential; if its whole affective structure is based on what each of the two participants gives or shows only to the one other person and to nobody else.

In other words, intimacy is not based on the content of the relationship. Two relationships may have an identical mixture of the two types of ingredients, of individual-exclusive and expansive contents. But only that is intimate in which the former function as the vehicle or the axis of the relation itself. Inversely, certain external situations or moods may move us to make very personal statements and confessions, usually reserved for our closest friends only, to relatively strange people. But in such cases we nevertheless feel that this “intimate” content does not yet make the relation an intimate one. For in its basic significance, the whole relation to these people is based only on its general, un-individual ingredients. That “intimate” content, although we have perhaps never revealed it before and thus limit it entirely to this particular relationship, does nevertheless not become the basis of its form, and thus leaves it outside the sphere of intimacy.

It is this nature of intimacy which so often makes it a danger to close unions between two persons, most commonly perhaps to marriage. The spouses share the indifferent “intimacies” of the day, the amiable and the unpleasant features of every hour, and the weaknesses that remain carefully hidden from all others. This easily causes them to place the accent and the substance of their relationship upon these wholly individual but objectively irrelevant matters. It leads them to consider what they share with others and what perhaps is the most important part of their personalities—objective, intellectual, generally interesting, generous features—as lying outside the marital relation; and thus they gradually eliminate it from their marriage.

It is obvious that the intimacy of the dyad is closely tied up with its sociological specialty, not to form a unit transcending the two members. For, in spite of the fact that the two individuals would be its only participants, this unit would nevertheless constitute a third element which might interpose itself between them. The larger the group is, the more easily does it form an objective unit up and above its members, and the less intimate does it become. The two characteristics are intrinsically connected. The condition of intimacy consists in the fact that the participants in a given relationship see only one another, and do not see, at the same time, an objective, super-individual entity.
Monogamous Marriage

§ 7. Monogamous Marriage

The fact that male and female strive after their mutual union is the foremost example or primordial image of a dualism which stamps our life-contents generally. It always presses toward reconciliation, and both success and failure of the reconciliation reveal this basic dualism only the more clearly. The union of man and woman is possible, precisely because they are opposites. As something essentially unattainable, it stands in the way of the most passionate craving for convergence and fusion. The fact that, in any real and absolute sense, the “I” can not seize the “not-I,” is felt nowhere more deeply than here, where their mutual supplementation and fusion seem to be the very reason for the opposites to exist at all. Passion seeks to tear down the borders of the ego and to absorb “I” and “thou” in one another. But it is not they which become a unit; rather, a new unit emerges, the child. The parents’ nearness, which they can never attain to the extent they desire but which always must remain a distance; and, on the other hand, their distance, which nevertheless to an infinite degree approaches their becoming-one—this is the peculiar dualistic condition in the form of which what has become, the child, stands between his creators. Their varying moods now let one of these two elements play its role, now the other. Therefore, cold, intrinsically alienated spouses do not wish a child: it might unify them; and this unifying function might contrast the more effectively, but the less desirably, with the parents’ overwhelming estrangement. Yet sometimes it is precisely the very passionate and intimate husband and wife who do not wish a child: it would separate them; the meta-

physical oneness into which they want to fuse alone with one another would be taken out of their hands and would confront them as a distinct, third element, a physical unit, that mediates between them. But to those who seek immediate unity, mediation must appear as separation. Although a bridge connects two banks, it also makes the distance between them measurable; and where mediation is superfluous, it is worse than superfluous.

Nevertheless, monogamous marriage does not seem to have the essential sociological character of the dyad, namely, absence of a super-personal unit. For, the common experience of bad marriages between excellent persons and of good marriages between dubious ones, suggests that marriage, however much it depends on each of the spouses, may yet have a character not coinciding with either of them. Each of the two, for instance, may suffer from confusions, difficulties, and shortcomings, but manages to localize them in himself or herself, as it were, while contributing only the best and purest elements to the marital relation, which thus is kept free from personal defects. If this is the case, the defect may still be considered the personal affair of the spouse. And yet we have the feeling that marriage is something super-personal, something which is valuable and sacred in itself, and which lies beyond whatever un-sacredness each of its elements may possess. It is a relationship within which either of the two feels and behaves only with respect to the other. His or her characteristics, without (of course) ceasing to be such, nevertheless receive a coloration, status, and significance that are different from what they would be if they were completely absorbed by the ego. For the consciousness of each of them, their relationship may thus become crystallized as an entity outside of them, an entity which is more and better (or worse, for that matter) than he or she is, toward which he has obligations and from which he receives good or fateful gifts, as if from some objective being.

This use of the group unit from its structure, which consists of the mere “I” and “thou,” is facilitated, in the case of marriage, by two circumstances. First, there is its incomparable closeness. The fact that two fundamentally different beings, man and woman, form such a close union; that the egoism of each is so thoroughly suspended, not only in favor of the other, but also in favor of the general relationship, including the interests and
the honor of the family and, above all, the children—this is really a miraculous fact. It is grounded in bases of the ego which rationalistically are inexplicable and which lie beyond its consciousness. It is also expressed in the distinction between the unit and its elements. That each of them feels the relation to be something with its own life-forces, merely indicates that it is incommensurable with the personal, self-contained ego, as we usually conceive it.

The second point is that this idea is further corroborated by the super-individual character of marriage forms, which are socially regulated and historically transmitted. It is impossible to decide whether the immeasurable differences in the nature and value of individual marriages are larger or smaller than are those among individuals. But no matter how great either of the differences may be, no couple has by itself invented the form of marriage. Its various forms are valid, rather, within given culture areas, as relatively fixed forms. In their formal nature, they are not subject to the arbitrary shadings and fates of individuals. If we look at the history of marriage, we are struck, for instance, by the important, always traditional role that is played by third persons during courtship, in negotiations regarding dowry, and in the wedding ceremonies proper. They are not always relatives; they include the priest who seals the marital union. This un-individualized initiation of marriage forcefully symbolizes its sociologically incomparable structure: in regard to its content and interest, as well as to its formal organization, this most personal relation of all is taken over and directed by entirely super-personal, historical social authority. This inclusion of traditional elements profoundly contrasts marriage with friendship and similar relations in which individual freedom is permitted much more play. Marriage, essentially, allows only acceptance or rejection, but not modification. It thus evidently favors the feeling of an objective form, of a super-personal unit. Although each of the two spouses is confronted by only the other, at least partially he also feels as he does when confronted by a collectivity; as the mere bearer of a super-individual structure whose nature and norms are independent of him, although he is an organic part of it.

Modern culture seems more and more to individualize the character of the given marriage, but at the same time to leave untouched, even in some respects to emphasize, its super-individuality, which is the core of its sociological form. At first glance, it may appear as if the great number of marriage forms found in half-cultures and past high-cultures (some of them based on the choice by the parties to the contract, some on their specific social positions), reflected an individualization that is at the service of the individual marriage. Actually, the reverse is true. Each of these types is profoundly un-individual and socially pre-determined, and being more minutely articulated, it is much narrower and tighter than is a very general and pervasive marriage form, whose more abstract characters are bound to leave greater play to personal differentiation.

Here we encounter a very general sociological uniformity. If the general is socially defined; if, that is, all relevant situations are stamped by a pervasive social form, a much greater freedom of individual behavior and creativity prevails than is true when social norms are crystallized in a variety of specific forms, while seemingly paying attention to individual conditions and needs. In the latter case, there is much more interference with what is properly individual: the freedom of differentiation is greater when the lack of freedom concerns a very general and pervasive features. The uniform character of the modern marriage form thus certainly leaves more room for individual articulations than do a larger number of socially pre-determined forms. On the other hand, it is true that its generality, which suffers no exception, greatly increases the character of objectivity and autonomous validity that it has in comparison with individual modifications in which we are interested here.

9 These correlations are treated in detail in the last chapter. ("The Enlargement of the Group and the Development of Individuality": not contained in this volume.)

10 The peculiar combination of subjective and objective, personal and super-personal or general elements in marriage is involved in the very process that forms its basis—physiological pairing. It alone is common to all historically known forms of marriage, whether perhaps no other characteristic can be found without exceptions. On the one hand, sexual intercourse is the most intimate and personal process, but on the other hand, it is absolutely general, absorbing the very personality in the service of the species and in the universal organic claim of nature. The psychological secret of this act lies in its double character of being both wholly personal and wholly impersonal. It explains why it is precisely this act that could become the basis of the marital relation which, at a higher sociological stage, re-
Something sociologically similar can be seen in the dyad of business partners. Although the formation and operation of the business rests, exclusively perhaps, on the cooperation of these two personalities, nevertheless the subject matter of the cooperation, the business or firm, is an objective structure. Each of the two has rights and duties toward it that in many respects are not different from those of any third party. And yet this fact here has another sociological significance than in the case of marriage. Because of the objective character of the economic system, business is intrinsically separate from the person of the owner, whether he be one or two, or more persons. The interaction among the participants has its purpose outside itself, while in marriage it has it within it. In business, the relationship serves as the means for obtaining certain objective results; in marriage, all objective elements are really nothing but means for the subjective relation. It is all the more remarkable that the psychological objectivity and autonomy of the group structure, which is not so essential to other dyads, does exist in marriage, along with immediate subjectivity.

peaks the same duality. But it is in the very relation between marriage and sex behavior that we find a most peculiar formal complication. For, however impossible it is to give a positive definition of marriage in view of the historical heterogeneity of marriage types, it can certainly be said which relation between man and woman is not marriage—the purely sexual relation. Whatever marriage is, it is always and everywhere more than sexual intercourse. However divergent the directions may be in which marriage transcends sexual intercourse, the fact that it transcends it at all makes marriage what it is. Here is, sociologically speaking, an almost unique phenomenon: the very point that all marriage forms have in common is the one which they have to transcend in order to result in marriage. Elsewhere there seem to be only very distant analogies. Thus all artists, no matter how heterogeneous their stylistic and imaginative tendencies may be, must know natural phenomena very minutely, not in order to stay within them, but in order to fulfill their specific artistic task by going beyond them. In a similar way, all historical and individual variations or gastronomic culture must satisfy relevant physiological needs, but again not to stop there, but to transcend this merely general need satisfaction by means of the most diverse stimuli. But among sociological formations, marriage seems to be the only one, or at least the purest, of this type. Here all cases of a given social form really contain only one common element; but this element is not sufficient to realize the form. This form emerges, rather, only when something else, something inevitably individual, which is different from case to case, is added to the general.
and which lead to mass crimes where even legal responsibility becomes a matter of dispute. In addition, the group interest (true or ostensible) entitles, or even obliges, the individual to commit acts for which, as an individual, he does not care to be responsible. Economic groups make shamelessly egoistic demands, officialdoms admit of crying abuses, both political and scientific associations practice outrageous acts of suppressing individual rights. If the individual had to answer for all these acts personally, he would find them impossible—at the very least, they would make him blush. But as a group member, he is anonymous. He feels himself protected if not concealed (so to speak) by the group, whose interests, at least formally, he believes himself to represent. He therefore commits these acts with the best of conscience. There are few cases in which the distance between the social unit and its elements is as great as it is here, where this distance is obvious and effective to a degree that almost degenerates into caricature.

This lowering of the practical personality values often entailed by group membership, had to be indicated because its absence characterizes the dyad. Since in this case each element has only one other individual, rather than more, who might form a higher unit with him, the dependence of the whole on him is perfectly clear, and thus his co-responsibility for all collective actions. He can, of course (and it happens often enough), pass responsibilities on to his partner. But this partner can reject them much more immediately and decisively than it is frequently possible for an anonymous whole: the whole lacks energy derived from personal interest, or requisite and legitimate representation. Neither of the two members can hide what he has done behind the group, nor hold the group responsible for what he has failed to do. Here the forces with which the group surpasses the individual—indecently and partially, to be sure, but yet quite perceptibly—cannot compensate for individual inadequacies, as they can in larger groups. There are many respects in which two united individuals accomplish more than two isolated individuals. Nevertheless, the decisive characteristic of the dyad is that each of the two must actually accomplish something, and that in case of failure only the other remains—not a super-individual force, as prevails in a group even of three.

The significance of this characteristic, however, is by no means only negative (referring, that is, to what it excludes). On the contrary, it also makes for a close and highly specific coloration of the dyadic relationship. Precisely the fact that each of the two knows that he can depend only upon the other and on nobody else, gives the dyad a special consecration—as is seen in marriage and friendship, but also in more external associations, including political ones, that consist of two groups. In respect to its sociological destiny and in regard to any other destiny that depends on it, the dyadic element is much more frequently confronted with All or Nothing than is the member of the larger group.

§ 9. The Expansion of the Dyad

[a] The Triad vs. the Dyad

This peculiar closeness between two is most clearly revealed if the dyad is contrasted with the triad. For among three elements, each one operates as an intermediary between the other two, exhibiting the twofold function of such an organ, which is to unite and to separate. Where three elements, A, B, C, constitute a group, there is, in addition to the direct relationship between A and B, for instance, their indirect one, which is derived from their common relation to C. The fact that two elements are each connected not only by a straight line—the shortest—but also by a broken line, as it were, is an enrichment from a formal-sociological standpoint. Points that cannot be contacted by the straight line are connected by the third element, which offers a different side to each of the other two, and yet fuses these different sides in the unity of its own personality. Discords between two parties which they themselves cannot remedy, are accommodated by the third or by absorption in a comprehensive whole.

Yet the indirect relation does not only strengthen the direct one. It may also disturb it. No matter how close a triad may be, there is always the occasion on which two of the three members regard the third as an intruder. The reason may be the mere fact that he shares in certain moods which can unfold in all their

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11 Again not Simmel's term, but again more convenient than "Verbindung zu dreien" (association of three) and the like.—Tr.
intensity and tenderness only when two can meet without distraction: the sensitive union of two is always irritated by the spectator. It may also be noted how extraordinarily difficult and rare it is for three people to attain a really uniform mood—when visiting a museum, for instance, or looking at a landscape—and how much more easily such a mood emerges between two. A and B may stress and harmoniously feel their m, because the n which A does not share with B, and the x which B does not share with A, are at once spontaneously conceded to be individual prerogatives located, as it were, on another plane. If, however, C joins the company, who shares n with A and x with B, the result is that (even under this scheme, which is the one most favorable to the unity of the whole) harmony of feeling is made completely impossible. Two may actually be one party, or may stand entirely beyond any question of party. But it is usual for just such finely tuned combinations of three at once to result in three parties of two persons each, and thus to destroy the unequivocal character of the relations between each two of them.

The sociological structure of the dyad is characterized by two phenomena that are absent from it. One is the intensification of relation by a third element, or by a social framework that transcends both members of the dyad. The other is any disturbance and distraction of pure and immediate reciprocity. In some cases it is precisely this absence which makes the dyadic relationship more intensive and strong. For, many otherwise undeveloped, unifying forces that derive from more remote psychical reservoirs come to life in the feeling of exclusive dependence upon one another and of hopelessness that cohesion might come from anywhere but immediate interaction. Likewise, they carefully avoid many disturbances and dangers into which confidence in a third party and in the triad itself might lead the two. This intimacy, which is the tendency of relations between two persons, is the reason why the dyad constitutes the chief seat of jealousy.

Dyads, wholes composed of only two participants, presuppose a greater individualization of their members than larger groups do (other things being equal). This observation is merely another aspect of the same fundamental sociological constellation. The essential point is that within a dyad, there can be no majority which could outvote the individual. This majority, however, is made possible by the mere addition of a third member. But relations which permit the individual to be overruled by a majority devalue individuality. What is more, if the relations in question are of a voluntary character, persons of a very decided individuality do not care to enter them.

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish a decided individuality from a strong individuality, two concepts that are very often confused. Certain extremely individualized persons and collectivities do not have the strength to preserve their individualization in the face of suppressive or leveling forces. The strong personality on the other hand, usually intensifies its formation precisely through opposition, through the fight for its particular character and against all temptation to blend and intermix. The decided merely qualitative individuality avoids groups in which it might find itself confronted by a majority. It is rather predestined, almost, for dyadic relationships, because its differentiation and its vulnerability make it dependent on supplementation by another personality. The first type—the more intensive individuality—prefers, on the other hand, to confront a plurality against whose quantitative superiority it can test its own, dynamic superiority. This preference is justified even for almost technical reasons. Napoleon’s Consulate of Three was decidedly more convenient for him than a group of two, for he had to win over only one colleague (which is very easy for the strongest among three) in order to dominate, in a perfectly legal form, the other, that is, actually, both other colleagues.

In general, it may be said that the dyad does two things in comparison with groups of more members. On the one hand, it favors a relatively greater individuality of the members. On the
other hand, it presupposes that the group form does not lower individual particularity to an average level. Now, women are the less individualized sex; variation of individual women from the general class type is less great than is true, in general, of men. This explains the very widespread opinion that, ordinarily, women are less susceptible to friendship than men. For, friendship is a relation entirely based on the individualities of its elements, more so perhaps even than marriage: because of its traditional forms, its social rules, its real interests, marriage contains many super-individual elements that are independent of the specific characters of the personalities involved. The fundamental differentiation on which marriage is based, as over against friendship, is in itself not an individual, but a species, differentiation. It is therefore understandable that real and lasting friendships are rare at the stage of low personality development; and that, on the other hand, the modern, highly differentiated woman shows a strikingly increased capacity for friendship and an inclination toward it, both with men and with women. Individual differentiation here has overwhelmed species differentiation. We thus see a correlation emerge between the most pointed individualization and a relationship which, at this stage at least, is absolutely limited to the dyad. This, of course, does not preclude the possibility that the same person can, at the same time, be engaged in more than one relation of friendship.

[c] Dyads, Triads, and Larger Groups

Dyads thus have very specific features. This is shown not only by the fact that the addition of a third person completely changes them, but also, and even more so, by the common observation that the further expansion to four or more by no means correspondingly modifies the group any further. For instance, a marriage with one child has a character which is completely different from that of a childless marriage, but it is not significantly different from a marriage with two or more children. To be sure, the difference resulting from the advent of the second child is again much more considerable than is that which results from the third. But this really follows from the norm mentioned: in many respects, the marriage with one child is a relation consisting of two elements—on the one hand, the parental unit, and on the other, the child. The second child is not only a fourth member of a relation but, sociologically speaking, also a third, with the peculiar effects of the third member. For, as soon as infancy has passed, it is much more often the parents who form a functional unit within the family than it is the totality of the children.

In an analogous way, in regard to marriage forms, the decisive difference is between monogamy and bigamy, whereas the third or twentieth wife is relatively unimportant for the marriage structure. The transition to a second wife is more consequent, at least in one sense, than is that to an even larger number. For it is precisely the duality of wives that can give rise to the sharpest conflicts and deepest disturbances in the husband's life, while they do not arise in the case of a greater plurality. The reason is that a larger number than two entails a de-classing and de-individualizing of the wives, a decisive reduction of the relationship to its sensuous basis (since a more intellectual relationship also is always more individualized). In general, therefore, the husband's deeper disturbances that characteristically and exclusively flow from a double relationship cannot come up.

This same fundamental idea can also be seen in Voltaire's statement about the political usefulness of religious anarchy. It says that, within a state, two rivaling sects inevitably produce unrest and difficulties which can never result from two hundred. The significance that the dualism of one element has in a group of several members is, of course, no less specific and decisive when this group serves the maintenance, rather than the disturbance, of the total collectivity of which it is a part. Thus it has been suggested that the collegiate relationship of the two Roman Consuls was perhaps a more effective obstacle to monarchical aspirations than the Athenian system of nine highest officials. It is the same dualistic tension which works now in a conservative, now in a destructive manner, depending on the other circumstances that characterize the total group. The decisive point is that this total group completely changes its sociological character as soon as the function in question...
is exerted, rather than by two, either by one person or by more than two. Important colleges are often composed of two members, like the Roman Consuls: there are the two kings of the Spartans, whose continuous frictions are explicitly stressed as assuring the continuation of the state; the two highest war chiefs of the Iroquois; the two civic heads of medieval Augsburg, where the aspiration toward a single mayordomio stood under a severe penalty. The peculiar tensions between the dualistic elements of a larger structure guarantee the *status quo* function of the dyad: in the examples given, the fusion into unity could easily have resulted in the predominance of an individual, and the expansion into a plurality, in an oligarchical clique.

This discussion has already shown the general significance of dualism and the comparable insignificance of its numerical increase. In concluding this analysis, I will mention two particular but sociologically highly significant facts. France’s political position in Europe was at once changed profoundly as soon as the country entered into a closer relationship with Russia. A third or fourth ally would not have produced any significant modification once this decisive modification had occurred. In general, the contents of human life differ very considerably according to whether the first step is the most difficult and decisive step and all later ones are of a comparatively secondary importance, or whether the first step itself proves nothing, while only later and more outspoken steps realize the turn of events that was merely foreshadowed in the beginning. The numerical aspects of association provide numerous illustrations of either case, as will become increasingly clear later on. For a state whose isolation entails the loss of political prestige, the existence of any one alliance whatever is decisive. By contrast, certain economic or military advantages perhaps develop only in a number of alliances of which none may be absent if their success is to be guaranteed. Obviously, between these two types there is the intermediate one wherein the particular character and success of the relationship is directly correlated with the number of elements, as is usually true in the aggregation of large masses.

The second type is suggested by the experience that relations of command and assistance radically change their character if, instead of one servant, assistant, or other subordinate, there are two. Aside from the question of cost, housewives sometimes prefer to get along with one servant because of the special difficulties that are involved if there are several. Because of a natural need for attachment, one servant tries to approach and enter the employer’s personal sphere and interest. But the same need for attachment may lead him to take a stand against the employer by joining a second servant, for each of the two has support in the other. Feelings of specific social status with their latent or more conscious opposition against the master, become effective only where there are two servants, because they emerge as a feature which they have in common.

In short, the sociological situation between the superordinate and the subordinate is completely changed as soon as a third element is added. Party formation is suggested instead of solidarity; that which separates servant and master is stressed instead of what binds them, because now common features are sought in the comrade and, of course, are found in their common contrast to the superordinate of them both. But this transformation of a numerical into a qualitative difference is no less fundamental if viewed from the master’s standpoint. It is easier to keep two rather than one at a desired distance; in their jealousy and competition the master has a tool for keeping them down and making them obedient, while there is no equivalent tool in the case of one servant. This is expressed, in formally the same sense, in an old proverb: “He who has one child is his slave; he who has more is their master.” It is seen in all these cases that the triad is a structure completely different from the dyad but not, on the other hand, specifically distinguished from groups of four or more members.

Before discussing particular types of triads, we must emphasize the variety of group characteristics that results from the subdivision of the group into two or into three chief parties. Periods of excitement generally place the whole of public life under the slogan, “Who is not for me is against me.” The consequence of this is a division of elements into two parties. All interests, convictions, and impulses which put us into a positive or negative relation with others at all, are distinguished from one another by the question of how aptly this alternative applies to them. They may be arranged along a continuum. At the one
pole is the radical exclusion of all mediation and impartiality; at the other, tolerance of the opponent's standpoint as legitimate as one's own. Between these extremes lies a whole range of standpoints that concur more or less with one's own position. A point on the continuum is occupied by every decision concerning immediate or remote groups that we have contact with; by every decision defining our positions within these groups; by every decision involving intimate or superficial cooperation, benevolence, or toleration, our increased prestige, or a danger to us. Every decision traces an ideal line around us. This line may definitely include or exclude everybody else; or it may have gaps where the question of inclusion and exclusion does not even arise; or it may permit mere contact, or only a partial inclusion and a partial exclusion. Whether the question of for-or-against-me is raised, and if so how emphatically, is determined not only by the logical rigor of the content of this question, nor only by the passion with which this content is insisted upon, but also by my relation to my social circle. The closer and more solidary this relation is; the more difficult it is for the individual to live with others that are not in complete harmony with him; and the more some ideal claim unites their totality, the more uncompromising is the question for each of them. The radicalism with which Jesus formulated this very decision derives from an infinitely strong feeling of the fundamental unity among all those who had received his message. In regard to it, there can be not only acceptance or rejection but what is more, only acceptance or outright fight against it. This fact is the strongest expression of the unconditional unity of all who belong to Jesus and of the unconditional exclusion of all who do not. For, the fight against the message, the being-against-me, is still an important relation, an inner, though perverted, unity; and this is stronger than any indifferent standing-by or half-hearted fence straddling.

[d] The formal radicalism of the mass

Thus, this fundamental sociological feeling leads to a split of the whole complex of elements into two parties. On the other hand, however, there are cases that show no such passionate feeling which forces everybody into a positive relation, of acceptance or fight, to the new idea or challenge. In these cases, every group that is part of the whole is rather essentially content with its existence as a part-group, and does not seriously request inclusion into the totality. If this is the situation, there is opportunity for a plurality of party formations, for tolerance, for mediating parties, for a whole range of subtly graded modifications. Epochs in which large masses are in movement facilitate party dualism, exclude indifference, and reduce the influence of middle parties. This fact becomes understandable on the basis of the radicalism which appeared to us as the character of mass movements. The simplicity of the ideas by which these movements are guided, imposes the alternative between absolute "yes" and "no." 12

The radicalism of mass movements does not prevent, however, a complete shift from one extreme to the other. In fact, it is not difficult to understand that such a shift occurs, and for relatively slight reasons. Suppose a stimulus X corresponding to the mood a is exerted upon a mass of people who are present in the same place. In this mass there is a number of individuals, perhaps one only, whose temperament and natural passion tend toward a. This individual is vividly stimulated by X, which reinforces his own leanings. Understandably enough, this person takes leadership in the mass, which is in some measure already disposed toward a, and which follows the mood of the leader whose temperament exaggerates the stimulus. By contrast, the individuals whose natures predispose them toward b, the opposite of a, keep quiet in the face of X. If now there appears a Y which justifies b, the adherents of a must be silent, and the movement repeats, with the same exaggeration, in the direction of b. This exaggeration derives from two facts. One is that in every mass there are individuals whose temper leans toward the extreme development of whatever mood is stimulated. The other is that these individuals, because at the moment

12 Throughout history, democratic tendencies, insofar as they direct the great mass movements, tend toward simple measures, laws, and principles. All complex practices that reject many-sided concerns and pay attention to heterogeneous standpoints, are antipathetic to democracy. Aristocracy, inversely, usually abhors general and coercive principles and tries to do justice to the peculiarities of individual elements; personal, local, and objective.
they are strongest and most emphatic, pull the mass in the direction of their own mood, whereas the individuals who are disposed in the opposite direction remain passive, because the trend of the moment gives them and the whole no opportunity toward their own direction. To put the matter in axiomatic form: it is the contentually variable, formal radicalism of the mass which is the reason why no middle line results from the members of the mass with their dispositions toward different directions. It is the reason why, on the contrary, the momentary predominance of one direction usually silences, at once and completely, the representatives of all others, instead of allowing them to co-determine the mass action in proportion to their relative strengths.

This also explains why once a given direction has been formulated, there is no obstacle in the way of its reaching its extreme. In the face of fundamental practical problems, there are as a rule only two simple positions, however many mixed and mediating ones there may be. In a similar way, every lively movement within a group—from the family through the whole variety of organizations based on common interests, including political groups—generally results in the differentiation into a clear-cut dualism. If the rate of speed at which interests develop and general stages of development follow one another is great, we always find that decisions and differentiations are more definitive than they are in slower periods: mediation requires time and leisure. In quiet and stagnant epochs, vital questions are not stirred up but remain concealed under the regular interests of the day. Such epochs easily lead to imperceptible transitions and allow an indifferentment of the individual, which a more vivid current would force into the opposition between the chief parties. The typical difference in sociological constellation, thus, always remains that of two, as over against three, chief parties. A number of parties can share in different degrees in the function of the third, which is to mediate between two extremes. The existence of these degrees is, as it were, only an expansion or refinement in the technical execution of the principle of mediation; the principle itself changes the configuration radically, and always emerges and operates when a third party is added.

§ 1. The Sociological Significance of the Third Element

What has been said indicates to a great extent the role of the third element, as well as the configurations that operate among three social elements. The dyad represents both the first social synthesis and unification, and the first separation and antithesis. The appearance of the third party indicates transition, conciliation, and abandonment of absolute contrast (although, on occasion, it introduces contrast). The triad as such seems to me to result in three kinds of typical group formations. All of them are impossible if there are only two elements; and, on the other hand, if there are more than three, they are either equally impossible or only expand in quantity but do not change their formal type.

§ 2. The Non-Partisan and the Mediator

It is sociologically very significant that isolated elements are unified by their common relation to a phenomenon which lies outside of them. This applies as much to the alliance between states for the purpose of defense against a common enemy as to the "invisible church" which unifies all faithful in their equal relation to the one God. The group-forming, mediating function of a third element will be discussed in a later context. In the cases under examination now, the third element is at such a distance from the other two that there exist no properly sociological interactions which concern all three elements alike. Rather, there are configurations of two. In the center of sociological attention, there is either the relation between the two...
joining elements, the relation between them as a unit and the center of interest that confronts them. At the moment, however, we are concerned with three elements which are so closely related or so closely approach one another that they form a group, permanent or momentary.

In the most significant of all dyads, monogamous marriage, the child of children, as the third element, often has the function of holding the whole together. Among many “nature peoples,” only childbirth makes marriage perfect or insoluble. And certainly one of the reasons why developing culture makes marriages deeper and closer is that children become independent relatively late and therefore need longer care. Perfection of marriage through childbirth rests, of course, on the value which the child has for the husband, and on his inclination, sanctioned by law and custom, to expel a childless wife. But the actual result of the third element, the child, is that it alone really closes the circle by tying the parents to one another. This can occur in two forms. The existence of the third element may directly start or strengthen the union of the two, as for instance, when the birth of a child increases the spouses’ mutual love, or at least the husband’s for his wife. Or the relation of each of the spouses to the child may produce a new and indirect bond between them. In general, the common preoccupations of a married couple with the child reveal that their union passes through the child, as it were; the union often consists of sympathies which could not exist without such a point of mediation. This emergence of the inner socialization of three elements, which the two elements by themselves do not desire, is the reason for a phenomenon mentioned earlier, namely, the tendency of unhappily married couples not to wish children. They instinctively feel that the child would close a circle within which they would be nearer one another, not only externally but also in their deeper psychological layers, than they are inclined to be.

When the third element functions as a non-partisan, we have a different variety of mediation. The non-partisan either produces the concord of two colliding parties, whereby he withdraws after making the effort of creating direct contact between the unconnected or quarreling elements; or he functions as an arbiter who balances, as it were, their contradictory claims against one another and eliminates what is incompatible in them. Differences between labor and management, especially in England, have developed both forms of unification. There are boards of conciliation where the parties negotiate their conflicts under the presidency of a non-partisan. The mediator, of course, can achieve reconciliation in this form only if each party believes that the proportion between the reasons for the hostility, in short, the objective situation justifies the reconciliation and makes peace advantageous. The very great opportunity that non-partisan mediation has to produce this belief lies not only in the obvious elimination of misunderstandings or in appeals to good will, etc. It may also be analyzed as follows. The non-partisan shows each party the claims and arguments of the other; they thus lose the tone of subjective passion which usually provokes the same tone on the part of the adversary. What is so often regrettable here appears as something wholesome, namely, that the feeling which accompanies a psychological content when one individual has it, usually weakens greatly when it is transferred to a second. This fact explains why recommendations and testimonies that have to pass several mediating persons before reaching the deciding individual, are so often ineffective, even if their objective content arrives at its destination without any change. In the course of these transfers, affective imponderables get lost; and these not only supplement insufficient objective qualifications, but, in practice, they alone cause sufficient ones to be acted upon.

Here we have a phenomenon which is very significant for the development of purely psychological influences. A third mediating social element deprives conflicting claims of their affective qualities because it neutralizes formulates and presents these claims to the two parties involved. Thus this circle that is fatal to all reconciliation is avoided: the vehemence of the one no longer provokes that of the other, which in turn intensifies that of the first, and so forth, until the whole relationship breaks down. Furthermore, because of the non-partisan, each party to the conflict not only listens to more objective matters but is also forced to put the issue in more objective terms than it would if it confronted the other without mediation. For now it is important for each to win over even the mediator. This,
however, can be hoped for only on purely objective ground because the mediator is not the arbitrator, but only guides the process of coming to terms; because, in other words, he must always keep out of any decision—whereas the arbitrator ends up by taking sides. Within the realm of sociological techniques, there is nothing that serves the reconciliation of conflicting parties so effectively as does objectivity, that is, the attempt at limiting all complaints and requests to their objective contents. Philosophically speaking, the conflict is reduced to the objective spirit of each partial standpoint, so that the personalities involved appear as the mere vehicles of objective conditions. In case of conflict, the personal form in which objective contents become subjectively alive must pay for its warmth, color, and depth of feeling with the sharpness of the antagonism that it engenders. The diminution of this personal tone is the condition under which the understanding and reconciliation of the adversaries can be attained, particularly because it is only under this condition that each of the two parties actually realizes what the other must insist upon. To put it psychologically, antagonism of the will is reduced to intellectual antagonism. Reason is everywhere the principle of understanding, on its basis can come together what on that of feeling and ultimate decision of the will is irreconcilably in conflict. It is the function of the mediator to bring this reduction about, to represent it, as it were, in himself; or to form a transformation point where, no matter in what form the conflict enters from one side, it is transmitted to the other only in an objective form; a point where all is retained which would merely intensify the conflict in the absence of mediation.

It is important for the analysis of social life to realize clearly that the constellation thus characterized constantly emerges in all groups of more than two elements. To be sure, the mediator may not be specifically chosen, nor be known or designated as such. But the triad here serves merely as a type or scheme; ultimately all cases of mediation can be reduced to this form. From the conversation among three persons that lasts only an hour, to the permanent family of three, there is no triad in which a dissent between any two elements does not occur from time to time—a dissent of a more harmless or more pointed, more momentary or more lasting, more theoretical or more practical nature—and in which the third member does not play a mediating role. This happens innumerable times in a very rudimentary and inarticulate manner, mixed with other actions and interactions, from which the purely mediating function cannot be isolated. Such mediations do not even have to be performed by means of words. A gesture, a way of listening, the mood that radiates from a particular person, are enough to change the difference between two individuals so that they can seek understanding, are enough to make them feel their essential commonness which is concealed under their acutely differing opinions, and to bring this divergence into the shape in which it can be ironed out the most easily. The situation does not have to involve a real conflict or fight. It is rather the thousand insignificant differences of opinion, the allusions to an antagonism of personalities, the emergence of quite momentary contrasts of interest or feeling, which continuously color the fluctuating forms of all living together; and this social life is constantly determined in its course by the presence of the third person, who almost inevitably exercises the function of mediation. This function makes the round among the three elements, since the ebb and flow of social life realizes the form of conflict in every possible combination of two members.

The non-partisanship that is required for mediation has one of two presuppositions. The third element is non-partisan either if he stands above the contrasting interests and opinions and is actually not concerned with them, or if he is equally concerned with both. The first case is the simpler of the two and involves fewest complications. In conflicts between English laborers and entrepreneurs, for instance, the non-partisan called in could be neither a laborer nor an entrepreneur. It is notable how decisively the separation of objective from personal elements in the conflict (mentioned earlier) is realized here. The idea is that the non-partisan is not attached by personal interest to the objective aspects of either party position. Rather, both come to be weighed by him as by a pure, impersonal intellect; without touching the subjective sphere. But the mediator must be subjectively interested in the persons or groups themselves who exemplify the contents of the quarrel which to him are merely
The Non-Partisan and the Mediator

The third party to a conflict, who is neither a party to it nor affected by it, is called a mediator. The mediator's role is to help the parties resolve their differences. The mediator does not take sides or favor one party over another. Instead, the mediator works to understand the perspectives of both parties and facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution.

Mediation involves a step-wise process:
1. Information gathering: The mediator gets to know the conflict, the parties, and their interests.
2. Exploration: The mediator helps the parties to explore their interests, needs, and preferences.
3. Identification: The mediator helps the parties to identify the underlying interests and needs.
4. Option generation: The mediator helps the parties to generate options to resolve the conflict.
5. Option evaluation: The mediator helps the parties to evaluate the options.
6. Agreement: The mediator helps the parties to reach an agreement.
7. Agreement implementation: The mediator helps the parties to implement the agreement.

Mediation is a more informal and flexible process than litigation. It can be conducted in a variety of settings, such as a private office or a public space. The mediator's role is to facilitate dialogue and understanding, rather than to impose a solution.
one into a clear or latent, full or partial difference from two others, offer many intermediary grades between these two forms. In the inexhaustibly varying relations, the parties' appeal to the third person, to his voluntarily or even forcibly seized initiative to conciliate, often gives him a position whose mediating and arbitrating elements it is impossible to separate. If one wants to understand the real web of human society with its indescribable dynamics and fulness, the most important thing is to sharpen one's eyes for such beginnings and transitions, for forms of relationship which are merely hinted at and are again submerged, for their embryonic and fragmentary articulations. Illustrations which exemplify in its purity any one of the concepts denoting these forms, certainly are indispensable sociological tools. But their relation to actual social life is like that of the approximately exact space forms, that are used to illustrate geometrical propositions, to the immeasurable complexity of the actual formations of matter.

After all that has been said, it is clear that from an over-all viewpoint, the existence of the impartial third element serves the perpetuation of the group. As the representative of the intellect, he confronts the two conflicting parties, which for the moment are guided more by will and feeling. He thus, in so to speak, complements them in the production of that psychological unity which resides in group life. On the one hand, the non-partisan tempers the passion of the others. On the other hand, he can carry and direct the very movement of the whole group if the antagonism of the other two tends to paralyze their forces. Nevertheless, this success can change into its opposite. We thus understand why the most intellectually disposed elements of a group lean particularly toward impartiality: the cool intellect usually finds lights and shadows in either quarter; its objective justice does not easily undervalue with either. This is the reason why sometimes the most intelligent individuals do not have much influence on the decisions in conflicts, although it would be very desirable that such decisions come from them. Once the group has to choose between "yes" and "no," they, above all others, ought to throw their weight into the balance, for then the scale will be the more likely to sink in favor of the right side. If, therefore, impartiality does not serve practical media-

Non directly, in its combination with intellectuality it makes sure that the decision is not left to the more stupid, or at least more prejudiced, group forces. And in fact, ever since Solon, we often find disapproval of impartial behavior. In the social sense, this disapproval is something very healthy: it is based on a much deeper instinct for the welfare of the whole than on mere suspicion of cowardice—an attack which is frequently launched against impartiality, though often quite unjustifiably.

Whether impartiality consists in the equal distance or in the equal closeness that connects the non-partisan and the two conflicting parties, it is obvious that it may be mixed with a great many other relations between him and each of the two others and their group as a whole. For instance, if he constitutes a group with the other two but is remote from their conflicts, he may be drawn into them in the very name of independence from the parties which already exist. This may greatly serve the unity and equilibrium of the group, although the equilibrium may be highly unstable. It was this sociological form in which the third estate's participation in state matters occurred in England. Ever since Henry III, state matters were inextricably dependent on the cooperation of the great barons who, along with the prelates, had to grant the monies; and their combination had power, often superior power, over the king. Nevertheless, instead of the fruitful collaboration between estates and crown, there were incessant splits, abuses, power shifts, and clashes. Both parties came to feel that these could be ended only by resort to a third element which, until then, had been kept out of state matters; lower vassals, freemen, counties, and cities. Their representatives were invited to councils; and this was the beginning of the House of Commons. The third element thus exerted a double function. First, it helped to make an actuality of government as the image of the state in its comprehensiveness. Secondly, it did so as an agency which confronted hitherto existing government parties objectively, as it were, and thus contributed to the more harmonious employment of their reciprocally exhausted forces for the over-all purpose of the state.
§ 3. The Tertius Gaudens

In the combinations thus far considered, the impartiality of the third element either served or harmed the group as a whole. Both the mediator and the arbitrator wish to save the group unity from the danger of splitting up. But, evidently, the non-partisan may also use his relatively superior position for purely egotistic interests. While in the cases discussed, he behaved as a means to the ends of the group, he may also, inversely, make the interaction that takes place between the parties and between himself and them, a means for his own purposes. In the social life of well consolidated groups, this may happen merely as one event among others. But often the relation between the parties and the non-partisan emerges as a new relationship: elements that have never before formed an interactional unit may come into conflict; a third non-partisan element, which before was equally unconnected with either, may spontaneously seize upon the chances that this quarrel gives him; and thus an entirely unstable interaction may result which can have an animation and wealth of forms, for each of the elements engaged in it, which are out of all proportion to its brief life.

I will only mention two forms of the tertius gaudens in which the interaction within the triad does not emerge very distinctly, and here we are interested in its more typical formations. In these two, the essential characteristic is rather a certain passivity, either of the two engaged in the conflict or of the tertius [third element, party, or person]. The advantage of the tertius may result from the fact that the remaining two hold each other in check, and he can make a gain which one of the two would otherwise deny him. The discord here only effectuates a paralysis of forces which, if they only could, would strike against him. The situation thus really suspends interaction among the three elements, instead of fomenting it, although it is certainly, nonetheless, of the most distinct consequences for all of them. The case in which this situation is brought about on purpose will be discussed in connection with the next type of configuration among three elements. Meanwhile, the second form appears when the tertius gains an advantage only because action by one of the two conflicting parties brings it about for its own purposes—the tertius does not need to take the initiative. A case in point are the benefits and promotions which a party bestows upon him, only in order to offend its adversary. Thus, the English laws for the protection of labor originally derived, in part at least, from the mere rancor of the Tories against liberal manufacturers. Various charitable actions that result from competition for popularity also belong here. Strangely enough, it is a particularly petty and mean attitude that befriends a third element for the sake of annoying a second; indifference to the moral autonomy of altruism cannot appear more sharply than in this exploitation of altruism. And it is doubly significant that the purpose of annoying one's adversary can be achieved by favoring either one's friend or one's enemy.

The formations that are more essential here emerge whenever the tertius makes his own indirect or direct gain by turning toward one of the two conflicting parties—but not intellectually and objectively, like the arbitrator, but practically, supporting or granting. This general type has two main variants: either two parties are hostile toward one another and therefore compete for the favor of a third element, or they compete for the favor of the third element and therefore are hostile toward one another. This difference is important particularly for the further development of the threefold constellation. For where an already existing hostility urges each party to seek the favor of a third, the outcome of this competition—the fact that the third party joins one of the two, rather than the other—marks the real beginning of the fight. Inversely, two elements may curry favor with a third independently of one another. If so, this very fact may be the reason for their hostility, for their becoming parties. The eventual granting of the favor is thus the object, not the means of the conflict and, therefore, usually ends the quarrel. The decision is made, and further hostilities become practically pointless.

In both cases, the advantage of impartiality, which was the tertius' original attitude toward the two, consists in his possibility of making his decision depend on certain conditions. Where he is denied this possibility, for whatever reason, he
cannot fully exploit the situation. This applies to one of the most common cases of the second type, namely, the competition between two persons of the same sex for the favor of one of the opposite sex. Here the decision of the third element does not depend on his or her will in the same sense as does that of a buyer who is confronted with two competing offers, or that of a ruler who grants privileges to one of two competing supplicants. The decision, rather, comes from already existing feelings which cannot be determined by any will, and which therefore do not even permit the will to be brought into a situation of choice. In these cases, therefore, we only exceptionally find offers intended to be decided by choice; and, although we genuinely have a situation of tertius gaudens, its thorough exploitation is, in general, not possible.

On the largest scale, the tertius gaudens is represented by the buying public in an economy with free competition. The fight among the producers for the buyer makes the buyer almost completely independent of the individual supplier. He is, however, completely independent on their totality; and their coalition would, in fact, at once invert the relationship. But as it is, the buyer can base his purchase almost wholly on his appraisal of quality and price of the merchandise. His position even has the added advantage that the producers must try to anticipate the conditions described: they must guess the consumer's unverbalized or unconscious wishes, and they must suggest wishes that do not exist at all, and train him for them. These situations of tertius gaudens may be arranged along a continuum. At the one end, perhaps, there is the above-mentioned case of the woman between two suitors. Here the decision depends on the two men's natures, rather than on any of their activities. The chooser, therefore, usually makes no conditions and thus does not fully exploit the situation. At the other end, there is the situation which gives the tertius gaudens his extreme advantage. It is found in modern market economy with its complete exclusion of the personal element; here the advantage of the chooser reaches a point where the parties even relieve him of the maximum intensification of his own bargaining condition.

Let us come back to the other formation. In its beginning, a dispute is not related whatever to a third element. But then it forces its parties to compete for help from such a third element. Ordinarily an example is provided by the history of every federation, whether it be between states or between members of a family. The very simple, typical course of the process, however, gains a particular sociological interest through the following modification. The power the tertius must expend in order to attain his advantageous position does not have to be great in comparison with the power of each of the two parties, since the quantity of his power is determined exclusively by the strength which each of them has relative to the other. For evidently, the only important thing is that his superadded power give one of them superiority. If, therefore, the power quanta are approximately equal, a minimum accretion is often sufficient definitely to decide in one direction. This explains the frequent influence of small parliamentary parties: they can never gain it through their own significance but only because the great parties keep one another in approximate balance. Wherever majorities decide, that is, where everything depends on one single vote, as it often does, it is possible for entirely insignificant parties to make the severest conditions for their support. Something similar may occur in the relations of small to large states which find themselves in conflict. What alone is important is that the forces of two antagonistic elements paralyze one another and thus actually give unlimited power to the intrinsically extremely weak position of a third element not yet engaged in the issue. Of course, intrinsically strong third elements profit no less from such a situation.

Yet within certain formations, as for instance within a highly developed system of political parties, it is more difficult to realize this advantage. For it is precisely the great parties that are often definitely committed, objectively as well as in their relations toward one another. They do not, therefore, have the freedom of decision that would give them all the advantages of the tertius gaudens. It was only because of very special favorable constellations that during the last decades the Center Party has escaped this limitation in the German parliaments. Its power position is very much strengthened by the fact that its principles commit it to only a very small portion of the parliamentary decisions; in regard to all others, it can freely decide now in one, now in...
another direction. It can pronounce for or against protective tariffs, for or against legislation favorable to labor, for or against military demands, without being handicapped by its party program. In all such cases, therefore, it places itself as tertius gaudens between the parties, each of which may try to win its favor. No Agrarian will seek the assistance of the Social Democrats in fighting for a wheat tariff, because he knows that their party principles oblige them to be against it; and, in his fight against the tariff, no Liberal will seek their assistance and pay for it, because he knows that their party line makes them agree with him, anyway. But both can go to the Center Party whose non-commitment on this question enables it to make its own price. On the other hand, an already strong element often attains the situation of tertius gaudens because it does not have to put its whole power into effect. For, the advantages of tertius gaudens accrue to it not only from outright fight, but from the mere tension and latent antagonism between the other two: the advantages derive from the mere possibility of deciding in favor of one or the other, even if the matter does not come to an open contest.

This very situation was characteristic of English politics at the beginning of the modern period, after the medieval phase, to the extent at least, that England no longer sought immediate possessions and dominions on the continent but always had a potential power between the continental realms. Already in the sixteenth century it was said that France and Spain were the scales of the European balance, but England was the "tongue or the holder of the balance." The Roman bishops, beginning with the whole development up to Leo the Great, elaborated this formal principle with great emphasis by forcing conflicting parties within the church to give them the role of the decisive power. Even since very early times, bishops in dogmatic or other conflict with other bishops have sought the assistance of their Roman colleague who, on principle, always took the party of the petitioner. Thus, nothing was left for others to do but likewise to turn to the Roman bishop, in order not to antagonize him from the start. He came, therefore, to acquire the prerogative and tradition of a decisive tribunal. Here, what might be called the sociological logic of the situation of three, of which two are in conflict, is developed in great purity and intensity in the direction of the tertius gaudens.

Thus the advantage accruing to the tertius derives from the fact that he has an equal, equally independent, and for this very reason decisive, relation to two others. The advantage, however, does not exclusively depend on the hostility of the two. A certain general differentiation, mutual strangeness, or qualitative dualism may be sufficient. This, in fact, is the basic formula of the type, and the hostility of the elements is merely a specific case of it, even if it is the most common. The following favorite position of the tertius, for instance, is very characteristic, and it results from mere dualism. If B is obligated to a particular duty toward A, and if he delegates this duty to C and D among whom it is to be distributed, then A is greatly tempted to impose on each of them, if possible, a little more than half; from both together, therefore, he profits more than he would have earlier, when the duty was in the hands of only one person. In 1751, the government had to issue an explicit decree in regard to the breaking up of peasant holdings in Bohemia. The law was to the effect that if a holding was divided by the manorial lord, each of its parts could not be burdened with more than its portion, in correspondence with its size, of the socage that adhered to the whole.

More generally, if a duty is turned over to two, the most important idea is that each of them now has to do less than the one did who formerly had been burdened with it alone. In comparison with this notion, the more exact definition of the quantum recedes, and can therefore easily be changed. In other words, the merely numerical fact of the party's two-ness, instead of oneness, here engenders, so to speak, the situation of tertius gaudens. In the following case, however, it arises on the basis of a duality characterized by qualitative differences. This explains the judicial power of the English king, which was unheard of for the Germanic Middle Ages. William the Conqueror wished to respect the laws of the Anglo-Saxon population as he found them. But his Normans, too, brought their native laws with them. These two law complexes did not fit one another; they did not result in a unitary right of the people as over against the king: consistent with his own interest, the king could force
himself between the two laws and thus could practically annul them. The discord of these nations resulted (and in similar cases results) not only from their actual conflicts but also from their actual differences that made a common legal enforcement difficult. In this discord lay the support of absolutism; and, for this reason, the power of absolutism declined steadily as soon as the two nationalities fused into one.

The favorable position of the tertius disappears quite generally the moment the two others become a unit; the moment, that is, the group in question changes from a combination of three elements back into that of two. It is instructive, not only in regard to this particular problem but in regard to group life in general, to observe that this result may be brought about without any personal conciliation or fusion of interests. The object of the antagonism can be withdrawn from the conflict of subjective claims by being fixed objectively. This, it seems to me, is shown with particular clarity in the following case. Modern industry leads to ever new interrelations among the most heterogeneous trades. It constantly creates new tasks that historically do not belong to any existing trade. It has thus brought about, especially in England, frequent conflicts over the respective competencies among the different categories of labor. In the large enterprises, shipbuilders and carpenters, plumbers and blacksmiths, boilermakers and metaldrillers, masons and bricklayers are very often in conflict over the question concerning to whom a certain job belongs. Every trade stops working as soon as it believes that another trade interferes with its own tasks. The insoluble contradiction here consists in the presupposition that subjective rights to certain objects are specifically delimited, while they are continuously in flux in their very nature. Often such conflicts among workmen gravely undermine their position toward the entrepreneur. He has a moral advantage as soon as his workers strike because of their own discords, and thereby do him immeasurable harm. Furthermore, he has it in his arbitrary power to subdue any trade by threatening to employ another trade for the work in question. The economic interest that everyone of them has in not losing the job, is based on the fear that the competing worker might do it more cheaply and might, thereby, contribute

to lowering the standard wage paid for it. It was therefore proposed, as the only possible solution, that the trade unions should fix the standard wage for every particular work in consultation with the federated entrepreneurs, and then leave it up to the workers which category of laborers they wanted to employ for a job in question. The excluded category thus no longer has to fear any harm to its basic economic interest. This objectification of the matter of dispute deprives the entrepreneur of the advantage that he gains by lowering the wages and playing up the two parties against one another. Although he has retained the choice among the different labor groups, he can no longer make any profitable use of it. The earlier mixture of personal and objective elements has become differentiated. In regard to the first, the entrepreneur remains in the formal situation of tertius gaudens; but the objective fixation of the second has taken from this situation the chance of exploitation.

Many among the various kinds of conflicts mentioned here and in connection with the next form of triad, must have operated to produce or increase the power position of the church ever since the Middle Ages, when it began to have it among secular powers. In view of the incessant unrests and quarrels in the political districts, large and small, the church, the only stable element, an element already revered or feared by every party, must have gained an incomparable prerogative. Many times, it is quite generally the mere stability of the tertius in the changing stages of the conflict—the fact that the tertius is not touched by its contents—around which oscillate the ups and downs of the two parties; and this gives the stable third element its superiority and its possibility of gain. Other things being equal, it may be said that the more violently and, especially, the longer the positions of the conflicting parties oscillate, all the more superior, respected, and of greater opportunity will the position of the tertius be rendered by firm endurance, as a purely formal fact. There is probably no more gigantic example of this widely observed relationship than the Catholic Church itself.

For the general characterization of the tertius gaudens, which applies to all of its particular manifestations alike, a further point must be noted. This is, that among the causes of his pre-
rogative, there is the mere difference of psychological energies which he invests in the relationship, as compared with the others. Earlier, in regard to the non-partisan in general, I mentioned that he represents intellectuality, while the parties in conflict represent feeling and will. If the non-partisan is in the position of tertius gaudens, that is, of egoistic exploiter of the situation, this intellectuality gives him a dominating place. It is enthroned, as it were, at an ideal height. The tertius fully enjoys that external advantage which every complication bestows upon the party whose feelings are not involved. Certainly, he may scorn the practical exploitation of his less biased grasp of the conjuncture, of his strength, which is not committed one way or another but can always be used for different purposes. But even if he does, his situation gives him at least the feeling of a slight ironical superiority over the parties which stake so much for the sake of what to him is so indifferent.

§ 4. Divide et Impera

The previously discussed combinations of three elements were characterized by an existing or emerging conflict between two, from which the third drew his advantage. One particular variety of this combination must now be considered separately, although in reality it is not always clearly delimited against other types. The distinguishing nuance consists in the fact that the third element intentionally produces the conflict in order to gain a dominating position. Here too, however, we must preface the treatment of this constellation by pointing out that the number three is merely the minimum number of elements that are necessary for this formation, and that it may thus serve as the simplest schema. Its outline is that initially two elements are united or mutually dependent in regard to a third, and that this third element knows how to put the forces combined against him into action against one another. The outcome is that the two either keep each other balanced so that he, who is not interfered with by either, can pursue his advantages; or that they so weaken one another that neither of them can stand up against his superiority.

I shall now characterize some steps in the scale on which the relevant phenomena may be arranged. The simplest case is found where a superior prevents the unification of elements which do not yet positively strive after unification but might do so. Here, above all, belong the legal prohibitions against political organizations, as well as against leagues of organizations each of which, individually, is permitted. Usually there is no specifically defined fear or demonstrable danger that such organizations might present to the ruling powers. Rather, the form of association as such is feared, because there is the possibility that it might be combined with a dangerous content. Pliny, in his correspondence with Trajan, states explicitly that the Christians are dangerous because they form an association; otherwise they are completely harmless. On the one hand, there is the experience that revolutionary tendencies, or tendencies that are at all directed toward changing what is, must adopt the form of unifying as many interested parties as possible. But this experience changes into the logically false but psychologically well understandable inverse notion according to which all associations have tendencies directed against the existing powers. Their prohibition thus is founded upon a possibility of the second power, as it were. In the first place, the a priori prohibited associations are merely possible and very often do not exist even as wishes of the elements separated by the prohibition. In the second place, the dangers for the sake of which the prohibition occurred would only be possibilities, even if the associations actually existed. In this elimination of anticipated associations, the "divide and rule," therefore, appears as the subtlest imaginable prophylactic on the part of the one element against all possibilities that might result from the fusion of the others.

This preventive form may exist even where the plurality that confronts one element consists of the various power components of one identical phenomenon. The Anglo-Norman kings saw to it that the manors of the feudal lords were in as widely scattered locations as possible; some of the most powerful vassals had their seats in from seventeen to twenty-one different shires each. Because of this principle of local distribution, the dominions of the crown vassals could not consolidate themselves into great sovereign courts as they could on the continent. Regarding the earlier land distributions among the sons of
rulers, we hear that the individual pieces were parceled out as widely as possible in order to preclude their complete separation from the ruler. In this manner, the unified state wishes to preserve its dominion by splitting up all territorial subdivisions: if they were contiguous, they could more easily remove themselves from its influence.

Where there actually exists a desire for unification, the prophylactic prevention of the unification has an even more pointed effect. A relevant case (which, to be sure, is complicated by other motives as well) is the fact that generally, in wage and other controversial matters, employers categorically refuse to negotiate with intermediary persons who do not belong to their own employees. This refusal has two functions. It prevents the workers from strengthening their position by associating with a personality who has nothing to fear or to hope from the employer. In the second place, it is an obstacle to the unified action of workers in different trades toward a common goal. For instance, the general establishment of a uniform wage scale. By rejecting the middle person who might negotiate on behalf of several workers' groups alike, the employer precludes the threatening unification of the workers. In view of the existing tendencies toward such a unification, this refusal is considered very important for his position. For this reason, employers' associations sometimes impose this isolation of the labor force, in the case of conflicts and negotiations, as a statutory duty upon each of their members. It was an extraordinary progress in the history of English trade unions, especially in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, when the institution of an impersonal agency made the employer's exploitation of this "divide" impossible. For in this manner, the arbitrations by non-partisans who were resorted to in conflict situations, began to attain a finality which was recognized beyond the individual case by both parties to the matter at issue. Thus a general rule frequently regulated the negotiations between employer and employee, although they still negotiated individually. But this is, obviously, an intermediate step in the direction of collective contracts governing a whole trade and all interests within it; and this stage of collective contracts eliminates in principle the practice of "divide and rule."

In a similar fashion, the attempts of constitutional monarchs at splitting up parliaments in order to prevent the rise of inconvenient majorities, go beyond mere prophylactic measures. I mention only one example which is of major interest because of its radicalism. Under George III, the English court held the practice of declaring the party principle and its operation as actually inadmissible, and incompatible with the welfare of the state. It did so on the thesis that only the individual and his individual capabilities could render political services. By designating laws and general directives as the specific functions of parties, the court requested "men, not measures." It thus played up the practical significance of individuality against the actions by pluralities; it tried to dissolve the plurality into its atoms, allegedly its only real and effective elements, by somewhat derogatorily identifying it with abstract generality itself.

The separation of the elements attains a more active, rather than a merely prohibitive form when the third person creates jealousy between them. The reference here is not yet to cases where he makes them destroy one another. On the contrary, here we are thinking of tendencies which often are conservative: the third wants to maintain his already existing prerogative by preventing a threatening coalition of the other two from arising, or at least from developing beyond mere beginnings. This technique seems to have been used with particular finesse in a case that is reported of ancient Peru. It was the general custom of the Incas to divide a newly conquered tribe in two approximately equal halves and to place a supervisor over each of them, but to give these two supervisors slightly different ranks. This was indeed the most suitable means for provoking rivalry between the two heads, which prevented any united action against the ruler on the part of the subjected territory. By contrast, both identical ranks and greatly different ranks would have made unification much easier. If the two heads had had the same rank, an equal distribution of leadership in case of action would have been more likely than any other arrangement; and, since there would have been need for subordination, peers would have most probably submitted to such technical necessity. If the two heads had had very different ranks, the leadership of the one would have found no opposition. The slight difference in rank least
of all allows an organic and satisfactory arrangement in the unification feared, since the one would doubtless have claimed unconditional prerogative because of his superiority, which, on the other hand, was not significant enough to suggest the same claim to the other.

The principle of the unequal distribution of values (of whatever description) in order to make the ensuing jealousy a means for “divide and rule,” is a widely popular technique. But it should be noted that there are certain sociological circumstances that offer basic protection against it. Thus, the attempt was made to agitate Australian aborigines against one another by means of unequally distributed gifts. But this always failed in the face of the communism of the hordes, which distributed all gifts among all members, no matter to which they had gone. In addition to jealousy, it is particularly distrust which is used as a psychological means to the same end. Distrust, in contrast to jealousy, is apt to prevent especially larger groups from forming conspiratory associations. In the most effective manner, this principle was employed by the government of Venice which, on a gigantic scale, invited the citizens to denounce all in any way suspect fellow citizens. Nobody knew whether his nearest acquaintance was in the service of the state inquisition. Revolutionary plans, which presuppose the mutual confidence of large numbers of persons, were thus cut at the root, so that in the later history of Venice, open revolts were practically absent.

The grossest form of “divide and rule,” the unleashing of positive battle between two parties, may have its intention in the relationship of the third element either to the two or to objects lying outside them. The second of these two alternatives occurs where one of three job applicants manages to turn the two others against one another so that they reciprocally destroy their chances by gossip and calumny which each circulates about the other. In all these cases, the art of the third element is shown by the distance he knows how to keep between himself and the action which he starts. The more invisible the threads are by which he directs the fight, the better he knows how to build a fire in such a way that it goes on burning without his further interference and even surveillance—not only the more pointed and undistracted is the fight between the two until their mutual ruin is reached, but the more likely is it that the prize of the fight between them, as well as other objects that are valuable to him, seem almost automatically to fall into his lap. In this technique, too, the Venetians were masters. In order to take possession of estates owned by noblemen on the mainland, they used the means of awarding high titles to younger or inferior members of the nobility. The indignation of their elders and superiors always presented occasions for brawls and breaches of the peace between the two parties, whereupon the government of Venice, in all legal formality, confiscated the estates of the guilty parties.

It is very plausible that in all such cases, the union of the discordant elements against the common suppressor would be a most expedient step to take. The failure of this union quite distinctly shows the general condition of “divide and rule”: the fact that hostilities by no means have their sufficient ground in the clash of real interests. Once there is a need for hostility at all, once there is an antagonism which is merely groping for its object, it is easy to substitute for the adversary against whom hostility would make sense and have a purpose, a totally different one. “Divide and rule” requires of its artist that he create a general state of excitement and desire to fight by means of instigations, calumnies, flatteries, the excitement of expectations, etc. Once this is done, it is possible to succeed in slipping in an adversary that is not properly indicated. The form of the fight itself can thus be completely separated from its content and the reasonableness of this content. The third element, against whom the hostility of the two ought to be directed, can make himself invisible between them, so to speak, so that the clash of the two is not against him but against one another.

Where the purpose of the third party is directed, not toward an object, but toward the immediate domination of the other two elements, two sociological considerations are essential. (1) Certain elements are formed in such a way that they can be fought successfully only by similar elements. The wish to subdue them finds no immediate point of attack. It is, therefore, necessary to divide them within themselves, as it were, and to continue a fight among the parts which they can wage with homogeneous weapons until they are sufficiently weakened to fall to the third element. It has been said of England that she could gain India
only by means of India. Already Xerxes had recognized that Greeks were best to fight Greece. It is precisely those whose similarity of interests makes them depend upon one another who best know their mutual weaknesses and vulnerable points. The principle of *similia similibus*, of eliminating a condition by producing a similar one, therefore applies here on the largest scale. Mutual promotion and unification is best gained if there is a certain measure of qualitative difference, because this difference produces a supplementation, a growing together, and an organically differentiated life. Mutual destruction, on the other hand, seems to succeed best if there is qualitative homogeneity, except, of course, in those cases where one party has such a quantitative superiority of power that the relation of its particular characteristics to those of the other becomes altogether irrelevant. The whole category of hostilities that has its extreme development in the fight between brothers, draws its radically destructive character from the fact that experience and knowledge, as well as the instincts deriving from their common root, give each of them the most deadly weapons precisely against this specific adversary. The basis of the relations among like elements is their common knowledge of external conditions and their empathy with the inner situation. Evidently, this is also the means for the deepest hurts, which neglect no possibility of attack. Since in its very nature this means is reciprocal, it leads to the most radical annihilation. For this reason, the fight of like against like, the splitting up of the adversary into two qualitatively homogeneous parties, is one of the most pervasive realizations of "divide and rule."

(2) Where it is not possible for the suppressor to have his victims alone do his business, where, that is, he himself must take a hand in the fight, the schema is very simple: he supports one of them long enough for the other to be suppressed, whereupon the first is an easy prey for him. The most expedient manner is to support the one who is the stronger to begin with. This may take on the more negative form that, within a complex of elements intended for suppression, the more powerful is merely spared. When subjugating Greece, Rome was remarkably considerate in her treatment of Athens and Sparta. This procedure is bound to produce resentment and jealousy in the one camp, and haughtiness and blind confidence in the other—a split which makes the prey easily available for the suppressor. It is a technique employed by many rulers: he protects the stronger of two, both of whom are actually interested in his own downfall, until he has ruined the weaker; then he changes fronts and advances against the one now left in isolation, and subjugates him. This technique is no less popular in the founding of world empires than in the brawls of street urchins. It is employed by governments in the manipulation of political parties as it is in competitive struggles in which three elements confront one another—perhaps a very powerful financier or industrialist and two less important competitors whose powers, though different from one another, are yet both a nuisance to him. In this case, the first, in order to prevent the two others from joining up, will make a price agreement or production arrangement with the stronger of the two, who draws considerable advantages from it, while the weaker is destroyed by the arrangement. Once he is, the second can be shaken off, for until then he was the ally of the first, but now he has no more backing and is being ruined by means of underselling or other methods.