



The Persistence of Social Groups

Georg Simmel

American Journal of Sociology, Volume 3, Issue 5 (Mar., 1898), 662-698.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-9602%28189803%293%3A5%3C662%3ATPOS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8>

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

American Journal of Sociology is published by The University of Chicago Press. Please contact the publisher for further permissions regarding the use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

American Journal of Sociology
©1898 The University of Chicago Press

JSTOR and the JSTOR logo are trademarks of JSTOR, and are Registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. For more information on JSTOR contact jstor-info@umich.edu.

©2002 JSTOR

THE PERSISTENCE OF SOCIAL GROUPS.¹

It is the doubtful advantage of incipient sciences that they must temporarily furnish refuge for all sorts of vagrant problems. The boundaries of new sciences are necessarily indefinite and indefensible. They are thus open to all the homeless. They therefore gather by degrees a miscellaneous content which cannot be managed. Then the process of limitation begins. The immediate effect is disappointing, but, on the other hand, precise bounds secure sciences against later disappointment. The new science of sociology is entering the stage of definition. It is beginning to assort the confused mass of problems that threatened to overwhelm it. Suffrage within the science is no longer unchallenged. The exact boundaries of the science are not yet beyond dispute, but in every direction earnest scientific efforts are evident to draw permanent lines of division. For a while the term "sociology" seemed to be a magic word that promised to solve all the riddles of history and of practical life, of ethics and of æsthetics, of religion and of politics. The source of this error is in the conception that the subject-matter of sociology is the whole sum of occurrences which take place in society. From that standpoint all problems that do not belong to physical science seem to fall within the scope of sociology. It is self-evident that this standpoint is untenable. It is plainly nonsensical to throw into one big pot labeled "sociology" all those researches which have been satisfactorily conducted by national economy, history of civilization, philosophy, political science, statistics, demography, juridical science, and ethics. That gives us a new name, but no new knowledge. In point of fact, most of the so-called sociological investigations belong within the field of one of these already existing sciences, for there is no content of life which would not be proper subject-

¹Translated by ALBION W. SMALL.

matter of one or other of these. If, therefore, sociology is to have a peculiar and independent significance, its problems must consequently concern, not the contents of social life, but its form—the form which brings it to pass that all those contents which are treated by the special sciences are “societary.” Sociology rests its whole right of existence as a separate science upon this abstraction of the forms of society, just as mathematics rests upon an abstraction of the mere spatial forms from material things, or as linguistic science rests upon the one abstraction of the forms of speech from the various linguistic representations in which men express themselves.

The subject-matter of sociology is, therefore, the forms or ways in which human beings exist beside, for, and with each other. The purposes for the sake of which these socializations come into being—economic and social,¹ religious and criminal, sexual and military, political and ethical, etc.—will be treated by other sciences. Since now socialization only occurs among human beings for the sake of such purposes, we shall discover the laws of social forms only by collecting such societary phenomena of the most diverse contents, and by ascertaining what is common to them in spite of their diversity. In this way the diverse contents of the forms of socialization nullify each other, and that which is formally the same, the societary form as such, must clearly appear. For instance, we observe the formation of parties on political and artistic, on religious and economic ground. By searching for that which is common in these phenomena, in spite of wide variation of purposes and interests, we discover the laws and species of party formation as such, as a form of the coexistence of human beings in general. By this method we discover, for example, as such forms, superiority and inferiority, the erection of hierarchies, competition, division of labor, imitation, representation, and countless other types of human socialization. Only after all their separate forms, from their most primitive to their most developed types, have been inductively determined

¹ In the conventional sense.

and psychologically interpreted, can we gradually solve the riddle: "What is society in its essence?" For society is surely not a structure so unitary that a single exhaustive definition is possible. Society consists rather of the sum of all the ways and means of combination that appear among its elements. It cannot be said that "society" must exist before all these separate relations make their appearance in society. Any single relation may be eliminated, to be sure, since in the societies known to us there are always enough remaining relations. If we try to project our thought beyond all these relations, however, there remains no society at all.

Merely as an example of this method I shall attempt in the following to exhibit the specific ways in which society as such maintains itself. In this attempt I use the term "society" not in the now usual sense of the whole great complex of all the individuals and groups held together by common nationality or common culture. I see society rather wherever a number of human beings come into reciprocity and form a transient or permanent unity. In each such unification the phenomenon emerges which also determines the life of the individuals, viz., that at every moment destructive forces attack the life both from within and from without, and, if these alone operated, the unity would soon be resolved into its elements or transformed into other combinations. But opposed to these destructive forces there are preservative influences which hold the individual parts together by maintaining reciprocity between them, from which comes cohesion of parts, and hence a unity of the whole. This unity is of longer or shorter duration, until, like everything earthly, it at last yields to decomposing forces.

At this point the justification must appear for speaking of the society as a special unity over and above its individual elements. These phenomena of the self-preservation of societies are by no means identical with the instinct of self-preservation in the individual members. The latter, on the contrary, calls for quite different treatment; it employs quite different forces from those that preserve the group to which the individual belongs; so that

the self-preservation of the individuals may be complete while that of the group is weakened and destroyed, or, on the contrary, the latter may show itself still in full force after the self-sustaining power of the individuals is in decadence. These facts have done the most to recommend the idea that the society, the unified group, is a structure of independent reality, which leads its life after peculiar laws and by virtue of peculiar forces, independent of all its individual components. In fact, when we consider the development and the characteristics of language, morals, church, law, political and social organization, that conception seems inevitable. All these seem to be products and functions of an impersonal structure. They seem to belong to all in common, as a piece of public property belongs to the community, yet in such a way that no individual could be named as the sufficient cause or the determining purpose of the same, nor could the precise share of any single individual in its creation be distinguished. These products stand rather over against the individual as something objective, absolved from the limitations of personal life. On the other hand, it is certain that in the last analysis only individuals exist, that there are human products apart from human beings themselves only in the case of material things; that, on the other hand, spiritual structures like those just mentioned have their existence only in personal minds. Every attempt to think of them outside of persons is a mysticism like the conceptual realism which made independent substantial entities of human ideas. How, then, if we hold fast to the existence of individuals only, shall we explain the super-individual character of those structures, the objectivity and independence of societal forces and organizations?

So far as I can see, this antinomy can be resolved in only one way. From the view point of completed knowledge we must hold unconditionally to the fact that there are only spiritual individuals. An all-penetrating vision would prepotently resolve that appearance which seems to announce a new independent unity above the individuals into the reciprocity which plays between the individuals, and it would see that, if this reci-

procuity were actually separated from the individuals, nothing of it could remain. But this completed knowledge is denied to men. The relations of human beings to each other are so complex, so ramified, and so compact that it would be a wholly hopeless task to resolve them into their elements, and we are consequently compelled to treat them as unities rather than as self-existing structures. It is, therefore, only a methodological device to speak of the essence and the development of the state, of law, of institutions, of fashion, etc., as if each of these were a unified entity. We cannot resolve the unitary aspect which they present to us into its components, and it is, therefore, a scientific interim-filler if we treat this aspect as a something that has an independent existence. This provisional convenience is like our treatment of the "life processes" as though they were a proper entity, although we assume that they are merely the complex of the endlessly complicated mechanical reciprocities of the minutest parts of the organic body. In like manner is the conflict to be adjusted between the individualistic and, as we may term it, the monistic conception of the social structure. The former corresponds with the fact, the latter with the limited power of analysis; the former is the ideal of intelligence, the latter the stage of understanding actually attained. In our knowledge of physical organisms we have succeeded in thinking beyond the idea of a vital power that seemed to sway over the separate organs, and to compose a new entity in addition to them. We have, in part at least, substituted for this conception the reciprocal action of the organs. In like manner we must attempt in the social sciences to approach nearer and nearer to the individual operations which produce the social structure, however far we may be obliged to stop short of complete analysis. In the case of our particular subject-matter the question might be formulated in this way: When we see that the most manifold socializations betray the operation of apparently specific efficient forces, in order to self-maintenance, into what more primary processes may these phenomena be resolved? Although the continuance of the group, after it is once in existence, seems to

declare at the same time a special vital force, a stability having a unified source, all this is nevertheless the consequence, or rather summation (*Zusammenfassung*), of a collection of separate and manifold fragmentary processes of a social nature. Our task, therefore, is to search these out.

The most general case in which the persistence of the group presents itself as a problem occurs in the fact that, in spite of the departure and the change of members, the group remains identical. We say that it is the same state, the same association, the same army, which now exists that existed so and so many decades or centuries ago. This, although no single member of the original organization remains. Here is one of the cases in which the temporal order of events presents a marked analogy with the spatial order. Out of individuals existing side by side, that is, apart from each other, a social unity is formed. The inevitable separation which space places between men is nevertheless overcome by the spiritual bond between them, so that there arises an appearance of unified interexistence. In like manner the temporal separation of individuals and of generations presents their union in our conceptions as a coherent, uninterrupted whole. In the case of persons spatially separated this unity is effected by the reciprocity maintained between them across the dividing distance. The unity of complex beings means nothing else than the cohesion of elements which is produced by the reciprocal exercise of forces. In the case of temporally separated persons, however, unity cannot be effected in this manner, because reciprocity is lacking. The earlier may influence the later, but the later cannot influence the earlier. Hence the persistence of the social unity in spite of shifting membership presents a peculiar problem which is not solved by explaining how the group came to exist at a given moment.

The first and most obvious element of the continuity of group unity is the continuance of the locality, of the place and soil on which the group lives. The state, still more the city, and also countless other associations, owe their unity first of all to the territory which constitutes the abiding substratum for all

change of their contents. To be sure, the continuance of the locality does not of itself alone mean the continuance of the social unity, since, for instance, if the whole population of a state is driven out or enslaved by a conquering group, we speak of a changed civic group in spite of the continuance of the territory. Moreover, the unity of whose character we are speaking is psychological, and it is this psychological factor itself which makes the territorial substratum a unity. After this has once taken place, however, the locality constitutes an essential point of attachment for the further persistence of the group. But it is only one such element, for there are plenty of groups that get along without a local substratum. On the one hand, there are the very small groups, like the family, which continue precisely the same after the residence is changed. On the other hand, there are the very large groups, like that ideal community of the "republic of letters," or the other international associations in the interest of culture, or the groups conducting international commerce. Their peculiar character comes from entire independence of all attachment to a definite locality.

In contrast with this more formal condition for the maintenance of the group, of incomparably greater importance to the same end is the physiological connection of the generations—in general the whole concatenation of blood relationships. Community of stock is not always enough to insure unity of coherence for a long time. In many cases the local unity must be added. The social unity of the Jews has been weakened to a marked degree since the dispersion, in spite of their physiological and confessional unity. It has become more compact in cases where a group of Jews have lived for a time in the same territory, and the efforts of the modern "Zionism" to restore Jewish unity on a larger scale calculate upon concentration in one locality. On the other hand, when other bonds of union fail, the physiological is the last recourse to which the self-maintenance of the group resorts. The more the German *Zünfte* declined, the weaker their inherent power of cohesion became, the more energetically did each *Zunft* attempt to make itself

exclusive, that is, it insisted that no persons should be admitted as *Zunftmeister* except sons or sons-in-law of masters or the husbands of masters' widows.

The physiological coherence of successive generations is of incomparable significance for the maintenance of the unitary self of the group, for the special reason that the displacement of one generation by the following *does not take place all at once*. By virtue of this fact it comes about that a continuity is maintained which conducts the vast majority of the individuals who live in a given moment into the life of the next moment. The change, the disappearance and entrance of persons, affects in two contiguous moments a number relatively small compared with the number of those who remain constant. Another element of influence in this connection is the fact that human beings are not bound to a definite mating season, but that children are begotten at any time. It can never properly be asserted of a group, therefore, that at any given moment a new generation begins. The departure of the older and the entrance of the younger elements proceed so gradually and continuously that the group seems as much like a unified self as an organic body in spite of the change of its atoms. If the substitution of elements took place all at once and suddenly, in such a way as to affect the group throughout, it could scarcely be said that in spite of the disappearance of individuals the group maintains its unitary selfhood. Since at each moment those who were members of the groups in earlier moments constitute a vast majority over the entering members, the identity of the group is saved, in spite of the fact that moments far separated from each other may have no common elements.

The foregoing is one of the few cases in which the fact that change is gradual furnishes a real explanation of the change. In general, care must be taken not to imagine that a change from one condition into another quite different is explained when it is described as "gradual." When we use that formula, we are apt to think of a multitude of intermediate stages interposed between the two extremes in question. We assume that the difference

between any two contiguous stages was so minute as to be a negligible quantity, so that no great spiritual force was demanded to make the transition, but, on the contrary, the mind could glide over easily from the earlier stage to the later. This too frequent attempt to get rid of the problem and its difficulties by simple reference to the gradualness of the change or development is a self-deception as seductive as it is fatal. We are justified in extreme incredulity whenever "gradualness" is alleged as basis of explanation. Even in the case before us, the change itself, the ultimate substitution of wholly different group elements, is not to be explained by the formula of gradualness. The form of gradualness in which the alteration actually occurs explains rather how it happens that we regard the group as persistent in spite of the shifting membership. This form is the vehicle of the group unity throughout the succession of members, somewhat as the form of reciprocity performs the same function for contemporaneous members. This form of gradualness, moreover, is obviously operative, not merely when the unity of the group is to be preserved in spite of the change of membership. It works, also, in cases where change affects other elements of group unity. For instance, where the political forms, the law, the customs, the entire culture of a group change to such an extent that after a time the group presents a wholly altered aspect, our right to speak of it as the identical group depends upon the fact that the alterations did not affect all the vital forms of the group simultaneously. If the change were instantaneous, it is doubtful if we should be justified in calling the group "the same" after the critical moment as before. The circumstance alone that the transition affected in a given moment only a minimum of the total life of the group makes it possible for the group to retain its selfhood through the change. We may express this schematically as follows: If the totality of individuals or other conditions of the life of the group be represented by *a, b, c, d, e*; in a later moment by *m, n, o, p, q*; we may nevertheless speak of the persistence of identical selfhood if the development takes the following course: *a, b, c, d, e—m,*

b, c, d, e—m, n, c, d, e—m, n, o, d, e—m, n, o, p, e—m, n, o, p, q.
 In this case each stage is differentiated from the contiguous stage by only one member, and at each moment it shares the same chief elements with its neighboring moments.

This continuity in change of the individuals who are the vehicles of the group unity is most immediately and thoroughly visible when it rests upon procreation. The same form is found, however, in cases where this physical agency is excluded, as, for example, within the Catholic clerus. Here the continuity is secured by provision that enough persons always remain in office to initiate the neophytes. This is an extremely important sociological fact. It makes bureaucracies so tenacious, and causes their character and spirit to endure in spite of all shifting of individuals. The physiological basis of self-maintenance here gives place to a psychological one. To speak exactly, the preservation of group identity in this case depends, of course, upon the amount of invariability in the vehicles of this unity, but, at all events, the whole body of members belonging in the group at any given moment only separate from the group after they have been associated with their successors long enough to assimilate the latter fully to themselves, *i. e.*, to the spirit, the form, the tendency of the group. The immortality of the group depends upon the fact that the change is sufficiently slow and gradual.

The fact referred to by the phrase "immortality of the group" is of the greatest importance. The preservation of the identical selfhood of the group through a practically unlimited period gives to the group a significance which, *ceteris paribus*, is far superior to that of the individual. The life of the individual, with its purposes, its valuations, its force, is destined to terminate within a limited time, and to a certain extent each individual must start at the beginning. Since the life of the group has no such *a priori* fixed time limit, and its forms are really arranged as though they were to last forever, the group accomplishes a summation of the achievements, powers, experiences, through which it makes itself far superior to the fragmentary individual lives. Since the early Middle Ages this has been the

source of the power of municipal corporations in England. They had from the beginning the right, as Stubbs expresses it, "of perpetuating its existence by filling up vacancies as they occur." The ancient privileges were given expressly only to the burghers and their heirs. As matter of fact, they were exercised as a right to add new members, so that, whatever fate befell the members and their physical descendants, the corporation, as such, was held intact. This had to be paid for, to be sure, by the disappearance of the individual importance of the units behind their rôle as vehicles of the maintenance of the group, for the group security must suffer the closer it is bound up with the perishable individuality of the units. On the other hand, the more anonymous and unpersonal the unit is, the more fit is he to step into the place of another, and so to insure to the group uninterrupted self-maintenance. This was the enormous advantage through which during the Wars of the Roses the commons repulsed the previously superior power of the upper house. A battle that destroyed half the nobility of the country took also from the house of lords one-half its force, because this is attached to the personalities. The house of commons is in principle assured against such weakening. That estate at last got predominance which, through the equalizing of its members, demonstrated the most persistent power of group existence. This circumstance gives every group an advantage in competition with an individual. It has been remarked of the East India Company that it won its mastery over India by the same means which grand moguls had used before. Its advantage over other usurpers was simply that its life could not be destroyed.

On this account special arrangements are necessary so soon as the life of the group is intimately bound up with that of a leading, commanding individual. What dangers to the integrity of the group are concealed in this sociological form may be learned from the history of all interregnums—dangers which, of course, increase in the same ratio in which the ruler actually forms the central point of the functions through which the group preserves its unity, or, more correctly, at each moment creates its unity

anew. Consequently a break between rulers may be a matter of indifference where the prince only exercises a nominal sway—"reigns, but does not govern"—while, on the other hand, we observe even in the swarm of bees that anarchy results so soon as the queen is removed. Although it is entirely false to explain this latter phenomenon by analogy of a human ruler, since the queen bee gives no orders, yet the queen occupies the middle point of the activity of the hive. By means of her antennæ she is in constant communication with the workers, and so all the signals coursing through the hive pass through her. By virtue of this very fact the hive feels itself a unity, and this unity dissolves with the disappearance of the functional center.

In political groups the attempt is made to guard against all the dangers of personality, particularly those of possible intervals between the important persons, by the principle: "The king never dies." While in the early Middle Ages the tradition prevailed that when the king dies his peace dies with him, this newer principle contains provision for the self-preservation of the group. It involves an extraordinarily significant sociological conception, viz., the king is no longer king as a person, but the reverse is the case, that is, his person is only the in itself irrelevant vehicle of the abstract kingship, which is as unalterable as the group itself, of which the kingship is the apex. The group reflects its immortality upon the kingship, and the sovereign in return brings that immortality to visible expression in his own person, and by so doing reciprocally strengthens the vitality of the group. That mighty factor of social coherence which consists of loyalty of sentiment toward the reigning power might appear in very small groups in the relation of fidelity toward the person of the ruler. For large groups the definition that Stubbs once gave must certainly apply, viz.: "Loyalty is a habit of strong and faithful attachment to a person, not so much by reason of his personal character as of his official position." By becoming objectified in the deathless office the princely principle gains a new psychological power for concentration and cohesion within the group, while the old

princely principle that rested on the mere personality of the prince necessarily lost power as the size of the group increased.

The most obvious way in which the persistence of the group depicts itself in the continuance of the ruler is in the heredity of the princely dignity. The physiological connection within the reigning family reflects the intricate connection within the group. The group perpetuates itself without intermission and as a matter of course from age to age. In no other way can this fact be more precisely and appropriately expressed than in the provision that the father shall be succeeded by the son, who in turn is designated from birth as heir apparent of the throne, and is always ready to assume the prerogative. Since the heredity of the regal office makes the same independent of the qualities of the personalities who occupy it (in which is also the questionable element of the device), it at the same time clearly shows that the coherence of the group has made itself independent; that it has become objective; that it has gained for itself status and durability which are no longer affected by the accident of the personality by which they are represented. The hereditary principle is often called senseless and dangerous, because it is purely formal in nature, and consequently may bring to the throne the most unfit person as well as the most fit. Precisely this circumstance, however, has a very profound meaning, for it demonstrates that the form of the group, the relation between ruler and ruled, has become real and settled. So long as the character of the group is still uncertain and variable, the supreme head, whose office it is to hold the group together, can perform the function only by virtue of very definite personal qualities. The Greek king of the heroic age had to be not only brave, wise, and eloquent, but also distinguished in athletic exercises, and, so far as possible, a superior carpenter, shipbuilder, and tiller of the soil. In general, social interest takes care further that, in groups that are still unstable, conflict and selection go before the acquisition of sovereignty. Wherever the form in which the group maintains itself is already established and secure, the personal element may withdraw in favor of the formal principle. That

species of sovereignty may now gain the front rank which best expresses the continuity and theoretical eternity of the group life so formed. That form is the hereditary sovereignty. It most adequately and intelligibly expresses the principle that the king never dies.

The objectification of the coherence of the group may, also, do away with the personal form to such an extent that it attaches itself to a material symbol. Thus in the German lands in the Middle Ages the imperial jewels were looked upon as the visible realization of the idea of the realm and of its continuity, so that the possession of them gave to a pretender a decided advantage over all other aspirants, and this was one of the influences which evidently assisted the heir of the body of the deceased emperor in securing the succession.

In view of the destructibility of a material object, since too this disadvantage cannot be offset, as in the case of a person, by the continuity of heredity, it is very dangerous for the group to seek such a support for its self-preservation. Many a regiment has lost its coherence with the loss of its standard. Many kinds of associations have dissolved after their palladium, their storehouse, their grail was destroyed. When, however, the social coherence is lost in this way, it is safe to say that it must have suffered serious internal disorder before, and that in this case the loss of the external symbol representing the unity of the group is itself only the symbol that the social elements have lost their coherence. Where this last is not the case, the loss of the group symbol not only has no disintegrating effect, but it exerts a direct integrating influence. While the symbol loses its corporal reality, it may as mere thought, longing, ideal, work much more powerfully, profoundly, indestructibly. We may get a good view of these two opposite influences of the forms of destruction of the group symbol upon the solidity of the group by reference to the consequences of the destruction of the Jewish temple by Titus. The hierarchical Jewish state was a thorn in the flesh of the Roman statecraft that aimed at the unity of the empire. The purpose of dissolving this state was

accomplished, so far as a certain number of the Jews were concerned, by the destruction of the temple. Such was the effect with those who cared little, any way, about this centralization. Thus the alienation of the Pauline Christians from Judaism was powerfully promoted by this event. For the Palestinian Jews, on the other hand, the breach between Judaism and the rest of the world was deepened. By this destruction of its symbol their national-religious exclusiveness was heightened to desperation. Thus the destruction of the group symbol works in two directions upon the persistence of the group: destructively where the integrating reciprocal action of the members is already weak, and constructively where these reciprocal influences are so strong in themselves that they can replace the lost tangible symbol by its spiritualized and idealized representation.

The significance of a material symbol for the persistence of a society is much heightened when the symbol, besides its suggestive use, is a real social possession in itself, that is, when the centralizing functions of the society depend upon it, or are facilitated by it, when the material interests of all the members of the group converge in this symbol. In this case it will be of peculiar importance for the maintenance of the group to secure this common possession against destruction, somewhat as is done in the case of the personal group center by the fiction that the king does not die. The most frequent means to this end is "the dead hand," the provision that the property of corporations, which as such should be permanent, shall not be alienable. As the transitoriness of the individual is reflected in the destructibility of his property, so the indestructibility of the association is mirrored in its inalienable and non-assignable tenure of possessions. The proprietary qualifications of the ecclesiastical corporations especially resembled the maw of the lion, which every thing could enter, but from which nothing ever came out. For the church the eternity of her tenure was a symbol of the eternity of the principle in which her coherence was founded. The dead hand secured for such associations an impregnable defense and rallying point, an invaluable means of

group maintenance. This character of the dead hand was supported further by the fact that the possessions of such corporations were chiefly real estate. In contrast with all movable property, especially with money, property in land has a stability, an indestructibility, a fixity which renders it the most appropriate content for the "dead hand" form of tenure. Moreover, the local definiteness and precision of this tenure bring it about that those who enjoy its benefits have in it the fixed point by means of which they can always keep their reckoning and, at the same time, either directly or indirectly in their interests, can unite without confusion. This significance which the continuance of landed property has for the maintenance of a social form has found expression in the hypothesis that landed possession on a large scale was one of the origins of hereditary monarchy. Superior riches secure, at all events, a leading position in a group. So long, however, as wealth consists only in herds, it is very insecure and may easily die out. Only when it has become immobile is there good chance that it may remain in the hands of one person or family. The stable character of landed property, even if only in the hands of the leader, is favorable to the stability of the constitutional form. It secures for the above discussed hereditary principle a basis that is at once adequate and of corresponding form.

Thus the "dead hand" was by no means merely a matter of material advantage. It was rather a subtle agency of preserving the form and substance of the group. This very fact, however, often entangles the group in a conflict of typical sociological significance, and for the reason that the group thus assisted in its self-preservation is only a portion of a larger civic society containing it. Almost all sorts of human association, whatever be their specific content and character, have to work to secure the coöperation in social unity of certain parts that persist in following a certain egoistic impulse. The form and tendency of these parts duplicate in miniature those of the group of which they are members, with which however they are often, for this very reason, in disagreement. The rôle appropriate to them as

part and member of a comprehensive whole does not comport with the part they are trying to play as egoistic wholes. I shall return presently to the principles involved in this tragic relation, which recurs within all large societies. At this point I merely observe how prominently it impresses itself in the case of the "dead hand." While, as above indicated, it is of extreme importance for the status of a close corporation that it has its own territorial foundation as firm basis of its unity, and as means of delimitation, it is also highly critical if a portion of such society demands the same for itself. The conflict of interest thus arising between the part and the whole appeared immediately in the fact that the "dead hand," as a rule, demanded and obtained exemption from taxation. Indirectly, but still more significantly, the antithesis appeared in the injury to national industry from withdrawal of such properties from the stream of commerce. The firmness of social structure that comes from indestructibility and inalienability of property works as a thorn in the flesh so soon as it comes to be an attribute of a distinct portion of a large group. In that case the state of things which promotes the persistence of the fractional group is, from the standpoint of the larger containing group, directly antagonistic, because it leads to the benumbing and finally the excision of an organic member.

From the long history of the "dead hand" I will here only remark further that as early as 1391 its disadvantages led to a law in England which simply prohibited the acquisition of real estate by such perpetual corporations as guilds and fraternities. From the same point of view, opposition is made in modern times to the patents of the nobility, which pursue the corresponding purpose of creating an objective organ of the unity and stability of the family, an instrument which shall not be affected by the fortunes of individual members of the family. In this case, also, a certain inalienable and indivisible possession is calculated to be not merely the economic basis upon which the continuity of the family is maintained under all circumstances. It affords, at the same time, a rallying point of family coher-

ence. By it not merely the material conditions of the stability of the family, but its sociological form as well, is assured. In this case again however, at least in the opinion of many, this centripetal self-maintenance of a small group comes into antagonism with the containing civic whole. The latter will be absolute, and for that reason it can concede to its parts only a relative character.

Modern inclinations try by other forms of device to secure the same ends which were served by the patent of nobility and the "dead hand." The fundamental idea of both these forms was the withdrawal of the possession guaranteed by the form from the uncertainty to which the fortunes of the individual are liable, and its establishment as an independent, objective, durable structure. Thus certain associations bind their members by the provision that in case of withdrawal the contribution of the seceder to the association is not repaid. The idea behind this provision is that the group and its interests have placed themselves quite beyond the sphere of interests pertaining to the individual members; that the group leads a life of its own; that it completely detaches the quotas of possessions from their former owners who contributed them; and that it can no more give these back than the organic body can give back to their sources the particles of food that have become parts of its substance. The continued and self-sustained persistence of the group is promoted, not merely directly by this mode of procedure, but still further indirectly by creating in the individual member a lively sense of a group-unity which is a super-individual existence independent of all personal variations.

The sociological technique of self-preservation operates again in higher potency in the regulation of certain associations that, even in case of the dissolution of the association, its property shall not be distributed among its members, but shall revert to some union for similar purposes. Self-maintenance is concerned in such case, not with the physical existence of the group, but with its idea, which is incarnated in the group that becomes its heir, the continuity of which is just as well provided for through

the transference of its property to that group. This correlation is to be seen very clearly in the case of many French labor organizations in the fifth decade of this century. We find in their statutes the provision that the property of the association should under no circumstances be divided. This idea went still further, so that associations of the same character often formed syndicates, to which each delivered its indivisible fund, so as to form thus a group property in which the contributions of the separate associations combined as a new and objective unity, as the contributions of the individuals had previously done in the fund of the several associations. Herewith there was produced a sort of sublimation of the thought of the separate associations. The syndicate was the incarnated and independent substance of the socializing interests which had previously existed only in the more individual form of the associations, and had consequently been more or less obscured by the peculiar purposes of the association. The social motive of these unions was thus lifted to a higher plane, upon which, if other powers had not exerted a destructive influence, it might have maintained itself in full security against all individual and material variations.

I come now to a further type of means for social maintenance. It may be described as both ideal and concrete. It constitutes, in fact, a peculiar species beyond this antithesis, and finds its most efficient example in *honor*. The sociological significance of honor, as a form of cohesion which reappears as formally the same in the most diverse socializations, is extraordinarily great, and can be understood only after extended observation. In general, it may be said that, through the appeal to honor, society secures from its members the kind of conduct conducive to its own preservation, particularly within the spheres of conduct intermediate between the purview of the criminal code, on the one hand, and the field of purely personal morality, on the other. If we place these three forms of imperative in a series—morality, honor, criminal law—each earlier member of the series covers the range of the remaining, but the scope of a latter member does not cover that of a predecessor.

Complete morality contains what honor and law can only command and forbid. Fulfilled honor prohibits of itself what the law lays under penalty, but honor does not assure everything which morality demands, nor does the criminal law secure everything that morality and honor decree. From this series we may immediately conclude that honor corresponds, as a social requisite, to the needs of a somewhat contracted circle, between those of the largest civic group, which coerces its members by penal law, and those of purely personal life, which finds its norms only in the autonomy of the individual. In the executive action of these three sorts of law the intermediate position of honor also shows itself. While civic law employs physical force as its sanction, while personal morality has no other recourse than the approval or disapproval of conscience, the laws of honor are guarded by penalties which have neither the pure externality of the former nor the pure subjectivity of the latter. This peculiar intermediary position of honor points to the perception which arises from the most general observation of the workings of honor, viz.: that honor is originally a class standard (*Standesehre*); *i. e.*, an appropriate life-form of smaller circles contained within a larger whole. By the demands upon its members contained in the group standard of honor the group preserves its unified character and its distinctness from the other groups within the same inclusive association. That which we think of as honor in a larger sense than this, as human honor in general, or, otherwise expressed, as purely individual honor, is an abstract idea made possible by effacing the boundaries of the class (*Stand*). It is, indeed, impossible to name any single procedure which assails human honor as such, *i. e.*, every human being's sense of honor without exception. It is a matter of honor with the ascetic to let himself be spit upon; with the girls of a certain African tribe to have as many sexual relations as possible. Accordingly the essential thing is the specific idea of honor in narrow groups—family honor, officers' honor, mercantile honor, yes, even the "honor among thieves." Since the individual belongs to various groups, the individual

may, at the same time, be under the demands of several sorts of honor which are independent of each other. One may preserve his mercantile honor, or his scientific honor as an investigator, who has forfeited his family honor, and *vice versa*; the robber may strictly observe the requirements of thieves' honor after he has violated every other; a woman may have lost her womanly honor and in every other respect be most honorable, etc. Thus honor consists in the relation of the individual to a particular circle, which in this respect manifests its separateness, its sociological distinctness from other groups.

So far as its content is concerned, honor seems to me to get its character as duty of the individual from the circumstance that, in preserving his own honor, the individual preserves at the same time the honor of his own social circle. The officer guards, in his own honor, that of the whole corps of officers, the merchant that of the mercantile class, the member of the family that of his family. This is the enormous advantage which society derives from the honor of its members, and for the sake of which society permits the individual to do things which are otherwise both by ethics and law positively forbidden.*

When the social group intrusts to each of its elements its total honor *pro rata*, it confides to the individual at the same time a good of extraordinary value, something that the individuals are, as a rule, not in a position to gain for themselves, something that they have simply to keep from losing. Since the honor of the whole circle becomes thus at the same time the private possession of the individual, and in this individualization becomes his honor, it thereby demonstrates a unique and extremely close coalescence of individual and social interest. The latter has taken in this case, for the consciousness of the individual, a completely personal form. Herewith the enormous service is manifest which honor renders to the self-maintenance of the group, for what I called the honor of the group, represented by the honor of the individual, proves,

* For further discussion of the idea of honor I refer to my *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*, I, 190-212.

on close examination, to be nothing else than the stability, the unity, and the durable character of the group. Honor demands from the individual those kinds of conduct which promote these ends of his society. Since conformity to this demand acquires, on the one hand, an ideal worth, so ideal and so powerful at the same time that honor is preferred to life; since the preservation of honor, on the other hand, has very sensible pleasurable effects upon the individual, and its loss produces equally keen pains, it comes about that honor constitutes an extraordinarily close bond between the whole group and its elements. Accordingly honor is one of the most thorough means of maintaining the existence and specific significance of the group.

From such recourse of social self-preservation to individual persons, to a material substance, to an ideal conception, we pass now to the cases in which social persistence takes advantage of an organ composed of a number of persons. The objective principle in which unity manifests itself again exhibits societary character. Thus a religious community embodies its coherence and its life principle in its priesthood; a political community its inner principle of union in its administrative organization, its union against foreign power in its military system; this latter in its corps of officers; every permanent union in its official head; transitory associations in their committees; political parties in their parliamentary representatives. The structure of such organs is the result of sociological division of labor. The reciprocity between individuals in which all socialization consists, and the special form of which determines the character of the group as such, goes on at first immediately between the separate members of the society as such. The unification of operations comes about from direct agreement or from mutual adjustment of interests; the unity of the religious community through the common longing of the religious sentiment for union; the military constitution of the group through the interest of every man capable of military service in being strong for offense and defense; the administration of justice through immediate judg-

ment by the community as a whole; the organization of leaders and led through the personal superiority of certain members over the rest; the economic system through direct exchange between producers.¹

These functions, at first exercised by the persons immediately interested, presently pass over to special functional groups. The previous reciprocities of the elements give place to a condition in which each element comes into relations with the newly developed organ. Otherwise expressed, while previously, where there was no structure of organs, the individual primary elements alone had a substantial existence, and its coherence was merely functional, now the coherence of organs gets an existence of its own, and, more than this, an existence not merely apart from all the members of the group in which the new organ belongs, but even separate from those individuals who are the immediate constituents of the organ itself. Thus the mercantile element in a society is a structure which has an existence for itself. As such it fulfills its function as medium between producers indifferent to all change of individuals within its structure. More evidently still an administrative department (*Amt*) exists as an objective organ through which the individual officials again also pass, and behind which their personalities often enough disappear. Thus the state as receiver of taxes appropriates to itself those sacrifices which one interested circle of citizens demands of others, but at the same time the state subjects each of those intrusted with this function of tax collection to the same liability to taxation. The church, in like manner, is an impersonal organism whose functions are undertaken and exercised, but not produced, by the individual priests. In short, what was once erroneously assumed to be true of physical life, viz., that it is something maintained by a peculiar vital spirit, instead of being, as we now know, a sort of reciproc-

¹I will not assert that this logically primary condition has everywhere been the historical starting point of the further social development, yet in order to make clear the essential meaning of the division of labor among social organs the assumption of this primitive condition is permissible, even if it is only a fiction. In numberless cases it surely is not fiction.

ity between certain physical atoms—this, or something closely corresponding with it, is true of social life. In origin it is a direct reciprocity. Presently it is maintained by a special self-existing structure. These structures represent the idea or the power which holds the group together in this particular respect, and they, at the same time, consolidate the group coherence so that it passes from a mere functional to a substantial character.

It is one of the profoundest facts about humanity, and of most specific application to human conditions, that individuals as well as groups have derived considerable powers and advantages from structures which they have themselves endowed with the energies and qualities from which these reinforcements come. The effective energies of an actor, with which he secures his maintenance and development, exhibit themselves very often in the roundabout way of first producing an apparently objective structure, from which they then flow back upon the actor. Thus, for illustration, we act like a party waging war, who secures an ally, but first furnishes that ally with all the military resources which he is to use. Think, for instance, of the idea of the gods, whom men first endowed with all sorts of qualities, worthinesses, and excellencies reflected from human souls. Then the same men used these gods as a source of moral laws and of power to enforce them. Think again how we endow a fine country in which we live with meanings taken from our own feelings, and then draw from contemplation of the same comfort, earnestness, and impulse. Think again how often friend or wife seems to enrich us in thought and feeling, until we perceive that all this spiritual content came from ourselves, and is only reflected back upon us by these helpers. If in all such occurrences a deep self-deception is concealed, it is surely not without profound utility. Without question many powers of our nature require such extension, transformation, and projection in order to reach their highest use. We must set them at a certain distance from ourselves in order for them to work upon us with maximum force. Illusion about their actual source is evidently very advantageous in preventing interference with this influence.

Social elaboration of differentiated organs for special purposes occurs in many ways under the form-type just discussed. The group forces are concentrated in a special structure, which, in turn, with its own status and character, places itself in antithesis with the group as a whole. Since this organ promotes the purposes of the group, it appears as though independent energies proceeded from it. They are, in fact, nothing but the transformed energies of the same elements upon which the organ now reacts. Of what significance such organs are for the persistence of the group may be most clearly seen, perhaps, from observation of a contrasted instance. The original constitution of Germany, composed of numberless petty associations, went to pieces partly for the reason that the confederacies constructed no organs. They remained identical with the sum of the confederated members. The confederacy did not raise itself as an objective unity above these, and consequently did not succeed in giving this unity an incarnation in special functionaries. It had, to be sure, representatives with specific powers, but these were of purely individual character. A certain trusted person was commissioned to discharge just the needed functions. Such commissions from case to case are very often the origin of administrative offices and permanent organs of public life. In the early history of the German peoples, however, progress did not reach that stage. The unity of the group remained limited to the immediate reciprocities of the personal elements. This unity neither advanced to the objective civic idea, which the aggregate of individuals at any time would merely exemplify or represent, nor for that very reason to the special organs, of which each would assume a particular function, of which the whole body as such would accordingly be relieved. The disadvantageous influences of this lack upon the persistence of the group may be approximately summarized under the following heads:

1. The specialized organ permits greater flexibility of movement in the social body. So soon as it is necessary for the whole group to put itself in action for a single purpose, such as political determinations, judicial judgments, administrative meas-

ures, etc., the group will suffer from clumsiness, and that in two different ways: first, physically or locally. In order that the group as a whole may take action, it must needs assemble. It is so hard, and it takes so much time, and it is so often impossible to bring the whole group together, that many movements are altogether prevented, and others are so long impeded that they are at last too late. But if this external difficulty of assemblage is overcome, the difficulty of psychological approach arises—the task of bringing a great mass to unanimity. Every farsighted action of a large body must overcome the force of doubts, objections, antagonistic interests, and especially the indifference of individuals. The social organ that exists exclusively for this purpose, and which is composed of relatively few persons, is free from a large proportion of these obstructions. Such organs of the group promote its persistence, therefore, through an increased quickness and precision of social action, in contrast with which the movements of a whole group have an inflexible and dilatory character. These physical and psychological difficulties, so to speak, may dispose a mass to appoint representatives, even in case no technical difficulties of the tasks make it inevitable to do so. Thus an ordinance of the end of the fifteenth century, in the Dürkheim district, speaks of affairs “which would be too difficult for a whole community to manage. Accordingly eight competent persons were chosen from the community. These took oath that they would do all that the community had to perform.” There are innumerable cases of similar representation of a large number to reach this external factor—agreement. A group of smaller number has merely for that reason, and without qualitative superiority, the advantage of easier mobility, of greater rapidity of assemblage, and of more precise determination, as compared with a multitude. The local difficulty appears, moreover, not alone in cases requiring the congregation of the whole group. It emerges in connection with economic exchanges. So long as exchange and purchase take place only when producers and consumers are actually in each other’s presence, the transactions are evidently

clumsy and imperfect, and the difficulties of these local limitations must be contended with continually. So soon, however, as the trader intervenes, and finally a mercantile class systematizes exchange and brings into existence every sort of relationship between people with economic interests, the whole coherence of the group becomes immeasurably closer and stronger. The introduction of a new organ between the primary elements, like the sea between countries, operates, not as a barrier, but as a bond of union. The unity of the group, which consists in the commerce of each member with each other member by some sort of means, must become much more energetic and intimate when assisted by the activity of the mercantile class. Presently, through the continued action of this class, there arises a system of regularly functioning, reciprocally balanced forces and relations, as a universal form, in which production and consumption by individuals have a place as an accidental content. This general form rises above the single action, as the state is superior to the single citizen, or the church to the individual believer. By virtue of this development unlimited room is made for the economic relationships of individuals with each other. The endless multiplications of transactions, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the continuance of the organization itself, even in cases of occasional economic crises, bear witness to the significance which the elaboration of special organs has for the intimacy and durability of group union. At the same time, these phenomena bring clearly to view the imperfections of immediate reciprocity between individuals.

2. In case the whole group of equally privileged and equally stationed elements must exert itself for a specific purpose, there inevitably arise within the group counter efforts, each of which has *a priori* equal weight, and for which there is no decisive court of appeal. The most adequate expression of this condition is the case in which not even a majority may decide, but each dissenter either defeats the decision altogether or at least is personally not bound by it. This danger, not only for the external purposeful action, but also for the internal form and unity of the

group, is met by the development of social organs, at least in two directions. First, an administrative agency (*Amt*), a commission, a delegation, etc., will have more special knowledge than the aggregate of other persons. By resort to these substitutes those frictions and oppositions will be avoided which come from pure ignorance of the things involved. The group will be the more able to maintain such unity of action as comes from knowledge of the conditions concerned, and from exclusion of the vascillations due to mere subjective influences, the more the direction of its special plans is committed to an organ separately designated for the purpose. The significance of a second and related factor is not so obvious. The absence of adaptations to the circumstances, which so often prevents unity in the actions of the mass (for subjective errors are numberless, while in the case of objectively correct representations all must at last come to the same result), is not always the consequence of mere ignorance of the subject, but often also of the very important sociological fact that the factions, which, in connection with any important subject, always divide the group, stand for mental differences upon matters far removed from and wholly unrelated to the question in hand. These differences are evidence that accord is radically impossible. The party divisions that have arisen from any cause whatsoever are preserved throughout the whole range of interests, and bring it to pass that, for example, political parties must occupy hostile camps, even about religious, æsthetic, personal, and culture questions of every sort, even in cases where the content of the new party programmes has no real connection with that which caused the original division. The line which divides parties in any vital matter is produced through affairs of every possible sort, from generalities to particularities, and simply because opponents upon the important subject will not coöperate upon any other. The mere fact that the one party has taken sides upon any open question is sufficient to make the opposing party take the other side. This power of party, as a mere form which shows itself in unbroken continuance throughout the most heterogeneous kinds of inter-

ests, is one of the weightiest obstacles to the unification of a group, and even to the performance of any group action at all. This production of the line of hostility occurs also not merely where it separates whole divisions of groups. It appears as well in the relations of individuals with each other. The mere fact that *A* votes for the measure *m* is often enough to make his enemy vote against it. The factionalism and obstruction that follow should promote the tranference of group business to special organs. Since these are constituted with sole reference to the definite purpose in view, the latter is set farther apart psychologically from the other interests and opinions of the person to whom the purpose is intrusted. This purpose, therefore, receives on behalf of the members of the group an emphasis which would be lessened or lost if it were naïvely jumbled together with essentially unrelated tendencies. When social action is thus freed from the oppositions, entanglements, and centrifugal movements which spring from the association of special issues with other personal and party positions, this action becomes much more unified, animated, and purposeful (*zielbewusst*). The power of persistence in the group gains in the ratio in which that waste of energy ceases, which is involved in the above noted confusions and consequent paralyzing of forces, and which is unavoidable in the neglect of group tasks that is sure to exist if the group as a group tries to do its needed work.

3. While these advantages of social organs over the group as a whole in promoting the persistence of the group thus fall in with the *tempo* and rhythm of the powers or process that preserve the group, they extend furthermore to certain qualitative conditions. In the first place, it is decisive that the total action of the group will always be on a relatively low intellectual level. This is due to the fact that the particular point about which a large number of individuals agree must always be close to the level occupied by that one of them who stands lowest. This is evident from the fact that those who stand higher can descend, but not everyone on a lower intellectual level can ascend. The

latter sort, therefore, and not the former, determine the level which may be occupied in common.

In cases of agitation and expression of feelings this rule does not hold, because in an actually assembled mass of people there develops a certain collective irritability, a rapture (*Mitgerissen-werden*) of emotion, a reciprocal stimulation, so that there may follow a momentary elevation of the individuals above the average intensity of their feelings. This in no wise prejudices the appropriateness or inappropriateness of these feelings, nor the wisdom or foolishness of their content. In this respect the sentiments of the mass will remain on that level below the average which is accessible to lower and higher alike. That level may be raised sometimes, as experience shows, in respect of feeling and willing, but not in respect of intelligence.

While now the persistence of the group rests, on the one side, upon the immediate relations of individuals to individuals, and in so far the individual may unfold all the powers of intellect with which he is endowed, this is not absolutely true in those matters in which the group has to act as a unity. We may call the former the molecular action of the group, the latter the molar action. In the former kind of action representation of the individual is, in principle, neither possible nor desirable. In the latter it is both possible and desirable. When a group of any considerable size conducts its affairs directly, the group is shut up to relatively trivial actions by the inexorable condition that each member must in some degree comprehend and approve each group measure. Only when the guidance of group action is intrusted to an organization consisting of relatively few persons can specific talent be enlisted for its direction. Within a group acting as an undifferentiated mass such endowment and special knowledge as only the few may possess must at best fight their way to influence in each particular case. Within a differentiated organ, on the other hand, such endowment and knowledge have, in principle at least, uncontested influence.²

² To be sure, contrasted phenomena occur. Within an official bureau jealousy sometimes prevents talent from exerting its proper influence, while on the other hand

Therein lies the superiority of the parliamentary system over the plebiscite. It has been observed that direct popular votes seldom show a majority for original and bold measures. The popular majority is rather on the side of caution, convenience, and triviality. The single representative, whom the mass chooses, possesses still other personal qualities besides those which—especially during the epochs of purely partisan choices—are in the consciousness of the electing multitude. He brings to his post something in addition to that which was really chosen in selecting him. Hence in parliaments personal talents and intellectual shadings, such as are found only in single persons, may win a high degree of influence. They may even be able to promote the stability of the group by exerting influence that reaches over the gaps between parties which so often the masses may sometimes easily follow a talented individual even when he leads contrary to their judgment. It is impossible for an abstract science like sociology to exhaust the whole abundance and complications of historical action when it exhibits the separate typical relationships. For, however correct may be the assertion of relationship, and however influential, the concrete occurrence will always contain a number of elements beside this, and in the final, visible, aggregate effect the influence of the typical form may be concealed. The science of physics is analogously made up in part of certain regular relationships of movements which never appear in the actual world just as they work out mathematically, or as they can be produced in the laboratory. Nevertheless, the demonstrated relations of force are real and operative in all those cases in which science has discovered their participation. Only their *visible* action is not entirely in accordance with the scientific schedule in which it is formulated, because beside them a number of other forces and conditions operate upon the same substance. In the resultant of both the former and the latter, which constitutes the actual event, the share of the formulated influence may be concealed from immediate observation. It may have contributed only an insensible and indistinguishable part. This inadequacy, which is exhibited by every sort of cognition through types, when compared with the concrete actuality, evidently reaches its culmination in the psychical sciences. In their territory not only the factors of the particular occurrence mix in almost inextricable complexity, but even the fate of a given element, that may be analyzed out of the confusion, is beyond determination by mathematics and experiment. No matter what correlation of cause and effect may be looked upon as the normal form by which to interpret historical events and psychological probabilities, there will be many cases in which the conditions of that type seem to be present, but the type itself does not emerge. This need not shake confidence in the correctness of the abstraction. It shows only that other, perhaps contrary, forces have worked upon the individuals in question, and that these latter have outweighed the former in the total or visible effect.

threaten group unity. To be sure, the effectiveness of the personal principle in parliaments is modified by new levelings ; in the first place, because the parliament to which the single person speaks is itself a relatively large body. It includes extremely diverse parties and individuals, so that the points of common and reciprocal understanding can lie only very low in the intellectual scale.¹ In the second place, because the individual belongs to a party which, as such, stands not on an individual but on a social plane, by which its parliamentary activities are *a priori* reduced to an average level. In the third place, because the individual speaks, indirectly but intentionally, to the whole country. These subtractions from the intellectual advantages of constituting organs are necessary only in the case of parliaments. They do not equally affect other forms. Indeed, these very disadvantages give proof, as the higher developments of parliamentarism show, that the differentiation of organs is necessary. In England the impossibility of governing with a body so numerous, so heterogeneous, so inconstant, and yet at the same time so immobile as the house of commons, led at the end of the seventeenth century to the establishment of the ministry. The English ministry is in fact an organ of Parliament. It is related to Parliament somewhat as the latter to the whole country. Since it is composed of leading members of Parliament, and represents the majority of that body for the time being, it combines the total tendency of the largest group—which it at the same time displays in sublimated form—with the advantages of individual gifts. This combination could nowhere else have such effectiveness as in a system of leadership by single individuals and within a body as small as a ministry. The English ministry is a well-adapted means of further concentrating the differentiated organ, and thus of counterbalancing the deficiencies in which the organ reproduces the defects of the aggregate group action, to avoid which the organ was instituted.

¹What a poor order of wit, for example, is shown by parliamentary reports to have roused the legislators' hilarity.

The proof of the necessity of building such organs is not to be derived in part only, as in the above case, but in other cases entirely *ex contrario*. The enormous expenditure of time and means required for progressive measures by the civic machinery in the United States is charged by Bryce to the fact that public opinion has to accomplish everything, while there is no such guiding authority as the ministries are in Europe. Neither in Congress nor in the legislatures of the several states are there administrative officers with ministerial authority, whose special duty and life task it would be to take the initiative upon untried ground, to unify legislative consideration by introducing guiding ideas, to bear responsibility for maintenance and progress of the whole — in short, to do what only individuals as such can do, and which, as this example shows, cannot be supplied by the mass action of the primary group element — here in the form of “public” opinion.

All these factors combine to expose a society without differentiated organs not merely to the disintegrating and destructive forces which every social structure develops in itself, but also to powerful individual forces, in confronting which such a society is defenseless. In the very case to which we attached this discussion, the old German confederate constitution, this condition was fatal. It was not strong enough to oppose those masterful rulers who appeared during and after the Middle Ages in the provincial and central principalities. It collapsed because it lacked what only organs constituted by individual powers can assure to a state — quickness of decision, unconditional concentration of all resources, and that highest intellectuality which is developed only by individuals, whether because their motive is love of power or the sense of responsibility.

On the other hand, the persistence of the group depends on the fact that the organ thus differentiated does not attain *absolute* independence. Rather must the idea remain ever operative (although by no means always conscious) that the organ is in fact only a corporealized abstraction of the reciprocal action within the group itself. The group remains always the founda-

tion. Its powers, developments, purposes, only receive a peculiarly practical form in the organs. The latter only exhibit the mode in which the directly reciprocating primary elements of the group may work out their latent energies most completely and efficiently. So soon as the differentiation of the organ releases it from dependence upon the aggregate movements of the group, its preservative action may be turned into a destructive influence. I suggest two types of grounds for this: First, when the organ gains too vigorous independent life, and does not place the emphasis of its importance upon the worth of its service to the group, but upon its value to itself, the persistence of the organ may come into conflict with the persistence of the group. A relatively harmless case, but for that very reason one that quite clearly represents the type, is the bureaucracy. The bureaucratic body, a formal organization for exercising an extended administration, constitutes in itself a scheme which frequently clashes with the variable requirements of practical social life. This, on the one hand, because the departmental work of the bureaucratic system is not adjusted with reference to very individual and complicated cases, which none the less must be disposed of by means of the bureaucratic machinery; on the other hand, because the *tempo* in which the bureaucratic wheels must revolve is often in striking contrast with the urgency of the particular case. If now a structure with such functional inadequacies forgets its rôle as merely servitor of the group, and deports itself as though its own existence were its ultimate purpose, the difference between its life forms and those of the whole group must eventuate in positive harm to the latter. The persistence of both is no longer compatible. In this respect we might compare bureaucratic with logical schematism. The latter bears about the same relation to knowledge of reality in general that the former bears to civic administration. Each is a tool and a form, indispensable in connection with the content which it is called to order, but the whole meaning and purpose of each lie in this content. When logic poses, however, as independent knowledge, and, without reference to the real content of which

it is a mere form, presumes to construct of itself a separate intelligence, it makes for itself a world which usually presents marked contrasts with the real universe. The logical forms abstracted and organized into a science are merely an organ for comprehension of the totality of things. So soon, however, as logic declines this rôle and strives after complete self-sufficiency, so soon as logic attempts to be the conclusion rather than the medium of understanding, it becomes as obstructive to the preservation, extension, and unification of knowledge as bureaucratic schematism may be to the aggregate interests of the group.

Even the law does not always avoid this sociological complication. The law is aboriginally that form of reciprocal relationship between the group members which has approved itself as most necessary for the stability of the group. The form which the law defines is not sufficient of itself to assure this stability or the progress of the society in which it is in force. The law of any group is the minimum, which must be preserved as the foundation of the existence of that group. The elaboration of organs is, in this connection, double. From transactions actually demanded, and as a rule really customary, there differentiates itself "the law," the abstracted form and norm of just these transactions, logically connected and completed, which then remains as a standard to which real action shall conform. This group-preserving organ, being composed of ideas, needs still further a concrete organ in order that it may be effective against opposition. Technical relations brought about the destruction of that original unit in which either the *pater familias* or the assembled group rendered judgment. A special class became necessary to assure the integrity of the legal norms in the acts of the group elements. But useful and necessary as are both these developments—the abstraction of group conduct with arrangement into a completed system of laws, and the incarnation of the law in a judicial class—yet from both comes unavoidably the danger that the very necessary firmness and completeness (*innere Geschlossenheit*) of these structures may some time come into collision with the demands of group prog-

ress or with the requirements of cases containing specific complications. Through the logical cohesion of its structure and the dignity of its administrators, the law attains not only an independence which is actual, and for its purpose necessary to a very great extent, but it derives from within itself—by a *circulus vitiosus*, to be sure—a claim to unlimited and irresponsible independence. Since now the concrete circumstances of the group sometimes demand other conditions for its maintenance, situations occur which have been expressed in the words *fiat justitia pereat mundus*, and *summum jus summa injuria*. The attempt is made to give the law that flexibility and adaptability which are appropriate to its character as an organ, by leaving to the judge a certain scope in the application and interpretation of statutes. On the borders of this territory within judicial discretion occur those cases of collision between the persistence of the law and that of the group which may here serve as illustrations of the fact. The group must allow its organs to acquire a certain staunchness and independence, or they could not promote the maintenance of the group. Precisely this necessary stability of the organ may efface its organic character. The autonomy and rigidity of the organ that acts as though it were an independent whole may turn into an injury of group unity.

In the case of bureaucracy, as in that of legal formalism, this conversion of an organ into a self-governing totality is the more dangerous because it takes the appearance and offers the pretext of being always for the sake of the whole. The attitude of the army sometimes fulfills this sociological form. This organ of group maintenance must, for technical reasons, be itself, so far as possible, an organism. To develop its professional qualities, particularly its close inner coherence, there is need of sharp distinction between it and other social classes. Hence the utility of various means, from the special code of honor among the officers to the distinctive uniform. Much as this promotion of the military order to independence serves the interests of the whole, it may assume such absoluteness and rigidity as to set the army apart from the group as a state within the state. This

cuts the connection with the root, from which after all its whole force and direction must come. The modern national army tries to anticipate this danger. By the device of universal liability to military service for a certain period a fortunate means is found of combining the independence of the military system with its organic character.

But not alone the possible antagonism between the whole and the parts, between the group and its organ, should hold the independence of the latter within certain bounds; but the same is desirable in order that, in case of necessity, the differentiated function may revert to the group. There is this peculiarity about the evolution of society, that its preservation sometimes calls for temporarily throwing out of service organs that have already been differentiated. This is not to be regarded as closely analogous with those structural degenerations which take place in animal organisms from changes in the conditions of life, as for example in visual organs that have become rudimentary after the habitat has long been in the dark. In these cases the function itself becomes superfluous, and for that reason the organ performing the function gradually dies away. In the social developments now in mind, on the contrary, the function is indispensable, and on that account, when the organ proves unequal to its performance, recourse must be had to that unmediated reciprocity between primary group elements as a substitute for which the organ was originally developed.

GEORG SIMMEL.

UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN.

(To be continued.)