The Sociology of Georg Simmel

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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 indifferentism 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.

Chapter 4

The Triad

§ 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 or 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 neutrally 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 grounds, 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

theoretical, since otherwise he would not take over his function. It is, therefore, as if subjective interest set in motion a purely objective mechanism. It is the fusion of personal distance from the objective significance of the quarrel with personal interest in its subjective significance which characterizes the non-partisan position. This position is the more perfect, the more distinctly each of these two elements is developed and the more harmoniously, in its very differentiation, each cooperates with the other.

The situation becomes more complicated when the non-partisan owes his position, not to his neutrality, but to his equal participation in the interests in conflict. This case is frequent when a given individual belongs to two different interest groups, one local, and the other objective, especially occupational. In earlier times, bishops could sometimes intervene between the secular ruler of their diocese and the pope. The administrator who is thoroughly familiar with the special interests of his district, will be the most suitable mediator in the case of a collision between these special interests and the general interests of the state which employs him. The measure of the combination between impartiality and interest which is favorable to the mediation between two locally separate groups, is often found in persons that come from one of these groups but live with the other. The difficulty of positions of this kind in which the mediator may find himself, usually derives from the fact that his equal interests in both parties, that is, his inner equilibrium, cannot be definitely ascertained and is, in fact, doubted often enough by both parties.

Yet an even more difficult and, indeed, often tragic situation occurs when the third is tied to the two parties, not by specific interests, but by his total personality; and this situation is extreme when the whole matter of the conflict cannot be clearly objectified, and its objective aspect is really only a pretext or opportunity for deeper personal irreconcilabilities to manifest themselves. In such a case, the third, whom love or duty, fate or habit have made equally intimate with both, can be crushed by the conflict—much more so than if he himself took sides. The danger is increased because the balance of his interests, which does not lean in either direction, usually does not lead to successful mediation, since reduction to a merely objective contrast fails. This is the type instanced by a great many family conflicts. The mediator, whose equal distance to both conflicting parties assures his impartiality, can accommodate both with relative ease. But the person who is impartial because he is equally close to the two, will find this much more difficult and will personally get into the most painful dualism of feelings. Where the mediator is *chosen*, therefore, the equally uninterested will be preferred (other things being equal) to the equally interested. Medieval Italian cities, for instance, often obtained their judges from the outside in order to be sure that they were not prejudiced by inner party frictions.

This suggests the second form of accommodation by means of an impartial third element, namely, arbitration. As long as the third properly operates as a mediator, the final termination of the conflict lies exclusively in the hands of the parties themselves. But when they choose an arbitrator, they relinquish this final decision. They project, as it were, their will to conciliation, and this will becomes personified in the arbitrator. He thus gains a special impressiveness and power over the antagonistic forces. The voluntary appeal to an arbitrator, to whom they submit from the beginning, presupposes a greater subjective confidence in the objectivity of judgment than does any other form of decision. For, even in the state tribunal, it is only the action of the complainant that results from confidence in just decision, since the complainant considers the decision that is favorable to him the just decision. The defendant, on the other hand, must enter the suit whether or not he believes in the impartiality of the judge. But arbitration results only when both parties to the conflict have this belief. This is the principle which sharply differentiates mediation from arbitration; and the more official the act of conciliation, the more punctiliously is this differentiation observed.

This statement applies to a whole range of conflicts; from those between capitalist and worker, which I mentioned earlier, to those of great politics, where the "good services" of a government in adjusting a conflict between two others are quite different from the arbitration occasionally requested of it. The trivialities of daily life, where the typical triad constantly places

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 fullness, 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, 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 side unconditionally 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 mediation 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 [13]

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 egoistic 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 paralyzation 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

[13] Literally, "the third who enjoys," that is, the third party which in some fashion or another draws advantage from the quarrel of two others.—Tr.

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 dependent 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. Ever 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 hand 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 had 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 a 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 excitation 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 flowing 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.