

# CROWDS AND POWER

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THE CROWD

## *The Fear of being Touched*

THERE IS NOTHING that man fears more than the touch of the unknown. He wants to *see* what is reaching towards him, and to be able to recognize or at least classify it. Man always tends to avoid physical contact with anything strange. In the dark, the fear of an unexpected touch can mount to panic. Even clothes give insufficient security: it is easy to tear them and pierce through to the naked, smooth, defenceless flesh of the victim.

All the distances which men create round themselves are dictated by this fear. They shut themselves in houses which no-one may enter, and only there feel some measure of security. The fear of burglars is not only the fear of being robbed, but also the fear of a sudden and unexpected clutch out of the darkness.

The repugnance to being touched remains with us when we go about among people; the way we move in a busy street, in restaurants, trains or buses, is governed by it. Even when we are standing next to them and are able to watch and examine them closely, we avoid actual contact if we can. If we do not avoid it, it is because we feel attracted to someone; and then it is we who make the approach.

The promptness with which apology is offered for an unintentional contact, the tension with which it is awaited, our violent and sometimes even physical reaction when it is not forthcoming, the antipathy and hatred we feel for the offender, even when we cannot be certain who it is—the whole knot of shifting and intensely sensitive reactions to an alien touch—proves that we are dealing here with a human propensity as deep-seated as it is alert and insidious; something which never leaves a man when he has once established the boundaries of his personality. Even in sleep, when he is far more unguarded, he can all too easily be disturbed by a touch.

It is only in a crowd that man can become free of this fear of being touched. That is the only situation in which the fear changes into its opposite. The crowd he needs is the dense crowd, in which body is pressed to body; a crowd, too, whose psychical constitution is also dense, or compact, so that he no longer notices who it is that presses against him. As soon as a man has surrendered himself to the crowd, he ceases to fear its touch. Ideally, all are equal there; no distinctions count, not even that of sex. The man pressed against him is the same as

himself. He feels him as he feels himself. Suddenly it is as though everything were happening in one and the same body. This is perhaps one of the reasons why a crowd seeks to close in on itself: it wants to rid each individual as completely as possible of the fear of being touched. The more fiercely people press together, the more certain they feel that they do not fear each other. This reversal of the fear of being touched belongs to the nature of crowds. The feeling of relief is most striking where the density of the crowd is greatest.

### *The Open and the Closed Crowd*

THE CROWD, suddenly there where there was nothing before, is a mysterious and universal phenomenon. A few people may have been standing together—five, ten or twelve, not more; nothing has been announced, nothing is expected. Suddenly everywhere is black with people and more come streaming from all sides as though streets had only one direction. Most of them do not know what has happened and, if questioned, have no answer; but they hurry to be there where most other people are. There is a determination in their movement which is quite different from the expression of ordinary curiosity. It seems as though the movement of some of them transmits itself to the others. But that is not all; they have a goal which is there before they can find words for it. This goal is the blackest spot where most people are gathered.

This is the extreme form of the spontaneous crowd and much more will have to be said about it later. In its innermost core it is not quite as spontaneous as it appears, but, except for these 5, 10 or 12 people with whom actually it originates, it is everywhere spontaneous. As soon as it exists at all, it wants to consist of *more* people: the urge to grow is the first and supreme attribute of the crowd. It wants to seize everyone within reach; anything shaped like a human being can join it. The natural crowd is the *open* crowd; there are no limits whatever to its growth; it does not recognize houses, doors or locks and those who shut themselves in are suspect. "Open" is to be understood here in the fullest sense of the word; it means open everywhere and in any direction. (The open crowd exists so long as it grows; it disintegrates as soon as it stops growing.)

For just as suddenly as it originates, the crowd disintegrates. In its spontaneous form it is a sensitive thing. The openness which enables it to grow is, at the same time, its danger. A foreboding of threatening

disintegration is always alive in the crowd. It seeks, through rapid increase, to avoid this for as long as it can; it absorbs everyone, and, because it does, must ultimately fall to pieces.)

In contrast to the open crowd which can grow indefinitely and which is of universal interest because it may spring up anywhere, there is the *closed* crowd.

The closed crowd renounces growth and puts the stress on permanence. The first thing to be noticed about it is that it has a boundary. It establishes itself by accepting its limitation. It creates a space for itself which it will fill. This space can be compared to a vessel into which liquid is being poured and whose capacity is known. The entrances to this space are limited in number, and only these entrances can be used; the boundary is respected whether it consists of stone, of solid wall, or of some special act of acceptance, or entrance fee. Once the space is completely filled, no one else is allowed in. Even if there is an overflow, the important thing is always the dense crowd in the closed room; those standing outside do not really belong.

The boundary prevents disorderly increase, but it also makes it more difficult for the crowd to disperse and so postpones its dissolution. In this way the crowd sacrifices its chance of growth, but gains in staying power. It is protected from outside influences which could become hostile and dangerous and it sets its hope on *repetition*. It is the expectation of reassembly which enables its members to accept each dispersal. The building is waiting for them; it exists for their sake and, so long as it is there, they will be able to meet in the same manner. The space is theirs, even during the ebb, and in its emptiness it reminds them of the flood.

### *The Discharge*

THE MOST IMPORTANT occurrence within the crowd is the *discharge*. Before this the crowd does not actually exist; it is the discharge which creates it. (This is the moment when all who belong to the crowd get rid of their differences and feel equal.)

These differences are mainly imposed from outside; they are distinctions of rank, status and property. Men as individuals are always conscious of these distinctions; they weigh heavily on them and keep them firmly apart from one another. A man stands by himself on a secure and well defined spot, his every gesture asserting his right to keep others at a distance. He stands there like a windmill on an enormous

plain, moving expressively; and there is nothing between him and the next mill. All life, so far as he knows it, is laid out in distances—the house in which he shuts himself and his property, the positions he holds, the rank he desires—all these serve to create distances, to confirm and extend them. Any free or large gesture of approach towards another human being is inhibited. Impulse and counter impulse ooze away as in a desert. No man can get near another, nor reach his height. In every sphere of life, firmly established hierarchies prevent him touching anyone more exalted than himself, or descending, except in appearance, to anyone lower. In different societies the distances are differently balanced against each other, the stress in some lying on birth, in others on occupation or property.

I do not intend to characterize these hierarchies in detail here, but it is essential to know that they exist everywhere and everywhere gain a decisive hold on men's minds and determine their behaviour to each other. But the satisfaction of being higher in rank than others does not compensate for the loss of freedom of movement. Man petrifies and darkens in the distances he has created. He drags at the burden of them, but cannot move. He forgets that it is self-inflicted, and longs for liberation. But how, alone, can he free himself? Whatever he does, and however determined he is, he will always find himself among others who thwart his efforts. So long as they hold fast to *their* distances, he can never come any nearer to them.

Only together can men free themselves from their burdens of distance; and this, precisely, is what happens in a crowd. During the discharge distinctions are thrown off and all feel *equal*. In that density, where there is scarcely any space between, and body presses against body, each man is as near the other as he is to himself; and an immense feeling of relief ensues. It is for the sake of this blessed moment, when no-one is greater or better than another, that people become a crowd.

But the moment of discharge, so desired and so happy, contains its own danger. It is based on an illusion; the people who suddenly feel equal have not really become equal; nor will they *feel* equal for ever. They return to their separate houses, they lie down on their own beds, they keep their possessions and their names. They do not cast out their relations nor run away from their families. Only true conversion leads men to give up their old associations and form new ones. Such associations, which by their very nature are only able to accept a limited number of members, have to secure their continuance by rigid rules. Such groups I call crowd crystals. Their function will be described later.

But the crowd, as such, disintegrates. It has a presentiment of this and fears it. It can only go on existing if the process of discharge is continued with new people who join it. Only the growth of the crowd prevents those who belong to it creeping back under their private burdens.

### *Destructiveness*

THE DESTRUCTIVENESS of the crowd is often mentioned as its most conspicuous quality, and there is no denying the fact that it can be observed everywhere, in the most diverse countries and civilizations. It is discussed and disapproved of, but never really explained.

The crowd particularly likes destroying houses and objects: breakable objects like window panes, mirrors, pictures and crockery; and people tend to think that it is the fragility of these objects which stimulates the destructiveness of the crowd. It is true that the noise of destruction adds to its satisfaction; the banging of windows and the crashing of glass are the robust sounds of fresh life, the cries of something new-born. It is easy to evoke them and that increases their popularity. Everything shouts together; the din is the applause of objects. There seems to be a special need for this kind of noise at the beginning of events, when the crowd is still small and little or nothing has happened. The noise is a promise of the reinforcements the crowd hopes for, and a happy omen for deeds to come. But it would be wrong to suppose that the ease with which things can be broken is the decisive factor in the situation. Sculptures of solid stone have been mutilated beyond recognition; Christians have destroyed the heads and arms of Greek Gods and reformers and revolutionaries have hauled down the statues of Saints, sometimes from dangerous heights, though often the stone they wanted to destroy has been so hard that they have achieved only half their purpose.

The destruction of representational images is the destruction of a hierarchy which is no longer recognized. It is the violation of generally established and universally visible and valid distances. The solidity of the images was the expression of their permanence. They seem to have existed for ever, upright and immovable; never before had it been possible to approach them with hostile intent. Now they are hauled down and broken to pieces. In this act the discharge accomplishes itself.

But it does not always go as far as this. The more usual kind of

destruction mentioned above is simply an attack on all boundaries. Windows and doors belong to houses; they are the most vulnerable part of their exterior and, once they are smashed, the house has lost its individuality; anyone may enter it and nothing and no-one is protected any more. In these houses live the supposed enemies of the crowd, those people who try to keep away from it. What separated them has now been destroyed and nothing stands between them and the crowd. They can come out and join it; or they can be fetched.

But there is more to it than this. In the crowd the individual feels that he is transcending the limits of his own person. He has a sense of relief, for the distances are removed which used to throw him back on himself and shut him in. With the lifting of these burdens of distance he feels free; his freedom is the crossing of these boundaries. He wants what is happening to him to happen to others too; and he expects it to happen to them. An earthen pot irritates him, for it is all boundaries. The closed doors of a house irritate him. Rites and ceremonies, anything which preserves distances, threaten him and seem unbearable. He fears that, sooner or later, an attempt will be made to force the disintegrating crowd back into these pre-existing vessels. To the crowd in its nakedness everything seems a Bastille.

Of all means of destruction the most impressive is *fire*. It can be seen from far off and it attracts ever more people. It destroys irrevocably; nothing after a fire is as it was before. A crowd setting fire to something feels irresistible; so long as the fire spreads, everyone will join it and everything hostile will be destroyed. After the destruction, crowd and fire die away.

### *The Eruption*

THE OPEN CROWD is the true crowd, the crowd abandoning itself freely to its natural urge for growth. An open crowd has no clear feeling or idea of the size it may attain; it does not depend on a known building which it has to fill; its size is not determined; it wants to grow indefinitely and what it needs for this is more and more people. In this naked state, the crowd is at its most conspicuous, but, because it always disintegrates, it seems something outside the ordinary course of life and so is never taken quite seriously. Men might have gone on disregarding it if the enormous increase of population in modern times, and the rapid growth of cities, had not more and more often given rise to its formation.

The closed crowds of the past, of which more will be heard later, had turned into familiar institutions. The peculiar state of mind characteristic of their members seemed something natural. They always met for a special purpose of a religious, festal or martial kind; and this purpose seemed to sanctify their state. A man attending a sermon honestly believed that it was the sermon which mattered to him, and he would have felt astonished or even indignant had it been explained to him that the large number of listeners present gave him more satisfaction than the sermon itself. All ceremonies and rules pertaining to such institutions are basically intent on capturing the crowd; they prefer a church-full secure to the whole world insecure. The regularity of church-going and the precise and familiar repetition of certain rites safeguard for the crowd something like a domesticated experience of itself. These performances and their recurrence at fixed times supplant needs for something harsher and more violent.

Such institutions might have proved adequate if the number of human beings had remained the same, but more and more people filled the towns and the accelerating increase in the growth of populations during the last few centuries continually provided fresh incitements to the formation of new and larger crowds. And nothing, not even the most experienced and subtle leadership, could have prevented them forming in such conditions.

All the rebellions against traditional ceremonial recounted in the history of religions have been directed against the confinement of the crowd which wants to feel the sensation of its own growth again. The Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament comes to mind. It is enacted in the open, thousands are able to listen and there is no doubt that it is directed against the limiting ceremoniousness of the official temple. One remembers the tendency of Pauline Christianity to break out of the national and tribal boundaries of Judaism and to become a universal faith for all men. One remembers the contempt of Buddhism for the caste-system of contemporary India.

The *inner* history, too, of the several world religions is rich in occurrences of a similar kind. The Crusades developed into crowd formations of a magnitude no church building of the contemporary world could have held. Later, whole towns became spectators of the performances of the flagellants and these, in addition, wandered from town to town. Wesley, in the 18th Century, based his movement on sermons in the open air. He was perfectly aware of the importance of the enormous crowds which listened to him and sometimes in his Journals he worked out the numbers of those who were able to hear

him. Each eruption from a closed locality means that the crowd desires to regain its old pleasure in sudden, rapid and unlimited growth.

I designate as *eruption* the sudden transition from a closed into an open crowd. This is a frequent occurrence, and one should not understand it as something referring only to space. A crowd quite often seems to overflow from some well-guarded space into the squares and streets of a town where it can move about freely, exposed to everything and attracting everyone. But more important than this external event is the corresponding inner movement: the dissatisfaction with the limitation of the number of participants, the sudden will to attract, the passionate determination to reach *all* men.

Since the French Revolution these eruptions have taken on a form which we feel to be modern. To an impressive degree the crowd has freed itself from the substance of traditional religion and this has perhaps made it easier for us to see it in its nakedness, in what one might call its biological state, without the transcendental theories and goals which used to be inculcated in it. The history of the last 150 years has culminated in a spate of such eruptions; they have engulfed even wars, for all wars are now mass wars. The crowd is no longer content with pious promises and conditionals. It wants to experience for itself the strongest possible feeling of its own animal force and passion and, as means to this end, it will use whatever social pretexts and demands offer themselves.

The first point to emphasise is that the crowd never feels saturated. It remains hungry as long as there is one human being it has not reached. One cannot be certain whether this hunger would persist once it had really absorbed all men, but it seems likely. Its efforts to endure, however, are somewhat impotent. Its only hope lies in the formation of double crowds, the one measuring itself against the other. The closer in power and intensity the rivals are, the longer both of them will stay alive.

### *Persecution*

ONE OF THE most striking traits of the inner life of a crowd is the feeling of being persecuted, a peculiar angry sensitiveness and irritability directed against those it has once and forever nominated as enemies. These can behave in any manner, harsh or conciliatory, cold or sympathetic, severe or mild—whatever they do will be interpreted as springing from an unshakable malevolence, a premeditated intention to destroy the crowd, openly or by stealth.

In order to understand this feeling of hostility and persecution it is necessary to start from the basic fact that the crowd, once formed, wants to grow rapidly. It is difficult to exaggerate the power and determination with which it spreads. As long as it feels that it is growing—in revolutionary states, for example, which start with small but highly-charged crowds—it regards anything which opposes its growth as constricting. It can be dispersed and scattered by police, but this has only a temporary effect, like a hand moving through a swarm of mosquitoes. But it can also be attacked from within, namely by meeting the demands which led to its formation. Its weaker adherents then drop away and others on the point of joining turn back. An attack from outside can only strengthen the crowd; those who have been physically scattered are more strongly drawn together again. An attack from *within*, on the other hand, is really dangerous; a strike which has achieved any gains crumbles visibly. It is an appeal to individual appetites and the crowd, as such, regards it as bribery, as “immoral”; it runs counter to its clear-cut basic conviction. Everyone belonging to such a crowd carries within him a small traitor who wants to eat, drink, make love and be left alone. As long as he does all this on the quiet and does not make too much fuss about it, the crowd allows him to proceed. But, as soon as he makes a noise about it, it starts to hate and to fear him. It knows then that he has been listening to the enticements of the enemy.

The crowd here is like a besieged city and, as in many sieges, it has enemies before its walls and enemies within them. During the fighting it attracts more and more partisans from the country around. These slip through the enemy lines and collect in front of the gates, begging to be let in. In favourable moments their wish is granted; or they may climb over the walls. Thus the city daily gains new defenders, but each of these brings with him that small invisible traitor we spoke of before, who quickly disappears into a cellar to join the traitors already hidden there. Meanwhile the siege continues. The besiegers certainly watch for a chance to attack, but they also try to prevent new recruits reaching the city. To do this they keep on strengthening the walls from outside. (In this strange siege the walls are more important to the assailants than to the defenders.) Or they try to bribe newcomers to keep away. If they fail in both, they do what they can to strengthen and encourage that traitor to his own cause which each newcomer carries with him into the city.

The crowd's feeling of persecution is nothing but the intuition of this double threat; the walls outside become more and more

constricting and the cellars within more and more undermined. The activities of the enemy outside on the walls are open and can be watched; in the cellars they are hidden and insidious.

But images of this kind never convey more than a part of the truth. Those streaming from outside, wanting to get into the city, are not only new partisans, a reinforcement and a support; they are also the *food* of the crowd. A crowd which is not increasing is in a state of fast—there are ways of holding out through such a fast and religions have developed a great mastery of these. I propose now to show how the world religions have succeeded in holding their crowds even when these are not in the stage of fierce and rapid growth.

### *Domestication of Crowds in the World Religions*

RELIGIONS WHOSE claims to universality have been acknowledged very soon change the accent of their appeal. In the beginning their aim is to reach and to win all who can be reached and won. The crowd they envisage is universal; every single soul counts and every soul shall be theirs. But the fight they have to sustain leads gradually to a kind of hidden respect for adversaries whose institutions are already in existence. They see how difficult it is to hold one's ground; institutions which offer solidarity and permanence seem more and more important to them. Stimulated by those of their adversaries, they make great efforts to introduce institutions of their own, and these, if they succeed, grow in importance with time. The dead weight of institutions, which have a life of their own, then gradually tames the impetus of the original appeal. Churches are built to contain the existing faithful and are enlarged only with reluctance and circumspection when there is real need. There is, too, a strong tendency to collect the faithful in separate units. When they become many there is always a danger of disintegration, which must be continually countered.

A sense of the treacherousness of the crowd, is, so to speak, in the blood of all the historical world religions. Their own traditions, which are of a binding character, teach them how suddenly and unexpectedly they grew. Their stories of mass conversions appear miraculous to them, and they are so. In the heretical movements which the churches fear and persecute, the same kind of miracle turns against themselves and the injuries thus inflicted on their bodies are painful and unforgettable. Both the rapid growth of their early days and the no less rapid defections later keep their suspicion of the crowd always alive.

What they want in contrast to this is an obsequious flock. It is customary to regard the faithful as sheep and to praise them for their submissiveness. The churches entirely renounce the crowd's essential tendency to quick growth. They are satisfied with a temporary fiction of equality among the faithful—though this is never too strictly imposed—, with a defined density kept within moderate bounds, and with a strong direction. The goal they place in the far distance, in that other world which no man may enter so long as he is alive and which he has to earn by many efforts and submissions. Gradually the direction becomes the most important thing; the more distant the goal, the better the prospect of its permanence. The seemingly indispensable principle of growth has been replaced by something quite different: by repetition.

The faithful are gathered together at appointed places and times and, through performances which are always the same, they are transported into a mild state of crowd feeling sufficient to impress itself on them without becoming dangerous, and to which they grow accustomed. Their feeling of unity is dispensed to them in doses and the continuance of the church depends on the rightness of the dosage.

Wherever men have grown accustomed to this precisely repeated and limited experience in their churches or temples they can no longer do without it. They need it as they need food and anything else which is part of their existence. No sudden suppression of their cult, no prohibition by edict of the state, can remain without consequences. Any disturbance of their carefully balanced crowd-economy must ultimately lead to the eruption of an *open* crowd, and this will have all the elemental attributes which one knows. It will spread rapidly and bring about a real instead of a fictitious equality; it will find new and far more fervent densities; it will give up for the moment that far-off and scarcely attainable goal for which it has been educated, and set itself a goal here, in the immediate surroundings of this concrete life.

All suddenly prohibited religions revenge themselves by a kind of secularization. The character of their adherents' faith changes completely in an eruption of great and unexpected ferocity, but they do not understand this. They think they still hold their old faith and convictions and their only intention is to keep them. But, in reality, they have suddenly become quite different people. They are filled with the unique and violent feeling of the open crowd which they now compose, and at all costs they want to remain part of it.

## *Panic*

PANIC IN A theatre, as has often been noted, is a *disintegration* of the crowd. The more people were bound together by the performance and the more closed the form of the theatre which contained them, the more violent the disintegration.

It is also possible that the performance alone was not enough to create a genuine crowd. The audience may have remained together, not because they felt gripped by it, but simply because they happened to be there. What the play could not achieve is immediately achieved by a *fire*. Fire is as dangerous to human beings as it is to animals; it is the strongest and oldest symbol of the crowd. However little crowd feeling there may have been in the audience, awareness of a fire brings it suddenly to a head. The common unmistakable danger creates a common fear. For a short time the audience becomes something like a real crowd. If they were not in a theatre, people could flee together like a herd of animals in danger, and increase the impetus of their flight by the simultaneity of identical movements. An active crowd-fear of this kind is the common collective experience of all animals who live together in herds and whose joint safety depends on their speed.

In a theatre, on the other hand, the crowd inevitably disintegrates in the most violent manner. Only one or two persons can get through each exit at a time and thus the energy of flight turns into an energy of struggle to push others back. Only one man at a time can pass between the rows of seats and each seat is neatly separated from the rest. Each man has his place and sits or stands by himself. A normal theatre is arranged with the intention of pinning people down and allowing them only the use of their hands and voices; their use of their legs is restricted as far as possible.

The sudden command to flee which the fire gives is immediately countered by the impossibility of any common movement. Each man sees the door through which he must pass; and he sees himself alone in it, sharply cut off from all the others. It is the frame of a picture which very soon dominates him. Thus the crowd, a moment ago at its apex, must disintegrate violently, and the transmutation shows itself in violent individual action: everyone shoves, hits and kicks in all directions.

The more fiercely each man "fights for his life", the clearer it becomes that he is fighting *against* all the others who hem him in. They stand there like chairs, balustrades, closed doors, but different

from these in that they are alive and hostile. They push him in this or that direction, as it suits them or, rather, as they are pushed themselves. Neither women, children nor old people are spared: they are not distinguished from men. Whilst the individual no longer feels himself as "crowd", he is still completely surrounded by it. Panic is a disintegration of the crowd *within* the crowd. The individual breaks away and wants to escape from it because the crowd, as a whole, is endangered. But, because he is physically still stuck in it, he must attack it. To abandon himself to it now would be his ruin, because it itself is threatened by ruin. In such a moment a man cannot insist too strongly on his separateness. Hitting and pushing, he evokes hitting and pushing; and the more blows he inflicts and the more he receives, the more *himself* he feels. The boundaries of his own person become clear to him again.

It is strange to observe how strongly for the person struggling with it the crowd assumes the character of fire. It originated with the unexpected sight of flames or with a shout of "fire" and it plays like flames with the man who is trying to escape from it. The people he pushes away are like burning objects to him; their touch is hostile, and on every part of his body; and it terrifies him. Anyone who stands in his way is tainted with the general hostility of fire. The manner in which fire spreads and gradually works its way round a person until he is entirely surrounded by it is very similar to the crowd threatening him on all sides. The incalculable movements within it, the thrusting forth of an arm, a fist or a leg, are like the flames of a fire which may suddenly spring up on any side. Fire in the form of a conflagration of forest or steppe actually *is* a hostile crowd and fear of it can be awakened in any human being. Fire, as a symbol for the crowd, has entered the whole economy of man's feelings and become an immutable part of it. That emphatic trampling on people, so often observed in panics and apparently so senseless, is nothing but the stamping out of fire.

Disintegration through panic can only be averted by prolonging the original state of united crowd fear. In a threatened church there is a way of achieving this: people pray in common fear to a common God in whose hand it lies to extinguish the fire by a miracle.

## *The Crowd as a Ring*

AN ARENA CONTAINS a crowd which is *doubly* closed. On account of this curious quality its examination may not be entirely without value.

The arena is well demarcated from the outside world. It is usually

visible from far off and its situation in the city—the space which it occupies—is well known. People always feel where it is, even if they are not thinking of it. Shouts from the arena carry far and, when it is open at the top, something of the life which goes on inside communicates itself to the surrounding city.

But however exciting these communications may be, an uninhibited flow into the arena is not possible. The number of seats it contains is limited; its maximum density is fixed in advance. The seats are arranged so that people are not too closely crushed. The occupants are meant to be comfortable in them and to be able to watch, each from his own seat, without disturbing others.

Outside, facing the city, the arena displays a lifeless wall; inside is a wall of people. The spectators turn their backs to the city. They have been lifted out of its structure of walls and streets and, for the duration of their time in the arena, they do not care about anything which happens there; they have left behind all their associations, rules and habits. Their remaining together in large numbers for a stated period of time is secure and their excitement has been promised them. But only under one definite condition: the discharge must take place *inside the arena*.

The seats are arranged in tiers around the arena, so that everyone can see what is happening below. The consequence of this is that the crowd is seated opposite itself. Every spectator has a thousand in front of him, a thousand heads. As long as he is there, all the others are there too; whatever excites him, excites them; and he sees it. They are seated some distance away from him, so that the differing details which make individuals of them are blurred; they all look alike and they all behave in a similar manner and he notices in them only the things which he himself is full of. Their visible excitement increases his own.

There is no break in the crowd which sits like this, exhibiting itself to itself. It forms a closed ring from which nothing can escape. The tiered ring of fascinated faces has something strangely homogeneous about it. It embraces and contains everything which happens below; no-one relaxes his grip on this; no-one tries to get away. Any gap in the ring might remind him of disintegration and subsequent dispersal. But there is no gap; this crowd is doubly closed, to the world outside and in itself.

## The Attributes of the Crowd

BEFORE I TRY to undertake a classification of crowds it may be useful to summarize briefly their main attributes. The following four traits are important.

1. *The crowd always wants to grow.* There are no natural boundaries to its growth. Where such boundaries have been artificially created—e.g. in all institutions which are used for the preservation of closed crowds—an eruption of the crowd is always possible and will, in fact, happen from time to time. There are no institutions which can be absolutely relied on to prevent the growth of the crowd once and for all.

2. *Within the crowd there is equality.* This is absolute and indisputable and never questioned by the crowd itself. It is of fundamental importance and one might even define a crowd as a state of absolute equality. A head is a head, an arm is an arm, and differences between individual heads and arms are irrelevant. It is for the sake of this equality that people become a crowd and they tend to overlook anything which might detract from it. All demands for justice and all theories of equality ultimately derive their energy from the actual experience of equality familiar to anyone who has been part of a crowd.

3. *The crowd loves density.* It can never feel too dense. Nothing must stand between its parts or divide them; everything must be the crowd itself. The feeling of density is strongest in the moment of discharge. One day it may be possible to determine this density more accurately and even to measure it.

4. *The crowd needs a direction.* It is in movement and it moves towards a goal. The direction, which is common to all its members, strengthens the feeling of equality. A goal outside the individual members and common to all of them drives underground all the private differing goals which are fatal to the crowd as such. Direction is essential for the continuing existence of the crowd. Its constant fear of disintegration means that it will accept *any* goal. A crowd exists so long as it has an unattained goal.

There is, however, another tendency hidden in the crowd, which appears to lead to new and superior kinds of formation. The nature of these is often not predictable.

Each of these four attributes will be found in any crowd to a greater

or lesser degree. How a crowd is to be classified will depend on which of them predominates in it.

I have discussed open and closed crowds and explained that these terms refer to their growth. The crowd is open so long as its growth is not impeded; it is closed when its growth is limited.

Another distinction is that between *rhythmic* and *stagnating* crowds. This refers to the next two attributes, *equality* and *density*; and to both of them simultaneously.

The *stagnating* crowd lives for its discharge. But it feels certain of this and puts it off. It desires a relatively long period of density to prepare for the moment of discharge. It, so to speak, warms itself at its density and delays as long as possible with the discharge. The process here starts not with equality, but with density; and equality then becomes the main goal of the crowd, which in the end it reaches. Every shout, every utterance in common is a valid expression of this equality.

In the *rhythmic* crowd, on the other hand (for example the crowd of the dance), density and equality coincide from the beginning. Everything here depends on movement. All the physical stimuli involved function in a predetermined manner and are passed on from one dancer to another. Density is embodied in the formal recurrence of retreat and approach; equality is manifest in the movements themselves. And thus, by the skilful enactment of density and equality, a crowd feeling is engendered. These rhythmic formations spring up very quickly and it is only physical exhaustion which bring them to an end.

The next pair of concepts—the *slow* and the *quick* crowd—refer exclusively to the nature of the goal. The conspicuous crowds which are the ones usually mentioned and which form such an essential part of modern life—the political, sporting and war like crowds we see daily—are all *quick* crowds. Very different from these are the religious crowds whose goal is a heaven, or crowds formed of pilgrims. Their goal is distant, the way to it long, and the true formation of the crowd is relegated to a far off country or to another world. Of these slow crowds we actually see only the tributaries, for the end they strive after is invisible and not to be attained by the unbelieving. The slow crowd gathers slowly and only sees itself as permanent in a far distance.

This is a mere indication of the nature of these forms. We shall have to consider them more closely.

## Rhythm

RHYTHM IS ORIGINALLY the rhythm of the feet. Every human being walks, and, since he walks on two legs with which he strikes the ground in turn and since he only moves if he continues to do this, whether intentionally or not, a rhythmic sound ensues. The two feet never strike the ground with exactly the same force. The difference between them can be larger or smaller according to individual constitution or mood. It is also possible to walk faster or slower, to run, to stand still suddenly, or to jump.

Man has always listened to the footsteps of other men; he has certainly paid more attention to them than to his own. Animals too have their familiar gait; their rhythms are often richer and more audible than those of men; hoofed animals flee in herds, like regiments of drummers. The knowledge of the animals by which he was surrounded, which threatened him and which he hunted, was man's oldest knowledge. He learnt to know animals by the rhythm of their movement. The earliest writing he learnt to read was that of their tracks; it was a kind of rhythmic notation imprinted on the soft ground and, as he read it, he connected it with the sound of its formation.

Many of these footprints were in large numbers close together and, just by looking quietly at them, men, who themselves originally lived in small hordes, were made aware of the contrast between their own numbers and the enormous numbers of some animal herds. They were always hungry and on the watch for game; and the more there was of it, the better for them. But they also wanted to be more themselves. Man's feeling for his own increase was always strong and is certainly not to be understood only as his urge for self-propagation. Men wanted to be more, *then* and *there*; the large numbers of the herd which they hunted blended in their feelings with their own numbers which they *wished* to be large, and they expressed this in a specific state of communal excitement which I shall call the *rhythmic* or *throbbing* crowd.

The means of achieving this state was first of all the rhythm of their feet, repeating and multiplied. Steps added to steps in quick succession conjure up a larger number of men than there are. The men do not move away but, dancing, remain on the same spot. The sound of their steps does not die away, for these are continually repeated; there is a long stretch of time during which they continue to sound loud and alive. What they lack in numbers the dancers make up in intensity; if

they stamp harder, it sounds as if there were more of them. As long as they go on dancing, they exert an attraction on all in their neighbourhood. Everyone within hearing joins them and remains with them. The natural thing would be for new people to go on joining them for ever, but soon there are none left and the dancers have to conjure up increase out of their own limited numbers. They move as though there were more and more of them. Their excitement grows and reaches frenzy.

How do they compensate for the increase in numbers which they cannot have? First, it is important that they should all do the same thing. They all stamp the ground and they all do it in the same way; they all swing their arms to and fro and shake their heads. The equivalence of the dancers becomes, and ramifies as, the equivalence of their limbs. Every part of a man which can move gains a life of its own and acts as if independent, but the movements are all parallel, the limbs appearing superimposed on each other. They are close together, one often resting on another, and thus density is added to their state of equivalence. Density and equality become one and the same. In the end, there appears to be a single creature dancing, a creature with fifty heads and a hundred legs and arms, all performing in exactly the same way and with the same purpose. When their excitement is at its height, these people really feel as one, and nothing but physical exhaustion can stop them.

Thanks to the dominance of rhythm, all throbbing crowds have something similar in their appearance. The following account of one such dance was written in the first third of the last century. It describes the *Haka* of the New Zealand Maoris, which was originally a war dance.

"The Maoris placed themselves in an extended line, in ranks four deep. This dance, called Haka, to a stranger witnessing it for the first time, is calculated to excite the most alarming fears; the entire body of performers, male and female, bond and free, were mixed together, without reference to the rank they held in the community. All the male performers were quite naked, except for the cartouche-box around the body, filled with ball cartridges. All were armed with muskets or bayonets put on the ends of spears or sticks; the young women, including the wives of the chief who joined in the dance, were exposed to the waist.

"In the chant that accompanied the dance, proper time was kept; as was equally well displayed in the various performances of agility exhibited in these hakas, especially in the perpendicular jump from the

ground which was often repeated in a simultaneous manner, as if the whole body of performers were actuated by *one* impulse. The implements with which they armed themselves were brandished at the same moment, and the distortions of countenance, with the long tresses of hair that often adorn either sex, gave them the appearance of an army of Gorgons.

"The countenances of all were distorted into every possible shape permitted by the muscles of the human face; every new grimace was instantly adopted by all the performers in exact unison. Thus, if one commenced screwing up his face with a rigidity as if the appliance of a vice had been made use of, he was instantly followed by the whole body with a similar gesticulation, so that at times the whites of the eyes were only visible, the eyeballs rolling to and fro. They almost rolled their eyes out of their sockets, and distended their mouths, like hammer-headed sharks, from ear to ear. Their tongues were thrust out of the mouth with an extension impossible for an European to copy; early and long practice only could accomplish it. Altogether their countenances presented so horrible a spectacle that I was glad to relieve myself by withdrawing my gaze. . . .

"Every part of their body was in separate activity, fingers, toes, eyes, tongues as well as arms and legs. With the flattened hand they struck themselves on the left breast, or on the thigh. The noise of their chant was deafening. At least 350 performers took part in the haka. It is easy to imagine the effect of these dances in times of war, in raising the bravery, and heightening the antipathy that is felt by the contending parties against each other."

The rolling of the eyes and the thrusting out of the tongue are signs of defiance and challenge. But though war is usually a matter for men, that is, for *free* men, *everyone* abandons himself to the excitement of the haka. The crowd here knows neither age, sex nor rank; all act as equals. But what distinguishes this dance from others of a similar purpose is the exceptionally extreme *ramification* of equality. It is as though each body was taken to pieces, not only the arms and legs, but also the fingers, toes, tongues and eyes; and then all the tongues got together and did exactly the same thing at the same moment; all the toes and all the eyes became equal in one and the same enterprise. Each part of each dancer is seized by this feeling of equality; and it is always represented in action of increasing violence. The sight of 350 human beings, who together leap from the ground, together thrust out their tongues and together roll their eyes, must make an impression of invincible unity. Density here is not only a density of people, but also, and

equally, one of their several limbs. One could imagine fingers and tongues coming together on their own to fight. The rhythm of the haka gives substance to each one of these equalities; mounting together to their common climax they are irresistible. For everything happens under the supposition that it is *seen*. The enemy is watching and the essence of the haka is the intensity of the common threat. But, once in existence, the dance becomes something more as well. It is practised from an early age, assumes many shapes and is performed on all kinds of occasion. Many travellers have been welcomed with a haka; the report quoted above derives from one such occasion. When one friendly group meets another, they salute each other with a haka, which looks so much in earnest that the innocent spectator fears the immediate outbreak of a battle. At the funeral ceremonies of a great chief, after all the phases of violent lament and self-mutilation customary with the Maoris, or after a festive and abundant meal, everyone suddenly jumps up, reaches for his musket and forms into a haka.

In this dance, in which all may participate, the tribe feel themselves a crowd. They make use of it whenever they feel a need to be a crowd, or to appear as one in front of others. In the rhythmic perfection it has attained the haka serves this purpose reliably. Thanks to it their unity is never seriously threatened from within.

### Stagnation

THE *stagnating* crowd is closely compressed; it is impossible for it to move really freely. Its state has something passive in it; it waits. It waits for a head to be shown it, or for words, or it watches a fight. What really matters to it is *density*. The pressure which each member feels around him will also be felt as the measure of the strength of the formation of which he is now part. The more people who flow into that formation, the stronger the pressure becomes; feet have nowhere to move, arms are pinned down and only heads remain free, to see and to hear; every impulse is passed directly from body to body. Each individual knows that there must be a number of people there, but, because they are so closely jammed together, they are felt to be one. This kind of density allows itself time; its effects are constant over a certain period; it is amorphous and not subject to a practised and familiar rhythm. For a long time nothing happens, but the desire for action accumulates and increases until it bursts forth with enhanced violence.

The *patience* of a stagnating crowd becomes less astonishing if one realizes fully the importance this feeling of density has for it. The denser it is, the more people it attracts. Its density is the measure of its size, but is also the stimulus to further growth; the densest crowd grows fastest. Stagnation before the discharge is an exhibition of this density; the longer a crowd remains stagnant, the longer it feels and manifests its density.

For the individuals who compose such a crowd the period of stagnation is a period of marvels; laid down are all the stings and weapons with which at other times they arm themselves against each other; they touch one another, but do not feel confined; a clutch is a clutch no longer; they do not fear each other. Before they set forth, in whatever direction this will be, they want to make sure that they will remain together when they do. They want to grow closer together beforehand and, to do this, they need to be undisturbed. The stagnating crowd is not quite sure of its unity and therefore keeps still for as long as possible.

But this patience has its limits. The discharge must come sometime. Without it, it would be impossible to say that there really was a crowd. The outcry which used to be heard at public executions when the head of the malefactor was held up by the executioner, and the outcry heard today at sporting occasions, are the *voice* of the crowd. But the outcry must be spontaneous. Rehearsed and regularly repeated shouts are no proof that the crowd has achieved a life of its own. They may lead to it, but they may also be only external, like the drill of a military unit. Contrasted with them, the spontaneous and never quite predictable outcry of a crowd is unmistakable, and its effect enormous. It can express emotions of any kind; *which* emotions often matters less than their strength and variety and the freedom of their sequence. It is they which give the crowd its "feeling" space.

They can also, however, be so violent and concentrated that they immediately tear the crowd apart. This is what happens at public executions; one and the same victim can be killed only once. If he happens to be someone thought inviolable, there will, up to the very last moment, be some doubt as to whether he can in fact be killed; and this doubt will accentuate the inherent stagnation of the crowd. All the sharper and more effective, then, will be the sight of the severed head. The succeeding outcry will be terrible, but it will be the last outcry of this particular crowd. We may say that, in this case, the crowd pays for the lengthened period of stagnant expectation, which it will have enjoyed intensely, with its own immediate death.

Our modern arrangements for sport are more practical. The spectators can *sit*: universal patience is made visible to itself. They are free to stamp their feet, but they stay in the same place; they are free to clap their hands. A definite time is allowed for the occasion, and in general, they can count on its not being shortened. For this time, at least, they will remain together. Within it, however, anything may happen. No-one can know whether, or when, or on which side, goals will be shot; and, apart from these longed-for occurrences, there are many other lesser events which can lead to vociferous eruptions, many occasions on which the crowd will hear its own voice.

The final disintegration and scattering of this crowd is made somewhat less painful by being determined in advance. It is known, too, that the beaten side will have an opportunity of taking its revenge; everything is not over for good. The crowd can really feel comfortable at a match; first it can jam the entrances and then it can settle down in the seats. It can shout as opportunity arises and, even when everything is over, it can hope for similar occasions in the future.

Stagnant crowds of a much more passive kind form in *theatres*. Ideally, actors play to full houses; the desired number of spectators is fixed from the start. People arrive on their own. There may be small aggregations in front of the box-office, but people find their way separately into the auditorium. They are taken to their seats. Everything is fixed: the play they are going to see, the actors who will perform, the time the curtain will rise, and the spectators themselves in their seats. Late-comers are received with slight hostility. There they all sit, like a well-drilled herd, still and infinitely patient. But everyone is very well aware of his own separate existence. He has paid for his seat and he notices who sits next to him. Till the play starts, he leisurely contemplates the rows of assembled heads. They awaken in him an agreeable but not too pressing feeling of density. The equality of the spectators really consists only in the fact that they are all exposed to the same performance. But their spontaneous reactions to it are limited. Even their applause has its prescribed times; in general people clap only when they are supposed to. The strength of the applause is the only clue to the extent to which they have become a crowd; it is the only measure of this, and is valued accordingly by the actors.

Stagnation in the theatre has become so much a rite that individuals feel only gentle external pressure, which does not stir them too deeply and scarcely ever gives them a feeling of inner unity and togetherness. But one should not underestimate the extent of their real and shared

expectation, nor forget that it persists during the whole of the performance. People rarely leave a theatre before the end of the play; even when disappointed they sit it through, which means that, for that period anyway, they stay together.

The contrast between the stillness of the listeners and the din of the apparatus inflicting itself on them is even more striking in *concerts*. Here everything depends on the audience being completely undisturbed; any movement is frowned on, any sound taboo. Though the music performed draws a good part of its life from its rhythm, no rhythmical effect of any sort on the listeners must be perceptible. The continually fluctuating emotions set free by the music are of the most varied and intense kind. Most of those present must feel them and, in addition, must feel them together, at the same time. But all outward reactions are prohibited. People sit there motionless, as though they managed to hear *nothing*. It is obvious that a long and artificial training in stagnation has been necessary here. We have grown accustomed to its results, but, to an unprejudiced mind, there are few phenomena of our cultural life as astonishing as a concert audience. People who allow music to affect them in a natural way behave quite differently; and those who hear it for the first time, never having heard any before, show unbridled excitement. When French sailors played the Marseillaise to the aborigines of Tasmania these expressed their satisfaction by such strange contortions of their body and such astounding gestures that the sailors shook with laughter. One young man was so enchanted by it that he tore out his hair, scratched his head with both hands and repeatedly uttered loud, piercing cries.

A meagre remnant of physical discharge is preserved even in our concerts. Clapping is offered as thanks to the performers: a brief, chaotic noise in exchange for a long, well-organized one. If applause is suppressed and people disperse as quietly as they have sat, it is because they feel that they are within the sphere of religious devotion.

It is from this sphere that the stillness of the concert originally derives. The *standing together* before God is a practice common to many religions. It is characterized by the same features with which we have become familiar in secular crowds, and it can lead to just as sudden and violent discharges.

Perhaps the most impressive case is the famous "Standing on Arafat", the climax of the pilgrimage to Mecca. On a ritually appointed day, 600-700,000 pilgrims gather on the plain of Arafat, some hours distance from Mecca. They group themselves in a large circle round "The Mount of Mercy", a bare hill which rises in the middle of the

plain. They take up their positions towards two o'clock, when the sun is hottest, and remain standing there until it sets. They are all bare-headed and dressed in the white robes of pilgrims. In passionate tension they listen to the words of the preacher who speaks to them from the summit of the hill. His sermon is an uninterrupted glorification of God and the pilgrims respond with one formula, repeated a thousand times: "We wait for your commands, O Lord. We wait for your commands." Some sob with excitement, some beat their chest. Many faint in the terrible heat. But it is essential that they should endure through the long burning hours on the sacred plain. Only at sunset is the signal for departure given.

Subsequent events, which are amongst the most enigmatic of all known religious observances, will be described and interpreted later, in another context. All we are interested in here is this hour-long moment of stagnation. Hundreds of thousands of human beings in a state of mounting excitement are kept there on that plain. They stand before God, and, whatever happens to them, may not abandon their station. Together they take their places and together they receive the signal for departure. They are set on fire by the sermon and they set themselves on fire with their own voices. Their "waiting" is contained in the formula they use, which recurs again and again. The sun, moving with imperceptible slowness, immerses everything in the same blazing light, the same burning glow. It is the embodiment of stagnation.

Every gradation of stiffening and of stillness can be found among religious crowds, but the highest degree of passivity ever attained by a crowd is that imposed on it from outside, by force. In a battle two crowds meet, each of which wants to be stronger than the other. With the help of battle-cries each tries to prove, to the enemy as to itself, that it is the stronger. The aim of the battle is to silence the other side. Their loud and united voice is a threat rightly feared; when they have all been cut down, it is silenced for ever. The stillest crowd is the crowd of enemy dead. The more dangerous they were, the stronger the desire to see them in a motionless heap. The experience of seeing them thus, as a defenceless heap of dead, evokes an intense and peculiar emotion, for it was only a short time before that they were experienced as a living host, which fought and shouted for blood. In former times, this *stilled crowd* of the dead was by no means felt to be lifeless. It was assumed that, in a way of their own, they would go on living somewhere else, all of them together still; and basically their life would be as one had known it. The enemy who lay on the battlefield as corpses

represented for the beholder an extreme case of a stagnating crowd.

But this conception can be carried still one degree further. Instead of the slaughtered enemy, it can be *all* the dead *everywhere* who lie in the common earth and await resurrection. Everyone who dies and is buried adds to their number. All who have ever lived belong there, and there are so many of them that they cannot be counted. The earth between them is their density and, though they lie there separately, they are felt to be close to each other. They will lie there for an eternity, until the Day of the Last Judgment. Their life stagnates until the moment of resurrection, and this moment coincides with that of their assembly together before God, who will judge them. Nothing happens in between. As a crowd they lie there; as a crowd, they rise again. There is no more sublime proof of the reality and significance of the stagnating crowd than the development of this conception of Resurrection and Last Judgment.

### *Slowness, or the Remoteness of the Goal*

THE SLOW CROWD is characterized by the remoteness of its goal. It is composed of people who move with great persistence towards an immovable goal, and who keep together in all circumstances. The road is long, the obstacles unknown and dangers threaten them from all sides. No discharge is permitted before the goal has been reached.

The slow crowd has the form of a train. Sometimes it includes from the beginning everyone who is going to belong to it, as with the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt. Their goal is the Promised Land and they are a crowd so long as they believe in this goal. The story of their wandering is the story of their belief. Often the difficulties are so great that they begin to doubt. They hunger and thirst and, as soon as they grumble, they are threatened with disintegration. Again and again must the man who leads them strive to re-establish their faith. Again and again he succeeds, or, if *he* does not, the threat of enemies does. Their wandering stretches over forty years and contains many examples of the formation of quick, transitory crowds. Much could be said about these, but the point now is that here they are all subordinated to the more comprehensive conception of a single slow crowd moving onwards to its goal, the country that was promised it. The adults in it grow old and die; children are born and grow up. But even if all the individuals are different, the Exodus as a whole

remains the same. No new groups join it; from the start it had been decided who belonged to it and had a claim on the Promised Land. It is a crowd which cannot grow by leaps and bounds and thus one question remained paramount during the whole migration: how was such a crowd to avoid disintegration.

There is a second type of slow crowd which can better be compared to a network of streams. It starts with small rivulets gradually running together. Into the stream thus formed other streams flow and these, if enough land lies ahead, will in time become a river whose goal is the sea. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca is perhaps the most impressive example of this type of slow crowd. From the remotest parts of the Islamic world caravans of pilgrims set out, all in the direction of Mecca. Some of these begin small; others are equipped with great splendour by princes and, from the start, are the pride of the countries where they originate. But all of them in the course of their wanderings encounter other caravans with the same goal; and so they grow and grow until, near their goal, they become enormous rivers. Mecca is the sea into which they flow.

Such caravans are so constituted that the pilgrims have ample scope for ordinary experiences, quite unconnected with the purpose of their journey as a whole. They live the recurring day, contend with many dangers and, as they are mostly poor, have difficulty in providing themselves with food and drink. They live in alien and continually changing surroundings and are far more exposed to dangers than they are at home; and these dangers are not always related to their enterprise. Thus they remain to a large extent individuals, living their separate lives as people do anywhere. But as long as they stick to their goal—and most pilgrims do—they are also always part of a slow crowd which exists however they behave in relation to it, and which will continue to exist until the goal is reached.

A third variant of the slow crowd is to be found in formations which have reference to an invisible goal, not attainable in this life. The world where the blessed await all those who have merited their place in it is a well-defined goal and belongs to the faithful alone. They see it clearly and distinctly in front of them; they do not have to be satisfied with a vague symbol. Life is a pilgrimage towards it, but between them and their goal stands death. The way ahead is difficult to know, for it is nowhere marked; many go astray and get lost. But the hope of the world beyond still colours the life of the believer to such a degree that we are entitled to speak of a slow crowd to which all the followers of a faith belong in common. The anonymity of this crowd is particularly

impressive. Its members do not know each other, for they live dispersed in many cities and countries.

But what does it look like from *inside* and what chiefly distinguishes it from a *quick* crowd?

The *discharge* is denied to the slow crowd. We could say that this was its most important distinguishing mark and, instead of slow crowds, we could speak of crowds which have no discharge. But the first term is preferable, for the discharge cannot be entirely renounced. It will always be contained in the conception of the final state. It is only postponed to a far distance; where the goal is, there too is the discharge. A vision of it is always strongly present, though its actuality lies at the end of the way.

The slow crowd tends to lengthen and protract the process which leads to the discharge. The great religions have developed a particular mastery of this business of delay. Their concern is to keep the followers they have won and, in order to do this and also to win new ones, they have to assemble them from time to time. Such assemblies will result in violent discharges and, once these have happened, they have to be repeated and, if possible, surpassed in violence. Their regular recurrence, at least, is essential if the unity of the faithful is not to be lost. But the events likely to happen in the course of services enacted, as these are, by rhythmic crowds, cannot be controlled over large distances. The central problem of the universal religions is how to dominate believers spread over wide stretches of the earth. The only way to do it is by a conscious slowing down of crowd events. Distant goals must gain in importance, near ones losing more and more of their weight until, in the end, they appear valueless. An earthly discharge is too brief; only one which is removed into the world beyond has permanence.

In this way goal and discharge coincide; and the goal is inviolate. A promised land here on earth can be occupied and laid waste by enemies; the people to whom it was sworn can be expelled from it. Mecca was conquered and plundered by the Carmathians and the holy stone Kaaba carried off; for many years no pilgrimage could be undertaken. But the heaven of the blessed is secure from all such devastations. It subsists on faith alone and is only vulnerable there. The disintegration of the slow crowd of Christianity set in as soon as faith in this other world began to decay.

## Invisible Crowds

OVER THE WHOLE earth, wherever there are men, is found the conception of the *invisible dead*. It is tempting to call it humanity's oldest conception. There is certainly no horde, no tribe, no people which does not have abundant ideas about its dead. Man has been obsessed by them; they have been of enormous importance for him; the action of the dead upon the living has been an essential part of life itself.

They were thought of as being together, just as men are together, and generally it was assumed that there were a great many of them. "The old Bechuana, in common with all other South African natives, believed all space to be full of the spirits of their ancestors. Earth, air and sky were crowded with ghosts who could exercise a baleful influence on the living if they chose." "The Boloki folk in the Congo believe that they are surrounded by spirits who try to thwart them at every twist and turn and to harm them every hour of the day and night. The rivers and creeks are crowded with the spirits of their ancestors, and the forests and bush are full also of spirits, ever seeking to injure the living who are overtaken by night when travelling by road or canoe. I never met among them a man daring enough to go at night through the forest that divided our village from the next, even though a large reward was offered. Their invariable reply was: 'There are too many spirits in bush and forest.'"

Men usually believe that the dead live together in a distant country, under the earth, on an island, or in a heavenly house. The following is part of a song from the Pygmies in Gaboon.

"The gates of the cave  
Are shut.  
The gates of the cave  
Are shut.  
The souls of the dead are crowding there in droves,  
Like a swarm of flies,  
Like a swarm of flies, dancing at evening time.  
A swarm of flies dancing at evening time  
When the night has grown dark,  
When the sun has vanished,  
When the night has grown dark,  
A swarm of flies.  
The whirling of dead leaves  
In a howling tempest."

But it is not only that the numbers of the dead increase and a feeling of their density prevails. They also move about and undertake expeditions together. To ordinary people they remain invisible, but there are people with special gifts, called Shamans, who have power to conjure up and subdue the spirits and turn them into their servants. Among the Chukchee in Siberia "a good Shaman has whole legions of auxiliary spirits and, when he calls them all, they come in such numbers that they surround the small sleeping tent where the exorcism takes place, like a wall on all sides."

The Shamans *tell* what they see. "In a voice trembling with emotion, the Shaman calls out through the snow hut:

"The space of heaven is filled with naked beings rushing through the air; men, naked men, naked women who rush through the air and rouse gale and snowstorm.

"Do you hear it roaring? Roaring like the wing-beat of great birds high in the air. That is the fear of naked men. That is the flight of naked men. The spirits of the air breathe out storm. The spirits of the air drive the whirling snow over the earth.'"

This mighty vision of naked spirits in their flight comes from the Eskimos.

Some peoples imagine their dead, or certain of them, as fighting hosts. The Celts of the Scottish Highlands have a special word for the host of the dead: *sluagh*, meaning "spirit-multitude". "The spirits fly about in great clouds like starlings, up and down the face of the world, and come back to the scenes of their earthly transgressions. With their venomous unerring darts they kill cats and dogs, sheep and cattle. They fight battles in the air as men do on the earth. They may be heard and seen on clear, frosty nights, advancing and retreating, retreating and advancing against one another. After a battle their crimson blood may be seen staining rocks and stones." The word *gairm* means shout or cry, and *sluagh-ghairm* was the battle-cry of the dead. This word later became "slogan". The expression we use for the battle-cries of our modern crowds derives from the Highland hosts of the dead.

Two widely separated northern peoples, the Lapps in Europe and the Tlinkit Indians in Alaska, share the same conception of the Aurora Borealis as a battle. "The Kolta Lapps imagine that they see in the Northern Lights those who have fallen in war and who, as spirits, continue their fight in the air. The Russian Lapps see in the Lights the spirits of the slain. They live together in a house where they assemble from time to time and there stab each other to death; the floor is

covered with blood. The Northern Lights announce the start of these battles between the souls of the slain. Among the Tlinkit of Alaska all those who do not fall in battle, but die of disease, pass into the underworld. In heaven are only the brave warriors who have died in wars. From time to time heaven opens to receive new spirits; these show themselves to the Shaman as fully armed warriors and their souls appear as the Aurora Borealis and especially as those flames which resemble arrows and sheaves of light and pass and overtake each other and change places, very much as the Tlinkits themselves fight. A strong Aurora Borealis announces, so they believe, great slaughter. It is the dead seeking for new comrades."

The Germanic peoples believe that enormous numbers of warriors are gathered together in Valhalla. All those who have fallen in battle since the beginning of the world go to Valhalla. Their numbers grow continually, for there is no end to wars. In Valhalla they revel and gorge themselves; food and drink is renewed eternally. Each morning they seize their weapons and go out to fight. They kill each other in sport, but they stand up again; it is not real death. Through 640 gates they re-enter Valhalla, 800 men in a row.

But it is not only the spirits of the dead which are imagined in such numbers, invisible to ordinary living men. In an old Jewish text we read: "Man ought to know and should remember that the space between heaven and earth is not empty, but is all filled with troops and multitudes. Some of these are pure, full of grace and goodness; but others are unclean creatures, tormentors and doers of harm. They all fly to and fro in the air. Some of them want peace, others seek war; some do good, some evil; some bring life, but others bring death."

In the religion of the old Persians, the demons—*Daevas*—form a specific host under a high command of their own. In their holy book, the *Zend-Avesta*, there is a formula for their innumerability: "Thousands of thousands of those *Daevas*, their ten thousands of ten thousands, their numberless myriads."

The Christian Middle Ages gave serious thought to the number of devils. In Caesarius von Heisterbach's *Dialogue of Miracles* is a report of how they once thronged the choir of a church in such numbers that they disturbed the chant of the monks. These were beginning the third psalm, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me." The demons flew from one side of the choir to the other and mingled with the monks, so that the latter no longer knew what they were singing until, in their confusion, each side was trying to shout down the other. If so many demons can gather together in one single place to interrupt one

single service, how many of them must there be in the whole world! "But we know already from the Gospel", adds Caesarius, "that a legion entered into one man."

Later he tells how a wanton priest on his deathbed said to a kinswoman who sat near him, "Do you see that great barn opposite us? Under its roof are as many separate straws as there are demons now gathered round me." They lay in ambush for his soul, waiting to carry it to punishment. But they also tried their luck at the deathbeds of the pious. At the funeral of a good abbess there were more devils gathered together than there are leaves on the trees of a great forest; round a dying abbot more than the grains of sand on the sea shore. These particulars came from a devil who had been there in person and gave an account of it all to a knight with whom he fell into conversation. He did not disguise his disappointment over these fruitless endeavours and admitted that he had been present, sitting on an arm of the Cross, when Jesus expired.

It is clear that the importunity of these devils was as monstrous as their numbers. Whenever Richalm, a Cistercian abbot, closed his eyes he saw them around him as thick as dust. There were more precise estimates of their numbers, two of which are known to me, but they differ widely: one is 44,635,569; the other is 11 billion.

There is a natural and wide contrast between men's conception of devils and their conception of angels and saints. With the latter everything is calm. There is no more striving, for the goal has been reached. But they, too, are gathered together, a heavenly host, "a multitude of angels, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins and other righteous ones." Ranged in great circles, they stand round the throne of their Lord, like courtiers turned towards their king. Head pressed close to head, their bliss is grounded in their nearness to him. He has accepted them forever and, in as much as they will never leave him, they will never separate from each other. They remain in contemplation of him, and they sing his praises. It is the only thing they still do, and they do it together.

The minds of the faithful are full of such images of invisible crowds. Whether these are the dead, or devils, or saints, they are imagined as large, concentrated hosts. It could be argued that religions *begin* with these invisible crowds. They may be differently grouped, and in each faith a different balance between them has developed. It would be both possible and fruitful to classify religions according to the way in which they manipulate their invisible crowds. Here the higher religions—by which I mean all those which have attained universal validity—

exhibit a superior degree of certainty and clarity. These invisible hosts are kept alive by religious teaching. They are the life-blood of faith. The hopes and desires of men cling to them. When they fade, faith weakens and, whilst it dies slowly away, fresh hosts come to take the place of the faded.

One of these crowds, and perhaps the most important of all, has not been mentioned yet. It is the only one which, in spite of its invisibility, seems natural to us today: I mean *posterity*. For two, or perhaps three, generations a man can count his posterity; from then on it lies entirely in the future. It is precisely when it has become numberless that posterity is visible to no-one. It is known that it must increase, first gradually and then with growing acceleration. Tribes and whole peoples trace their origin back to a common ancestor and the promises claimed to have been given to him show how glorious, and especially how numerous, a progeny he desired; innumerable as the stars in heaven and the sand on the shores of the sea. In the *Shi-King*, the classical Book of Songs of the Chinese, there is a poem in which progeny is compared to a swarm of locusts:

“The locusts’ wings say ‘throng, throng’;  
Well may your sons and grandsons  
Be a host innumerable.  
The locusts’ wings say ‘bind, bind’;  
Well may your sons and grandsons,  
Continue in an endless line.  
The locusts’ wings say ‘join, join’;  
Well may your sons and grandsons  
Be forever at one.”

Large numbers, unbroken succession—a kind of density throughout time—and unity: these are the three wishes for progeny pronounced here. The use of the swarm of locusts as a symbol for the crowd of progeny is particularly striking in that it exhibits them not as harmful vermin, but as praiseworthy in their exemplary power of increase.

The feeling for posterity is as alive today as it ever was, but the image of abundance has detached itself from our own progeny and transferred itself to future humanity as a whole. For most of us, the hosts of the dead are an empty superstition, but we regard it as a noble and by no means fruitless endeavour to care for the future crowd of the unborn; to want their good and to prepare for them a better and a juster life. In the universal anxiety about the future of the earth, this

feeling for the unborn is of the greatest importance. Disgust at the thought of their malformation, the thought of what they may look like if we continue to conduct our grotesque wars, may well do more than all our private fears for ourselves to lead to the abolition of these wars, and of war altogether.

If we now consider the *fate* of the invisible crowds we have spoken of, we shall conclude that some of them have disappeared completely, and others in large part. Among the latter are the devils. In spite of their former numbers, they are no longer to be found anywhere in their familiar shape. But they have left their traces. The fact that they were small is proved by the striking instances adduced by Caesarius von Heisterbach, who was contemporary with the time of their flowering. Since then they have given up all the traits which might remind us of a human figure and become much smaller still. It is greatly changed, and in even larger numbers, that they turn up again in the 19th century as *bacilli*. Instead of the souls, they now attack the bodies of men; and to these they can be very dangerous. Only a tiny minority of people have looked into a microscope and really seen them there. But everyone has heard of them and is continually aware of their presence and makes every effort not to come into contact with them—though this, considering their invisibility, is a somewhat vague endeavour. Their power to harm and their concentration in enormous numbers in very small spaces is undoubtedly taken over from devils.

An invisible crowd which has always existed, but which has only been recognized as such since the invention of the microscope, is the crowd of *spermatozoa*. 200 million of these animalcules set out together on their way. They are equal among themselves and in a state of very great density. They all have the same goal and, except for one, they all perish on the way. It may be objected that they are not human beings and that it is therefore not correct to speak of them as a crowd in the sense the word has been used. But this objection does not really touch the essentials of the matter. Each of these animalcules carries with it everything of our ancestors which will be preserved. It contains our ancestors; it is them, and it is overwhelmingly strange to find them here again, between one human existence and another, in a radically changed form, all of them within *one* tiny invisible creature, and this creature present in such uncountable numbers.

## *Classification of Crowds according to Their Prevailing Emotion*

THE CROWDS WE have become acquainted with are filled with all kinds of emotions, and scarcely anything has been said about these. The first aim of our enquiry was a classification according to formal principles, but the statement that a crowd is open or closed, slow or quick, visible or invisible, tells us very little about what it feels, what its content is.

Now this content is by no means always to be found in a pure state. There are occasions when the crowd runs through a whole series of emotions in quick succession. People can spend hours in a theatre and the experiences they share there are of the most varied kind. In a concert their feelings are even more detached from the occasion and may be said, in fact, to attain the maximum of variety. But these occasions are artificial; their richness is an end-product of high and complex cultures. Their effect is moderated because in them, extremes cancel each other out. They serve, on the whole, to soften and diminish the passions at whose mercy people feel when alone.

The main emotional types of crowd can be traced much further back than this. They make a very early appearance; their history is as old as that of humanity itself, and in two cases even older. Each of these types is distinguished by a homogeneous colour; a single passion dominates them. Once they have been properly understood, it is impossible ever to confound them again.

I propose to distinguish five types of crowd in accordance with their emotional content. The oldest of these are the baiting crowd and the flight crowd. These are to be found among animals as well as amongst men and it is probable that their formation among men has time and again been influenced by the example of animals. The prohibition, the reversal and the feast crowd, on the other hand, are specifically human. A description of these five main types is indispensable, and its interpretation can afford insights of considerable importance.

## *Baiting Crowds*

THE BAITING CROWD forms with reference to a quickly attainable goal. The goal is known and clearly marked, and is also near. This crowd is out for killing and it knows whom it wants to kill. It heads for this goal with unique determination and cannot be cheated of it. The proclaiming of the goal, the spreading about of who it is that is to perish, is enough to make the crowd form. This concentration on killing is of a special kind and of an unsurpassed intensity. Everyone wants to participate; everyone strikes a blow and, in order to do this, pushes as near as he can to the victim. If he cannot hit him himself, he wants to see others hit him. Every arm is thrust out as if they all belonged to one and the same creature. But the arms which actually do the hitting count for most. The goal is also the point of greatest density. It is where the actions of all the participants unite. Goal and density coincide.

One important reason for the rapid growth of the baiting crowd is that there is no risk involved. There is no risk because the crowd have immense superiority on their side. The victim can do nothing to them. He is either bound or in flight, and cannot hit back; in his defencelessness he is victim only. Also he has been made over to them for destruction; he is destined for it and thus no-one need fear the sanction attached to killing. His permitted murder stands for all the murders people have to deny themselves for fear of the penalties for their perpetration. A murder shared with many others, which is not only safe and permitted, but indeed recommended, is irresistible to the great majority of men. There is, too, another factor which must be remembered. The threat of death hangs over all men and, however disguised it may be, and even if it is sometimes forgotten, it affects them all the time and creates in them a need to deflect death on to others. The formation of baiting crowds answers this need.

It is so easy and everything happens so quickly that people have to hurry to get there in time. The speed, elation and conviction of a baiting crowd is something uncanny. It is the excitement of blind men who are blindest when they suddenly think they can see. The crowd advances towards victim and execution in order to rid itself once and for all of its own deaths. But what actually happens to it is the opposite of this. Through the execution, though only after it, it feels more menaced than ever by death; it disintegrates and disperses in a kind of

flight. The greater the victim, the greater the fear. It can only hold together if a series of similar events follow each other in quick succession.

The baiting crowd is very old. It goes back to the most primitive dynamic unit known among men: the hunting pack. I shall say more later about packs, which are smaller than crowds, and differ from them in many other respects also. Here I only want to treat of a few general occasions which give rise to the formation of baiting crowds.

Among the death penalties which a horde or a people can inflict on an individual, two main forms can be distinguished. The first is *expulsion*. The individual is marooned where he is at the mercy of wild animals without any kind of defence, or where he will starve. The people to whom he formerly belonged will have nothing to do with him any more; they are not allowed to shelter him or give him food; any intercourse with him defiles them and makes them guilty. Solitude in its most rigorous form is the ultimate penalty here; separation from one's group is a torture which very few can survive, especially under primitive conditions. A variant of this isolation is handing over to the enemy. This is particularly cruel and humiliating for men who suffer it otherwise than after fighting. For them it is a double death.

The other way of punishing is collective killing. The condemned man is taken out to a field and stoned. Everyone has a share in his death; everyone throws a stone and it is under their joint impact that the transgressor collapses. No-one has been appointed executioner; the community as a whole does the killing. The stones stand for the community; they are the monument both to its decision and to its deed. Even where stoning is no longer customary, the inclination for collective killing persists. Death by *fire* can be compared to it; fire represents the multitude which desires the condemned person's death. The victim is assailed from all sides by the flames, which set on him simultaneously and kill him. The religions of hell go further. Collective killing by fire—fire stands as a symbol for the crowd—is associated with the idea of expulsion, namely, expulsion to hell, and surrender to diabolic enemies. The flames of hell reach up to the earth and fetch down the heretic who is forfeit to them. The studding of a victim with arrows and the shooting of a condemned man by a detachment of soldiers both present the executing group as the delegates of the whole community. With the burying of men in ant-heaps, as practised in Africa and elsewhere, the ants stand for the multitude and do its painful business.

All forms of public execution are connected with the old practice of collective killing. The real executioner is the crowd gathered round the

scaffold. It approves the spectacle and, with passionate excitement, gathers from far and near to watch it from beginning to end. It wants it to happen and hates being cheated of its victim. The account of Christ's condemnation contains the root of the matter. The cry of "Crucify Him!" comes from the crowd; it is the crowd which is truly active here. On another occasion it might have done everything itself and stoned Jesus. The tribunal pronouncing judgement—normally in front of a limited number of people only—stands for the multitude which later attends the execution. The sentence of death, which sounds abstract and unreal when pronounced in the name of justice, becomes real when it is carried out in the presence of the crowd. It is actually for the sake of the crowd that justice is done and it is the crowd we have in mind when we speak of the importance of justice being public.

In the Middle Ages executions were carried out with pomp and solemnity, and as slowly as possible. Sometimes the victim exhorted the spectators with pious speeches. He declared his concern for them and expatiated on the manner of life which had led him to where he stood, so that they might avoid his fate. The crowd felt flattered by his concern and to him it may have been a last satisfaction to stand there once more as an *equal* amongst them, a good man like themselves, with them renouncing his former life and condemning it. This repentance in the face of death, which priests do their utmost to bring about in malefactors and infidels, has another significance besides the professed purpose of soul-saving. It transfuses the emotional state of the baiting crowd with premonitions of a future festal crowd. All who are present feel confirmed in their righteous convictions and in their belief in a heavenly reward.

In revolutionary periods executions are accelerated. Samson, the Paris executioner, boasted that his assistants only needed "a minute per person". Much of the feverish excitement of such times is due to the rapid succession of innumerable executions. It is important for the crowd that the executioner should show it the severed head. This, and this alone, is the moment of discharge. Whoever the head has belonged to, it is degraded now; during the short moment it stares at the crowd it becomes a head like all other heads. Though it may have started on the shoulders of a king, it is made level with them by this lightning process of public degradation. The crowd here consists of staring heads and it attains its feeling of equality during the moment that the head stares back at it. The greater the former power of the executed man, the greater the distance which used to separate him from the crowd and the stronger, therefore, the excitement of the discharge. In

the case of a king, or person with similar power, there is, in addition, the satisfaction of *reversal*. The right of capital punishment which had been his so long, has been turned against him. Those he used to kill have now killed him. It is impossible to over-rate the importance of this reversal. There is a type of crowd which is created by reversal alone.

The effect of displaying the victim's head to the crowd is by no means confined to the discharge. The impact of his downfall is tremendous. By it he becomes no more than they are. They recognize him as one of themselves and thus he makes them all equal to one another, for they all see themselves in him. But the severed head of the victim is also a threat. They have looked into those dead eyes with such passion that now they cannot free themselves from him. His head has become part of the crowd and so the crowd itself is struck at in his death. Terrified and stricken by a mysterious disease, it begins to disintegrate, and finally disperses in a kind of flight from him.

Once a baiting crowd has attained its victim it disintegrates rapidly. Rulers in danger are well aware of this fact and throw a victim to the crowd in order to impede its growth. Many political executions are arranged solely for this purpose. The spokesman of radical parties, on the other hand, often fail to understand that the public execution of a dangerous enemy may cut deeper into their own flesh than into that of the enemy party. It may well be that the crowd of their partisans will scatter after such an execution, and that they will not regain their strength for a long time, and perhaps never.

Disgust at collective killing is of very recent date and should not be over-estimated. Today everyone takes part in public executions through the newspapers. Like everything else, however, it is more comfortable than it was. We sit peacefully at home and, out of a hundred details, can choose those to linger over which offer a special thrill. We only applaud when everything is over and there is no feeling of guilty connivance to spoil our pleasure. We are not responsible for the sentence, nor for the journalists who report its execution, nor for the papers which print them. None the less, we know more about the business than our predecessors, who may have walked miles to see it, hung around for hours and, in the end, seen very little. The baiting crowd is preserved in the newspaper reading public, in a milder form it is true, but, because of its distance from events, a more irresponsible one. One is tempted to say that it is the most despicable and, at the same time, most stable form of such a crowd. Since it does not even have to assemble, it escapes disintegration; variety is catered for by the daily re-appearance of the papers.

## *Flight Crowds*

THE *flight crowd* is created by a threat. Everyone flees; everyone is drawn along. The danger which threatens is the same for all. It is concentrated at a definite point and makes no distinctions there. It can threaten the inhabitants of a city, or all those who belong to a particular faith, or speak a particular language.

People flee together because it is best to flee that way. They feel the same excitement and the energy of some increases the energy of others; people push each other along in the same direction. So long as they keep together they feel that the danger is distributed, for the ancient belief persists that danger springs at one point only. They argue that, whilst the enemy is seizing one of them, all the others can escape. The flanks of the flight are uncovered but, since they are extended, they think it impossible for danger to attack all of them at the same time. No-one is going to assume that he, out of so many, will be the victim and, since the sole movement of the whole flight is towards salvation, each is convinced that he personally will attain it.

For the most striking thing about a mass flight is the force of its direction. The crowd has, as it were, become all direction, away from danger. Since the goal of safety and the distance from it are the only things which matter, all the previously existing distances between men become unimportant. Strange and widely dissimilar creatures who have never come near each other before suddenly find themselves together. In their flight all the distances between them disappear, though the differences of course do not. The flight crowd is the most comprehensive of all crowds. It contains absolutely everybody and the picture of diversity which it thus presents is further complicated by the differing speeds of the fugitives: there are young and old among them, strong and weak, those less and those more burdened. But the picture is misleading. Its motley colours are only incidental and, measured against the overpowering force of direction, utterly insignificant.

The impetus of the flight continues to multiply so long as everyone recognizes that there are others fleeing with him. He may press them forwards, but he must not push them aside. The moment he starts to think only of himself and to regard those around him purely as obstacles, the character of the mass flight changes completely and it turns into its exact opposite; it becomes a panic, a struggle of each against all who stand in his way. This reversal generally occurs when

the direction of the flight has been repeatedly impeded. To block the crowd's way is enough to make it break out in another direction. If its way is repeatedly blocked, it soon no longer knows where to turn. It grows confused about its direction and thus loses its coherence. The danger which, till then, had united its members and given them wings, now sets each man up as an enemy of the next. Everyone is intent only on saving himself.

The mass flight, on the other hand, contrary to the panic, derives its energy from its coherence. As long as it remains one powerful and undivided river and does not allow itself to be dispersed and split, so long does the fear by which it is driven remain bearable. Once a mass flight is under way it is characterized by a kind of exaltation—the exaltation of common movement. No one person is in any less danger than any other and, though he continues to run or ride with all his might to save his own life, he still occupies a recognized place amongst all the others and sticks to it throughout the turmoil.

The flight can last for days or weeks and, during it, some remain behind, either stricken by the enemy, or because their strength is gone. Everyone who falls by the way acts as a spur to the others. Fate has overtaken him and exempted them. He is a sacrifice offered to danger. However important he may have been to some of them as a companion in flight, by falling he becomes important to all of them. The sight of him gives new strength to the weary; he has proved weaker than they are; the danger was aimed at him and not at them. The isolation in which he remains behind, and in which they still see him for a short time, heightens for them the value of their being together. Anyone who falls has thus an incalculable importance for the cohesion of the flight.

The natural end of the flight is the attainment of the goal; once this crowd is in safety it dissolves. But the danger can also be arrested at its source. An armistice may be declared and the city from which people were fleeing be no longer in danger. They fled together, but they return singly, and soon everything is again as separate as it used to be. But there is also a third possibility, which may be called the oozing away of the flight in sand. The goal is too far off, the surroundings are hostile and the people starve and grow exhausted. It is no longer only a few, but hundreds and thousands who collapse and remain behind. This physical disintegration sets in only gradually, for the original impetus lasts for a long time; people crawl on even when every chance of salvation has vanished. Of all types of crowd, the flight crowd is the one which exhibits the greatest tenacity; its remnants keep together until the very last moment.

There is no dearth of examples of mass flights. Our own time alone is rich in them. Until the last war one would have thought first of the fate of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* in its retreat from Moscow, for this is the most striking example we know of, and we know it in all its details: an army composed of men of so many different countries and languages, the terrible winter, the immense stretch of country they had to traverse, most of them on foot—this was a retreat which was bound to degenerate into a mass flight. The first civilian flight from a metropolis of comparable size was probably that which took place when the Germans approached Paris in 1940. This famous *exode* did not last long, for an armistice was soon concluded, but such was the extent and intensity of the movement that for the French it has become the central mass memory of the last war.

I do not intend to accumulate examples from recent times, for they are still fresh in everyone's memory. But it is worth pointing out that mass flight has always been known to men, even in the times when they still lived together in quite small groups. It played a part in their imagination long before they could have experienced it in actual numbers. One remembers the vision of the Eskimo Shaman: "The space of heaven is filled with naked beings rushing through the air. Men, naked men, naked women who rush through the air and rouse gale and snowstorm. Do you hear it roaring? Roaring like the wing-beat of great birds high in the air. That is the fear of naked men. That is the flight of naked men."

### *Prohibition Crowds*

A SPECIAL TYPE of crowd is created by a *refusal*: a large number of people together refuse to continue to do what, till then, they had done singly. They obey a prohibition, and this prohibition is sudden and self-imposed. It can be an old prohibition which has been forgotten, or one which is resuscitated from time to time. But, in any case, it strikes with enormous power. It is as absolute as a command, but what is decisive about it is its negative character. Contrary to appearances, it never really comes from outside, but always originates in some need in those it affects. As soon as the prohibition has been enunciated the crowd begins to form. Its members all refuse to do what the outside world expects them to do. What, till then, they had done without any fuss, as if it was natural to them and not at all difficult, they now suddenly refuse to do in any circumstances; and the firmness of their refusal

is the measure of their togetherness. From the moment of its birth this crowd is transfused with the negativeness of prohibition, and this remains its essential characteristic as long as it exists. Thus one could also speak of a negative crowd. It is formed by resistance; the prohibition is a frontier nothing can cross, a dam nothing can pierce. Each person watches the other to see whether he remains part of the dam. Anyone who gives way and transgresses the prohibition is outlawed by all the others.

In our own time the best example of a negative, or prohibition, crowd is the *strike*. The majority of workers are accustomed to do their work regularly at certain hours. The actual tasks vary from man to man, one doing one thing and another something quite different. But large groups start work at the same time and leave it at the same time. They are equals in relation to this common moment of starting and stopping work. In addition, most of them do their work with their hands and all of them alike get paid for working. Their wages, however, differ according to the work they do, and it is clear in general that their equality does not go very far and is not pronounced enough to lead by itself to the formation of a crowd. But when a strike breaks out the workers' equality becomes far more stringent. It consists then in their common refusal to continue work; and this refusal is something which permeates the whole man. The conviction created by a prohibition on work is both keen and strongly resistant.

The moment of standstill is a great moment, and has been celebrated in workers' songs. There are many things which contribute to the workers' feeling of relief at the start of a strike. The fictitious equality, which they had heard made so much of, had never really meant more than that they all used their hands. Now it has suddenly become a real equality. As long as they were working they had very varied things to do, and everything they did was prescribed. But, when they stop work, they all do the same thing. It is as though their hands had all dropped at exactly the same moment and now they had to exert all their strength *not* to lift them up again, however hungry their families. Stopping work makes the workers equals. Their concrete demands are actually of less importance than the effect of this moment. The aim of the strike may be a wage increase, and they certainly feel at one in this aim. But by itself it is not sufficient to make a crowd out of them.

The hands that drop infect other hands. Their inaction spreads to the whole of society. Sympathetic strikes prevent others, who had not been thinking of a stoppage, from following their normal occupations.

The essence of a strike is to prevent others working while the strikers are idle. The more nearly they achieve this, the greater their chance of victory.

Within the actual strike it is essential that everyone should abide by the undertaking not to work. Spontaneously from within the crowd itself there springs up an organization with the functions of a state. It is fully conscious of the shortness of its life and has only a very small number of laws; but these are strictly kept. Pickets guard the entrances to the place where the strike started, and the workplace itself is forbidden ground. The interdict on it lifts it out of its everyday triviality and endows it with a special dignity. In its emptiness and stillness it has something sacred. The fact that the strikers have taken over responsibility for it turns it into a common possession and, as such, it is protected and invested with a higher significance. Anyone who comes near it is examined about his convictions. Anyone who approaches it with profane intentions, wanting to work there, is treated as an enemy or traitor.

The organization sees to it that food and money are fairly distributed. What they have must last for as long as possible, so it is important that everyone should receive equally *little*. It does not occur to the strong to think that they should have more, and even the greedy are satisfied with their portion. As there is usually only a very little for everyone, and as distribution is settled in good faith and publicly, it adds to the pride which the crowd feels in its equality. There is something deeply serious and worthy of respect about such an organization and, when the ferocity and destructiveness of crowds are mentioned, one cannot help remembering the responsibility and dignity of these structures sprung spontaneously from crowds. An examination of the prohibition crowd is essential if only for the reason that it exhibits such entirely different, and indeed, contrary, qualities. As long as it remains true to its nature, it is averse to destruction.

But it is true that it is not easy to keep it in this state. When things go badly and want reaches proportions difficult to bear, and especially if it is assailed or besieged, the negative crowd tends to revert to a positive and active one. The strikers are men who have suddenly denied themselves the normal activity of their hands and, after a time, it can cost them no small effort to go on not using them. As soon as they feel the unity of their stand threatened, they incline towards destruction, and particularly towards destruction in the sphere of their own familiar activity. It is here that the most important task of the organization begins. It must keep the character of the prohibition crowd intact

and prevent any positive or separate action. It must also recognize when the moment has come to lift the prohibition to which the crowd owes its existence. If its insight corresponds to the feeling of the crowd it will, by withdrawing the prohibition, decree its own dissolution.

### *Reversal Crowds*

“DEAR FRIEND, the wolves have always eaten the sheep; are the sheep going to eat the wolves this time?” This sentence, which comes from a letter which Madame Jullien wrote to her son during the French Revolution, contains the essence of reversal. So far a few wolves have held down many sheep. Now the time has come for the many sheep to turn against the few wolves. It is true that sheep are not carnivorous, but, in its very absurdity, the sentence is full of meaning. Revolutions are times of reversal; those who have been defenceless for so long suddenly find teeth. Their numbers have to make up for the experience in viciousness which they lack.

Reversal presupposes a stratified society. A clear separation of classes, one enjoying more rights than the other, must have lasted for some time, and made itself felt in men's daily life before the need for reversal arises. The stratification may have occurred as the result of internal events, or the higher group may have acquired the right to give orders to the lower one by conquering the country and thus setting itself above the natives.

Every command leaves behind a painful *sting* in the person who is forced to carry it out. The nature of these stings will be examined in more detail later. All I want to say here is that they are indestructible. People who are habitually ordered about are full of them, and feel a strong urge to get rid of them. They can free themselves in two different ways. They can pass on to others the orders which they have received from above; but, for them to be able to do this, there must be others below them who are ready to accept their orders. Or they can try to pay back to their superiors themselves what they have suffered and stored up from them. One man alone, weak and helpless as he is, will only rarely be fortunate enough to find an opportunity for this, but, if many men find themselves together in a crowd, they may jointly succeed in what was denied them singly: together they can turn on those who, till now, have given them orders. A revolutionary situation can be defined as this state of reversal, and a crowd whose

discharge consists mainly in its collective deliverance from the stings of command should be called a *reversal crowd*.

The French Revolution is usually considered to have begun with the storming of the Bastille. It actually began earlier with a massacre of hares. In May 1789 the States General were assembled at Versailles. They were deliberating the abolition of feudal rights, among them the hunting rights of the nobility. On June 10th, a month *before* the storming of the Bastille, Camille Desmoulins, who was present as a deputy, wrote to his father: “The Bretons are provisionally carrying out some of the articles of their *cahiers de doléance*. They are killing pigeons and game. And here in this part some 50 young people are creating havoc among hares and rabbits. They are said to have killed between four and five thousand head of game under the eyes of the wardens in the plain of St. Germain.” Before they dare attack the wolves, the sheep turn against hares. Before the reversal directed against superiors, they turn on the lowliest available quarry.

But the real event is the Day of the Bastille. The whole city provided itself with arms. The rising was directed against the king's justice, embodied in the stormed and conquered building. Prisoners were set free, who were then able to join the crowd. The Governor responsible for the defence of the Bastille, and his assistants, were executed. But thieves, too, were strung from the lamp posts. The Bastille was razed to the ground and carried away stone by stone. Justice in its two main aspects—the right of inflicting capital punishment and the right of mercy—was taken over by the people. The reversal had, for the moment, accomplished itself.

Crowds of this type form in the most diverse circumstances; they may be revolts of slaves against their masters, of soldiers against their officers, of coloured people against the whites who have settled in their midst. But, in all cases, the one group will have been subject for a long time to the commands of the other group; the rebels are always driven to act by the stings they carry within them; and it always takes a long time before they can do so.

Much of the surface activity of revolutions, on the other hand, is due to baiting crowds. Single people are hunted and, when caught, are killed by the crowd, with or without the formality of a trial. But the revolution by no means consists solely of this. The baiting crowds which quickly attain their natural goal are not the whole of it. Once started, the reversal goes on spreading. Everyone tries to get into a position where he can free himself of his stings of command; and everyone has a large number of these. The reversal is a process which takes

hold of the whole of a society and, even if attended with success from the start, it comes to an end only slowly and with difficulty. The successive baiting crowds run their brief course on the surface while the waves of reversal rise slowly from the depths.

But the process may be much slower even than this; the reversal may be promised for heaven: "The last shall be first." Between the present state and that other stands death. In the other world men will live again. The poorest here, if he has done no evil, will stand highest there. He will live on as a new man and one, moreover, who has a better position. The believer is promised deliverance from his stings. But nothing is said about the precise circumstances of this deliverance. Though physical proximity is part of the concept of heaven, there is no actual indication that the crowd is the substratum of this reversal.

At the centre of this kind of promise stands the idea of revival. Cases of people brought back to life by Christ are reported in the Gospels. The preachers of the famous "revivals" in Anglo-Saxon countries made every possible use of death and resurrection, threatening the assembled sinners with the most fearful pains of hell until they were reduced to an indescribable state of terror, imagining a lake of fire and brimstone yawning to swallow them and the hand of the Almighty thrusting them down in the horrible abyss. It was said of one of the preachers that the terror inspired by the fierceness of his invective was heightened still further by the hideousness of his visage and the thunder of his tones. People came from 40, 50 or 100 miles away to hear such preachers. Men brought their families with them in covered wagons and came provided with bedding and food for several days. Round about 1800, one part of Kentucky was roused to a state of feverish excitement by meetings of this kind. The meetings were held in the open because no building then existing in the State could have held the enormous crowds. In August 1801 20,000 people gathered at Cane Ridge and the memory of this meeting still lingered in Kentucky after the lapse of a century.

The preachers went on terrifying their listeners until the latter fell down to the ground and remained lying there as though dead. It was God's commands that threatened them and from which they fled, seeking refuge in a semblance of death. And it was the conscious and declared intention of the preachers thus to strike them down. The place looked like a battlefield; right and left whole rows of people fell to the ground. The comparison with a battlefield was made by the preachers themselves. To achieve the moral reversal they wanted this utmost and ultimate terror seemed essential. The success of the preaching

was measured by the number of the "fallen". An eyewitness who kept a precise journal reports that, in the course of this meeting, which lasted for several days, 3,000 people fell helpless to the ground—nearly one sixth of those present. Those who fell were carried to the meeting house nearby. At no time was the floor less than half covered with people lying there. Some lay quiet, unable to speak, or move. At times they would come to themselves for a few moments, then a deep groan, a piercing shout or a fervent prayer for mercy would show that they were alive. "Some talked but could not move. Some beat the floor with their heels. Some, shrieking in agony, bounded about like a fish out of water. Many lay down and rolled over and over for hours at a time. Others rushed wildly over stumps and benches and plunged shouting 'Lost! Lost!' into the forest."

When the fallen came to themselves they were changed people. They rose and shouted 'Salvation!'. They were "new-born" and ready to begin a good and pure life; their old sinful existence was left behind them. But the conversion could only be believed in if a kind of death had preceded it.

There were also phenomena of a less extreme nature which tended to the same end. A whole meeting would suddenly break out weeping; many people were seized with irresistible jerks. Others, usually in groups of four or five, started barking like dogs. After a few years, when the excitement had begun to take milder forms, people would burst out, first singly and then in chorus together, into a "holy laugh".

But everything that happened, happened within a crowd, crowds more highly-charged and excited than almost any others we know of.

The reversal aimed at in these revivals differs from that in revolutions. What is involved here is men's relation to the divine commands. Men have been acting contrary to them and now the fear of God's punishment has come over them. This fear, increased in every possible way by the preacher, has driven them into a state of unconsciousness. They feign death like hunted animals, but their fear is so great that they really lose consciousness. When they come to themselves they declare their readiness to submit to God's commands and prohibitions, and thus their acutest fear of his immediate punishment subsides. It is, as it were, a process of domestication: a man allows himself to be tamed by the preacher to become God's obedient servant.

The process is exactly the opposite of what happens in a revolution. As we saw earlier, the essential there is liberation from the burden of all the stings resulting from long submission to some kind of domination. Here the essential is a new submission, submission to the

commands of God, and a willingness, therefore, to accept all the stings they may implant. The only factor common to both processes is the reversal itself, and the psychic scene where it takes place—in both cases the crowd.

### *Feast Crowds*

THE FIFTH TYPE of crowd is the *feast crowd*. There is abundance in a limited space, and everyone near can partake of it. The produce of all kinds of cultivation is exhibited in great heaps: a hundred pigs lie bound in a row; mountains of fruit are piled up; huge vessels of a favourite drink are prepared and stand waiting to be drunk. There is more of everything than everyone together can consume and, in order to consume it, more and more people come streaming in. As long as there is anything there they partake of it, and it looks as though there would be no end to it. There is an abundance of women for the men, and an abundance of men for the women. Nothing and no-one threatens and there is nothing to flee from; for the time being, life and pleasure are secure. Many prohibitions and distinctions are waived, and unaccustomed advances are not only permitted but smiled on. For the individual the atmosphere is one of loosening, not discharge. There is no common identical goal which people have to try and attain together. The feast *is* the goal and they are there. The density is very great, but the equality is in large part an equality simply of indulgence and pleasure. People move to and fro, not in one direction only. The things which are piled up, and of which everyone partakes, are a very important part of the density; they are its core. They were gathered together first and only when they were all there, did people gather round them. It may take years before everything is ready and people may have to endure a long period of want for this brief abundance. But they live for this moment and work steadily towards it. Men who can otherwise rarely see each other are ceremoniously invited with their own groups. The arrival of the various contingents is vigorously acclaimed and each fresh arrival raises the level of universal joy.

But another feeling also plays its part. By common enjoyment at this one feast people prepare the way for many future feasts. Earlier occasions of the same kind are recalled in ritual dances and dramatic performances; the tradition of them is contained in the actuality of the present feast. Those feasting remember the first founders of their celebrations, whether these are their ancestors, the mythical creators

of the delights they are enjoying, or, as in later and colder societies, simply the rich donors. In any case they feel assured of the future repetition of similar occasions. The feasts call to one another; the density of things and of people promises increase of life itself.

### *The Double Crowd: Men and Women.*

#### *The Living and the Dead*

THE SUREST, and often the only, way by which a crowd can preserve itself lies in the existence of a second crowd to which it is related. Whether the two crowds confront each other as rivals in a game, or as a serious threat to each other, the sight, or simply the powerful image, of the second crowd, prevents the disintegration of the first. As long as all eyes are turned in the direction of the eyes opposite, knee will stand locked by knee; as long as all ears are listening for the expected shout from the other side, arms will move to a common rhythm.

People are in physical proximity to their own kind and acting within a familiar and natural unit. All their curiosity and expectation, meanwhile, is directed towards a second body of men divided from them by a clearly defined distance. The sight of it fascinates them and, if they cannot see it, they can still hear it, and all their own actions turn on its actions and intentions. The confrontation calls for a special kind of watchfulness, raising the specific density within each group. Neither can disband until the other does. The tension between the two groups exerts its pressure on everyone belonging to either. If the tension happens to be that arising out of a ritual game, then the pressure manifests itself in a kind of shame; people make every effort to avoid the humiliation of their own side in front of the enemy. But if the enemy threatens them, if it is really a matter of life and death, then the pressure transforms itself into the armour of united and resolute defence.

But in any case, given that they are about equal in size and intensity, the two crowds keep each other alive. The superiority on the side of the enemy must not be too great, or, at least, must not be thought to be so. Once the feeling spreads that there is no chance of standing firm, people will try to save themselves in mass flight and, if this proves hopeless, the crowd will disintegrate in a panic, everyone fleeing for himself. But this is not what interests us here. For the formation of a *two-crowd structure* it is important that both sides should feel roughly equal in strength.

In order to understand the origin of this structure we have to start from three basic antitheses. The first and most striking is that between men and women; the second that between the living and the dead; and the third that between friend and foe. This last is the one people almost invariably have in mind today when they speak of two opposing crowds.

The connection between the first antithesis—that of men and women—and the formation of specific crowds is not immediately apparent. Men and women live together in families. They may tend to have different activities, but one scarcely thinks of them as confronting each other in separate, excited groups. One has to go to reports of more primitive conditions of life to acquire a real conception of the form this antithesis may take.

Jean de Léry, a young French Huguenot, was, in 1557, a witness of a big feast among the Tupinambu in Brazil.

"We were ordered to stay in the house where the women were. We did not yet know what they would do, but suddenly we heard a deep voice from the house where the men were, less than thirty paces from us and the women. It sounded like the murmur of prayers.

"As soon as the women, about 200 in number, heard this, they all jumped up, pricked their ears and pressed closely together in a heap. Soon afterwards the men raised their voices. We distinctly heard them all singing together and encouraging themselves by repeating over and over again the exclamation: 'He, he, he, he!' We were amazed when the women answered them with the same cry: 'He, he, he, he!' For more than a quarter of an hour they howled and screamed so loud that we did not know how to keep our countenances. In the midst of their howling they sprang in the air with great violence, their breasts shaking and their mouths foaming. Some fell unconscious to the ground, like people who have the falling sickness. It seemed to me that the devil had got into them and had made them mad.

"Quite near us we heard the uproar of the children, who were in a separate room by themselves. Though I had now lived among the natives for over half a year, and had got on quite well with them, I cannot deny that I was terrified. I asked myself how the thing would end and wished myself back in our fort."

The witches' sabbath calmed down in the end, the women and children fell silent and Jean de Léry heard the men sing in chorus so marvellously that he longed to see them and could not bear not to be with them. The women tried to hold him back, for they knew that they themselves were prohibited from joining the men. But he managed to

sneak in among the men, nothing untoward happened to him and, with two other Frenchmen, he attended the feast.

Here the men and women are strictly separated from each other in different but adjacent houses. They cannot see each other, but this causes the one group to listen all the more intently for the noise of the other. They utter the same cries and work themselves into a state of crowd excitement which is common to both of them. The real events are enacted among the men, but the women take part in kindling the crowd. It is remarkable how, as soon as they distinguish the first sounds from the men's house, they press together into a dense mass and respond more and more wildly to the wild shouts which they soon hear from thence. They are full of fear because they are shut in—in no circumstances are they allowed out—and, as they thus cannot know what is happening among the men, their excitement takes on a particular tinge. They jump high in the air as though to jump out. The hysterical symptoms that de Léry notes in them are characteristic of a prevented mass flight. Their natural tendency would be to flee to the men but, since a heavy prohibition lies on this, they flee, as it were, on the same spot.

The sensations of de Léry himself are worth noticing. He feels the excitement of the women, but cannot really belong to their crowd, for he is both a stranger and a man. In the midst of it and yet separated from it, he inevitably fears that he may become its victim.

It is apparent from another part of the report (not quoted here) that the particular contribution of the women is not unimportant. The sorcerers of the tribe, or *Caribs* as de Léry calls them, strictly forbid the women to leave their house, but they command them to listen attentively to the men's singing.

The assemblage of women can have a significant effect on the crowd of their men even when they are much further apart. There are times when the women are called on to make a contribution to the success of warlike expeditions. Three instances of this follow, drawn respectively from Asia, America and Africa, that is, from peoples between whom there was never any contact and who certainly could not influence each other.

Among the Kafirs of the Hindu-kush the women perform the war dance whilst the men are absent on a raid. In this way they give the warriors strength and courage and keep them wakeful lest they should be surprised by a wily enemy.

"Among the Jivaros in South America it is customary for the women during the whole time that the men are absent on the warpath to assemble every night in one house and perform a special dance with

rattles of snail shells around the waist and chanting conjurations. This war dance of the women is supposed to have a special power: it protects their fathers, husbands and sons against the lances and bullets of the enemy; it lulls the enemy into security so that he will not apprehend the danger before it is too late; and lastly it prevents him taking revenge for the defeat inflicted upon him."

*Mirary* is the name given in Madagascar to an old dance of the women which might be performed only in the actual moment of fighting. When a battle was imminent the women were informed by messengers. They then let down their hair and started the dance. In this way they were in communion with the fighters. When the Germans were marching on Paris in 1914 the women in Tananarive danced the *Mirary* for the protection of the French soldiers. It seems to have worked in spite of the intervening distance.

Throughout the world there are feasts where men and women dance in separate groups. But they are visible to, and usually dance towards, each other. It is unnecessary to describe them, for they are widely known, and I have intentionally limited myself to a few extreme cases where the degree of separation, of distance and of excitement is particularly striking. It is certainly possible to speak of the double crowd as something deeply rooted in the lives of these people. The two crowds in these cases are favourably disposed towards each other. The excitement of the one side is supposed to further the well-being and success of the other. Men and women belong to the same people and are dependent on each other.

In the legends of Amazons, which are by no means confined to Greek antiquity, examples being found even among the natives of South America, the women have separated from the men for good and make war on them as a hostile people would.

But before we examine war, the most violent expression of what seems the inescapably dangerous essence of double crowds, it is desirable to consider briefly the age-old antagonism between the living and the dead.

Everything which happens in connection with the dying and the dead is coloured by the image of the much larger number of beings on the other side whom the dead man will eventually join. The loss weakens the living and, if it is a man in his prime, is particularly painful for his people. They resist it as well as they can, but they know that their resistance is not much use. The crowd on the other side is larger and stronger than theirs and the dying man is dragged over to it. All their attempts to prevent it are made in full awareness of this superiority. Everything that might irritate the spirits must be avoided, for

they have power to harm the living. Some peoples believe that the crowd of the dead is the reservoir from which the souls of the new-born are taken. Thus it depends on them whether the woman have children or not. Sometimes the spirits come as clouds and bring rain; they can also withhold the plants and animals which serve as food; and they can fetch new victims for themselves from among the living. The dead man, who was surrendered only after strong resistance, must be appeased, for he is now a member of that powerful host.

Dying is thus a fight, a fight between two enemies of unequal strength. The piercing cries, and the wounds self-inflicted in sorrow and despair, are perhaps also intended to express this fight. The dead man must not believe that he was given up easily; he was fought for.

It is a unique kind of fight, a fight which is always lost however bravely it is fought. From the very beginning the living are in flight; they make a pretence of accepting battle only in the hope of detaching themselves from the enemy in a rear-guard action. The fight is also intended as flattery of the dying man who will soon increase the enemy's force. They want him to be well-disposed towards them when he arrives there, or, at least, not hostile. If he is angry when he arrives among the dead, he may incite them to fresh assaults.

The essence of this fight between the living and the dead is that it is intermittent. One can never know when something is going to happen. Nothing may happen for a long time, but one cannot count on this; each new blow comes suddenly out of the dark. There is no declaration of war; after a single death everything may be over, or it may go on for a long time as in plagues and epidemics. The living are always on the retreat. Nothing is ever really over.

I shall say more later about the relation of the living to the dead. All I wanted to do here was to show them as a double crowd, whose component parts continually interact.

The third type of double crowd is that which forms in war, and this is the one which concerns us most today. After the experiences of the last fifty years one would give much to understand and to be able to dissolve it.

### *The Double Crowd: War*

WAR HAS TO DO with killing. The enemy ranks are "thinned". It is killing wholesale; as many of the enemy as possible are cut down. The aim is to transform a dangerous crowd of live adversaries into a heap

of dead. The victor is the one who kills the largest number. The adversary in war is the growing crowd of one's neighbours. Their increase is frightening in itself, and the threat it contains is enough to release the aggressive drive of one's own corresponding crowd. During the war each side seeks to obtain superiority of numbers at the crucial spot, and to exploit the enemy's weakness in every possible way before he can increase his own numbers. The detailed conduct of war exactly mirrors the nature of war as a whole. Each side wants to constitute the larger crowd of living fighters and it wants the opposing side to constitute the larger heap of dead. In this rivalry between growing crowds lies an essential, and it may even be the prime, cause of wars. As well as killing enemies, one can also make slaves of them, especially of the women and children; and these slaves will serve to increase one's own crowd. But the war is not a true war unless its first aim is a heap of enemy dead.

All the only too familiar phrases in both modern and ancient languages describing the events of war point to precisely this fact. People speak of massacre, butchery and carnage; rivers run red with blood; the enemy is cut down to the last man; quarter is neither given nor taken.

It is, however, important to realize that the heap of the dead is also felt to be a unit; some languages have a special word for it. The German word *Walstatt* for battlefield contains the old root *Wal*, which means "those who are left dead on the field." *Valr* in old Norse means "the corpses on the battlefield". *Valhalla* is nothing but "the dwelling of the fallen warriors". The word *wuol*, meaning "defeat" is derived by ablaut from the old High German *wal*. The corresponding word *wol* in Anglo-Saxon means "plague, pestilence". All these words, whether they refer to those who are left on the field of battle, to defeat, or to plague and pestilence, have one thing in common: they contain the idea of a *heap of dead*.

This conception is found everywhere and is by no means purely Germanic. The prophet Jeremiah saw in a vision the whole earth as one field of rotting corpses: "And the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; they shall not be lamented, neither gathered nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground."

The prophet Mohammed had such a strong sense of the heap of his dead enemies that he addressed them in a kind of triumphal sermon. After the battle of Bedr, his first great victory over his enemies from Mecca, he gave orders that the enemy slain should be thrown into a

pit. Only one of them was buried beneath earth and stones and this was because his body had swelled so much that it was impossible to remove his armour, and thus he was left to lie where he had fallen. "As the others were thrown in the pit, the apostle stood and said 'O people of the pit! Have you found that what God threatened is true? For I have found that what my Lord promised me is true.' His companions said: 'Are you speaking to dead people?' He replied 'They hear what I say to them.'"

Crowded together in the pit, and in safe keeping there, he had assembled those who had formerly refused to listen to his words. I know no more striking instance of the attribution of a residue of life and crowd-like character to the heap of enemy dead. They can no longer threaten, but they can be threatened. Anything can be perpetrated on them with impunity. Whether they feel it or not, the victor assumes that they do, in order to heighten his own triumph. They lie so close in the pit that none of them could move. If one of them awoke he would find nothing but dead men round him; his own people would stifle him; the world to which he returned would be a world of the dead, and the dead would be those who had been closest to him living.

Among the peoples of antiquity the Egyptians were not reckoned truly warlike, the energy of their Old Kingdom being directed more to the building of Pyramids than to conquest. But some campaigns were undertaken even at this early period. One of them was described by Une, a high judge who had been appointed by his king Pepy as commander-in-chief against the Bedouin. His report, as inscribed in his tomb, runs as follows:

"This host went happy and hacked to pieces the land of the Bedouin.  
This host went happy and destroyed the land of the Bedouin.  
This host went happy and overthrew its towers.  
This host went happy and cut down its figs and vines.  
This host went happy and threw fire into its villages.  
This host went happy and slaughtered its armies, many ten thousands.  
This host went happy and brought home prisoners, a large multitude."

This powerful image of destruction culminates in the line announcing the slaughter of tens of thousands of enemies. In the New Kingdom the Egyptians began, though they did not long continue, a planned policy of aggression. Rameses II undertook prolonged wars against the Hittites. A hymn in his praise runs as follows: "He treadeth down the

land of the Khatti and maketh it a heap of corpses like Sekhmet when she rageth after the pestilence." Already in myth the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet has wrought terrible carnage amongst rebellious humans. She remains the goddess of war and slaughter, and the poet of this song of praise associates the image of the Hittite heap of dead with that of the victims of a plague—a conjunction already familiar to us.

In his famous report on the battle of Kadesh, which he fought against the Hittites, Rameses II tells how he was cut off from his own men and how, through superhuman strength and courage, he won the battle alone. His men "found that all peoples amongst whom I had forced my way were lying slaughtered in heaps in their blood, even all the best warriors of Khatti, and the children and brethren of their prince. I had caused the field of Kadesh to become white, and one knew not where to tread because of their multitude." The corpses were clothed in white, and it was their numbers which changed the colour of the field. It is a most terrifying and graphic description of the result of a battle.

But it is a result which only soldiers see. The battle may be fought abroad and people at home want a share in the heap of the dead. Merenptah, the son and successor of Rameses II, won a great battle against the Libyans. We hear how their whole camp, with all its treasures and all the relations of their prince, fell into the hands of the Egyptians and was first plundered and then burnt. The booty included 9,376 prisoners, but this was not enough; in order to prove the number of the dead to the people at home the private parts of the fallen were cut off; or, if they were circumcised, the hands were taken instead. All this booty was loaded on to donkeys. Rameses III also fought against the Libyans; on this occasion the trophies numbered 12,535. It is clear that these ghastly loads are simply epitomes of the mound of enemy dead which, in them, is made transportable and capable of demonstration to the whole people. Each of the fallen contributes part of his body to the heap and—and this is important—all these parts are identical.

Other peoples preferred heads. Among the Assyrians a reward was offered for every head of an enemy; a soldier sought to procure as many as possible for himself. A relief from the time of King Assurbanipal shows the scribes in their large tents noting down the number of severed heads. Each soldier brings his heads, throws them on a common heap, gives his name and that of his detachment and then goes away. The Assyrian kings had a passion for these mounds of heads. When with the army they presided at the bringing in of the

trophies and themselves distributed the rewards to the soldiers. When absent they had the whole heap of heads brought to them; if that was impossible they made do with those of the enemy leaders.

Thus the immediate and quite concrete goal of war is clear, and we need search for no further illustrations of it. Written history abounds in them; indeed one forms the impression that they are its favourite subject matter and that only by great and repeated efforts has it been made to turn its attention to humanity's other memories.

If we consider both warring parties simultaneously war presents a picture of two doubly interlocked crowds. An army, itself as large as possible, is bent on creating the largest possible heap of enemy dead. And exactly the same is true of the other side. Thus every participant in the war belongs simultaneously to two crowds. From the point of view of his own people he belongs to the crowd of living fighters; from that of the enemy to the potential and desired crowd of dead.

In order to maintain a bellicose spirit each side has to assert, over and over again, first how strong it is itself—that is, how many fighters it disposes of; and second, how weak the enemy is—that is, how many of them are already dead. From the earliest times war reports have been characterized by these twofold statistics: on the one side, so many men on the move; on the other, so many dead. There is a strong tendency to exaggerate, particularly the number of enemy dead.

None of those involved in a war like admitting that the number of living enemies is too great for them. Even if aware of it, they keep silent about it and try to redress the balance by skilful distribution of the fighting troops. The self-sufficiency and mobility of army units is increased and, as has been said before, everything possible is done to ensure superiority on the spot. Only *after* the war do people speak openly of the losses on their own side.

The fact that wars can last so long, and may be carried on well after they have been lost, arises from the deep urge of the crowd to maintain itself in the acute stage; not to disintegrate; to remain a crowd. This feeling is sometimes so strong that people prefer to perish together with open eyes, rather than acknowledge defeat and thus experience the disintegration of their own crowd.

But how does a belligerent crowd *form*? What, from one moment to another creates that uncanny coherence? What is it that suddenly moves men to risk their all? The phenomenon is so mysterious that it must be approached with a measure of caution.

War is an astonishing business. People decide that they are threatened

with physical destruction and proclaim the fact publicly to the whole world. They say "I can be killed", and secretly add "because I myself want to kill this or that man." The stress properly belongs on the second half of this sentence. It should run: "I want to kill this or that man, therefore I can be killed myself." But when it is a question of a war starting, of its eruption and the awakening of a bellicose spirit within the nation, the first version will be the only one openly admitted. Even if in fact the aggressor, each side will always attempt to prove that it is threatened.

The threat consists in someone arrogating to himself the right to kill one. Every single person on one's own side stands under the same threat and is made equal by it, for it is directed against everybody. From a given moment, which is the same for everyone—the moment of the declaration of war—the same thing can and may happen to everyone. Life within a community is normally a protection against physical destruction, but now this has come very close, just *because* one belongs to a community. One and the same terrible threat has been pronounced against all counting themselves members of one nation. Singly, but simultaneously, a thousand people have been told "You shall die", and they unite in order to ward off this danger of death. Quickly they seek to attract all those who might be similarly threatened and, for the sake of their common defence, submit to a common direction of action.

On both sides those involved usually come together very quickly, whether in physical actuality or in imagination and feeling. The outbreak of a war is primarily an *eruption of two crowds*. As soon as these crowds have formed, the supreme purpose of each is to preserve its existence through both belief and action. To abandon the crowd would be to abandon life itself. A belligerent crowd always acts as though everything outside it were death. The individual may have survived many wars but, with each new war, he surrenders himself afresh to the same illusion.

Death, which in truth threatens every man all the time, must have been proclaimed as a collective sentence before people will oppose it actively. There are, as it were, *declared times of death*, times when it turns on a definite, arbitrarily selected group as a whole. It is "Death to the French" or "Death to the English". The enthusiasm with which men accept such declarations has its root in the individual's cowardice before death; no one likes facing it alone. It is easier in a duel, when two enemies, as it were, execute sentence on each other; and the death that thousands approach together is entirely different. The worst

that can happen to men in war is to perish together; and this spares them death as individuals, which is what they most fear.

But they do not even believe that this worst will happen, for they see that there is a possibility of deflecting the common sentence passed on them and of turning it against others. The *death-conductor* here is the enemy, and all they must do is to forestall his doing the same thing. But they have to be quick; this business of killing does not admit of even a moment's hesitation. And the enemy is there, ready to their hand. It was he who first pronounced sentence, who first said "You shall die". What he intended for others recoils on him. It is always the enemy who started it. Even if he was not the first to speak out, he was certainly planning it; and if he was not actually planning it, he was thinking of it; and, if he was not thinking of it, he would have thought of it. The wish to see death is everywhere and one does not have to go deep into men to bring it to light.

The curious and unmistakable high-tension which characterizes all the processes of war has two causes: people want to forestall death, and they are acting as a crowd. Without the latter element there is no chance whatsoever of success in the first. As long as the war lasts they must remain a crowd, and the war really ends as soon as they cease to be one. War offers the crowd the hope of a definite duration of life, and this is a considerable factor in its popularity. It can be shown that the coherence and duration of wars in modern times is associated with the greatly increased size and density of the double crowds involved in them.

### *Crowd Crystals*

CROWD CRYSTALS are the small, rigid groups of men, strictly delimited and of great constancy, which serve to precipitate crowds. Their structure is such that they can be comprehended and taken in at a glance. Their unity is more important than their size. Their rôle must be familiar; people must know what they are there for. Doubt about their function would render them meaningless. They should preferably always appear the same and it should be impossible to confound one with another; a uniform or a definite sphere of operation serves to promote this.

The crowd crystal is *constant*; it never changes its size. Its members are trained in both action and faith. They may be allotted different parts, as in an orchestra, but they must appear as a unit, and the first

feeling of anyone seeing or experiencing them should be that this is a unit which will never fall apart. Their life outside the crystal does not count. Even where the unit is a merely professional one, as with orchestral players, no one thinks of their private existence; they are the orchestra. In other cases they wear uniform, and it is only in uniform that one sees them together; out of it they are entirely different people. Soldiers and monks are the most important examples of this type. With them the uniform expresses the fact that members of a crystal *live* together. Even when they appear separately, people always think of the rigid unit to which they belong, the monastery or the regiment.

The clarity, isolation and constancy of the crystal form an uncanny contrast with the excited flux of the surrounding crowd. The process of rapid, uncontrollable growth, and the threat of disintegration, which together give the crowd its peculiar restlessness, do not operate within the crystal. Even in the midst of the greatest excitement the crystal stands out against it. Whatever the nature of the crowd it gives birth to, and however much it may appear to merge with it, it never completely loses the sense of its own identity and always recombines again after the disintegration of the crowd.

The *closed* crowd differs from the crystal not only by being larger, but because its sense of itself is more spontaneous and does not permit of any real allocation of functions. All it has in common with the crystal is defined limits and regular repetition. But the crystal is *all* limits; everyone belonging to it constitutes part of its boundary, whereas the closed crowd has its boundary imposed on it from outside, if only by the shape and size of the building where it meets. Within this boundary where its members touch each other, it remains fluid, and sudden surprises and unexpected changes of behaviour are therefore always possible. Enclosed though it is, it can always attain that degree of density and fervour which leads to an eruption. The crowd crystal, on the other hand, is solid throughout; the nature of its activity is prescribed and it remains precisely conscious of all its utterances and movements.

Another astonishing thing about these crowd crystals is their historical permanence. It is true that new ones continually arise, but the old obstinately persist side by side with them. They may, for a time, withdraw into the background, lose something of their edge and cease to be indispensable; the crowds belonging to them may have died away or been completely suppressed. But, as harmless groups, without effect on the outside world, the crystals go on living on their own. Small groups of religious communities continue to exist in countries

which, as a whole, have changed their faith. The return of the moment when they are needed is as certain as the appearance of new crowds, ripe for the stimulation and release which they may be precisely qualified to give. All such torpid, semi-retired groups may be brought out again and re-activated. They can be revitalized and, with minor changes of constitution, reinstated as crowd crystals. There is scarcely any major political revolution which has not on occasion remembered such old, demoted groups, seized and galvanized them, and used them so intensively that they have appeared as something completely new and dangerously active.

I shall show later how individual crowd crystals function. Only by giving concrete examples is it possible to show how they actually precipitate crowds. The crystals themselves are variously constituted and give rise, therefore, to quite different crowds. The reader will, almost imperceptibly, make the acquaintance of a number of them in the course of this enquiry.

### *Crowd Symbols*

CROWD SYMBOLS is the name I give to collective units which do not consist of men, but which are still felt to be crowds. Corn and forest, rain, wind, sand, fire and the sea are such units. Every one of these phenomena comprehends some of the essential attributes of the crowd. Although they do not consist of men, each of them recalls the crowd and stands as symbol for it in myth, dream, speech and song.

It is desirable to distinguish sharply and clearly between these symbols and crowd crystals. A crowd crystal is a group of men which is striking because of its coherence and unity. It is imagined and experienced as a unit, but it invariably consists of real men in action: soldiers, monks, an orchestra. Crowd symbols, on the other hand, are never made up of men, and they are only *felt* to be a crowd.

It may seem, at first sight, that they are not important enough to warrant detailed examination. But it will be seen that, through them, the crowd itself can be approached in a new and profitable way. They shed a natural light on it, which it would be foolish to exclude.

#### Fire

The first thing to be said about fire is that it is always the same. Whether it is large or small, wherever it starts, and however long or short the time it lasts, there is in our imagination always a sameness

about it, which is independent of the particular occasion. The image of fire is like a scar, strongly marked, irremovable and precise.

Fire spreads; it is contagious and insatiable. The violence with which it seizes whole forests and steppes and cities is one of the most impressive things about it. Until its onset tree stood by tree, and house by house, each distinct and separate from the next. But fire joins what was separate, and in the shortest possible time. Isolated and diverse objects all go up in the same flames. They become so much the same that they disappear completely. Houses, trees, creatures—the fire seizes them all. It is in the highest degree contagious; over and over again one is surprised by the feebleness of the resistance it encounters. The more life a thing has, the less it can defend itself against fire; only minerals, the most lifeless of all substances, are a match for it. Its headlong ruthlessness knows no bounds; it wants to swallow up everything, and is never sated.

Fire is sudden; it can originate anywhere. No one is ever surprised when fire breaks out; here, there, or somewhere, it is always expected. Its very suddenness is impressive and people invariably search for a cause. The fact that often none can be found adds to the awe inherent in the idea of fire. It has a mysterious ubiquity; it can appear anywhere and at any time.

Fire is multiple. Not only does one know that there must be fires in many, indeed in innumerable places, but the individual fire itself is multiple: we speak of flames and of tongues of flame. In the *Vedas* fire is called "The one Agni, manifoldly ablaze".

Fire is destructive; it can be fought and tamed; it goes out. It has an elemental enemy to contend with, namely water in the form of rivers and cloudbursts. Their enmity is proverbial; the expression "fire and water" denotes animosity of the most extreme and irreconcilable kind. In ancient prefigurations of the end of the world either one or the other is victorious. The deluge ends all life by water; the universal conflagration destroys the world by fire. Sometimes they appear together in one and the same mythology, both therefore diminished. But, in this temporal existence, man has learnt to dominate fire. Not only can he always ally himself with water in the fight against it, but he has also succeeded in dividing it and in storing it thus. He keeps it captive in hearths and ovens, and feeds it as he feeds an animal; he can starve it, or he can choke it. This brings us to the last important characteristic of fire: it is treated as though it were alive. It lives restlessly, and it dies. It may be completely smothered in one place, but it will go on living in another.

If we consider the several attributes of fire together we get a surprising picture. Fire is the same wherever it breaks out: it spreads rapidly; it is contagious and insatiable; it can break out anywhere, and with great suddenness; it is multiple; it is destructive; it has an enemy; it dies; it acts as though it were alive, and is so treated. All this is true of the crowd. Indeed it would be difficult to list its attributes more accurately. Let us go through them in turn. The crowd is the same everywhere, in all periods and cultures; it remains essentially the same among men of the most diverse origin, education and language. Once in being, it spreads with the utmost violence. Few can resist its contagion; it always wants to go on growing and there are no inherent limits to its growth. It can arise wherever people are together, and its spontaneity and suddenness are uncanny. It is multiple, but cohesive. It is composed of large numbers of people, but one never knows exactly how many. It can be destructive; and it can be damped and tamed. It seeks an enemy. It dies away as quickly as it has arisen, and often as inexplicably; and it has, as goes without saying, its own restless and violent life. These likenesses between fire and the crowd have led to the close assimilation of their images; they enter into each other and can stand for each other. Fire is one of the most important and malleable of the crowd symbols which have always played a part in the history of mankind. We must now consider some of these affinities between fire and the crowd more closely.

The dangerous traits of the crowd are often pointed out and, among these, the most striking is the propensity to incendiarism. This propensity has its roots in the burning of forests. The forest, itself an age-old crowd symbol, is set on fire by men in order to create space for settlements, and there is good reason to believe that it was through the experience of such conflagrations that men learnt how to deal with fire. There is a clear prehistoric connection between forest and fire. Fields were situated in burnt-out clearings in forests and, whenever they needed to be renewed or enlarged, more forest had to be burnt.

Animals flee from the burning forest; mass fear is the natural and perpetual reaction of animals to large fires; and it was once man's reaction too. But man has taken possession of fire. He holds the fire-brand in his hand and need not fear it. His new power has overlaid his old fear, and the two of them have entered into a strange alliance.

The crowd which used to run from fire now feels strongly attracted by it. As is well known, conflagrations of all kinds have a magical effect on men. Men are not satisfied with the hearths and ovens which each domiciliary group maintains privately for itself; they want a

fire which is visible from afar, which they can all surround and where they can all be together. If the conflagration is large enough, a curious reversal of their old mass fear commands them to hurry to its site, and they feel there something of the glowing warmth which formerly united them. In periods of peace they have to go without this experience for a long time, but one of the strongest instincts of the crowd, as soon as it has formed at all, is to create such a fire for itself and to use its attraction to further its own growth.

The matchbox that modern man carries in his pocket is a small remnant of these ancient and deeply significant associations. It represents the serried tree trunks of a wood, all reduced to an agreeable uniformity, and each provided with a combustible head. It is possible to light several, or indeed all, of them together and thus create an artificial conflagration. One may feel tempted to do this, but it is not usually done, because the tiny size of the ensuing conflagration would deprive fire of all its ancient splendour.

But the attraction of fire may go even further than this. Not only do men rush to it and surround it, but there are old ceremonies by which they actually identify themselves with it. One of the finest examples of these is the famous fire-dance of the Navajo Indians.

"The Navajos of North Mexico prepare a huge fire around which they dance all night in presenting eleven distinct acts between sunset and sunrise. As soon as the disc of the sun has disappeared the performers dance wildly into the clearing almost naked, bedaubed with paint, and allowing their long hair to flow freely as they whirl about. They carry dancing staffs with tufts of feathers at the ends, and with wild bounds approach the high flames. Those Indians dance with a clumsy constraint half crouching, and creeping, in fact the fire is so hot that the performers have to wriggle on the ground in order to get near enough to set alight the feathers at the ends of their dancing sticks. A disc representing the sun is held aloft and around this the wild dancing continues; each time the symbol is lowered and raised a new dance begins. Towards sunrise the sacred ceremonies draw to a close. Men daubed with white come forward and light pieces of bark at the dying embers, then they spring again into a wild chase round the fire, throwing sparks, smoke, and flames all over their bodies. They actually leap among the embers, trusting to the white clay to prevent serious burns."

They dance fire itself; they become fire; their movements are those of flames. What they hold in their hands and set alight appears as though it was they themselves who were burning. Finally they throw

the sparks from the smouldering ashes up into the air, continuing until the rising sun takes over the fire from them, as they had taken it over from the sun at its setting.

The fire here, then, is still a live crowd. Just as other Indians, dancing, become buffaloes, so these act fire. For later peoples this living fire, into which the Navajos transform themselves, becomes a mere crowd symbol.

Behind every recognized crowd symbol one can find the concrete crowd which nourishes it; nor need one depend here on guesswork alone. The human urge to *become* fire, to re-activate this ancient symbol, is still alive in later and more complex cultures. Besieged cities which have abandoned all hope of relief often set fire to themselves. Kings in the last straits of despair burn themselves with their whole court. (Examples of this can be found among the old Mediterranean cultures as well as among the Indians and Chinese.) The Middle Ages, which believed in hell-fire, were satisfied with the burning of a single heretic instead of a whole audience. They, as it were, despatched representatives to hell, and saw to it that they really burnt.

An analysis of the significance which fire has acquired in different religions is of the greatest interest, but it would have little value unless treated at length and must therefore be reserved for another occasion. It seems appropriate, however, to speak here of the significance of impulsive incendiarism in relation to the individual who commits it, an individual who is really isolated and outside the sphere of any religious or political faith.

Kräpelin describes the case of a lonely old woman who, starting as a small child, committed arson about 20 times in her life. Six times she was accused of it, and 24 years of her life were spent in penitentiaries. "If only it would burn" she thinks to herself; arson is a fixed idea, she feels driven to it as though by an invisible power, and particularly when she has matches in her pocket. She certainly likes watching fire, but she also likes confessing, and confessing very circumstantially. She must, early in her life, have experienced fire as a means of attracting people; the commotion around a fire was probably her first experience of a crowd, and it was easy later for fire to take the place of the crowd. Her self-accusation results from her feeling that everyone is watching her. She likes this feeling and, through it, transforms herself into the fire that people are watching. Thus she has a double relationship with arson. Isolated at an early age by her lamentable history, she has had, particularly during her endless prison terms, no opportunity of mingling with crowds and now she wants, first of all, to be part of the

crowd staring at the fire—a fire which is reflected in all eyes and under whose powerful compulsion all eyes turn in the same direction. When the initial blaze is over and the crowd threatens to disperse and escape her, she keeps it alive by suddenly transforming *herself* into the fire. This she achieves very simply: she confesses that she caused it. The fuller and more detailed her story, the longer she will be stared at; the longer she herself will remain the fire.

Cases of this kind are not as rare as one might think. Though not always so extreme, they provide irrefutable proof of the connection between fire and the crowd, even in isolated individuals.

### The Sea

The sea is multiple, it moves, and it is dense and cohesive. Its multiplicity lies in its waves; they constitute it. They are innumerable; the sea-farer is completely surrounded by them. The sameness of their movement does not preclude difference of size. They are never entirely still. The wind coming from outside them determines their motion; they beat in this or that direction in accordance with its command. The dense coherence of the waves is something which men in a crowd know well. It entails a yielding to others as though they were oneself, as though there were no strict division between oneself and them. There is no escape from this compliance and thus the consequent impetus and feeling of strength is something engendered by all the units together. The specific nature of this coherence among men is unknown. The sea, while not explaining, expresses it.

Waves are not the only multiple element in the sea. There are also the individual drops of water. It is true that they only become drops in isolation, when they are separated from each other. Their smallness and singleness then makes them seem powerless; they are almost nothing and arouse a feeling of pity in the spectator. Put your hand into water, lift it out and watch the drops slipping singly and impotently down it. The pity you feel for them is as though they were human beings, hopelessly separated. They only begin to count again when they can no longer be counted, when they have again become part of a whole.

The sea has a *voice*, which is very changeable and almost always audible. It is a voice which sounds like a thousand voices, and much has been attributed to it: patience, pain, and anger. But what is most impressive about it is its persistence. The sea never sleeps; by day and by night it makes itself heard, throughout years and decades and centuries. In its impetus and its rage it brings to mind the one entity

which shares these attributes in the same degree; that is, the crowd. But the sea has, in addition, the constancy which the crowd lacks. It is always there; it does not ooze away from time to time and disappear. To remain in existence is the greatest, though as yet fruitless, desire of the crowd; and this desire is seen fulfilled in the sea.

The sea is all-embracing; nor can it ever be filled. If all the streams and rivers and clouds, all the waters of the earth, flowed into it, they would not really increase it; it would remain unchanged; we should still feel that it was the same sea. Thus in its size, too, it serves as a model for the crowd, which always wants to grow and would like to become as large as the sea and, in order to do so, draws in more and more people. The word "ocean" is the final expression of the solemn dignity of the sea. The ocean is universal, it reaches everywhere, it touches all lands; the ancients believed that the earth itself swam on it. If it were possible, once and for always, to fill the ocean, the crowd would have no image of its own insatiability, of its deepest and darkest urge, which is to absorb more and more people. The ocean lies before its eyes as the mythical justification for its own unconquerable urge towards universality.

Thus the sea is changeable in its emotions: it can soothe or threaten or break out in storms. But it is always there. One knows where it is; it lies open and manifest, not appearing suddenly where there was nothing before. It lacks the mystery and suddenness of fire which, like a ravening animal, springs out at man from nowhere and thus may be expected anywhere; the sea is to be expected only where it is known to be.

But there is, nevertheless, mystery in it, a mystery lying not in suddenness, but in what it contains and covers. The life with which it teems is as much part of it as its enduring openness. Its sublimity is enhanced by the thought of what it contains, the multitudes of plants and animals hidden within it.

The sea has no interior frontiers and is not divided into peoples and territories. It has one language, which is the same everywhere. There is thus no single human being who can be, as it were, excluded from it. It is too comprehensive to correspond exactly to any of the crowds we know, but it is an image of stilled humanity; all life flows into it and it contains all life.

### Rain

All over the world, and particularly where it is rare, rain, before it falls, is felt to be a unit. As a cloud it approaches and covers the sky;

the air grows dark before it rains and everything is shrouded in grey-ness. During this moment when it is certain rain is more strongly felt as a unit than while it is actually falling, for it is often ardently longed for, and may indeed be literally vital. Even when prayed for, however, it does not always appear; magic is called in aid and there are numerous and varied methods of luring it.

Rain falls in drops. There are many of them, they can be seen, and the direction of their movement is particularly noticeable. All languages speak of rain *falling*. It is seen as parallel streaks, and the number of the falling drops emphasises the uniformity of their direction. There is no movement which makes more impression on man than that of falling; compared with it all others seem secondary and derived. From a very early age falling is what one fears most; it is the first thing in life which one is armed against. Children learn to beware of it and, after a certain age, it becomes ridiculous or dangerous. In contrast to man, rain is what *should* fall, and there is nothing which falls so often or in such multiplicity.

It is possible that the heaviness and hardness of the fall is somewhat diminished by the great number of the falling drops. These can be heard hitting the ground, and it is a pleasant sound; they can be felt on the skin, and it is a pleasant sensation. Three senses at least—sight, hearing and touch—participate in the experience of rain, and to all these senses it is something multiple. It is easy to protect oneself against rain. Only rarely is it a serious menace; usually it is something beneficent and dense which wraps men round.

There is a sameness in the impact of rain-drops, and the parallel lines of their fall and the uniformity, both of their sound and of their wetness on the skin, all serve to accentuate this sameness.

The density of rain is variable. Rain can be heavy or light and the number of the drops is subject to large fluctuations. One can by no means count on its continuous increase; on the contrary, one knows that it will end and its drops ooze away in the earth without trace.

In so far as rain has become a crowd symbol, it does not stand, as fire does, for the phase of raging and irresistible increase. Nor is it ever as constant as the sea, and only rarely as inexhaustible. Rain is the crowd in the moment of discharge, and stands also for its disintegration. The clouds whence it comes dissolve into rain; the drops fall because they can keep together no longer, and it is not clear whether, or when, they can coalesce again.

## Rivers

The most striking thing about a river is its direction. It moves between unmoving banks, and these render its flux continuously apparent. The unresting and uninterrupted flow of its waters, the definiteness of its main direction—even if this changes in detail—the determination with which it makes towards the sea, its absorption of other, smaller streams—all this has an undeniably crowd-like character. And thus the river has become a symbol for the crowd, though not so much for the crowd in general as for some of its specific forms. The width of a river is limited; it cannot grow indefinitely or unexpectedly, and hence its use as a crowd symbol is always in some degree provisional only. It stands for processions; the people watching from the pavements are like trees on river-banks, the solid bordering the flowing. Demonstrations in large cities have a similar river-like character: tributaries come from various districts to feed the main stream. Rivers are especially a symbol for the time when the crowd is forming, the time before it has attained what it will attain. Rivers lack the contagiousness of fire and the universality of the sea. But, in place of these, they have an impetus which seems inexhaustible and which, because there is never a time when it is not being fed, is present from the beginning. Hence the fact that their origins are sometimes taken more seriously than their goal.

A river is the crowd in its vanity, the crowd exhibiting itself. This being seen is as important as the element of direction. There is no river without banks; its bordering verdure is like a lane of people. All river-like formations, such as processions and demonstrations, want to be *seen*. They show as much as possible of their surface, extending as far as they can and offering themselves to the largest possible number of spectators. They want to be admired or feared. They have a provisional goal, but it is not really important. The important thing is the stretch which separates them from it, the length of street they have to traverse. The density among their participants need not be very high. It is higher among the spectators, and between spectators and participants a special kind of relationship develops, resembling the love-play of two snake-like creatures, the one slowly and tenderly drawing its length through the embrace of the other.

Growth, of course, is determined at source and takes place only through precisely defined tributaries. In addition to water, a river also carries along with it many other different things and its appearance is much more effectively changed by these than the appearance of the

sea is changed by marine freights, which disappear on the enormous expanse of water.

Summing up, we may conclude that the river is only a limited crowd symbol and differs in this respect from fire, sea, forest or corn. It is the symbol of a movement which is still under control, before the eruption and the discharge; it contains the threat of these rather than their actuality. It is the symbol of the *slow* crowd.

### Forest

The forest is *higher* than man. It may be enclosed and overgrown with all kinds of scrub; it may be hard to penetrate, and still harder to traverse, but its real density, that which makes it a forest, is its foliage; and this is overhead. It is the foliage of single trees linked together which forms a continuous roof; it is the foliage which shuts out the light and throws a universal shadow.

Man stands upright like a tree and he inserts himself amongst the other trees. But they are taller than he is and he has to look up at them. No other natural phenomenon of his surroundings is invariably above him and, at the same time, so near and so multiple in its formation as the concourse of trees. For clouds pass, rain dries up, and the stars are distant. Of all the multiple phenomena affecting him from above, none is as perpetually near him as the forest. Tree-tops are attainable; trees can be climbed and their fruit picked and brought down; people have lived in them.

The direction in which a forest draws men's eyes is that of its own growth. A forest grows steadily upwards; the equality of its trees is approximate, consisting, in fact, only in uniformity of direction. Once in the forest, man feels sheltered. He is not at its point of greatest density, the top, where it goes on growing. On the contrary, the density is overhead and protects him. Thus the forest is the first image of awe. It compels men to look upwards, grateful for the protection above. Looking up at trees becomes looking up in general. The forest is a preparation for the feeling of being in church, the standing before God among pillars and columns. Its most harmonious and therefore most perfect expression is the vault of a dome, the trunks of many trees intertwined in a supreme and indivisible unity.

Another, and no less important, aspect of the forest is its multiple immovability. Every single trunk is rooted in the ground and no menace from outside can move it. Its resistance is absolute; it does not give an inch. It can be felled, but not shifted. And thus the forest has become the symbol of the *army*, an army which has taken up a position, which

does not flee in any circumstances, and which allows itself to be cut down to the last man before it gives a foot of ground.

### Corn

Corn, in more than one way, is a diminished and subjugated forest. It grows where forest stood before, and it never grows as high. It is man's work and entirely in his power. He sows it and reaps it and, by ancient rites, contributes to its growth. It is as pliant as grass and subject to the influence of every wind. The blades move together in accordance with the wind; the whole field bows down simultaneously. In storms it is struck down completely and remains lying thus for long periods. But it has a mysterious ability to straighten itself and, so long as it has not been too badly maltreated, will suddenly stand there again, the whole field of it. The full ears are like heavy heads; they nod to one or turn away as the wind blows.

Corn is usually shorter than man, but, even when it has grown above his head, he remains its master. It is cut all together, as it grew and was sown together. Even the grasses which man does not use remain together throughout their existence. But how much more striking is the sameness of the fate of blades of corn, sown, harvested, threshed and stored together! As long as corn is growing, it remains rooted on the same spot; no one blade can get away from the other blades, and anything which happens to one happens to all. The blades vary in size, but no more than men; a cornfield as a whole generally appears uniform in height. Its rhythm when excited by the wind is that of a simple dance.

Men readily see their own equality before death in the image of corn. But blades of corn are cut simultaneously and this brings a quite specific death to mind: a common death in battle, whole rows of men mown down together. The cornfield is a battlefield.

The pliancy of corn becomes submissiveness. It is like an assemblage of loyal subjects, incapable of conceiving the idea of resistance. Tremulously obedient they stand there, responsive to every command. When the enemy comes they are mercilessly trampled down.

The heaps of seed from which corn originates are as significant as the heaps of grain it finally becomes. Whether it bears seven or one hundredfold, the latter are many times larger than the former. By growing and standing together it increases; and this increase is its blessing.

## Wind

The strength of wind varies, and, with it, its voice. It can whine or howl, and, loud or soft, there are few sounds of which it is not capable. Thus it affects men as something living, long after other natural phenomena have become inanimate. Apart from its voice, the most striking thing about wind is its direction; in order to name it, it is essential to know which quarter it comes from. Since man is entirely surrounded by air, the buffettings he receives from wind are felt as something peculiarly physical. One feels entirely contained in wind, it gathers everything to itself and, in a storm, everything that it seizes is driven along together.

Wind is invisible, but the movement it imparts to clouds and waves, leaves and grasses, makes its multiplicity apparent. In the hymns of the *Vedas* the storm gods or *Maruts*, always appear in the plural. "Their numbers are stated as thrice seven or thrice sixty. . . . They are brothers of equal age, having the same birthplace and the same abode. . . . The noise made by the *Maruts* is thunder and the roaring of winds. They cause the mountains to quake, they shatter trees and, like wild elephants, devour the forests. They are often called singers: the singing of the wind. They are mighty, fierce, terrible like lions, but also playful like children or calves."

The age-old identification of wind and breath is proof of how concentrated wind is felt to be; it has the density of breath. Its invisibility, on the other hand, enables it to stand for invisible crowds, and thus for spirits. They come roaring like a storm, a wild host; or they are spirits in flight, as in the vision of the Eskimo Shaman.

*Flags* are wind made visible. They are like bits cut from clouds, nearer and more varied in colour, tethered and given permanent shape. In their movement they are truly arresting. Nations use them to mark the air above them as their own, as though the wind could be partitioned.

## Sand

Sand has various qualities relevant to this discussion, but two of these are especially important. The first is the smallness and sameness of its parts. This is one quality, not two, for grains of sand are felt to be the same only because they are so small. The second is the endlessness of sand. It is boundless; there is always more of it than the eye can take in. Where it appears in small heaps it is disregarded. It is only really striking when the number of grains is infinite, as on the sea-shore or in the desert.

Sand is continually shifting, and it is because of this that, as a crowd symbol, it stands midway between the fluid and the solid symbols. It forms waves like the sea and rises in clouds; dust is refined sand. Also important is the fact that sand is a threat, confronting man as something hostile and aggressive. The monotony, vastness and lifelessness of the desert, consisting as it does of innumerable, homogeneous particles, opposes to man a power which is almost invincible. Sand suffocates man as the sea does, but more maliciously because more slowly.

Man's relationship to the sand of the desert anticipates the struggle he wages with growing power against huge swarms of tiny enemies. Locusts, like sand, wither vegetation, and man, as cultivator, fears them as he fears sand, for they leave desert behind them.

It is puzzling that sand should ever have become a symbol of progeny. The fact that it has—and the Bible provides many instances of it—proves the intensity of man's desire for immense numbers of descendants. The stress here is not primarily on quality. It is true that people wish for a troop of strong and upright sons, but, for the remoter future, the sum of the life of generations, they want more than this. They want their posterity to be a crowd, and the largest, most boundless and least countable crowd they know is that of sand. How little the individual quality of descendants matters can be seen from the similar symbol of the Chinese, who equate progeny with a swarm of locusts, extolling their numbers and cohesion as a model for man's posterity.

Another symbol which the Bible uses for posterity is the stars. Here, too, the essential is their innumerability. There is no mention of the brightness of single, special stars. What is important is the fact that they remain; that they never pass away, but are always there.

## The Heap

Every heap which has human significance has been collected. The unity of a heap of fruit or grain is the result of activity. Many hands were occupied with the picking or harvesting. These are tied to a definite season and are of such decisive importance that the oldest division of the year is derived from them. Men celebrate in feasts their joy over the various heaps they have managed to collect. They exhibit them with pride and often their feasts are arranged round them.

The things which have been collected are all of the same kind, one species of fruit or grain. They are piled as closely as possible and the more there is of them and the denser the pile, the better. It is close at hand and does not have to be fetched from far off. The heap must be

large and people boast of it. Only if it is large enough will it last all of them for any length of time. As soon as they have got used to the gathering of things for these heaps, people go on and on making them larger and larger. They love to remember the years which brought the richest harvest and, as soon as annals are kept, these are recorded in them as the years of greatest happiness. From year to year and place place harvests vie with each other. Whether they belong to the community or to individuals the heaps of produce stand as exemplars to be guarded and cherished.

It is true that they are then used up, sometimes quickly on special occasions, at other times slowly according to need. The time of their existence is limited. The idea of decrease is contained in them from the beginning and their re-assembly is subject to the rhythm of the seasons. All harvesting is a rhythmic heaping, and feasts are celebrated in accordance with this rhythm.

### Stone Heaps

But there are also heaps of an entirely different kind, which are not edible. Such heaps are of stone and are erected precisely because it is difficult to take them to pieces. They are meant to endure for a long time, for a kind of eternity, and should never decrease but remain always as they are. They do not make their way into people's bellies, nor are they always lived in. In their oldest form each separate stone stands for the man who has contributed it to the heap. Later the size and weight of the individual stone increases and each can only be mastered by a number of men working together. Such monuments may represent different things, but each contains the concentrated effort of innumerable difficult journeys. Sometimes it is a mystery how they were erected at all, and the less they can be explained, and the more distant the origin of the stone, the greater the imagined number of their builders and the stronger the impression they make on later generations. They represent the rhythmic exertion of many men, of which nothing remains but these indestructible monuments.

### Treasure

Treasure, like all other heaps, is something which has been collected. But, in contrast to fruit and grain, it consists of units which are inedible and imperishable. What is essential is that each of these units should have a special value; it is only confidence in their retaining it which tempts men to amass treasure. A hoard of treasure is a heap which should be left to grow undisturbed. The man it belongs to may be

powerful, but there are always others equally powerful to rob him. The prestige treasure gives its owner carries danger with it; fights and wars have arisen over treasure and many a man would have lived longer if his treasure had been smaller. Thus it is often of necessity kept secret. The peculiarity of treasure lies in the tension between the splendour it should radiate and the secrecy which is its protection. The lust of counting, of seeing numbers mount up, derives largely from treasure and is most comprehensible there. None of the other enumerations whose desired result is the highest possible figure—those of cattle, or of men, for example—share the same concentration of countable units. The image of the owner secretly counting his treasure is deeply engraved in the minds of men; and no less imperishable is their hope of discovering treasure for themselves, treasure which has been so well hidden that it lies forgotten in its hiding-place and no longer belongs to anyone. Disciplined armies have been corroded and overcome by their greed for treasure, and many victories turned to defeat. The transformation, even before battle, of an army into a band of treasure-seekers is described by Plutarch in his life of Pompey.

"As soon as Pompey landed his fleet near Carthage, 7,000 of the enemy deserted and came over to him. His own army consisted of six legions at full strength. Here, they say, a rather absurd thing happened to him. It seems that some of his soldiers came across some hidden treasure and got a considerable amount of money. The story of this got abroad and all the rest of the army fancied that the place must be full of money which had been buried by the Carthaginians at some time of calamity. And so, for many days, Pompey could do nothing at all with his soldiers who were all busy looking for treasure. He merely went about laughing at the sight of so many thousands of men together digging up the ground and turning it over, until in the end they got tired of it and asked him to lead them wherever he liked; they had already, they said, suffered enough for their foolishness."

But apart from the heaps or hoards which are irresistible because they are hidden, there are others which are collected quite openly, as a kind of voluntary tax, and in the understanding that they will fall into the hands of one person, or of a few. To this group belong all kinds of lottery; they are quick accumulations of treasure. It is known that, immediately after the announcement of the result, they will be handed over to the fortunate winners. The smaller the number of these, the larger the treasure and the greater, therefore, its attraction.

The greed which unites people on such occasions presupposes an absolute confidence in the units composing the treasure. It is difficult to

exaggerate the strength of this confidence. A man identifies himself with the unit of his money; doubt cast on it offends him and, if it is shattered, his self-confidence is shaken. He feels slighted and humiliated by the lowering of the value of his monetary unit and, if this process is accelerated and inflation occurs, it is *men* who are depreciated until they find themselves in formations which can only be equated with flight-crowds. The more people lose, the more united are they in their fate. What appears as panic in the few who are fortunate enough to be able to save something for themselves, turns into mass-flight for all those others who have become equals by being deprived of their money. I shall describe in a later chapter the consequences of this phenomenon which, particularly in our own time, have been of incalculable general importance.

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