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Crowds and Power

"... massive ... provocative ... brilliant." —TIME

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 man. 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 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.

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; innnmerable 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 nnity: 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.