

societal life conditions—these are constellations which only begin to exhaust the kinds of individual subordination to the group. In them, the three powers which fill historical life—society, individual, and objectivity—become norm-giving, in this order. But they do so in such a way that each of them absorbs the social content, the quantity of superordination of society over the individual; in a specific manner, each of them forms and presents the power, the will, and the necessities of society.

PROSTITUTION

1907

ONLY TRANSACTIONS for money have that character of a purely momentary relationship which leaves no traces, as is the case with prostitution. With the giving of money, one completely withdraws from the relationship; one has settled matters more completely than by giving an object, which, by its contents, its selection, and its use maintains a wisp of the personality of the giver. Only money is an appropriate equivalent to the momentary peaking and the equally momentary satisfaction of the desire served by prostitutes, for money establishes no ties, it is always at hand, and it is always welcomed.

Money is never an adequate means in a relationship between persons that depends on duration and integrity—like love, even when it is only of short duration. Money serves most matter-of-factly and completely for venal pleasure which rejects any continuation of the relationship beyond sensual satisfaction: money is completely detached from the person and puts an end to any further ramifications. When one pays money one is completely quits, just as one is through with the prostitute after satisfaction is attained.

In prostitution, the relation of the sexes is reduced to its generic content because it is perfectly unambiguous and limited to the sensual act. It consists of that which any member of the species can perform and experience. The most diverse personalities can engage

From *Philosophie des Geldes*, 2d enlarged edition (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1907), pp. 413-18. Translated by Roberta Ash.

in it and all individual differences appear to be of no importance. Therefore, the economic counterpart of this relation is money, for it, too, is beyond all individual differences; it is at the species level of economic value, the representation of what is common to all. Conversely, the nature of money resembles the nature of prostitution. The indifference with which it lends itself to any use, the infidelity with which it leaves everyone, its lack of ties to anyone, its complete objectification that excludes any attachment and makes it suitable as a pure means—all this suggests a portentous analogy between it and prostitution.

Kant stated as a moral law that man is never to be used as a mere means, but is always to be perceived and treated as an end in himself. Prostitution represents behavior that is the exact opposite of this, and indeed, *for both parties involved*. Of all human relationships, it is perhaps the most significant case of the mutual reduction of two persons to the status of mere means. This may be the most salient and profound factor underlying the very close historic tie between prostitution and the money economy—the economy of “means.”

It is for this reason that the terrible humiliation inherent in prostitution finds sharpest expression in its equivalence to money. Certainly the nadir of human dignity is reached when what is most intimate and personal for a woman, that which should be given only on the basis of a genuine individual impulse and only when there is a comparable personal contribution from the man (even though it may have a different meaning for him), is offered for such thoroughly impersonal, externally objective remuneration. We perceive here the most total and painful imbalance between performance and recompense; or rather, the debasement of prostitution lies in the fact that the most personal possession of a woman, her area of greatest reserve, is considered equivalent to the most neutral value of all, one which is most remote from anything that is personal.

This characterization of prostitution in terms of monetary compensation leads, however, to certain contradictory considerations. These must now be discussed in order to let the meaning of money in this matter stand out quite clearly.

The completely personal, intimately individual character which

the sexual contribution of the woman is supposed to have does not seem very consistent with the previously emphasized fact that merely sensual contact between the sexes is completely general in nature, and that in this contact which is common to all, even to animals, all personality and individual spirit is extinguished. If men are inclined to lump all women together and to judge them collectively, surely one reason for this is that the feature which men—particularly the coarser sort of men—find particularly attractive in women is shared by the seamstress and the princess.

So, it seems impossible to find individuated values in the sexual function. All other similar universals—eating and drinking, the habitual physiological and psychological activities, the self-preservation drive and the generic logical functions are never strongly entwined with the personality; one never feels that someone expresses his innermost, most essential and most comprehensive being in the behaviors that he indistinguishably shares with everyone else. Nevertheless, the woman's sexual contribution is indisputably anomalous. This completely general act, which is identical for all classes of humanity, is also really viewed—at least for women—as supremely personal, as involving the innermost self.

This can be understood if one assumes that women in general are more deeply embedded in the species type than are men, who emerge from the species type more differentiated and individualized. From this assumption it would follow first of all that, for women, species characteristics and personal characteristics coincide more. If women are indeed closer to the dark, primitive forces of nature, then their most essential and personal characteristics are more strongly rooted in the most natural, most universal, and most biologically important functions. And it further follows that this unity of womankind in which there is less distinction between universal and individual elements than among men must be reflected in the greater homogeneity of each woman's nature. Experience seems to confirm that the faculties, qualities, and impulses of a woman are more closely interwoven than those of a man, whose elements are more autonomous, so that the development and fate of each is relatively independent of that of the others.

According to general opinion on the matter, the nature of

woman is much more inclined to all-or-nothing. A woman's inclinations and activities are more closely linked to each other, and it is much easier to stimulate her entire being—with all its feelings, longings, and thoughts—from a single vantage point. If this is indeed so, then perhaps there is some truth in the assumption that for a woman, this single, vital function, with its contribution of one part of her self, involves more fully and unreservedly her entire person than is true for the more differentiated man in a sexual situation. This difference is already apparent in the less serious stage of the relationship between a man and a woman. Even primitive peoples set different fines for the bride and groom to pay in the event of unilateral abrogation of the engagement; thus, for instance, among the Bakaks the bride must pay five florins, but the groom must pay ten, and among the people of Bengkula, the contract-breaking bride must pay ten florins, but the groom must pay forty. The meaning and the consequences which society ascribes to the sexual contact of men and women are also based on the assumption that the woman contributes her entire self, with all of its worth, whereas the man contributes only part of his personality. Therefore a girl who has gone astray only once loses her reputation entirely, a woman's infidelity is more harshly judged than a man's (of whom it seems to be believed that an occasional purely sensual indulgence is compatible with loyalty to his wife in every spiritual and essential respect), and prostitutes become irredeemably *déclassé*; but the worst rake can still rise from the mire by virtue of other facets of his personality and no social status is closed to him.

Thus, in the purely sensual act, which is the point of prostitution, the man contributes only a minimal part of himself, but the woman her entire self—not, of course, in every case, but on the whole. Under these circumstances, the institution of the pimp and the alleged frequency of lesbianism among prostitutes become comprehensible, for in her contacts with men who are never involved as real and whole persons, the prostitute must feel a terrible loneliness and dissatisfaction which she seeks to diminish by relationships which involve at least some further aspects of the persons. Neither the thought that the sex act is general and impersonal nor

the fact that objectively the man participates as fully as the woman can negate the claim; the contribution of the woman is infinitely more personal, more substantial, and more ego-involving than the man's, and thus money is the most inappropriate and inadequate remuneration, whose offer and acceptance is the greatest possible suppression of the woman's personality.

The humiliation of the prostitute does not lie in the polyandrous nature of prostitution, in her availability to many men; true polyandry often provides women with superior status, as among the high-caste Nayars of India. The key feature of prostitution is not polyandry, but polygyny; for everywhere polygyny incomparably diminishes uniqueness of a woman; she has lost the value of rarity. Objectively viewed, prostitution combines polygynous and polyandrous contacts. But the advantage of the buyer over the seller means that the polygynous features, which give the man a vast superiority, determine the character of prostitution. Even in affairs which do not have the remotest resemblance to prostitution, women find it embarrassing and humiliating to accept money from their lovers, although this feeling often does not extend to nonmonetary gifts. But they find enjoyment and satisfaction in giving money to their lovers. It was said of Marlborough that he was successful with women because he accepted money from them. The previously indicated superiority of the buyer over the seller, a superiority which in prostitution develops into a formidable social distance, in the reversed case gives the woman the satisfaction of making dependent on her the one whom she usually respects.

Now, however, we encounter the striking fact that in many primitive cultures, prostitution is not considered humiliating, nor does it lead to outcaste status. Similarly, in Asian antiquity, girls of all classes prostituted themselves to contribute to the temple treasury or to acquire a dowry, the latter also being the case among some African tribes. The girls, who often include the sovereign's daughter, do not lose their reputation, nor is their later married life in any way compromised. This opinion, so different from our own, indicates that the two factors—women's sexual honor and money—are related in a basically different way than they are among us. Among us prostitution is characterized by the unbridge-

able gap between these two elements; where a totally different view of prostitution is held, these two elements must be closer together in value. This is a counterpart of the development of *wergeld*, the monetary penalty for the killing of a person. The increasing emphasis on the worth of the individual and the decreasing value of money have made the institution of *wergeld* impossible. The same process of differentiation which has led to a special emphasis on the individual and has made him unique and incomparable has made money the measure and equivalent of a completely opposite type of object; the growing indifference and objectivity of money which this entails has made it seem increasingly inappropriate to the balancing of human relations. This imbalance between the service and the payment, which in our culture is the most salient feature of prostitution, is not yet to be found in less differentiated cultures.

Explorers report that among a great many savage tribes, women are remarkably similar to men physically and frequently also mentally. This phenomenon is the result of these tribes' lack of the differentiation which provides the more cultivated woman and her sexual honor with a value that cannot be matched by money, even if she seems less differentiated and less phylogenetically specialized than the men of her milieu. Attitudes toward prostitution undergo the same development that can be observed in the case of ecclesiastical penance and blood money: human beings and their values are relatively unindividualistic in primitive periods, whereas owing to its rarity and infrequent use, money is relatively more individualized. As development causes the two to diverge, the counterbalancing of the two either becomes impossible or where it persists, as in prostitution, it leads to a terrible suppression of personal dignity.

SOCIABILITY

1910

THERE IS an old conflict over the nature of society. One side mystically exaggerates its significance, contending that only through society is human life endowed with reality. The other regards it as a mere abstract concept by means of which the observer draws the realities, which are individual human beings, into a whole, as one calls trees and brooks, houses and meadows, a "landscape." However one decides this conflict, he must allow society to be a reality in a double sense. On the one hand are the individuals in their directly perceptible existence, the bearers of the processes of association, who are united by these processes into the higher unity which one calls "society"; on the other hand, the interests which, living in the individuals, motivate such union: economic and ideal interests, warlike and erotic, religious and charitable. To satisfy such urges and to attain such purposes arise the innumerable forms of social life, all the with-one-another, for-one-another, in-one-another, against-one-another, and through-one-another, in state and commune, in church and economic associations, in family and clubs. The energy effects of atoms upon each other bring matter into the innumerable forms which we see as "things." Just so the impulses and interests which a man experiences in himself and which push him out toward other men bring

Reprinted from "The Sociology of Sociability," *American Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 3 (Nov. 1949). Translated by Everett C. Hughes. Originally published as "Soziologie der Geselligkeit," in *Verhandlungen des I. Deutschen Soziologentages* (1910) (1911).