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Georg Simmel's *The Bridge and the Door*

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After the submission of the following translation, it was learned that a translation by Mark Ritter of the same essay was published in *Theory, Culture and Society,* Vol. 11, No. 1, February 1994, pp. 5-10. Michael Kaern, the translator of the essay in this issue, offers his own assessment of some differences between his and Ritter's translations. From the standpoint of the Editors of *Qualitative Sociology,* the growing importance of Simmel for theoretical and qualitative research suggests that the availability of more than one translation of the following essay may encourage more discussion about Simmel generally. It might even encourage more people to compare both translations to the German original.

Kaern writes: "There are numerous differences between my translation and that of Mark Ritter. Because of space limitations I restrict my comments to two places in the text. My first comment concerns the first sentence of the second paragraph (p. 407, this essay). This is the same sentence that I quote from David Frisby's translation (see p. 406) Ritter correctly does not insert the word 'things' as does Frisby. It is not in the original because Simmel is not speaking about *things,* but about the mental *process* 'relating/separating.' It may be applied to material things, but also to ideas or phenomena.

Both translations (Frisby and Ritter) misread Simmel to say that the capacity of humans to relate and to separate exists 'in contrast to nature'. Simmel does not say this (see my translation, p. 407) He is not speaking of something that humans can do but nature cannot. His concern is with the way in which humans are *dealing with* nature by using the mental ability to relate and to separate in the way he describes (there is no relating without separating and vice versa). The Ritter translation further differs from the original because it gives the impression that Simmel is speaking of 'the right' to relate and to separate. The 'right' does not appear in the original.

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Humans use mental processes like the one about which Simmel is writing, not because they have the right to do so, but because they have no choice.

The second place in the text is the fourth sentence of the second paragraph in the original and in Ritter. In my translation it is the fifth sentence. Here Simmel says that it makes little sense 'to relate that which in some sense does *not* remain separate' (my emphasis; see my translation, p. 408). The Ritter translation says that 'it would be meaningless to connect ... that which also remains separated in some sense' (*Theory, Culture and Society,* p. 5). The reason why what we relate remains separate in some sense is because the relation is the result of a mental operation that is applied independent of things. We treat things 'as-if' they were related although they are separate. This sentence without the 'not' would in fact contradict Simmel's relativist epistemology."

–The Editors

The author presents a translation of and an introduction to Georg Simmel's The Bridge and the Door. *The introduction treats Simmel's epistemology in general, and his theory of relativity in particular. Positive Idealism (a term used by Hans Vaihinger) is introduced as the cornerstone of Simmel's epistemology. In addition, some results of research on perception are used to show that Simmel's theory of relativity can be expanded to include physiological relativity.*

KEY WORDS: Georg Simmel; theory; positive idealism; cognitive sociology; relativism.

It is only relatively recently (Simmel died in 1918) that we are beginning to get something like a grasp on the metatheory on which Simmel's analyses rest. Elsewhere I have shown that the metatheoretical cornerstone of Simmel's philosophy is *Positive Idealism* (Kaern 1983; 1985, 1990b).

Simmel has not written an explicit account of his use of Positive Idealism and therefore it has gone practically unrecognized that it is in fact the core of his epistemology. Positive Idealism until recently has played no role in the interpretation of Simmel's works (for attempts to trace Positive Idealism in Simmel's theorizing see Kaern 1983, 1985, 1990b). Closest to an account by Simmel himself is probably chapter 1 of his *The Philosophy of Money.*

There is really only one book on Positive Idealism: Hans Vaihinger's *Die Philosophie des Als-Ob (The Philosophy of As-If)* published in 1911 (translation published in 1935). The date of publication shows that Simmel did not rely on Vaihinger's book for conceptualizing his epistemology. In-

stead, Vaihinger and Simmel arrived at very similar epistemological conclusions because they shared the same interpretation of the work of Immanuel Kant. According to their interpretation, Kant cannot be properly understood without understanding the role that Positive Idealism (the As-If) plays in his thinking. Similarly, Simmel cannot be properly understood without a clear grasp of Positive Idealism, or in other words, his use of the As-If.

Simmel shares with Positive Idealism — and therefore with Immanuel Kant — the view that the human mind functions independent of nature that is outside of it. The functions that make up the mind are independent of nature. These functions of the mind are what Kant called the *a priori*, or categories, heuristic or regulative principles. The consequences of this independence of the mind are two: first, the picture that the mind creates for us when we analyze the world by using the functions of the mind is not necessarily a true reflection of nature, and secondly, these functions of the mind *construct* for us reality-as-we-know-it. This is true for physical reality as well as for the construction of the social world we live in. In this connection it is important that Simmel did not subscribe to Kant's idea that humans acquire knowledge by using their rational capacities only. Simmel insisted that it is the *whole* human being that is involved in the formation of knowledge, and he placed great importance on humans' "inner life" (feelings, affects, will, motivations, etc.), and the role it plays in the acquisition of knowledge. This view he took from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In fact, he criticized Kant for ignoring the role of feelings in the process of knowledge formation. He called him an "overgrown brain" who knew about feelings only by reading about them.

Therefore it may not be legitimate to call Simmel a direct follower of Kant, or a Neo-Kantian. Interpretations of Simmel that see him as a direct follower of Kant do not realize the importance of the non-rational in Simmel's theorizing.

The functions of the mind include of course the Kantian a prioris, i.e., "cause and effect," "time," "inductive vs. deductive reasoning," "the whole vs. its parts," "moving vs. stationary," "up vs. down." Among the functions of the mind is a master-function. It is the capacity of the human mind to treat things as-if they were what they are not. When we treat things as-if, then we create fictions (Vaihinger's expression), and we use them to construct and analyze the world.

Since it is not possible to go into the details of Positive Idealism here, I shall briefly "explain" it by simply giving some examples of the use and the heuristic role of the As-If, or fictions.

Typification. When we form the type "fruit" we put the proverbial apples and oranges together and treat them *as-if* they were the same al-

though they are not. The world-as-we-know-it is the result of humans behaving *as-if* different things or different people were the same.

Logic. The axiom that is basic to mathematical logic is the "law of excluded middle". It says that statements are either true or else they must necessarily be false. When we apply logic we treat things *as-if* they could only be true or false.

Geometry. One of the axioms of geometry says that a point is something that has no extension. However, "line" is defined as a string of points, but then we treat the point *as-if* it did have extension, because lines have a length.

Calculus. Deals with the infinitely small. It is based on the idea that certain things can be treated *as-if* they were infinitely small or *as-if* they were composed of infinitely small elements.

It is extremely important to realize that "fictions" are nothing negative. On the contrary, they allow us to construct, for example, the various sciences, but also our everyday life-world. There are other fictions (or heuristic principles) that allow humans to construct the *social* world. Some of the fictions that operate in the *social* world are the following:

Free Will. There is no free will, but it is important to keep in mind that the social world is the way it is because we behave *as-if* there were free will. Our practice of putting people into prisons is based on the assumption that there is free will. When we put people into prisons we treat them *as-if* they could have acted differently.

Empathy. This is the problem whether ego can understand alter's inner goings-on (feelings, motivations, affects, etc.) the same way ego understands his own inner goings-on. Emphasis is on "the same way".

Simmel argues that ego cannot understand alter's feelings the same way he understands his own (Simmel 1917a). But it is important to realize that the social world is the way it is because we behave *as-if* it were possible for ego to understand alter's feelings as he understands his own.

Equality. Human societies are collections of individual beings who are all different from each other because they are individuals. "Democracy" as a political dogma (or "regulative idea") equalizes those individuals. Obviously this equality among the unequal can only be established as an idea. In the language of Positive Idealism, we would say that democracy is the result of people behaving *as-if* they were all equal. In general, the social world is the way it is because we behave *as-if* we were all equal.

SIMMEL'S THEORY OF RELATIVITY

The most important function within Simmel's epistemology that is used for the construction as well as the analysis of the world (the object-

to-be-known) is his relativism. This is what *The Bridge and the Door* is about. Relativism to Simmel is one of the elementary categories of our understanding of the world, the scientific world as well as the world of our every-day lives. Simmel's relativism is different from what relativism is commonly taken to mean. He points out that "what is usually meant by relativism is not much more than platitudes like: all truths are relative, in other words they may be false someplace else; or, all moral standards are relative. In other words, they may have different contents someplace else." (Simmel 1917b)

One of the relativisms that is fundamental to our — scientific or everyday — lives is the concept "absolute truth." According to Simmel there is no absolute truth. Truth is a relation between contents, none of which possesses it by itself. Just as no substance is heavy by itself but only in terms of its relation to another substance, so a given statement is true only in relation to another.

Simmel's views about "truth" can be explained by using mathematical logic. Mathematical logic is an abstract system that starts with definitions, assumptions and axioms. From these the theorems are derived with the help of rules of inference. However, the truth of the theorems only exists in relation to the axioms, but the truth of the axioms exists only in relation to propositions that are not part of mathematics. Therefore, it follows that mathematics incorporates two types of truth: the components of mathematics are true in a different sense than is mathematics as a whole (Simmel 1895:39).

For Simmel it is the nature of our knowledge in general that "All of what we call knowledge is not true as a whole in the same sense as its components are true" (Simmel 1895:39/40).

Simmel states his general theory of relativity in his *Die Philosophie des Geldes (The Philosophy of Money).* He says:

> Whatever an object is to us, it is what it is to us because of and in relation to, another object. Objects exist to us only by virtue of another existing...this is the mode of operation of our mind with which it [the mind] creates the world.
> (Simmel 1958a:69, my translation)

And he continues:

> The claim that things are related in such and such a way, has to be replaced by the claim that: our knowledge-and-discovery has to proceed *as-if* things were related in such and such a way.
> (Simmel 1958a:73, my translation)

The published translation of the paragraph above is not conveying the same message. It reads as follows:

> The assertion that things behave in a determinate way has to be replaced, in the context of the most developed and general views, by the notion that our

> understanding must proceed as if things behave in such and such a way. (Simmel 1978: 110)

Here, Simmel's reference to relativism is lost because the translation speaks-of 'behavior' instead of 'relation'. The reason for this is that the German verb *verhalten* has two meanings: one is in fact 'to behave', but the other is 'to relate to,' and that is the intended meaning. Note that the original says nothing about "determinate."

In 1911 he points out to his friend Edmund Husserl that the relativising function (our ability to construct relations between things) is, as far as he is concerned, "the foundation of our mind" (Simmel 1911). This relativising function, according to Simmel, plays a most important role in the construction of the world-as-we-know-it, and the order in it. It is the function that constructs bridges, for example between alter and ego. The essay *The Bridge and the Door* is about the physical bridge as a reification of "bridging" as a necessary human activity. Empathy is the mental bridge between alter and ego, and therefore it is essential for sociation as we know it — the process of the forming of *one* society.

Simmel argues that humans have a drive to proceed in terms of wholes, a drive toward *Ergänzung* (constructing wholes by inter-relating parts). However, he also argues that humans are not able to see, much less understand, the whole of anything. This is easy to agree to, but how can the paradox — that we have the drive to form wholes, and that we cannot understand wholes — be reconciled. What constitutes a whole has nothing to do with "completeness," and is not a question of all the parts being there. The "whole" is a subjective entity, it can be produced by adding or subtracting parts. A painting, i.e., a portrait, becomes art when it forms a whole, but it clearly does not contain all the parts of what it depicts. In *The Bridge and the Door* he speaks of wholeness in art being "ideal", meaning a "mere idea". This wholeness, in other words, is a fiction, a construction of the mind.

The solution to the paradox lies in Positive Idealism. We take the object-to-be-known and subdivide it into what we define as parts. Then, in our mind, we inter-relate the parts — for example by treating some as the cause for others; by computing correlation coefficients; by saying that the one occurs before the other — and treat the inter-related parts as-if they were the whole. As Simmel says: 'Things must first be separate in order to be together' (my translation, below p. 408), and '...the mind transcends this separateness... in a unifying fashion' (my translation, p. 408 below). *Ergänzung* is performed everytime we speak of something as being *one*, i.e., *one* essay, *one* individual, *one* society. Simmel demonstrates in the third *a priori* of his *How is Society Possible* how we apply *Ergänzung* to the formation of the whole of the individual. When Simmel's axiom of relativism is

applied to *Ergänzung* it follows that what is a part is a part only in relation to what is the whole, and vice versa. A seeming paradox comes about when we realize that "society" relates to "individual" as "whole" relates to "part." When we construct alter's individuality as the object-to-be-known we may subdivide the individual into character traits and recombine them in our mind and treat the result as-if it were the whole individual. However, in the third *a priori*, Simmel describes how the fact that "society" and "individual" are defined one through the other (following the axiom of relativity) is manifested in the way we construct the whole of the individual: when we construct the individual we often include as part of the whole individual that which is not part of it, i.e., his or her social class. "Relating," "forming wholes," or "unity" are all mental processes. The "whole" can not be found empirically, but it is constructed by our mind. He says in *The Bridge and the Door* (p. 409 below) that unity 'admittedly is of mental character'. If things in nature are related or separate, then this is so because we 'regard' them to be such (p. 407 below).

In his *The Bridge and the Door*, Simmel speaks of the 'will to relate'. How is this *will* connected to the *drive* to form relations (or wholes)? The answer is that we have to necessarily use our drive to form wholes, but the faculties of the soul decide what the drive is going to be applied to. The "soul" is Simmel's expression for "inner life," and — as already pointed out — inner life includes, among others, affects, motivations, feelings, and also *the will*. Therefore, the will can decide what the drive shall be applied to.

In general we can say that the *a priori* must be used necessarily (we have no choice in this), but which *a priori* is going to be applied to what, is decided by the non a priori factors, i.e., inner life, or they can be macro-level factors, i.e., culture.

EMPATHY

Relativism is, of course, relevant for the construction of the social world in general: we see ourselves in relation to others. We look at ourselves as-if we were somebody else when we look at ourselves from somebody else's point of view. What is Simmel's answer to the questions: How do we understand our own inner life? How do we understand other people's inner life?

In his treatment of empathy, Simmel is concerned about clearly distinguishing two forms of understanding inner life, i.e., feelings, motivations, affect (Simmel 1917a:149). On the one hand there is "living-through," and it refers to the mechanism through which ego understands *her own* inner

life, and on the other hand there is "to experience". It refers to the mechanism that ego uses for understanding *alter's* inner life.

Our social life, and the ways we are sociated obviously rely on ego's capacity to understand alter's inner life and his inner states, i.e., emotions, motivations, alter's love for ego or someone else. Ego has no problem understanding his own inner processes because he knows them by living-through them (*erleben*). We say that we are empathetic with alter when we claim that we understand *his* inner processes. Once we realize that ego knows his own inner processes in ways that are necessarily different from the processes by which he knows alter's inner processes — because ego does not know alter's inner processes by living them — then we have to conclude that ego cannot hope to know alter's inner processes in the same way as he knows his own. Nonetheless, every-day life seems to rely on ego's capacity to put himself into alter's situation. We often tell each other that "I know exactly how you feel". Simmel argues that the social sciences have failed to adequately explain this phenomenon. On the one hand, it is clear, inner processes that have occurred in alter are not simply repeated inside ego's head, but on the other hand, we even claim to understand the different degrees to which an inner state exists in alter. This argument could be supported by saying that although the human mind may not be able to understand nature as such, it may very well be able to understand another mind, because all minds are similar, and because therefore one mind has the inherent capacity to "adequately reflect" another.

However, the situation is not that simple, because ego would still have to imagine what the inner processes that are going on inside of him as a reflection of alter's processes, feel like from alter's point of view. In other words, the problem with this view is that ego has to imagine his own feelings as not being his own but as being alter's. In still other words, ego would be asked to feel and behave as-if his feelings were someone else's.

The other side of this problem is that by thinking what I feel is really what alter feels, ego necessarily misses entirely what alter feels because this is not how alter feels his own feelings: alter does not feel his feelings as-if they were someone else's.

The solution to this puzzle follows from Simmel's point of view of Positive Idealism. It suggests that, of course we cannot understand alter's feelings as we understand our own. We can only behave as-if we could do so. But it is extremely important to understand that the social world is the way it is because we behave as-if we could understand other people's feelings as we understand our own.

Unfortunately, this distinction between "living through" and "to experience" cannot be traced properly in the translation of Simmel's writings on the subject (Simmel 1917a; 1979), because the German *erfahren* (to ex-

perience) and *erleben* (to live-through) are both translated — almost without exception — as 'to experience' (Simmel 1979:145; translated by Oakes. For more detail, see Kaern 1985).

I have presented Simmel's analysis of empathy in some detail because it shows how important and effective relating-by-fiction is, and that the mind is capable of "bridging" the widest gaps when survival — in this case societal survival — is at stake.

Although Simmel located the relating function in the mind, he was, in a sense, aware of physiological relativism. However, he did not explicitly pursue physiological relativism, but he was familiar with Fechner's law (also known as Weber-Fechner Law). For example, his *The Metropolis and Mental Life* is, of course, an essay about the city, as is well understood in the secondary literature, but it is not understood equally well that the essay is an application of Fechner's law.

Research on perception suggests that relations are not only in our mind, but that in addition there is a *physiological* basis for relativism; the object-to-be-known is also created by the relations existing between sensory systems, or "analysers," not only by the way the individual sensory organs are constructed. The way things are perceived to be related to one another depends on the relations existing between the sensory analysers. (Sokolow 1969:78; Semjonowskaja 1969:96). The analyzers are in relations of "informing reciprocity". The perception of size, form, movement, etc., is the result of continuous, informing reciprocity among analyzers. In other words, what one analyzer perceives depends on what other analyzers are already perceiving. This corresponds to Simmels axiom that things are what they are only in relation to other things.

In my own research (Kaern 1983), an optical and an acoustical stimulus were presented. The acoustical stimulus is music, and the optical stimulus is the projection of chemical reactions, a randomly occurring stimulus. The subjects had the inescapable impression that the two went together perfectly. The main finding is that any two stimuli will be perceived as "belonging together" even if one occurs randomly, and they are mutually independent. By relating the unrelated, the mind builds the bridge that allows us to experience the two stimuli as a unit, as a whole. This whole, or unity, is a mental phenomenon.

Simmel has written a number of essays in a — what has been called by many — "journalistic," or "essayistic" (meaning: nonserious) style. However, in everyone of them he poses a serious scientific or epistemological problem. This problem is usually described in the first few paragraphs of the respective essay. This is no different with respect to *The Bridge and the Door,* and therefore one is well advised to pay close attention to them. They define the frame of reference in which to see the essay as a whole.

David Frisby in his *Georg Simmel's Concept of Society* gives his translation of the second sentence of the first paragraph and the first sentence of the second paragraph of *The Bridge and the Door* — indeed two of the most crucial sentences (see my translation below, p. 407):

> The undisturbed transformation of matter as well as energies brings everything in relation to everything else and makes a *single* cosmos out of all individual elements... In contrast to nature, it is only given to human beings to unite and to dissolve things and to do this, in fact, in the distinctive manner that the one is always the presupposition of the other.
> (Frisby 1990:43)

Frisby interprets the two sentences as expressing principles that are central to Simmel's theorizing, and to the essay. According to them 'everything interacts in some way with everything else,' and everything is connected to other things by 'permanently moving relationships' (Frisby 1990:43).

While it is true that those two principles more or less reflect Simmel's general relativism, they do not exhaust the significance of what is expressed in the second sentence of the quotation. The type of relativism that Simmel is speaking of is not restricted to the kind where one thing 'A' is related to another thing 'B'. Simmel is not speaking of a relation between things that exist independent of one another, but are somehow inter-related. Here, 'A' would still exist even if 'B' no longer exists. Instead he speaks of the situation where two items A and B are defined through one another, where they are related to one another in such a fashion that one is the pre-requisite for the other. Here, 'A' will cease to exist if 'B' ceases to exist. Note that in the German original, and therefore in my translation, the word "things" does not appear. Simmel did not use it, because he was not talking about "the material" only. Clearly, the nonmaterial, i.e., ideas or phenomena, are included in Simmel's argument.

In terms of his general axiom of relativism one would say that A is A only in relation to B, and at the same time B is B only in relation to A. In the German original of the second sentence quoted by Frisby, Simmel says that this type of relation holds between "to relate" and "to separate". In other words, there is no separating without relating, and vice versa.

This type of relation is very characteristic of Simmel's theorizing. The form-content relation is another example for it: form is form only in relation to what is content, and content is content only in relation to what is form. Therefore it is unfortunate to speak of the form-content *distinction* as has become common in the secondary literature, because to call it a distinction gives the impression that each exists independent of the other.

Simmel's claim that the ability to construct relations in the fashion that he is discussing, is applied *to nature* is also significant in a different

respect. In his *Beiträge zur Philosophie der Geschichte (Contributions to the Philosophy of History*; for a translation see Kaern 1985) — published in the same year (1909) as The Bridge and the Door — he points out that the external world (including alter) to us does not have the same continuity as does our own inner life. This means that alter's inner life as ego experiences it, is not as continuous as is ego's own inner life. Ego does not need to inter-relate her feelings in order to be able to understand them. They are lived-through in their inter-relatedness. Nature-as-we-know-it is discontinuous. It could be continuous for us if we knew the whole of it. We form knowledge about nature by 'selecting... things from their undisturbed natural situation'(my translation, p. 407 below), and we impose our mind upon them. In his *Contributions to the Philosophy of History* Simmel argues that humans live-through their own existence 'in continuity'. 'This gives to our own lives a certain smoothness and flow.' 'Living-through is continuous, and is interrupted only by sleep' (Simmel 1909b:34). In a sense, our efforts to build bridges, to inter-relate phenomena are efforts to create continuity in analogy to the continuity that exists in our inner life.

Below is my translation of Simmel's essay *Brücke und Tür (The Bridge and the Door),* published in Der Tag, Berlin, September 15, 1909. It is also contained in the collection of essays by the same title (see Simmel 1957).

THE BRIDGE AND THE DOOR BY GEORG SIMMEL

Translation by Michael Kaern

The picture we get of the things external to us is ambiguous to us because in external nature everything can be regarded [gelten] as inter-related or as separated. The perpetual transformations of matter and energy bring everything in relation to everything else and make *one* cosmos out of all singularities. However, the objects remain banned in their unforgiving spatial separateness; no particle of matter can share its spatial position with another, there is no real unity in space of the multiplicity of things. Because of this claim to these mutually exclusive concepts, existence in nature appears to escape their application.

With respect to nature only humans are given the capacity to relate and to separate in the peculiar fashion that the one is always the pre-condition for the other [in the sense that there is no relating without separating, and vice versa, M.K.]. By selecting two things from their undisturbed natural situation in order to call them >separate<, we have already related them to one another in our consciousness, we already have contrasted those

two against all that lies between them. This is true vice versa: to our mind only that is connected which we have somehow isolated from one another first. Things must first be separate in order to be together. Practically and logically, it would be senseless to relate that which was not separate, or to relate that which in some sense does not remain separate. All of our doing may be classified according to the formula in which the two modes of operation find together. According to whether separateness or relation is seen as what is given by nature, the respective other then becomes the task at hand [when we regard things in nature to be separate, then the task is to seek their inter-relation, and vice versa, M.K.]. We are at any moment — in the immediate or symbolic, in the physical or mental sense — beings who separate what is related and who relate what is separate.

The humans who were the first to construct a path between two locations reached one of the greatest achievements. Even if they had walked back and forth between the two locations very often, and in this way related them subjectively, they were objectively related only after humans imprinted the path visibly on the surface of the earth. With this, the will-to-relate had put things into a shape which lent itself to unlimited repetition, independent of how often the repetition had already occurred. The construction of paths is a specifically human achievement; animals also overcome distance, sometimes in the most clever and difficult fashion, but its beginning and its end remain unrelated. Animals do not create the miracle of the path: the miracle to freeze movement into a permanent form which originates from movement and into which movement is channeled.

This achievement reaches its high point in the construction of the bridge. Here not only the passive resistance of what is spatially separated, but also the active resistance of a particular configuration, appear to oppose the human will-to-relate. By overcoming this obstacle, the bridge symbolizes the spreading of our will through space. Only to us the banks of the river are not merely apart but >separated<; the concept "separation" would not have any meaning if we did not relate them first in our purposeful thinking, in our desires, in our imagination. The natural form — as if with positive intention — aids this conception of separateness; here separateness of singular elements appears to be the rule [gesetzt] but the mind then transcends this separateness in a reconciling and unifying fashion.

The bridge becomes an aesthetic value not only because it in reality achieves the inter-relation of what is separate, and because it achieves practical purposes, it becomes an aesthetic value because it makes the inter-relation immediately visible. The bridge encourages the eye to inter-relate parts of the landscape just as in practical reality it encourages bodies to relate with one another. The mere dynamics of the movement — in the reality of which the "purpose" of the bridge exhausts itself — has become

something concrete and enduring. This is similar to the portrait, which, so to speak, freezes the bodily and the inner [seelische] life processes in which the reality of humans unfolds. It collects in *one* timeless and enduring visual representation — which reality could never show and never has shown — the dynamics of this reality, although this dynamic [movement] of reality flows in time and passes in time. The bridge gives a single manifestation to an ultimate meaning that is beyond anything perceivable by our senses. This manifestation is not mediated by any abstract mental reflection, and it absorbs the practical purposiveness [Zweckbedeutung] of the bridge, and brings it into a concrete form, just as the work of art does with its "object." The difference between the bridge and a work of art lies in the fact that the bridge submits to nature although it creates a synthesis which transcends nature. As far as the eye is concerned, the bridge has a relation to the river banks it connects that is much more direct and much less haphazard than the relation that a house has to the ground, which to our eyes disappears below the house. Generally speaking, a bridge in a landscape is regarded as a >picturesque< element because through it the randomness of what is given by nature is elevated into a unity which admittedly is of mental character. However, the bridge, through its immediate and spatial concreteness, has aesthetic value the purity of which is portrayed in art when it puts the unity of the merely natural — that is achieved through the mind — into the island-like ideal wholeness of art.

With respect to the relation "separateness — unification" the bridge emphasizes the latter, and it makes obvious the distance between its resting points, and makes it measureable. By so doing, it also overcomes this distance at the same time. The door, however, in a stricter and more obvious manner demonstrates that the acts of separating and relating are but two sides of the same act. The human being who was the first to build a hut demonstrated — much like the one who was the first to build a path — the specifically human know-how (with which he confronts nature) by carving a parcel out of the continuity and infinity of space and by designing this parcel into a separate whole according to *one* meaning. By so doing, a piece of space was unified in itself and separated from the rest of the world. The door cancels the separation of the inside from the outside because it constitutes a link between the space of the human and everything which is outside of it. Exactly because the door can be opened, its being shut gives a feeling of being shut out, that is stronger than the feeling emanating from just a solid wall. The wall is silent but the door speaks. It satisfies their deepest nature when humans define their own limitations but do so with freedom, i.e., in such a fashion that they can at anytime remove the limitation and put themselves outside of it.

The finiteness into which we have put ourselves always borders somewhere at the infinity of the physical or metaphysical being. In this way the door becomes the symbol for the threshold on which humans always stand or can stand. The door relates the finite unity — as which we have constituted a piece of infinite space designated for us — again to infinite space. The door is the line of demarcation where the limited and the limitless meet, but not in the dead geometrical form of merely a partition wall, but rather as the permanent possibility of continuous alternation. This is unlike the bridge that relates the finite with the finite. However, upon stepping on it, the bridge frees us from these immutabilities and must have granted the strange feeling of hovering for a moment between earth and heaven until we got dulled to it through daily habituating use. The bridge as the line between two points, strictly prescribes safety and direction. From the door, however, life flows out of the limitedness of the isolated being-by-yourself, and it flows into the unlimited number of directions in which paths can lead.

On the one hand, the elements of separateness and relatedness meet in the bridge in such a fashion that the former appears to be more a matter of nature and the latter more a matter of humans; on the other hand, both enter human achievement — as human achievement — in more equal proportions through the door. On this rests the richer and livelier significance of the door as compared to the bridge. It manifests itself in the fact that it does not make any difference in meaning in which direction you walk across a bridge, whereas the door with its going-in and going-out function signals a totally different intention. In this respect the door also differs from the window, which in a way is similar to the door — both are a connection of the interior space with the world outside. But the teleological feeling vis à vis the window exclusively goes from the inside to the outside — it is only meant for looking-out-of and not for looking into. The window establishes the relation between the inside and the outside. Because of its transparency it does so — so to speak — necessarily [chronisch] and continuously; but because of the one-way manner in which this relating works, and because of the limitation of the window to being only a path for the eye, the window is granted only a fraction of the deep significance that the door has in principle.

But a special situation may emphasize one of the directions of its functions more than the other. For example, if in Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals the wall openings get narrower and narrower toward the door, and if one reaches the door in between pillars and statues which move closer and closer together, then the meaning of the door in those cathedrals is obviously intended as one of leading-into rather than one of leading-out-of, although only as an unfortunate and unavoidable accident the door

does have the latter function. This kind of structure safely and with tender automatic coercion guides the person who enters onto the right path. (Let me mention, for the analogy's sake, that this meaning continues through the way in which the pillars are arranged between the door and the altar. They show the way through their narrowing in perspective, they guide us, they do not allow any hesitation that would be the case if we would really see the parallelism of the pillars. Then the end point would not look any different from the beginning. There would be nothing to tell us that we have to begin at one point and end at the other. However, although perspective is being used brilliantly for showing the way within the church, it lends itself to pointing out the reverse direction and lets the string of pillars lead from the altar to the door through the same narrowing of the pillars as if it were leading to the point of the string of pillars.) Only this cone-form of the door makes the "into" rather than "out" its unambiguous meaning. But this is a unique situation, and it symbolizes that the movement of life ends at the church. This movement of life — that can go from the inside to the outside with the same justification as it goes from the outside to the inside — ends at the church. The movement of life is replaced by the only direction that has to be followed [the only direction that counts, M.K.]. Just as life on earth in every moment constructs bridges among the unrelated aspects of things, so in every moment it stands outside or inside the door through which life moves from its being-for-itself into the world as well as from the world into its being-for-itself.

The forms which rule the dynamics of our life are transformed in this way by the bridge and the door into the sturdy permanence of perceptible form. The mere functionality and the telos of our movements are not carried by them as if they were tools, but rather, the function and the telos coagulate in the form of the bridge and the door to an immediately convincing plasticity. If one considers the different emphases of the bridge and the door which dominate their appearance, then the bridge shows how man unifies the separateness of being that exists in nature, and the door shows how man breaks the uniform continuous unity that exists in nature. Through this general aesthetic meaning that the bridge and the door gain through their signifying something metaphysical, and through their stabilizing of something merely functional lies the reason for their special value for the arts. Even if the frequency, with which painting uses both, can be attributed to the artistic value of their mere form, there still is this mysterious concurrence through which the purely artistic significance and perfection of an object [Gebilde] always shows itself to also be the most complete expression of abstract inner or metaphysical meaning that can really not be shown: the painter's interest in the human face — although this interest is directed only toward form and color — is maximally satisfied

if the portrait of the face includes the maximum of inner [seelisch] life and mental character.

Because man is the relating being who must go on separating, but cannot relate without separating, therefore we must grasp the mere indifferent being-there of two river banks with our mind as being separate in order to unify them by a bridge. Similarly, the human being is the being with limits who has no limits. The seclusion of his being-at-home achieved by the door means that man severs a piece from the uninterrupted unity-of-being in nature. But just as amorphous limitation finds a shape, so man's being limited finds its meaning and its dignity in what is signified by the door — the possibility of at any moment stepping into freedom and out-of being limited.

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