

SOCIETY

C.K.Ogden

BASIC STEP BY STEP

The early history of man on earth is the history of the growth of society. Men have a natural impulse to take care of their young, and we have no record of a time when they were not living in families. The family is the unit on which society is based; but it is a long way from this first simple group to the system of society which we have today, and the process of development took a long time.

The first groups wider than the family may have been formed for helping one another in times of danger, or they may have come simply from the natural impulse to get together. But when men had had the experience of a united existence, its value was made clear to them. They saw that by keeping together they were safer from animals and other dangers, and that living in a group made possible new and better ways of getting food and doing work. Later, different persons came to be expert at different sorts of work, and so society slowly became the complex organization which it is now.

Men did not get all this good from society without giving something in exchange. A person living with other persons is not completely free. He may not do everything which is pleasing to him, because frequently an act which is pleasing to one does damage to others. The impulses of the self sometimes have a tendency to the destruction of the group, and so an adjustment of the self to society is necessary.

There are some persons who have naturally a kind feeling for all men, and who are ready to make an offer of help whenever they see anyone in need of it. Others are wise enough to be conscious of the value of peace and order, and to see that respect for society is the way to a better existence for themselves. Adjustment to society is not hard for persons like these. But there are some foolish persons who have no thought for others and no true knowledge of what is good for themselves, and it is

necessary to keep such persons from acting against society. This is the purpose of public punishment.

An act which is clearly against society is a crime, and the person who does such an act is taken before a judge and given a punishment. He may be put in a prison, or if the crime is very serious, the punishment may even be death. In most countries it is a crime to take, or to do damage to, another person's property.

An act may be wrong without being a crime. Any sort of cruel behaviour is wrong, but only those forms of it which are seen to be a danger to society are put on the list of crimes. But though there is no fixed punishment for certain sorts of wrong behaviour, fear of public opinion keeps a number of men from doing wrong.

The organization of society among men is not the only example of such a thing. Other animals have societies, and some of them, like the ant and the bee, have very complex ones. But in the societies of insects, organization has gone much farther than in the society of man. Every ant and every bee is living only for the group and has no private existence. It does nothing but the work of the group, and seems more like a part of a machine than a living thing. The only reward which it has is the necessary food and a safe place for sleep, and even these are only given to it while it is a good worker.