

PART I
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTIVE
PSYCHOLOGY

CHAPTER II

THE MENTAL LIFE OF THE CROWD

It is a notorious fact that, when a number of men think and feel and act together, the mental operations and the actions of each member of the group are apt to be very different from those he would achieve if he faced the situation as an isolated individual. Hence, though we may know each member of a group so intimately that we can, with some confidence, foretell his actions under given circumstances, we cannot foretell the behaviour of the group from our knowledge of the individuals alone. If we would understand and be able to predict the behaviour of the group, we must study the way in which the mental processes of its members are modified in virtue of their membership. That is to say, we must study the interactions between the members of the group and also those between the group as a whole and each member. We must examine also the forms of group organisation and their influence upon the life of the group.

Groups differ greatly from one another in respect of the kind and degree of organisation they possess. In the simplest case the group has no organisation. In some cases the relations of the constituent individuals to one another and to the whole group are not in any way determined or fixed by previous events; such a group constitutes merely a mob. In other groups the individuals have certain determinate relations to one another which have arisen in one or more of three ways:

(1) Certain relations may have been established between the individuals, before they came together to form a group; for example, a parish council or a political meeting may be formed by persons belonging to various definitely recognised classes, and their previously recognised relations will continue to play a part in