

claim to privacy which has yet to receive equal attention: it is the right to share and to communicate.²⁰

Each and every one of us is well aware of this complicated, ambivalent personal need to communicate and, the correlative need, even while communicating, to hold back some area, at least for the moment, for ourselves. Our personal experience is supported by the behavioral scientists. They have documented our need both to share and to withhold.²¹

We need to share in order to feel a useful part of the world in which we live; we need to share in order to test what we truly believe, to obtain the feedback from others which will shape our thoughts, support our egos, and reduce our anxiety. Communication is a form of nourishment, essential to growth and, indeed, to survival. In fact, we are told that if an individual is deprived of all sensory intake and thus isolated from all meaningful association with his environment, he promptly becomes thoroughly disoriented as a person.

Yet, as human beings we also need to withhold—and this for a variety of reasons. There are some things we cannot face and therefore suppress. There are other facts or fears that, although not suppressed, we neither prefer to know nor wish to discuss. Then, too, there are ideas or beliefs or behavior that we are not sure we understand or, even if we do, fear that the world may not. So to protect ourselves, or our processes of creativity, or our minority views, or our self-respect, all of us seek to withhold at least certain things from certain people at certain times.

Psychologically, then, privacy is a two-way street consisting not only of what we need to exclude from or admit into our own thoughts or behavior, but also of what we need to communicate to, or keep from, others. Both of these conflicting needs, in mutually supportive interaction are essential to the well-being of individuals and institutions, and any definition of privacy, or of private personality, must reflect this plastic duality: sharing and concealment.

It follows that the right of privacy does not deal with some fixed area of personal life that has been immutably ordained by either law, or divinity, or science, or culture, to be off-limits and private.²² The essence of privacy is no more, and certainly no less, than the freedom of the individual to pick and choose for himself the time and circumstances under which, and most importantly, the extent to which, his attitudes, beliefs, behavior and opinions are to be shared with or withheld from others. The right to privacy is, there-

20. See Shils, *supra* note 1, at 156.

21. On the importance of individual (and collective) secrecy in social relationships, see *THE SOCIOLOGY OF GEORG SIMMEL* 307-44 (Wolff ed. 1950).

22. Yet, it is to be expected that particular cultures will, from time to time, reach a consensus on definable areas that are deemed to be private. Such a consensus is likely, however, to be both temporary and limited.