Michel Collinet

SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND THE POWER OF THE STATE

The simplest and no doubt the most persistent of the ideas held on the relationship between society and power, from Menenius Agrippa to Auguste Comte, is that of an analogy between the social body and the human body. Both these men deduced that power is nothing other than the supreme regulating function of all functional activities, as harmoniously integrated in society as they are in human physiology. Ethnographic study often strengthened this organicist conception through description of the various social functions as necessary or vital for the cohesion and the existence of primitive society. But historic societies provide a spectacle quite different from that of an integrated organism. In them social functions are not abstractions but are seen rather in the form of human groups whose relationships can scarcely be said to show an organic solidarity. Within these groups and working to set them against each other, powers have their own interests which they must protect against the inroads of ambitions. The permanence of certain functions (military, religious, and economic, for example) does not imply permanence in the structures which implement them or in the real or fictional power which accompanies them. Their meaning is ambivalent. Obviously, they contribute to the architecture of a society; they may have a latent content which is a

Translated by James H. Labadie.

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

disintegrating factor from the moment when their hierarchy no longer suits the changing stratifications of the social body.

Functional study is therefore not sufficient for a description of society, and even less so for its characterization. To it must be added a study of the stratifications which are to society what altitude lines are to an orographic map or, more exactly, the group of isotherms or isobars which define on paper a given climatic situation. In approaching that description, there are as many possible strata as there are criteria to consider, but most of them are of little value in characterizing what is universally known as a social class. Nothing is more difficult to achieve than a precise limitation of this concept, which Marxism has used and even abused without giving it a unique definition and which in Marxist thought is inseparable from a messianic presupposition. However, if every stratum does not determine a class, it is still true that the notion of class is linked to a complex of strata among which may be discovered, more or less successfully, a certain number of correlations. Let us retain, among the possible criteria, those which seem to us indispensable, the list being far less exhaustive as the idea of class is extended in space and limited only by the analysis of concrete situations.

At the present time social stratification has as its basic criterion the level of income, but this is truly fruitful only if one discriminates in it the economic nature of the income. It is completed by the multiple stratifications of the professional or, more generally, the functional types, which imply, along with objective notions of qualification, capacity, or responsibility, a psychological appreciation and a historical consideration of the prestige linked to the function and of the place which custom assigns it in the social pyramid. From the functional criterion we pass without transition to that constituted by the way of life. This is linked to the notion of expenditure but does not always have a causal relationship with the income level, being penetrated by what Veblen called the "invidious distinction"—the need for prestige—which man associates with his consciousness of self.

As these criteria are made more precise, statistical analysis loses its interest as an instrument for approaching stratifications. Exact in the study of income and professions, it is risky and grossly schematic in the study of the way of life, poorly determined as this is through structural perception of expenditure. On the other hand, the analysis of a social behavior assumes greater importance as relational factors among various strata intervene. Some vary with functional changes caused by technical or economic evolution. Others appear as crystallized, made of habits inherited from the

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

past, resistant to the wear and tear of time, and accompanied by archetypes which weigh on the minds of the living and shape their present behavior. We cannot truthfully neglect the presence of these archetypes, which survive and are even reborn through revolutionary periods.

The criteria enumerated here, by no means exhaustively, sometimes permit the isolation of a social class in which a common behavior is crystallized, linked to a common consciousness of their situation which its members may have. But the class thus defined, as the element in a structural analysis, does not thereby acquire an authentic social life. There must be added to the body of psychological traits a will and a capacity to act which make the class a political and historical factor. It is in this sense that Schumpeter could write: "Social classes are not abstractions created by the analytical observer, but rather living entities existing as such."[1] The class thus becomes a social and political force and a dynamic factor of general evolution.

Historical circumstances, fortuitous at first glance, may play the role of a chemical detector and may cause to appear as a social force a class which has previously been but a structural category. Thus the Lyon insurrection of November, 1831, because it was disengaged from any ideological hypothesis, "revealed" to bourgeois France the existence of a working class, acting for itself. Before, the proletariat had been but a suffering category, outside the political order and the circuit of consumer goods, as Sismondi had observed in 1819. By behaving so spectacularly as a class, the proletariat posed the problem of its integration into the society from which it was, at the time, rejected.

In this common will to modify a situation of which one disapproves, and to act in consequence thereof, is manifested what has since Marx been called "class-consciousness." This "consciousness" does not mark in any particular way the aim pursued; it implies not a utopian scheme to be realized in life but essentially a will to modify social relations in a direction more favorable to the class. It may, depending on the situation, take the most diverse forms, from that of a modest claim to a desire for the dismantling of hierarchical structures. It may aim at the establishment of contractual relations or at the subversion of the state; it may occupy itself with narrowly functional problems or wrap itself in a political ideology. Like all collective sentiments, it feels strongly the pressure of the events which stimulate or compress it, as the feeling of a common destiny appears

1. *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (2d ed.; New York and London: Harper & Bros., 1947) (p. 77 of the French edition).

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

or disappears. The consciousness of a particular collective situation, it is not by nature an a priori belief in a certain historic mission, as the Marxists hold, except when it is embodied, in given circumstances, in a revolutionary ideology. Besides, Marxists such as Kautsky and Lenin have declared that the "socialist consciousness" does not emanate from the working class. "It is imported from outside into the class struggle of the proletariat and is not something which arises spontaneously."[2]

This spontaneous and therefore non-ideological class-consciousness is seen, however, through images in which archetypes have been crystallized. Of recent formation, the working class is still frequently stirred by images drawn from its origin and differing from one nation to another. Down through the generations are confusedly accumulated social "experiences" which feed archetypes whose presence is uncovered in later manifestations. In France the memory of the nineteenth century, an era in which the working class fought for recognition as a class integrated into society, marks the class spirit with an affective content steeped in the bitter sentiment of "injustice in itself," the injustice submitted to by an unrecognized entity. In the United States class feeling had, on the contrary, to surmount the multiplicity of origins resulting from a century of immigration and interior mobility which did not allow for the creation of a solid permanent base on which to erect an organized force. In Europe a hundred years ago the working class was exogenous, deprived of political and economic rights, excluded from a society and from a state which knew it only in its working strength. Now a force integrated into society, it still retains from its proletarian condition a sometimes justified fear which shrouds its actions in an agonizing feeling of eternal insecurity.

Marx used to say that history is the story of class struggles. The difficulty with an aphorism of this sort is that it projects into the past an interpretation of the liberal society of the nineteenth century without specifying whether the term "class" retains the same economic and social content and suggesting that the specific motivations of the liberal world were found in any given preceding type of society. In democratic society class is a complex ensemble of strata which are open in the sense that they are subject to no juridical or religious interdiction of a sacred character. It is not the same thing in most traditional societies constituted in more or less closed groups, hemmed in with obligations and restrictions, and with little possibility of interpenetration. If we use the term "class" to designate

2. Karl Kautsky in *Neue Zeit*, No. 3 (October, 1901).

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

these groups, we do so in its original meaning of a number of persons or objects of a common character, without specifying in advance what this may be.

Until our own era there is found in the history of peoples of Indo-European origin an exogenous class, rejected from those structures which integrate the other classes and which generally bear a sacred character. The Vedic tradition opposes to the three functional classes grouped under the title of *dvijas*, "twice-born," that of the *çudras* dedicated to servile labors—the internal proletariat in Toynbee's sense—and to the stain of an impurity forbidding them access to the mysteries of the religious community. Such a society founded on a polarity of the sacred reappears in multiple guises throughout past history. To this polarity is linked an exogenous class, like that of the slaves in ancient society, or the serfs and peasants called "free" in medieval society. In Athens freedom of the city is relatively available. In the Middle Ages nobility and clergy are closed classes admission to which is accompanied by sacramental rites; the urban bourgeoisie raises about itself the double inclosure of its ramparts and its privileges.

The exclusion of such a numerous class as the peasantry had as its corollary the closed and organized nature of the governing classes, which was preserved by a web of obligations and interdictions participating in a hierophany blended of pagan myths and Judeo-Christian traditions. Every political power played a part, whether it were the expression of a complex system of suzerainty or that of a monarch uniting in himself the traits of the paterfamilias, of sacerdotal magic, and of the happy warrior. Every extension of this power had the effect of creating a bureaucracy whose continuity through all regimes is the most remarkable fact of modern times. When the reciprocal bonds of suzerainty had fallen into disuse, royal power was found, by a logical evolution, to be the desired intermediary between the divine and the human but not without serious conflicts between the spiritual and the temporal resulting from this claim.

The sacred nature of monarchical power was to become more marked in that it had no existence except through a precarious balance among the privileged classes. To assure itself a better stability, this power sought to substitute itself for the functioning classes, reducing them to the status of its obedient servants. Through submission of the economy as well as of religious and intellectual forces, the absolutist state concentrated the "spirit" of society and appears to our eyes as an anticipation of the Hegelian state. In both types civil society is for the monarch nothing more than

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the material of his strength; if Louis XIV claimed to stop the course of the sun, Hegel fixed the time at the accession of his ideal state. Whatever the source of sovereignty in one or the other, the polarity of sanctity-impurity was exercised in a similar manner, the payment of taxes under an absolute monarchy being likened to a defilement!

The Revolution removed its sacred nature from the power and transferred it to the sovereign nation. But this nation is composed of a sum of individual monads facing a power which is the emanation of that sum, that is, the master. Against this power to come the members of the Constituent Assembly declared the undeniable character of the rights of man and, among them, of personal property whose natural basis must permit the individual to assure his own material independence before the power. Participating in the natural right and not in a positive right, property becomes the condition of a balance between society and power. As a consequence of this, the classes deprived or poorly provided with property are excluded from the political order.

This new balance would no doubt have been stable if the industrial revolution, of which the revolutionaries knew nothing, had not made of the proletariat "the most numerous and the poorest class" (Saint-Simon). Now this class is exogenous, deprived of political rights, and outside the consumption of the products it makes. It is forbidden the right of coalition, and its right to organize is disputed; so are certain aspects of civil equality. It impressed the interior of society as a group of barbarians—in Aristotle's sense of the term—who had come to camp but not to be assimilated.[3]

The state of bourgeois society is so devalued that it becomes a modest servant of the economically dominant class. This, Marx, criticizing the Hegelian conception, calls "a delegation which directs the common affairs of the whole bourgeois class."[4]

For Marx, as for the liberals, the state reflects the social and economic structure. Marx's theory is also a reflection of his age. His conception of classes and of their struggles is marked by the specific dichotomy of nineteenth-century society, between property as the source of all rights and

3. The *Journal des débats* gave this term all its meanings when it wrote just after the events of Lyon: "The barbarians who threaten society are not in the Caucasus nor in the steppes of central Asia, they are to be found in the suburbs of our manufacturing cities" (December 8, 1831); quoted by F. Rude in *Le Mouvement ouvrier à Lyon*.

4. *The Communist Manifesto*. On this subject the statement of a minister of Louis-Philippe to the Chamber of Deputies may be quoted: "The state must reserve for itself all chances of ruin in order to preserve the companies from it."

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

non-property, which is excluded from them—in other words, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Liberal society did not escape from the polarity of the two forms of the sacred; but this polarity depends less on a functional division than on an economic fissure between two open classes without juridical or religious interdicts. "Property," Adolphe Thiers answered to Proudhon, "is a holy and sacred institution, which is nothing other than the free and unlimited development of human faculties, or nothing but Nature herself, obeyed and respected."[5]

This definition, inspired more by the *manicipium* of gentilic society than by Roman quiritarian law, carries in itself a contradiction whose roots are to be found in the society of the time. It postulates at the same time a notion of the sacred, implying a static world, and a belief in progress, dynamic in spirit, which is the negation of such a world. Technical and economic progress produces a fluidity incompatible with a society which would like to believe itself crystallized and, a fortiori, with the lasting coexistence of an exogenous class. Participating in this fluidity, the proletariat is of a different nature from that of the *çudras* of India and of medieval serfs. Thus it is that the nineteenth century appeared even to Sismondi as the century of demands.

The social integration of the proletariat—that is, its disappearance as an exogenous class—has been a trait common to the socialist schools of the nineteenth century in whatever utopian or realistic manner they approached it. These schools, some by proclaiming the "right to work," others "contractual" exchange, looking toward the creation of a welfare state or free social institutions, sought in individual liberty a basis which did not imply a personal ownership of the means of production.

The industrial societies would have long since exploded under the effect of their primitive dichotomy had their social and axiological structures not undergone profound mutations. Fluidity has broken the old crystallizations and "desacralized" property. Productivity, dependent on technical progress and its rational requirements, has, under certain conditions of control or planification, favored a relative balance between production and consumption and a more equalitarian distribution of national income. The mechanization of productive forces has reduced the importance of purely manual labor and contributed to the growth of a salaried middle class of white-collar workers in which technical capacity and concern for human relations meet. This vast and heterogeneous class, with

5. *De la propriété* (Paris: Paulin, Lheureux et Cie, 1848), p. 203.

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

numerous and often poorly defined strata, came to insert itself between the two poles of the old dichotomous society. Finally, political and union rights have destroyed the juridical basis of the exogenous class.

Paralleling this evolution, propery has lost its sacred character, which it held through its physical and personal existence, and must now justify itself through the effectiveness of services rendered. In its form as movable goods it has been dematerialized and dispersed in the middle class which it does not transform into a leisure class. In its industrial form it has been depersonalized and relatively collectivized, acquiring a functional nature which is, according to Adolf Berle, an economic expression of the social organization. Invested, property is no longer a sacred entity but a right to profits, negotiable on the market. Limited through the interventions of the state, its use is even more regulated than it was in the epoch preceding liberal society; but this regulation is becoming the source of institutions which in the framework of democracy may facilitate the appearance of oligarchical nuclei.

In a similar manner the social law binds the changing relationships of capital and labor into a network of statist or free institutions which preserves existing stratifications and completes them with new ones. Among them vertical mobility is less the result of chance than of promotions within organized groups. A sort of social viscosity results from the institutional character of the classes and exerts a moderating effect on the oscillations between individual failure and success. Standardization of production techniques and of consumer goods creates a body of uniform lives which owe less to the person than to the class and which are not without danger for the full development of the person. Common types appear in the various strata, favorable to the homogeneity of a people even to the extent of causing monotonous stereotyped relationships. The industrial democracies, open in time and animated by an upsetting dynamism, perform the paradox of dissimulating their future under the monotonous crust of standardized social behaviors.

Democratic power derives its authority from the consensus of citizens. For this consensus not to be reduced to a myth, the citizen must exist in fact and not be totally absorbed by his labor or his function. This requires of man that he be at the same time inside and outside his function: extra-functional man is a man-reflection who does not see daily reality, accessible only at the interior of a social activity; intrafunctional man abdicates his generic nature and becomes as a living robot. The first postulate of a democratic society is each man's capacity and freedom to pass beyond his

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

functional role, to judge this role not only from within but from without, and thus to accede to a knowledge of the relationships out of which the social and political body is woven. In the absence of this postulate, democracy is an empty formula or a thin veneer over an oligarchical or despotic system.

The division and the discipline of labor require a functional hierarchy in which directors and executors are lined up. Every organized task is subordinated to the weight of things and persons in a system of vertical relationships with a definite and precise mechanism. The isolated man arrives at political citizenship, as at a free social life, only through a system of horizontal relationships, escaping through definition from functional hierarchies and realizing a minimum of equality in fact. Through these relationships he compensates for his subordination to hierarchies which, beginning in his professional life, come to an end only with political power. Through them, he is able to defend his social status, to attain political citizenship, and thus to preserve his personal freedom. The sociologist Georg Simmel[6] made the independence and the originality of the human person depend on the multiplicity of social circles which meet in the individual. Let us add that, aside from functional rigidities, it is in these free social circles that the originality of a people is worked out.

Within the horizontal relationships the unions play an essential compensating role. Founded on the notion of class, they represent its permanent expression; they constitute it, in the old sense of the term, by organizing its action and by disengaging the worker from his functional liaisons. In a position to resist the directing hierarchies, they substitute for pure subordination the contractual agreement, preserving the rights of each echelon and thus, paradoxically, reviving a type of relations nearer to those which existed between vassal and feudal suzerain than to those which have appeared in bourgeois society between employers and wage-earners. On the political level they stand as a social force which, along with others, counterbalances the force of the power and permits society to avoid the fate of a passive object held in its hands. Thus they contribute, along with other means, to the necessary distinction between society and the state—a distinction established by the Constituent Assembly through personal property.

The freedom of horizontal relationships in a stratified structure forms then the counterweight, of egalitarian spirit, to the hierarchic subordinations whose disappearance is inconceivable in our present society. It is

6. *Über soziale Differenzierung* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1890).

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

realized in fact by "intermediary bodies" detested by the Constituent Assembly that saw in them a threat to civic liberties. But a long evolution of structures will have been needed, bringing about the devaluation of property, so that these "intermediary bodies" may witness the integration of all classes into a single social body. The power of labor unions in particular means that the defense of the rights of labor henceforth takes place inside the social body and not on the outside, as in the last century.

Among the permanent adverse forces which struggle or strike a balance there is inevitably created a structural mimesis which seems to be a condition for the effectiveness of their confrontations. Like any other social forces, the "intermediary bodies," unions, parties, and diverse associations founded on free horizontal relationships create for themselves "apparatuses" of functionaries which are their *de facto* governments. Organized on a more or less democratic basis, the citizens of these bodies delegate their sovereignty to a power charged with acting in their name. Though ignorant of an internal penal code, this power does not lack the means of constraint toward those who disapprove of its conduct. There results from this a certain crystallization of social forces about their techno-bureaucratic apparatuses, which finally play a considerable role in democratic politics. These "apparatuses" would constitute a governing class (Machiavelli) if they were not in the final analysis the reflections of antagonisms interior to society. Much has been said about "mass media informations," that is, about the means of propaganda or of publicity which forge a political opinion generally ignorant or incompetent; and from this it has been deduced that the democratic system was limited to the elite—in Pareto's sense—which had control of these means. But it is enough that the apparatuses are in balance and at the same time counterbalance the political power for a public opinion to be born from the contradiction of behaviors, a public opinion capable of reacting to their politics. Forces, even the best organized, are not closed societies; and the public opinion which is thence derived, with what it includes of intuitive and affective elements, greatly surpasses the structures of class or party.

It is to these complex equilibriums that democracy owes the fact that it functions without being transformed into a bureaucratic oligarchy. But the counterpart of this is in a chronic weakness of the political power which generally fears the irreversible consequences of a break in the equilibrium. Its decisions no longer partake of the sacred character to which the old monarchies or theocracies owed the obedience of their subjects; these decisions are the more open to question in that they proceed from a broader

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and more farsighted view of things. No doubt charismatic authority then becomes the only means by which a democracy can survive the difficult moments when its very existence appears to be at stake.

Democratic society inherited from liberal society the idea that the state is theoretically the expression of the general will but practically that of social forces which, spontaneous or organized, are the true motive forces of historical development. Although the state, in its present hypertrophy, exercises a very great managing and regulating force, it has not been charged with a new sacred character.

On the other hand, our century has witnessed a resurgence of the sacred state in totalitarian regimes, Fascist or Communist. As in the Hegelian conception, the state there assumes the realization of what Hegel called "the moral idea," the supreme reason of a society which has abdicated its universal prerogatives in favor of the idea, even if, through a juridical fiction, it is no longer for the omnipotent and omniscient state anything other than the physical material of its corporal and spiritual power. In totalitarian regimes the single party and the state, closely associated with each other, constitute a new sacred entity as bearers of a myth pretending to absolute truth and as leaders of men toward the realization of this truth. The real power is the exclusivity of the centralized direction of the single party which has no other role than that of technical intermediary with the social body, imprisoned in the network of obligations and interdictions created by the power for the maintenance of its strength and, secondarily, that of the realization of its myth.

National Socialism had had the intention of suppressing classes, that is, of transforming them into the strata, homogeneous and obedient, of a vast pyramid which would have culminated in the *Führerprinzip*. There was not time to complete this construction, which was halted by the war and by the resistance of such old and strong traditional structures as those of the army. The inconsistency of the racist myth and its negation of all human values also hindered the political expansion of the system.

This is not true of communism, which, by its humanist and universal nature, is a myth favorable to the expansion of the totalitarian system. The party created by Lenin is to the class what the Hegelian state was to be to society; its consciousness, the realization of the idea it bears. The "moral idea" of Hegel becomes the "Marxist idea," that which Engels called "the realization of philosophy." In taking over the state, the party concentrates in it the totality of functions—it is political, economic, and

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

philosophic—and leaves no autonomous sector of activity to the civil society which Hegel, living on the contrary in contact with a liberal world, still respected while assigning it to a lesser sphere. Marx dreamed of a classless society which would absorb the state, while the Communist state absorbs society and makes of it a simple organ for the execution of the orders of power—an organ completely integrated into a hierarchized and centralized structure. What becomes of social classes under these conditions? One finds general stratifications according to the standard of living and the nature of employment. Kolkhozians, workers, and functionaries are separated, but their relationships cannot be defined by the known traits of democratic society. First of all, these classes are not open; each forms a closed stratum for which entry and exist are dependent on administrative regulations. Vertical mobility operates through legal nomination or co-optation, controlled by the party; it depends as much, if not more, on the political loyalty of those involved as on their individual capacities.

The class possesses no ability either to determine itself or to situate itself in the ensemble of the social body. The unions and other associations which, in a democracy, concentrate its means of expression and externalize its consciousness, have no independence vis-à-vis the political power; they are exclusively organs of that power, specialized on the social level, and have no other aim than to assure the carrying-out of its directives. In addition, although these organs are intercorporative, functional activity is their dominant trait, social activity being immediately dependent upon the party apparatus. As a result, the class is practically incapable of constituting itself and acting according to its own interests or duties. It does not exist as a social force—and in this sense it may be said that totalitarian society of the Communist type is classless—but the class subsists as the social material of power, as the field of execution of its directives or its projects.

We have seen that the organization of the class as social force was one of the means the individual might employ to escape from his purely functional role. In the totalitarian society of the Communist type this means exists no more than any other, since each activity, even cultural activity, is controlled by an organ of power. Horizontal relationships being neither free nor independent of the latter, the individual is the subject of vertical relationships, that is, of the hierarchy into which his official function fits. He is identified with this and exists only through it. Each function is the center of an ensemble of "privileges" which are specific to it and which imply material advantages. If he is constrained to give up the function,

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

the individual loses these advantages, which are thus an obvious docility factor.

The absorption of society by the state and that of the individual by his function are illustrated by the fact that the law binds society and the individual but does not bind the power. "The work of the judge is reduced . . . to the implacable application of the law as a political expression of the party and the government," wrote the former judge, Vichinsky.[7] It is thus the positive expression neither of a natural right, of a tradition, nor of a popular organization but that of a will of strength, utilizing to its ends the resources of the social body.

The absence of free horizontal relationships requires that the power intervene to satisfy individual aspirations and polarize them toward directed activities, useful to its politics; in this way they do not escape from a system of constraints and sanctions, inseparable from functional hierarchies. The latter extend their shadow to leisure-time activities as well as to labor—a shadow which does not bring security to those who work. Based for centuries on a triangular system, which permits supervision of the administration by the party and the secret police, the hierarchies meet not without friction among themselves, creating an insecurity in all echelons which persists despite evident weakening during the past few years.

These interfunctional conflicts are hardly ever externalized except in the rather rare cases where they serve to justify an important political operation. Extreme centralization authorizes hiding them from the eyes of an "opinion" deprived of the means of control and expression. In these conditions of relative ignorance and absolute silence, it is impossible to speak of the existence of a "public opinion," even in the upper classes of the society. One can at best note, among different levels of the party, the probable existence of what Merle Fainsod calls "family-type groups,"[8] spontaneous and discreet associations for mutual protection against the often unpredictable politics of the upper levels. This creates a situation favorable to a "double morality," according to Djilas,[9] in which two distinct opinions coexist in each person: one legal, designed for relations external to the group in question, and another, esoteric, which is doubtless the more authentic. What is called "public opinion" in the West cannot

7. *Cours d'instruction criminelle* (Moscow, 1936), p. 324.

8. *How Russia Is Ruled* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953).

9. *The New Class* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

be grasped. Fragmented, and without liberty of external expression, it no doubt exists more in what is not expressed than in external manifestations, in which it is difficult to distinguish what pertains to the official truth from what may arise from this unexpressed depth.

Every totalitarian regime maintains a sacred image of power for the moral justification of its acts. This power needs the presence of evil to prove its own identity with good; it must therefore re-create the united couple of "sanctity" and "impurity." In Hitler Germany "Aryan purity" required the combat against "Jewish impurity"; the "sanctity" of power was not separated from the "impurity" linked to the race excluded from society. Although the current Communist regime has certainly lost something of the sacred allure imprinted on it by Stalin, it is nonetheless true that the brutal politics of the absorption of society by the state would have been inconceivable without the presence of the sanctity-impurity division. The latter was shown in the violent antithesis between the solar cult, devoted to Stalin, and the abjection—denounced by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Congress—to which it reduced its real or imagined adversaries. In leaving to his successors the "concentrationary" regime, he showed that, aside from its economic aims, the downfall of some served the rise of others in the name of a mythic philosophy of history of which he was the sole judge.

The historically variable relationships between social structure and political power can be divided between two extreme types which signify schematically the absorption of one by the other. At one pole is found liberal society in which the political power is a delegation of the economically dominant class and in which the state is, through the intermediary of power, a bureaucracy in the service of this class. Here we have an open society, in which economic success means social promotion and which surrounds such success with a sacred aura from which the proletarian class finds itself excluded, not through juridical interdiction, but through the fact of its salaried situation.

At the other pole we place the totalitarian society whose most advanced type is that of communism. Here political power is everything; it has absorbed society and identified each of its members with the function he exercises in the service of the power. Class, with no means of autonomous expression, is not separated from an administratively organized stratum within a vast "apparatus" whose summit culminates along with power. If the analysis of the connections within this apparatus is made difficult

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press

through the interference of political, economic, and even military functions, such analysis is even more difficult in regard to a social body without autonomous total behavior and in which open horizontal relationships are lacking. "Man does not live by bread alone," a Communist author has written; but we know little of what he does live on and whether he desires to keep for himself a personality alien to his functional role but necessary to his own humanity.

Totalitarian society is closed within itself, as it is closed to the external world. It opens in time only through the intermediary of the power which is the sole motive force impelling its evolution.

Democratic society is separated from liberal society in that it no longer possesses an exogenous class or, in consequence, a sacred institution such as conditioned the existence of liberal society. If the political power undergoes the impulsion of social forces, a process in which it is the heir of liberal power, it is distinguished from the latter by an independence vis-à-vis society which is due to the directing and regulating role of the apparatus of the state. In spite of this, democratic society remains open; it develops largely by virtue of its internal forces, and its structures are in a state of continuous transformation. The possible crystallization of social forces into oligarchies finds its limit in their mutual confrontation, as in the fluidity of the structures.

In distinguishing between man and his function and in providing the possibility of free activity, democratic society differs profoundly from totalitarian society, in which man is confused with function and loses his freedom of self-determination. It differs in the fact that democratic society implies it continuance in permanent question and that it depends in last resort on the consent of its members for the maintenance of the dynamic equilibrium that is its condition of existence. Its evolution depends, indeed, on the most passive of those members.

The eternal or transitory nature of man, the contradiction between his desire to find a firm setting and his temptation to destroy this by another, generally hard to discern, are problems which defy sociological analysis. The dialectics of man and his creations carries in itself the future of societies, but this future is closed by a seal which the imagination alone can break.

https://doi.org/10.1177/039219215800602305 Published online by Cambridge University Press