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SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: A Book of Readings

The failure of so m ...thropological culture-historians as A. L. Kr ...even when they seem to be purposely seeki ...ibly because they *are* historians, by profession and commitment nonevolutionists, whereas the explanation for the variable potentiality for civilizational advance among different kinds of cultures stems logically only from evolutionary theory. Happily for this argument, both Veblen and Trotsky can be considered evolutionists.

One feels a little foolish in proclaiming a scientific law inasmuch as it is done so frequently as a form of humor. There are certain advantages to this procedure, however, which are greater than the risks. But first it must be admitted that all of the illustrations to follow, and a thousand more, would not prove that the law of evolutionary potentials is "true." A law states a relationship between two (or more) classes of phenomena, as this one has done with respect to general evolution and specific adaptation, but always it must be understood that other factors are regarded as constant. In nature, however, there are no constants. A law can be proved true only with laboratory apparatus which can keep all factors controlled, and of course many scientific laws cannot be submitted to laboratory tests. The criterion in these cases becomes not truth in the absolute sense, but their explanatory value. A law is a law if it is useful, if it renders particular events more understandable by showing them to be instances of an already comprehended general phenomenon. As Morris Cohen put it, "the repeatable escapes us if it is not identified."

EVOLUTIONARY UNIVERSALS IN SOCIETY* (*Parsons*)

Slowly and somewhat inarticulately, emphasis in both sociological and anthropological quarters is shifting from a studied disinterest in problems of social and cultural evolution to a "new relativity" that relates its universals to an evolutionary framework.

The older perspectives insisted that social and cultural systems are made up of indefinitely numerous discrete "traits," that "cultures" are totally separate, or that certain broad "human" universals, like language and the

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incest taboo, should be emphasized. Varied as they are, these emphases have in common the fact that they divert attention from specific *continuities* in patterns of social change, so that either traits or culture types must be treated as discretely unique and basically unconnected, and a pattern, to be considered universal, must be equally important to *all* societies and cultures. Despite their ostentatious repudiation of "culture-boundness," these perspectives have been conspicuously anthropocentric in setting off problems of man's modes of life so sharply from questions of continuity with the rest of the organic world. But the emphasis on human universals has also had a kind of "levelling" influence, tending to restrict attention to what is generally and essentially human, without considering gradations within the human category.

The "new relativity" removes this barrier and tries to consider human ways in direct continuity with the sub-human. It assumes that the watershed between subhuman and human does not mark a cessation of developmental change, but rather a stage in a long process that begins with many pre-human phases and continues through that watershed into our own time, and beyond. Granting a wide range of variability of types at all stages, it assumes that levels of evolutionary advancement may be empirically specified for the human as well as the pre-human phases.

Evolutionary Universals

I shall designate as an evolutionary universal any organizational development sufficiently important to further evolution that, rather than emerging only once, it is likely to be "hit upon" by various systems operating under different conditions.

In the organic world, vision is a good example of an evolutionary universal. Because it mediates the input of organized information from the organism's environment, and because it deals with both the most distant and the widest range of information sources, vision is the most generalized mechanism of sensory information. It therefore has the greatest potential significance for adaptation of the organism to its environment.

The evidence is that vision has not been a "one shot" invention in organic evolution, but has evolved independently in three different phyla—the molluscs, the insects, and the vertebrates. A particularly interesting feature of this case is that, while the visual organs in the three groups are anatomically quite different and present no evolutionary continuity, biochemically all use the same mechanism involving Vitamin A, though there is no

evidence that it was not independently "hit upon" three times.[1] Vision, whatever its mechanisms, seems to be a genuine prerequisite of *all* the higher levels of organic evolution. It has been lost only by very particular groups like the bats, which have not subsequently given rise to important evolutionary developments.

With reference to man and his biological potential for social and cultural evolution, two familiar evolutionary universals may be cited, namely the hands and the brain. The human hand is, of course, the primordial general-purpose tool. The combination of four mobile fingers and an opposable thumb enables it to perform an enormous variety of operations—grasping, holding, and manipulating many kinds of objects. Its location at the end of an arm with mobile joints allows it to be maneuvered into many positions. Finally, the pairing of the arm-hand organs much more than doubles the capacity of each one because it permits cooperation and a complex division of labor between them.

It is worth noting that the development of the hands and arms has been bought at a heavy cost in locomotion: man on his two legs cannot compete in speed and maneuverability with the faster four-legged species. Man, however, uses his hands for such a wide range of behavior impossible for handless species that the loss is far more than compensated. He can, for instance, protect himself with weapons instead of running away.

The human brain is less nearly unique than the hand, but its advantages over the brains of even anthropoids is so great that it is man's most distinctive organ, the most important single source of human capacity. Not only is it the primary organ for controlling complex operations, notably manual skills, and coordinating visual and auditory information, but above all it is the organic basis of the capacity to learn and manipulate symbols. Hence it is the organic foundation of culture. Interestingly, this development too is bought at the sacrifice of immediate adaptive advantages. For example the brain occupies so much of the head that the jaws are much less effective than in other mammalian species—but this too is compensated for by the hands. And the large brain is partly responsible for the long period of infantile dependency because the child must learn such a large factor of its effective behavior. Hence the burden of infant care and socialization is far higher for man than for any other species.

With these organic examples in mind, the conception of an evolutionary universal may be developed more fully. It should, I suggest, be formulated

[1] George Wald, "Life and Light," *Scientific American*, 201 (October, 1959), pp. 92–108.

with reference to the concept of adaptation, which has been so fundamental to the theory of evolution since Darwin. Clearly, adaptation should mean, not merely passive "adjustment" to environmental conditions, but rather the capacity of a living system[2] to cope with its environment. This capacity includes an active concern with mastery, or the ability to change the environment to meet the needs of the system, as well as an ability to survive in the face of its unalterable features. Hence the capacity to cope with broad *ranges* of environmental factors, through adjustment or active control, or both, is crucial. Finally, a very critical point is the capacity to cope with unstable relations between system and environment, and hence with *uncertainty*. Instability here refers both to predictable variations, such as the cycle of the seasons, and to unpredictable variations, such as the sudden appearance of a dangerous predator.

An evolutionary universal, then, is a complex of structures and associated processes the development of which so increases the long-run adaptive capacity of living systems in a given class that only systems that develop the complex can attain certain higher levels of general adaptive capacity. This criterion, derived from the famous principle of natural selection, requires one major explicit qualification. The relatively disadvantaged system not developing a new universal need not be condemned to extinction. Thus some species representing all levels of organic evolution survive today—from the unicellular organisms up. The surviving lower types, however, stand in a variety of different relations to the higher. Some occupy special "niches" within which they live with limited scope, others stand in symbiotic relations to higher systems. They are not, by and large, major threats to the continued existence of the evolutionarily higher systems. Thus, though infectious diseases constitute a serious problem for man, bacteria are not likely to replace man as the dominant organic category, and man is symbiotically dependent on many bacterial species.

Two distinctions should be made here, because they apply most generally and throughout. The first is between the impact of an innovation when it is *first* introduced in a given species or society, and its importance as a continuing component of the system. Certain evolutionary universals in the social world, to be discussed below, initially provide their societies with major adaptive advantages over societies not developing them. Their introduction and institutionalization have, to be sure, often been attended with severe dislocations of the previous social organization, sometimes resulting in short-

[2] Note that the species rather than the individual organism is the major system of reference here. See George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950.

ru[illegible]osses in adaptation. Once institutionalized, however, they tend to become essential parts of later societies in the relevant lines of *development* and are seldom eliminated except by regression. But, as the system undergoes further evolution, universals are apt to generate major changes of their own, generally by developing more complex structures.

Unlike biological genes, cultural patterns are subject to "diffusion." Hence, for the cultural level, it is necessary to add a second distinction, between the conditions under which an adaptive advantage can develop for the first time, and those favoring its adoption from a source in which it is already established.

Prerequisites of the Evolution of Culture and Society

From his distinctive organic endowment and from his capacity for and ultimate dependence on generalized learning, man derives his unique ability to create and transmit *culture.* To quote the biologist Alfred Emerson within a major sphere of man's adaptation, the "gene" has been replaced by the "symbol."[3] Hence, it is not only the genetic constitution of the species that determines the "needs" confronting the environment, but this constitution *plus* the cultural tradition. A set of "normative expectations" pertaining to man's relation to his environment delineates the ways in which adaptation should be developed and extended. Within the relevant range, cultural innovations, especially definitions of what man's life *ought* to be, thus replace Darwinian variations in genetic constitution.

Cultural "patterns" or orientations, however, do not implement themselves. Properly conceived in their most fundamental aspect as "religious," they must be articulated with the environment in ways that make effective adaptation possible. I am inclined to treat the entire orientational aspect of culture itself, in the simplest, least evolved forms, as directly synonymous with *religion.*[4] But since a cultural system—never any more an individual matter than a genetic pattern—is shared among a plurality of individuals, mechanisms of *communication* must exist to mediate this sharing. The fundamental evolutionary universal here is language: no concrete human group lacks it. Neither communication nor the learning processes that make it possible, however is conceivable without determinately organized relations among those who teach and learn and communicate.

[3] Alfred Emerson, "Homeostasis and Comparison of Systems" in Roy R. Grinker (ed.), *Toward a Unified Theory of Behavior,* New York: Basic Books, 1956.

[4] Cf. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,* London: Allen and Unwin, 1915.

The evolutionary origin of *social organization* seems to be kinship. In an evolutionary sense it is an extension of the mammalian system of bisexual reproduction. The imperative of socialization is of course a central corollary of culture, as is the need to establish a viable social system to "carry" the culture. From one viewpoint, the core of the kinship system is the incest taboo, or, more generally, the rules of exogamy and endogamy structuring relations of descent, affinity, and residence. Finally, since the cultural level of action implies the use of brain, hands, and other organs in actively coping with the physical environment, we may say that culture implies the existence of technology, which is, in its most undifferentiated form, a synthesis of empirical knowledge and practical techniques.

These four features of even the simplest action system—"religion," communication with language, social organization through kinship, and technology—may be regarded as an integrated set of evolutionary universals at even the earliest human level. No known human society has existed without *all* four in relatively definite relations to each other. In fact, their presence constitutes the very minimum that may be said to mark a society as truly human.

Systematic relations exist not only among these four elements themselves, but between them and the more general framework of biological evolution. Technology clearly is the primary focus of the organization of the adaptive relations of the human system to its physical *environment*. Kinship is the social extension of the individual *organism's* basic articulation to the species through bisexual reproduction. But, through plasticity and the importance of learning, cultural and symbolic communications are integral to the human level of individual *personality* organization. *Social* relations among personalities, to be distinctively human, must be mediated by linguistic communication. Finally, the main *cultural patterns* that regulate the social, psychological, and organic levels of the total system of action are embodied (the more primitive the system, the more exclusively so) in the religious tradition, the focus of the use of symbolization to control the variety of conditions to which a human system is exposed.

Social Stratification

Two evolutionary universals are closely interrelated in the process of "breaking out" of what may be called the "primitive" stage of societal evolution. These are the development of a well-marked system of social stratification, and that of a system of explicit cultural legitimation of differentiated societal functions, preeminently the political function, independent of kin-

ship. The two are closely connected, but I am inclined to think that stratification comes first and is a condition of legitimation of political function.

The key to the evolutionary importance of stratification lies in the role in primitive societies of *ascription* of social status to criteria of biological relatedness. The kinship nexus of social organization is intrinsically a "seamless web" of relationships which, in and of itself, contains no principle of boundedness for the system as distinguished from certain subgroups within it. Probably the earliest and most important basis of boundedness is the political criterion of territorial jurisdiction. But the economic problem of articulation with the environment, contingent on kinship as well as other groups, is also prominent in primitive societies. In the first instance this is structured primarily through place of residence, which becomes increasingly important as technological development, notably of "settled agriculture," puts a premium on definiteness and permanence of location.

For present purposes, I assume that in the society we are discussing, the population occupying a territorial area is generally endogamous, with marriage of its members to those of other territorial groups being, if it occurs, somehow exceptional, and not systematically organized.[5] Given a presumptively endogamous territorial community, comprising a plurality of purely local groups, certain general processes of internal differentiation of the society can be explained. One aspect of this tends to be a prestige difference between central or "senior" lineage groups and "cadet" groups, whether or not the differentiation is on the basis of birth.[6] Quite generally, the latter must accept less advantageous bases of subsistence including place of residence, than the former. At least this is apt to be the case where the residence groups become foci for the control of resources and as such are sharply differentiated from more inclusive political groupings. Thus a second aspect of an increased level of functional differentiation among the structures of the society tends to be involved.

Typically, I think, kinship status, in terms of both descent criteria and relative prestige of marriage opportunities is highly correlated with relative economic advantage and political power. This is to say that, under the conditions postulated, a tendency toward *vertical* differentiation of the society as a system overrides the pressure of the seamless web of kinship to

[5] See W. Lloyd Warner, *A Black Civilization* (2nd ed.), New York: Harper, 1958, for an analysis showing that such boundedness can be problematic.

[6] This analysis has been suggested in part by Charles Ackerman who bases himself on a variety of the recent studies of kinship systems, but, perhaps, particularly on Rodney Needham's studies of the Purums, *Structure and Sentiment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

equalize the status of all units of equivalent *kinship* character. This tendency is the product of two converging forces.

On the one hand, relative advantages are differentiated: members of cadet lineages, the kinship units with lesser claims to preferment, are "forced" into peripheral positions. They move to less advantaged residential locations and accept less productive economic resources, and they are not in a position to counteract these disadvantages by the use of political power.[7]

On the other hand, the society as a system gains functional advantages by concentrating responsibility for certain functions. This concentration focuses in two areas, analytically, the political and the religious. First, the increased complexity of a society that has grown in population and probably territory and has become differentiated in status terms raises more difficult problems of internal order, e.g., controlling violence, upholding property and marriage rules, etc., and of defense against encroachment from outside. Second, a cultural tradition very close to both the details of everyday life and the interests and solidarities of particular groups is put under strain by increasing size and diversity. There is, then, pressure to centralize both responsibility for the symbolic systems, especially the religious, and authority in collective processes, and to redefine them in the direction of greater generality.

For the present argument, I assume that the tendencies to centralize political and religious responsibility need not be clearly differentiated in any immediate situation. The main point is that the differentiation of groups relative to an advantage-disadvantage axis tends to converge with the functional "need" for centralization of responsibility. Since responsibility and prestige seem to be inherently related in a system of institutionalized expectations, the advantaged group tends to assume, or have ascribed to it, the centralized responsibilities. It should be clear that the problem does not concern the balance between services to others and benefits accruing to the advantaged group, but the convergence of *both* sets of forces tending to the same primary structural outcome.

The development of written language can become a fundamental accelerating factor in this process, because in the nature of the case literacy cannot

[7] I am putting forward this set of differentiating factors as an ideal type. Of course, in many particular cases they may not all operate together. For example, it may frequently happen that the outer lands to which cadet lineages move are more productive than the old ones. The net effect of these discrepancies is probably a tendency toward diversity of lines of development rather than the extinction of the main one sketched here. Indeed we can go farther and say that unless this advantage of economic resources comes to be combined with such structural advantages as incorporation in a stratification system it will not lead to further evolutionary developments.

immediately be extended to total adult populations, and yet it confers enormous adaptive advantages. It also has a tendency to favor cultural or religious elements over the political.[8]

The crucial step in the development of a stratification system occurs when important elements in the population assume the prerogatives and functions of higher status and, at least by implication, exclude all other elements. This creates an "upper," a "leading" or, possibly, a "ruling" class set over against the "mass" of the population. Given early, or, indeed, not so early conditions, it is inevitable that membership in this upper class is primarily if not entirely based on kinship status. Thus, an individual military or other leader may go far toward establishing an important criterion of status, but in doing so he elevates the status of his lineage. He cannot dissociate his relatives from his own success, even presuming he would wish to.

Stratification in the present sense, then, is the differentiation of the population on a prestige scale of kinship units such that the distinctions among such units, or classes of them, become hereditary to an important degree. There are reasons to assume that the early tendency, which may be repeated, leads to a *two*-class system. The most important means of consolidating such a system is upper-class endogamy. Since this repeats the primary principle which, along with the territoriality, delineates the boundaries of early societies, the upper class constitutes a kind of subsociety. It is not a class, however, unless its counterpart, the lower class, is clearly included in the *same* societal community.

From this "primordial" two-class system there are various possibilities for evolutionary change. Probably the most important leads to a four-class system.[9] This is based on the development of urban communities in which political-administrative functions, centralized religious and other cultural activities, and territorially specialized economic action are carried on. Thus, generalized "centers" of higher-order activity emerge, but the imperatives of social organization require that these centers, as local communities—including, e.g., "provincial" centers—cannot be inhabited exclusively by upper-class people. Hence the urban upper class tends to be differentiated from rural upper class,[10] and the urban from the rural lower class. When this occurs there is no longer a linear rank-order of classes. But so long as hereditary kinship status is a primary determinant of the individual's access

[8] See Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Comparative and Evolutionary Perspectives*, Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

[9] Cf. Gideon Sjoberg, *The Preindustrial City*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960, ch 5.

[10] The upper class will be primarily rural in societies that take a more or less feudal direction.

to "advantages," we may speak of a stratified society; beyond the lowest level of complexity, every society is stratified.

Diffuse as its significance is, stratification is an *evolutionary* universal because the most primitive societies are not in the present sense stratified, but, beyond them, it is on two principal counts a prerequisite of a very wide range of further advances. First, what I have called a "prestige" position is a generalized prerequisite of responsible concentration of leadership. With few exceptions, those who lack a sufficiently "established" position cannot afford to "stick their necks out" in taking the responsibility for important changes. The second count concerns the availability of resources for implementing innovations. The dominance of kinship in social organization is inseparably connected with rigidity. People do what they are required to do by virtue of their kinship status. To whatever degree kinship is the basis of solidarity *within* an upper class, closure of that class by endogamy precludes kinship from being the basis of upper-class claims on the services and other resources of the lower groups. So long as the latter are genuinely within the same society, which implies solidarity across the class line, relations of mutual usefulness (e.g., patron-client relationships across class lines) on non-kin bases are possible—opening the door to universalistic definitions of merit as well as providing the upper groups with the resources to pursue their own advantages.

Social stratification in its initial development may thus be regarded as one primary condition of releasing the process of social evolution from the obstacles posed by ascription. The strong emphasis on kinship in much of the sociological literature on stratification tends to obscure the fact that the new mobility made possible by stratification is due primarily to such breaks in kinship ascription as that across class lines. . . .

Cultural Legitimation

Specialized cultural legitimation is, like stratification, intimately involved in the emergence from primitiveness, and certainly the two processes are related. Legitimation could, perhaps, be treated first; in certain crucial respects it is a prerequisite to the establishment of the type of prestige position referred to above. The ways in which this might be the case pose a major problem for more detailed studies of evolutionary processes. Our task here, however, is much more modest, namely to call attention to the fact that without both stratification and legitimation no major advances beyond the level of primitive society can be made.

The point of reference for the development of legitimation systems is the cultural counterpart of the seamless web of the kinship nexus with its presumptive equality of units. This is the cultural definition of the social collectivity simply as "we" who are essentially human or "people" and as such are undifferentiated, even in certain concepts of time, from our ancestors—except in certain senses for the mythical "founders"—and from contemporary "others." If the others are clearly recognized to be others (in an ideal type seamless web they would not be; they would be merely special groups of kin), they are regarded as not "really human," as strange in the sense that their relation to "us" is not comprehensible.

By explicit cultural legitimation, I mean the emergence of an institutionalized cultural definition of the society of reference, namely a referent of "we" (e.g., "We, the Tikopia" in Firth's study) which is differentiated, historically or comparatively or both, from other societies, while the merit of we-ness is asserted in a normative context. This definition has to be religious in some sense, e.g., stated in terms of a particular sacred tradition of relations to gods or holy places. It may also ascribe various meritorious features to the group, e.g., physical beauty, warlike prowess, faithful trusteeship of sacred territory or tradition, etc.

This usage of the term legitimation is closely associated with Max Weber's analysis of political authority. For very important reasons the primary focus of early stages beyond the primitive is political, involving the society's capacity to carry out coordinated collective action. Stratification, therefore, is an essential condition of major advances in political effectiveness, because, as just noted, it gives the advantaged elements a secure enough position that they can accept certain risks in undertaking collective leadership.

The differentiation inherent in stratification creates new sources of strain and potential disorganization, and the use of advantaged position to undertake major innovations multiplies this strain. Especially if, as is usually the case, the authors of major social innovation are already advantaged, they require legitimation for both their actions and their positions. Thus, a dynamic inherent in the development of cultural systems[11] revolves about the cultural importance of the question *why*—why such social arrangements as prestige and authority relations, and particular attendant rewards and deprivations, come about and are structured as they are. This cultural dynamic converges with the consequences of the stratification developments already outlined. Hence the crucial problem here is distributive, that of justifying advantages and prerogatives *over against* burdens and depriva-

[11] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, Boston: Beacon Paperbacks, 1963.

tions. Back of this, however, lies the problem of the meaning of the societal enterprise as a whole.

As the bases of legitimation are inherently cultural, meeting the legitimation need necessarily involves putting some kind of a premium on certain cultural services, and from this point of view there is clearly some potential advantage in specializing cultural action. Whether, under what conditions, and in what ways political and religious leadership or prestige status are differentiated from each other are exceedingly important general problems of societal evolution, but we cannot go into them here. A "God-King" may be the primary vehicle of legitimation for his own political regime, or the political "ruler" may be dependent on a priestly class that is in some degree structurally independent of his regime. But the main problems have to do with explicating the cultural basis of legitimation and institutionalizing agencies for implementing that function.

The functional argument here is essentially the same as that for stratification. Over an exceedingly wide front and relatively independently of particular cultural variations, political leaders must on the long run have not only sufficient power, but also legitimation for it. Particularly when bigger implementive steps are to be legitimized, legitimation must become a relatively explicit and, in many cases, a socially differentiated function. The combination of differentiated cultural patterns of legitimation with socially differentiated agencies is the essential aspect of the evolutionary universal of legitimation.

As evolutionary universals, stratification and legitimation are associated with the developmental problems of breaking through the ascriptive nexus of kinship, on the one hand, and of "traditionalized" culture, on the other. In turn they provide the basis for differentiation of a system that has previously, in the relevant respects, been undifferentiated. Differentiation must be carefully distinguished from segmentation, i.e., from either the development of undifferentiated segmental units of any given type within the system, or the splitting off of units from the system to form new societies, a process that appears to be particularly common at primitive levels. Differentiation requires solidarity and integrity of the system as a whole, with both common loyalties and common normative definitions of the situation. Stratification as here conceived is a hierarchical status differentiation that cuts across the overall seamless web of kinship and occurs definitely within a single collectivity, a "societal community." Legitimation is the differentiation of cultural definitions of normative patterns from a completely embedded, taken-for-granted fusion with the social structure, accompanied by institutionaliza-

tion of the explicit, culture-oriented, legitimizing function in subsystems of the society. . . .

Bureaucratic Organization

A second pair of evolutionary universals develop, each with varying degrees of completeness and relative importance, in societies that have moved considerably past the primitive stage, particularly those with well-institutionalized literacy.[12] These universals are administrative bureaucracy, which in early stages is found overwhelmingly in government, and money and markets. I shall discuss bureaucracy first because its development is likely to precede that of money and markets.

Despite the criticisms made of it, mainly in the light of the complexities of modern organizations, Weber's ideal type can serve as the primary point of reference for a discussion of bureaucracy.[13] Its crucial feature is the institutionalization of the *authority of office*. This means that both individual incumbents and, perhaps even more importantly, the bureaucratic organization itself, may act "officially" for, or "in the name of," the organization, which could not otherwise exist. I shall call this capacity to act, or more broadly, that to make and promulgate binding decisions, *power* in a strict analytical sense.[14]

Although backed by coercive sanctions, up to and including the use of physical force, *at the same time* power rests on the consensual solidarity of a system that includes both the users of power and the "objects" of its use. (Note that I do not say *against* whom it is used: the "against" may or may not apply.) Power in this sense is the capacity of a unit in the social system, collective or individual, to establish or activate commitments to performance that contributes to, or is in the interest of, attainment of the goals of a collectivity. It is not itself a "factor" in effectiveness, nor a "real" output of the process, but a medium of mobilization and acquisition of factors and outputs. In this respect, it is like money.

Office implies the differentiation of the role of incumbent from a person's

[12] As a predominantly cultural innovation, literacy is not discussed here. Cf. Parsons, *Societies, op. cit.*, ch. 1.

[13] See "The Analysis of Formal Organizations," Part I of my *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960; Peter M. Blau, "Critical Remarks on Weber's Theory of Authority," *American Political Science Review*, 57 (June, 1963), pp. 305–316, and *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy* (2nd ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963; Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Authority* (Nomos I), Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958, especially Friedrich's own contribution, "Authority and Reason."

[14] Cf. Talcott Parsons, "On the Concept of Political Power," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (June, 1963), pp. 232–262.

other role-involvements, above all from his kinship roles. Hence, so far as function in the collectivity is defined by the obligations of ascriptive kinship status, the organizational status cannot be an office in the present sense. Neither of the other two types of authority that Weber discusses—traditional and charismatic—establishes this differentiation between organizational role and the "personal" status of the incumbent. Hence bureaucratic authority is always rational-legal in type. Weber's well-known proposition that the top of a bureaucratic structure cannot itself be bureaucratic may be regarded as a statement about the modes of articulation of such a structure with other structures in the society. These may involve the ascribed traditional authority of royal families, some form of charismatic leadership, or the development of democratic associational control, to be discussed briefly below.

Internally, a bureaucratic system is always characterized by an institutionalized hierarchy of authority, which is differentiated on two axes: *level* of authority and "sphere" of competence. Spheres of competence are defined either on segmentary bases, e.g., territorially, or on functional bases, e.g., supply vs. combat units in an army. The hierarchical aspect defines the levels at which a higher authority's decisions, in case of conflict, take precedence over those of a lower authority. It is a general bureaucratic principle that the higher the level, the smaller the relative number of decision-making agencies, whether individual or collegia, and the wider the scope of each, so that at the top, in principle, a single agency must carry responsibilty for *any* problems affecting the organization. Such a hierarchy is one of "pure" authority only so far as status within it is differentiated from other components of status, e.g., social class. Even with rather clear differentiation, however, position in a stratification system is likely to be highly correlated with position in a hierarchy of authority. Seldom, if ever, are high bureaucratic officials unequivocally members of the lowest social class.[15]

Externally, two particularly important boundaries pose difficulties for bureaucracies. The first has to do with recruiting manpower and obtaining facilities. In ideal type, a position in a bureaucratic organization constitutes an occupational role, which implies that criteria of eligibility should be defined in terms of competence and maximal responsibility to the organization, not to "private" interests independent of, and potentially in conflict with,

[15] The Ottoman Empire, where many high officials were "slaves" of the Sultan, is not an exception. In such circumstances slaves took on the status of their master's "household," and hence were outside the normal stratification system. See H.A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1962.

those of the organization. Thus high aristocrats may put loyalty to their lineage ahead of the obligations of office, or clergymen in political office may place loyalty to the church ahead of obligation to the civil government. Also, remunerating officials and providing facilities for their functions presents a serious problem of differentiation and hence of independence. The "financing of public bodies," as Weber calls it,[16] cannot be fully bureaucratic in this sense unless payment is in money, the sources of which are outside the control of the recipients. Various forms of benefices and prebends only very imperfectly meet these conditions, but modern salaries and operating budgets approximate them relatively closely.[17]

The second boundary problem concerns political support. An organization is bureaucratic so far as incumbents of its offices can function independently of the influence of elements having special "interests" in its output, except where such elements are properly involved in the definition of the organization's goals through its nonbureaucratic top. Insulation from such influence, for example through such crude channels as bribery, is difficult to institutionalize and, as is well known, is relatively rare.[18]

In the optimal case, internal hierarchy and division of functions, recruitment of manpower and facilities, and exclusion of "improper" influence, are all regulated by universalistic norms. This is implicit in the proposition that bureaucratic authority belongs to Weber's rational-legal type. Of course, in many concrete instances this condition is met very imperfectly, even in the most highly developed societies.

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[16] Max Weber, "The Financing of Political Bodies," in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1947, pp. 310 ff.

[17] Problems of this type have been exceedingly common over wide ranges and long periods. Eisenstadt gives many illustrations of the loss of fluidity of resources through aristocratization and similar developments. A very important one is the ruralization of the Roman legions in the later imperial period—they became essentially a border militia. At a lower level, a particularly good example is the difficulty of institutionalizing the differentiation of occupational from familial roles for the industrial labor force. S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires*, New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963, especially ch. 3; Martin P. Nilsson, *Imperial Rome*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926; Neil J. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

[18] The difficulty of mobilizing political support for bureaucratic regimes is exemplified by the particularly important case of the struggle between monarchs and aristocracies in early modern Europe. In spite of the obvious dangers of absolutism to the freedoms of the urban classes, the alliance between them and the monarchs was an essential way of developing sufficient support to counteract the traditionalizing influence of the aristocracies. The special place of the latter in military organization made the task of monarchies more difficult. Max Beloff, *The Age of Absolutism*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962; John B. Wolf, *The Emergence of the Great Powers*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962; especially chs. 4 and 7.

The basis on which I classify bureaucracy as an evolutionary universal is very simple. As Weber said, it is the most effective large-scale administrative organization that man has invented, and there is no direct substitute for it.[19] Where capacity to carry out large-scale organized operations is important, e.g., military operations with mass forces, water control, tax administration, policing of large and heterogeneous populations, and productive enterprise requiring large capital investment and much manpower, the unit that commands effective bureaucratic organization is inherently superior to the one that does not. It is by no means the only structural factor in the adaptive capacity of social systems, but no one can deny that it is an important one. Above all, it is built on further specializations ensuing from the broad emancipation from ascription that stratification and specialized legitimation make possible.

Money and the Market Complex

Immediate effectivenes of collective function, especially on a large scale, depends on concentration of power, as noted. Power is in part a function of the mobility of the resources available for use in the interests of the collective goals in question. Mobility of resources, however, is a direct function of access to them through the market. Though the market is the most general means of such access, it does have two principal competitors. First is requisitioning through the direct application of political power, e.g., defining a collective goal as having military significance and requisitioning manpower under it for national defense. A second type of mobilization is the activation of nonpolitical solidarities and commitments, such as those of ethnic or religious membership, local community, caste, etc. The essential theme here is, "as one of us, it is your duty . . ."

The political power path involves a fundamental difficulty because of the role of explicit or implied coercion—"you contribute, or else . . ."—while the activation of non-political commitments, a category comprising at least two others, raises the issue of alternative obligations. The man appealed to in the interest of his ethnic group, may ask, "what about the problems of my family?" In contrast, market exchange avoids three dilemmas: first, that I must do what is expected or face punishment for noncompliance; second, if I do not comply, I will be disloyal to certain larger groups, identification with which is very important to my general status; third, if I do not comply,

[19] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, op. cit.*, p. 377.

I may bet[illegible] the unit which, like my family, is the primary basis of my immediate personal security.

Market exchange makes it possible to obtain resources for future action and yet avoid such dilemmas as these, because money is a generalized resource for the consumer-recipient, who can purchase "good things" regardless of his relations to their sources in other respects. Availability through the market cannot be unlimited—one should not be able to purchase conjugal love or ultimate political loyalty—but possession of physical commodities, and by extension, control of personal services by purchase, certainly can, very generally, be legitimized in the market nexus.

As a symbolic medium, money "stands for" the economic utility of the real assets for which it is exchangeable, but it represents the concrete objects so abstractly that it is neutral among the competing claims of various other orders in which the same objects are significant. It thus directs attention away from the more consummatory and, by and large, immediate significance of these objects toward their *instrumental* significance as potential means to further ends. Thus money becomes the great mediator of the instrumental use of goods and services. Markets, involving both the access of the consuming unit to objects it needs for consumption and the access of producing units to "outlets" that are not ascribed, but contingent on the voluntary decisions of "customers" to purchase, may be stabilized institutionally. Thus this universal "emancipates" resources from such ascriptive bonds as demands to give kinship expectations priority, to be loyal in highly specific senses to certain political groups, or to submit the details of daily life to the specific imperatives of religious sects.

In the money and market system, money as a medium of exchange and property rights including rights of alienation, must be institutionalized. In general it is a further step that institutionalizes broadly an individual's contractual right to sell his services in a labor market without seriously involving himself in diffuse dependency relationships, which at lower status levels are usually in some ways "unfree." Property in land, on a basis that provides for its alienation, presents a very important problem. Its wide extension seems, except in a very few cases, to be a late development. The institution of contract in exchange of money and goods is also a complex area of considerable variation. Finally, money itself is by no means a simple entity, and in particular the development of credit instruments, banking and the like, has many variations.[20]

[20] A useful typology of the organization of economic exchange relations, from an evolutionary point of view, is given by Neil J. Smelser, *The Sociology of Economic Life,* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963; pp. 86–88.

These institutional elements are to a considerable degree independently variable and are often found unevenly developed. But if the main ones are sufficiently developed and integrated, the market system provides the operating units of the society, including of course its government, with a pool of disposable resources that can be applied to any of a range of uses and, within limits, can be shifted from use to use. The importance of such a pool is shown by the serious consequences of its shrinkage for even such highly organized political systems as some of the ancient empires.[21]

Modern socialist societies appear to be exceptional because, up to a point, they achieve high productivity with a relatively minimal reliance on monetary and market mechanisms, substituting bureaucracy for them. But too radical a "demonetization" has negative consequences even for such an advanced economy as that of the Soviet Union.

A principal reason for placing money and markets after bureaucracy in the present series of evolutionary universals is that the conditions of their large-scale development are more precarious. This is particularly true in the very important areas where a generalized system of universalistic norms has not yet become firmly established. Market operations, and the monetary medium itself, are inevitably highly dependent on political "protection." The very fact that the mobilization of political power, and its implementation through bureaucratic organization, is so effective generates interests against sacrificing certain short-run advantages to favor the enhanced flexibility that market systems can provide. This has been a major field of conflict historically, and it is being repeated today in underdeveloped societies. The strong tendency for developing societies to adopt a "socialistic" pattern reflects a preference for increasing productivity through governmentally controlled bureaucratic means rather than more decentralized market-oriented means.[22] But in general the money and market system has undoubtedly made a fundamental contribution to the adaptive capacity of

[21] S. N. Eisenstadt, *op. cit.* for example, makes a great deal of this factor, particularly in accounting for the gradual decline of the political power of the Byzantine Empire. This analysis is also closely related to Weber's thesis in his famous essay on the decline of the Roman Empire. Weber, however, particularly emphasized the mobility of manpower through slavery. Max Weber, "The Social Causes of the Decay of Ancient Civilization," *Journal of General Education* (October, 1950).

[22] See Gregory Grossman, "The Structure and Organization of the Soviet Economy" in the *Slavic Review,* 21 (June, 1962), pp. 203–222. The constriction of the market system may also have been a major factor in the difficulties suffered by the Chinese Communist regime in connection with the "Great Leap Forward" of 1958 and subsequent years. Audrey Donnithorne, "The Organization of Rural Trade in China Since 1958," *China Quarterly,* No. 8 (October–December, 1961), pp. 77–91, and Leo A. Orleans, "Problems of Manpower Absorption in Rural China," *China Quarterly,* No. 7 (July–September, 1961), pp. 69–84.

the societies in which it has developed; those that restrict it too drastically are likely to suffer from severe adaptive disadvantages in the long run.

Generalized Universalistic Norms

A feature common to bureaucratic authority and the market system is that they incorporate, and are hence dependent on, universalistic norms. For bureaucracy, these involve definitions of the powers of office, the terms of access to it, and the line dividing proper from improper pressure or influence. For money and markets, the relevant norms include the whole complex of property rights, first in commodities, later in land and in monetary assets. Other norms regulate the monetary medium and contractual relations among the parties to transactions. Here relations between contracts of service or employment and other aspects of the civil and personal statuses of the persons concerned are particularly crucial. . . .

Although it is very difficult to pin down just what the crucial components are, how they are interrelated, and how they develop, one can identify the development of a general legal system as a crucial aspect of societal evolution. A general legal system is an integrated system of universalistic norms, applicable to the society as a whole rather than to a few functional or segmental sectors, highly generalized in terms of principles and standards, and relatively independent of both the religious agencies that legitimize the normative order of the society and vested interest groups in the operative sector, particularly in government.

The extent to which both bureaucratic organization and market systems can develop *without* a highly generalized universalistic normative order should not be underestimated. Such great Empires as the Mesopotamian, the ancient Chinese, and, perhaps the most extreme example, the Roman, including its Byzantine extension, certainly testify to this. But these societies suffered either from a static quality, failing to advance beyond certain points, or from instability leading in many cases to retrogression.[23] Although many of the elements of such a general normative order appeared in quite highly developed form in earlier societies, in my view their crystallization into a coherent system represents a distinctive new step, which more than the industrial revolution itself, ushered in the *modern* era of social evolution.[24]

The clear differentiation of secular government from religious organization has been a long and complicated process, and even in the modern world

[23] Eisenstadt, *op. cit.*, pp. 349 ff.
[24] Parsons, *Societies, op. cit.*

its results are unevenly developed. It has perhaps gone farthest in the sharp separation of Church and State in the United States. Bureaucracy has, of course, played an important part in this process. The secularization of government is associated with that of law, and both of these are related to the level of generality of the legal system.

Systems of law that are *directly* religiously sanctioned, treating compliance as a religious obligation, also tend to be "legalistic" in the sense of emphasizing detailed prescriptions and prohibitions, each of which is given specific Divine sanction. Preeminent examples are the Hebrew law of Leviticus, the later developments in the Talmudic tradition, and Islamic law based on the Koran and its interpretations. Legal decisions and the formulation of rules to cover new situations must then be based as directly as possible on an authoritative sacred text.

Not only does religious law as such tend to inhibit generalization of legal principle, but it also tends to favor what Weber called *substantive* over *formal* rationality.[25] The standard of legal correctness tends to be the implementation of religious precepts, not procedural propriety and consistency of general principle. Perhaps the outstanding difference between the legal systems of the other Empires, and the patterns that were developed importantly in Roman law, was the development of elements of formal rationality, which we may regard as a differentiation of legal norms out of "embeddedness" in the religious culture. The older systems—many of which still exist—tended to treat "justice" as a direct implementation of precepts of religious and moral conduct, in terms of what Weber called *Wertrationalität*, without institutionalizing an independent system of *societal* norms, adapted to the function of social control at the societal level and integrated on its own terms. The most important foci of such an independent system are, first, some kind of "codification" of norms under principles not *directly* moral or religious, though they generally continue to be grounded in religion, and, second, the formalization of procedural rules, defining the situations in which judgments are to be made on a societal basis. Especially important is the establishment of courts for purposes other than permitting political and religious leaders to make pronouncements and "examples."[26]

Something similar can be said about what I have called operative vested interests, notably government. Advantages are to be gained, on the one hand, by binding those outside the direct control of the group in question

[25] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, op. cit.*, pp. 184 ff, and *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, ch. 8.

[26] Weber, *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society, op. cit.*

wit[illegible]letailed regulation, while, on the other hand, leaving maximum freedo[illegible]or the group's leadership. This duality Weber made central to his concept of traditional authority, with its sphere of traditionalized fixity, on the one hand, and that of personal prerogative, reaching its extreme form in "sultanism," on the other.[27] Both aspects are highly resistant to the type of rationalization that is essential to a generalized universalistic legal system.

Though the Chinese Empire, Hindu law (*Manu*), Babylonia, and to some extent, Islam made important beginnings in the direction I am discussing, the Roman legal system of the Imperial period was uniquely advanced in these respects. Though the early *jus civilis* was very bound religiously, this was not true to the same extent of the *jus gentium*, or of the later system as a totality. While a professional judiciary never developed, the jurisconsults in their "unofficial" status did constitute a genuine professional group, and they systematized the law very extensively, in the later phases strongly under the influence of Stoic Philosophy.[28]

Though Roman law had a variety of more or less "archaic" features, its "failure" was surely on the level of institutionalization more than in any intrinsic defect of legal content. Roman society of that period lacked the institutional capacity, through government, religious legitimation, and other channels, to integrate the immense variety of peoples and cultures within the Empire, or to maintain the necessary economic, political, and administrative structures.[29] Roman law remained, however, the cultural reference point of all the significant later developments.

The next phase, of course, was the development of Catholic Canon Law, incorporating much of Roman law. A major characteristic of the Western Church, Canon law was not only very important in maintaining and consolidating the Church's differentiation from secular government and society, but, with the Justinian documents, it also preserved the legal tradition.

The third phase was the revival of the study of Roman secular law in Renaissance Italy and its gradual adoption by the developing national states of early modern Europe. The result was that the modern national state developed as, fundamentally, a *Rechtsstaat*. In Continental Europe, however, one fundamental limitation on this development was the degree to which the law continued to be intertwined and almost identified with government. For example, most higher civil servants were lawyers. One might

[27] Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, op. cit.*

[28] A handy summary of Roman legal development is "The Science of Law" by F. de Zulueta in Cyrus Balley (ed.), *The Legacy of Rome*, London: Oxford University Press, 1923.

[29] Weber, "The Social Causes of the Decay of Ancient Civilization," *op. cit.*

ask whether this represented a "legalization of bureaucracy" or a bureaucratization of the law and the legal profession. But with elaborate bodies of law, law faculties as major constituents of every important university, and the prominence of university-trained legal professions, Continental European nations certainly had well institutionalized legal systems. . . .

The development of English Common Law, with its adoption and further development in the overseas English-speaking world, not only constituted the most advanced case of universalistic normative order, but was probably decisive for the modern world. This general type of legal order is, in my opinion, the most important single hallmark of modern society. So much is it no accident that the Industrial Revolution occurred first in England, that I think it legitimate to regard the English type of legal system as a fundamental prerequisite of the first occurrence of the Industrial Revolution.[30]

The Democratic Association

A rather highly generalized universalistic legal order is in all likelihood a necessary prerequisite for the development of the last structural complex to be discussed as universal to social evolution, the democratic association with elective leadership and fully enfranchised membership. At least this seems true of the institutionalization of this pattern in the governments of large-scale societies. This form of democratic association originated only in the late 18th century in the Western world and was nowhere complete, if universal adult suffrage is a criterion, until well into the present century. Of course, those who regard the Communist society as a stable and enduring type might well dispute that democratic government in this sense is an evolutionary universal. But before discussing that issue, I will outline the history and principal components of this universal.

Surely it is significant that the earliest cases of democratic government were the *poleis* of classical antiquity, which were also the primary early sources of universalistic law. The democratic *polis*, however, not only was small in scale by modern standards (note Aristotle's belief that a citizen body should never be too large to assemble within earshot of a given speaker, of course without the aid of a public address system), but also its democratic associational aspects never included a total society. It is esti-

[30]It is exceedingly important here once more to distinguish the first occurrence of a social innovation from its subsequent diffusion. The latter can occur without the whole set of prerequisite societal conditions necessary for the former. Cf. my *Structure and Process in Modern Societies, op. cit.*, ch. 3.

mated that during the Periclean age in Athens, only about 30,000 of a total population of about 150,000 were citizens, the rest being metics and slaves. And, of course, citizen women were not enfranchised. Thus even in its democratic phase the *polis* was emphatically a two-class system. And under the conditions of the time, when Roman society increased in scale away from the *polis* type of situation, citizenship, at least for large proportions of the Empire's population, was bound to lose political functions almost in proportion to its gains in legal significance.

The basic principle of democratic association, however, never completely disappeared. To varying degrees and in varying forms, it survived in the *municipia* of the Roman Empire, in the Roman Senate, and in various aspects of the organization of the Christian Church, though the Church also maintained certain hierarchical aspects. Later the collegial pattern, e.g., the *college* of Cardinals, continued to be an aspect of Church structure. In the Italian and North European city-states of the late Middle Ages and early modern period, it had its place in government, for example in "senates," which though not democratically elected, were internally organized as democratic bodies. Another important case was the guild, as an association of merchants or craftsmen. In modern times there have, of course, been many different types of private association in many different fields. It is certainly safe to say that, even apart from government, the democratic association is a most prominent and important constituent of modern societies.

At the level of national government, we can speak first of the long development of Parliamentary assemblies functioning as democratic associations and legislating for the nation, whose members have been to some degree elected from fairly early times. Secondly, there has been a stepwise extension of both the franchise for electing legislative representatives and the legislative supremacy of their assemblies, following the lead of England, which developed rapidly in these respects after 1688. Later, the French and American Revolutions dramatized the conception of the total national community as essentially a democratic association in this sense.

There are four critically important components of the democratic association. First is the institutionalization of the leadership function in the form of an elective office, whether occupied by individuals, executive bodies, or collegial groups like legislatures. The second is the franchise, the institutionalized participation of members in collective decision-making through the election of officers and often through voting on specific policy issues. Third is the institutionalization of procedural rules for the voting process and the determination of its outcome and for the process of "discussion" or campaigning for votes by candidates or advocates of policies. Fourth is the

institutionalization of the nearest possible approximation to the voluntary principle in regard to membership status. In the private association this is fundamental—no case where membership is ascribed or compulsory can be called a "pure" democratic association. In government, however, the coercive and compulsory elements of power, as well as the recruitment of societal communities largely by birth, modify the principle. Hence universality of franchise tends to replace the voluntary membership principle.

Formalization of definite procedural rules governing voting and the counting and evaluation of votes may be considered a case of formal rationality in Weber's sense, since it removes the consequences of the act from the control of the particular actor. It limits his control to the specific act of casting his ballot, choosing among the alternatives officially presented to him. Indirectly his vote might contribute to an outcome he did not desire, e.g., through splitting the opposition to an undesirable candidate and thus actually aiding him, but he cannot control this, except in the voting act itself.

Besides such formalization, however, Rokkan has shown in his comparative and historical study of Western electoral systems, that there is a strikingly general tendency to develop three other features of the franchise.[31] The first of these is universality, minimizing if not eliminating the overlap between membership and disenfranchisement. Thus property qualifications and, most recently, sex qualifications have been removed so that now the main Western democratic polities, with minimal exceptions, have universal adult suffrage. The second is equality, eliminating "class" systems, like the Prussian system in the German Empire, in favor of the principle, one citizen, one vote.[32] Finally, secrecy of the ballot insulates the voting decision from pressures emanating from status superiors or peers that might interfere with the expression of the voter's personal preferences.

Certain characteristics of elective office directly complementary to those of the franchise can be formulated. Aside from the ways of achieving office and the rules of tenure in it, they are very similar to the pattern of bureaucratic office. The first, corresponding to the formalization of electoral rules, is that conduct in office must be legally regulated by universalistic norms.

[31] Stein Rokkan, "Mass Suffrage, Secret Voting, and Political Participation," *The European Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1961), pp. 132–152.

[32] The recent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court on legislative reapportionment also constitute an important step in this process. In the majority opinion of the decision outlawing the Georgia county unit system of voting, Justice Douglas explicitly stated that this was a direct application of the Constitutional principle of equal protection of the laws. See *The New York Times*, March 19, 1963.

Second, corresponding to the universality of the franchise, is the principle of subordinating segmental or private interests to the collective interest within the sphere of competence of the office. Third, corresponding to equality of the franchise, is the principle of accountability for decisions to a total electorate. And finally, corresponding to secrecy of the ballot, is the principle of limiting the powers of office to specified spheres, in sharp contrast to the diffuseness of both traditional and charismatic authority.

The adoption of even such a relatively specific pattern as equality of the franchise may be considered a universal tendency, essentially because, under the principle that the membership rightfully chooses both the broad orientations of collective policy and the elements having leadership privileges and responsibilities, there is, among those with minimal competence, no universalistic basis for discriminating among classes of members. As a limitation on the hierarchical structure of power within collectivities, equality of franchise is the limiting or boundary condition of the democratic association, corresponding to equality of opportunity on the bureaucratic boundary of the polity.[33]

Especially, though not exclusively, in national territorial states, the stable democratic association is notoriously difficult to institutionalize. Above all this seems to be a function of the difficulty in motivating holders of immediately effective power to relinquish their opportunities voluntarily despite the seriousness of the interest at stake—relinquishment of control of governmental machinery after electoral defeat being the most striking problem.[34] The system is also open to other serious difficulties, most notably corruption and "populist" irresponsibility, as well as *de facto* dictatorship. Furthermore, such difficulties are by no means absent in private associations, as witness the rarity of effective electoral systems in large trade unions.[35]

The basic argument for considering democratic association a universal, despite such problems, is that, the larger and more complex a society becomes, the more important is effective political organization, not only in its administrative capacity, but also, and not least, in its support of a universalistic legal order. Political effectiveness includes both the scale and

[33] Cf. Parsons, "On the Concept of Political Power," *op. cit.* and John Rawls, *loc. cit.*

[34] In the 1920's and 30's the late Professor H. J. Laski was fond of saying that no "ruling class" would *ever* relinquish its position peacefully. Yet, in the late 1940's, the British Labor government both introduced the "welfare state" and set India free without a Conservative *coup d'état* occurring against them.

[35] Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin Trow, and James Coleman, *Union Democracy*, Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1956.

operative flexibility of the organization of power. Power, however, precisely as a generalized societal medium, depends overwhelmingly on a consensual element,[36] i.e., the ordered institutionalization and exercise of influence, linking the power system to the higher-order societal consensus at the value level.[37]

No institutional form basically different from the democratic association can, *not* specifically *legitimize* authority and power in the most general sense, but *mediate consensus in its exercise* by particular persons and groups, and in the formation of particular binding policy decisions. At high levels of structural differentiation in the society itself and in its governmental system, generalized legitimation cannot fill this gap adequately. Providing structured participation in the selection of leaders and formation of basic policy, as well as in opportunities to be heard and exert influence and to have a real choice among alternatives, is the crucial function of the associational system from this point of view.

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Conclusion

This paper is not meant to present even the schematic outline of a "theory" of societal evolution. My aim is much more limited: I have selected for detailed attention and illustration an especially important type of structural innovation that has appeared in the course of social change. I have attempted to clarify the concept "evolutionary universal" by briefly discussing a few examples from organic evolution, namely, vision, the human hands, and the human brain. I have interpreted these as innovations endowing their possessors with a very substantial increase in generalized adaptive capacity, so substantial that species lacking them are relatively disadvantaged in the major areas in which natural selection operates, not so much for survival as for the opportunity to initiate further major developments.

Four features of human societies at the level of culture and social organization were cited as having universal and major significance as prerequisites for socio-cultural development: technology, kinship organization based on an incest taboo, communication based on language, and religion. Primary attention, however, was given to six organizational complexes that develop

[36] Parsons, "On the Concept of Political Power," *loc. cit.*
[37] Parsons, "On the Concept of Influence," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 27 (Spring, 1963), pp. 37–62.

mainly at the level of social structure. The first two, particularly important for the emergence of societies from primitiveness, are stratification, involving a primary break with primitive kinship ascription, and cultural legitimation, with institutionalized agencies that are independent of a diffuse religious tradition.

Fundamental to the structure of modern societies are, taken together, the other four complexes: bureaucratic organization of collective goal-attainment, money and market systems, generalized universalistic legal systems, and the democratic association with elective leadership and mediated membership support for policy orientations. Although these have developed very unevenly, some of them going back a very long time, all are clearly much more than simple "inventions" of particular societies.

Perhaps a single theme tying them together is that differentiation and attendant reduction in ascription has caused the initial two-class system to give way to more complex structures at the levels of social stratification and the relation between social structure and its cultural legitimation. First, this more complex system is characterized by a highly generalized universalistic normative structure in all fields. Second, subunits under such normative orders have greater autonomy both in pursuing their own goals and interests and in serving others instrumentally. Third, this autonomy is linked with the probability that structural units will develop greater diversity of interests and subgoals. Finally, this diversity results in pluralization of scales of prestige and therefore of differential access to economic resources, power, and influence.

Comparatively, the institutionalization of these four complexes and their interrelations is very uneven. In the broadest frame of reference, however, we may think of them as together constituting the main outline of the structural foundations of modern society. Clearly, such a combination, balanced relative to the exigencies of particular societal units, confers on its possessors an adaptive advantage far superior to the structural potential of societies lacking it. . . .