

Suzanne Keller

BEYOND THE
RULING CLASS

Strategic Elites in Modern Society



RANDOM HOUSE Δ NEW YORK

1963

CONTENTS



1. INTRODUCTION Δ 3
 - Elites defined* 4
 - Influential theories of elites* 6
 - Questions and pitfalls in the study of elites* 19
 - Plan of this book* 22
2. STRATEGIC ELITES:
HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS Δ 29
 - Types of social core groups* 30
 - The rise of social core groups and social classes* 33
 - Two historical illustrations* 35
 - Origins of social classes* 38
 - The perpetuation of social classes* 44
 - The ruling class: Marx and Engels* 47
 - The ruling class and strategic elites* 54
3. STRATEGIC ELITES:
CONCOMITANT SOCIAL FORCES Δ 65
 - Growth of population* 66
 - Growth of the division of labor* 67
 - Growth of formal organization and its social implications* 70
 - Growth of moral diversity* 74
 - Rise of functional elites* 76
 - Elites as minorities* 77

4. THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF STRATEGIC ELITES Δ 88
- A functional model of the social system* 91
 - Emergent types of elites* 96
 - External and internal elites* 98
 - Modes of organization* 100
 - Instrumental and expressive aspects of elite roles* 102
5. THE EMERGENCE OF STRATEGIC ELITES: SELECTED CASES Δ 107
- Elites in industrialized societies* 108
 - A note on elites in the developing countries* 121
 - Rank order among strategic elites* 123
- 6 STRATEGIC ELITES AND THE MORAL ORDER Δ 132
- The collective conscience and strategic elites* 134
 - Moral differences among strategic elites* 141
 - Cohesion among strategic elites* 145
7. THE SYMBOLIC ROLE OF STRATEGIC ELITES Δ 153
- Three kinds of collective symbols* 155
 - Instrumental and symbolic functions* 158
 - Symbolic reciprocity between strategic elites and their publics* 162
 - Symbols and sentiments* 166
8. RECRUITMENT, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND REWARDS Δ 172
- Desirable attributes* 175
 - The search for candidates* 177
 - Selecting desirable candidates* 179
 - Attracting desirable candidates* 182
 - Responsibilities and rewards* 185
 - Patterns of recruitment* 186

9. SOCIAL BACKGROUNDS AND CAREERS
OF SELECTED ELITES IN THE
UNITED STATES Δ 198

Problems of definition and boundaries 200

Social origins of strategic elites 204

Education and careers 210

Internal and external elites 215

Some implications 216

10. THE RISE AND FALL OF
STRATEGIC ELITES Δ 227

Circulation of elite individuals 229

Circulation of elite positions 235

11. ELITES, EQUALITY, AND
FREEDOM Δ 259

Recapitulation 259

Equality 265

Freedom and despotism 272

APPENDIXES Δ 284

I. *Moral differentiation among elites* 284

II. *Social class origins of various elites* 292

III. *Trends in social class origins of elites* 307

IV. *Lineage, ethnic, and religious backgrounds* 308

V. *Trends in ascribed attributes* 309

VI. *Types of ascent for the disadvantaged* 312

VII. *Elites narrowly defined* 317

VIII. *Career lines of various elites* 319

IX. *The prevalence of lawyers* 325

BIBLIOGRAPHY Δ 327

INDEX Δ 343

4. THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF STRATEGIC ELITES

▲ Strategic elites proliferate in advanced industrial societies because of antecedent historical conditions, currently operative social forces, and the functional requirements of large-scale social systems. The first two of these matters have been discussed in the two preceding chapters. We now turn to the question of the functional requirements of modern industrial societies.

The notion that elites subserve social functions is a fairly general one, found in one form or another in most writings on the subject. But few writers go beyond generalizations to trace the specific interconnections between elites and their social functions. Often these generalizations conceal such tautologies as the proposition that elites rule the community, or that elites are groups superior in status and power. Frequently, one or two types of elites are taken as the models for all types, a procedure that hinders the development of a comprehensive theoretical model. Without such a model, it is hardly possible to integrate and organize the varied relevant historical, anecdotal, and empirical findings.

The work of Talcott Parsons provides such a model. Parsons builds upon the work of a number of other thinkers who, though differing from him and one another in their methods and conclusions, also sought to discover the factors making for social stability and social change. Adam Smith, representing classical economic

doctrines, thought of society as a self-regulating system propelled by myriads of independent, individual decisions registered in an impersonal market. A few decades later, Saint-Simon was no longer able to adhere to so mechanical a model, but he too sought to discover the factors affecting the social equilibrium. He saw this equilibrium as being actively promoted by a directing center consisting of the economic producers and technical and scientific experts—the key representatives of the emerging industrial society. Since wealth and technical knowledge were the mainsprings of that society, the decisions of economic and scientific experts were considered to be crucial for its fate.

Marx learned from both of these men. From Smith he derived the notion of society as a system of interdependent parts operating independently and almost outside of the individual consciousness. From Saint-Simon he acquired the conception of a directing agent—although he transformed it into the capitalist ruling class. Marx saw society as run by force, and since in his day this force was manifested most conspicuously in the economic realm, those in control of economic activity presumably controlled society.

Whatever their differences, Smith, Saint-Simon, and Marx similarly concentrated on one or very few factors as basic to the social order. Pareto further pursued these ideas. He tried to show, first, that although society was dependent on a common fund of values (“residues”), it also consisted of a dynamic set of competing and conflicting social forces. The equilibrium thereby established was at best precarious. Like Marx, Pareto retained the idea of a single group—in his case, the political rather than the economic elite—seeking to dominate society. Again like Marx, he saw the dynamic element in social life as a struggle between a powerful minority and the exploited. But this struggle was not between the powerful and the powerless, as Marx viewed it, but between the powerful and their rivals. Pareto argued that this conflict would continue as long as men exist; as long as there were minorities who rule there would be minorities who seek to rule.

In contrast to Marx, Saint-Simon, and Pareto, and despite the fact that he was preoccupied with problems of social control, Durkheim developed neither a single nor multistranded theory of power. He saw society as guided rather by moral norms which were either shared by all, as in primitive and simple societies or, distributed

differentially, as in complex and advanced societies, especially among the major occupational groups.

In this century, one of the most ambitious and systematic attempts to delineate the nature of the social system is that of Parsons himself. In *The Social System* (1952) Parsons tends, in the manner of the classical economists and Durkheim, to present the social system as a machine without a driver. His more recent work, however, shows greater interest in questions of power and leadership.¹ Nevertheless, from an over-all perspective, Parsons continues to emphasize self-regulating social processes and mechanisms.

Each of the aforementioned thinkers presents a different, if one-sided, explanation of how the social system works. The classical economists stressed self-interest; Saint-Simon, the actions of economic producers and technical experts; Marx, economic exploitation of one class by another; Pareto, political dominance guided by the residues underlying the dynamic social equilibrium; Durkheim, reciprocal awareness of interdependence or moral consensus. Parsons, like Durkheim, is drawn to moral consensus as the basis of the social order and social continuity. The internalization of social norms in childhood and their maintenance in adult life (by means of a set of mechanisms referred to as pattern maintenance and tension management) play a crucial theoretical role in Parsons' scheme.

The suggestion that self-interest, moral consensus, socialization, or force plays a determinant role in social continuity is valuable only if it is not presented as an either-or-choice, as has often been the case. Even if one agrees that these are important elements in social life, their actual significance and the concrete mechanisms through which they operate have not been systematically examined or empirically tested. Among these mechanisms, we propose, are the strategic elites.

If the analysis of the social system generally has been overly abstract, the analysis of elites has suffered from the opposite fault—too much descriptive detail and too little systematic theoretical interpretation. Several vivid portraits exist of such special elite groups as the robber barons, royal dynasties, and leading artists, but there is no comprehensive account of their respective social functions, though it is generally assumed that elites do have such functions and are thereby linked to the more enduring aspects of the social

system.² Our task, therefore, is to indicate the principal interrelations of the most comprehensive of these analytical models of the social system to the empirical descriptions of various elites.

A functional model of the social system

Since the publication of *The Social System*, Parsons has increasingly refined his formal analysis of the dimensions of the social order and the components of social action. Some aspects of his theoretical scheme are particularly relevant for the formal analysis of elites.

The most general proposition in Parsons' theory is that societies are composed of differentiated yet interdependent units whose efforts and purposes are at least in some measure coordinated. Society is held together, on the one hand, by common values and institutional mechanisms, and on the other, by specialized activities and interests some of which, manifestly or latently, support these values. A society is a *system* of interdependent parts requiring a unified general orientation and direction so that the different parts do not work at cross-purposes. Moral order is the most general source of this unity, the realm of fundamental values, which defines and articulates the boundaries and limits of the society. These boundaries may vary, but today, Parsons would agree, national sovereignty constitutes one such cardinal reference point.

Every society, then, includes as essential elements both a set of common values and a set of differentiated but interrelated institutions and patterns of action. As we have seen, this differentiation increases with a growth in size and occupational specialization. Specialization occurs not at random but with reference to specific functional problems which in all social systems, if they are to remain systems, must be solved.

Parsons names four such functional problems, constituting fundamental exigencies of social systems: *goal attainment, adaptation, integration, and pattern maintenance and tension management*.³ If societies are to achieve such collective goals as the maintenance of public welfare, freedom, progress, and sovereignty, institutional machinery must be developed for their implementation. Along each of Parsons' functional exigencies, more or less distinctive organized institutions and practices develop which in time

come to constitute a special subsystem of society with specialized objectives and responsibilities. The goal attainment subsystem serves "to maximize the capacity of the society to attain its collective goals," by deciding when, where, and how available resources are to be utilized. The adaptive subsystem produces generalized facilities or means to attain these goals. The integrative subsystem maintains order and coherence among different parts of the system so that social solidarity is promoted and internal conflict minimized; its primary task is to link differentiated perspectives to the common moral framework. The pattern maintenance and tension management subsystem maximizes the motivational commitments and emotional well-being of individuals so that they may adequately perform and participate in social life. In short, the goal attainment subsystem defines and pursues common social objectives, the adaptive subsystem devises and utilizes the necessary means and facilities, the integrative subsystem promotes social morality, and the pattern maintenance and tension management subsystem safeguards individual and group morale.

According to Parsons, each of these four functional subsystems corresponds to a specialized institutional sector of society. The goal attainment subsystem is primarily concentrated in the polity, the adaptive subsystem in the economy. Each of these, although bound to the over-all moral framework of society, is partly autonomous; and because the same individuals perform different roles in the polity and the economy, some conflict between the two is unavoidable. Yet they share a common perspective in that their activities orient them to the *external* situation facing the society.

The integrative and pattern maintenance subsystems are primarily oriented to the *internal* situation—to states of mind, moral awareness and obligations, crises of conscience, and emotional tensions and strains. Thus one task of the integrative subsystem is to adjust conflicts arising among various subsystems and their competing claims, as, for example, when the polity favors tight money and high interest rates to prevent inflation and the economy favors low interest rates to promote investments. Parsons, in a recent essay, suggests that the legal profession, political parties, and interest groups should be classed with this subsystem.⁴

The pattern maintenance subsystem is principally concerned

with the morale of the units in the system—individuals and groups fulfilling the role obligations on which day-to-day operations of the system depends. Here the family and the school are crucial. They train individuals, with their various biological and emotional characteristics, for the duties they will assume in the economy, the polity, and other social spheres.

Preparing collective resources for successful encounters with the environment is the responsibility of the goal attainment and adaptive subsystems. These have predominant influence in societies committed to technical progress, military conquest, or industrialization. The two subsystems oriented to such internal matters as morality and morale are predominant in societies oriented to a speculative, contemplative, and expressive way of life. The distinction is really a question of emphasis, for all four functional problems are matters of concern in any society. A society is heading for trouble if its leaders are preoccupied *only* with its power position or its Gross National Product, neglecting such problems as friction between institutions, competition between covetous groups and individuals, and personal unhappiness and anxiety among its members. Yet, merely to keep a society harmonious or in high spirits is likewise self-defeating, since essential work would not get accomplished.

In constructing his model of the social system by means of analytical rather than historical building blocks, Parsons has avoided the pitfalls of various determinist explanations of the social order in which certain social factors are overemphasized because they loom large in the mind of the observer. He has attempted first to work out a model on the analytical plane. On this score he has succeeded: his model of the social system has closure, comprehensiveness, and is sufficiently abstract to permit generalization.

Difficulties arise when Parsons seeks to test his theoretical constructs empirically. The social institutions he has selected for this test are only imperfectly suited to their presumed functional responsibilities. The polity is concerned with more than goal attainment, the economy with more than adaptation, the family with more than pattern maintenance and tension management. Each of these institutions is an establishment with a long and complicated history of its own, and each serves several social functions. No precise correspondence exists between analytical system functions

of major institutions and their concrete, and, in part, historically determined patterns of action.

This fact is particularly important in periods of rapid social change, when new needs, means, and values develop swiftly. Older, tradition-bound institutions are challenged and displaced by new institutions better able to meet changing situations. The family, once involved with all of the major functional problems of society, today plays a limited though still a significant role in society; its social form has changed from what MacIver calls a community to an association.⁵ Today, the family's chief contribution to the functioning of the social system is reproduction and early socialization of children. But even this nuclear function is shared with other agencies, including peer groups and schools. For adults, the modern family is apt to be a repository of intimacy and strong personal sentiments, yet many adults turn to nonrelatives for attention. The psychological importance of the family as a refuge from the hurts of the world may well have increased, but its contribution to the solution of large-scale societal problems has declined. Functions the family once performed largely on its own are today shared with schools (socialization and education), courts (moral teachings and punishment for transgressions of the law), business corporations (production of the means of sustenance), and governmental agencies (welfare, protection, defense).^{*} Parsons assigns to the family the function of "pattern maintenance and tension management"; but even this function is restricted to young children and thus hardly provides the most comprehensive empirical test of Parsons' model.

A second problem which arises in applying Parsons' analytical categories to current institutions stems from the fact that institutions themselves are abstractions. Institutions never act or deliberate or have crises of conscience or hostile impulses. The assignment to them of functional responsibilities therefore leads to reification of the social order. The normative order becomes confounded

* Because of its long and illustrious past and its control over important social machinery—most children are born, learn their first words, and acquire their first age and sex identities within families—the family's actual power over individuals is much more extensive than its functional power in the social system. The family has relinquished its hold on the social structure but not on the individuals whom it helps mold for participation in that structure.

with the factual order. Unwittingly, the implication that the state or the economy or the family ought to do such and such leads to the assertion that they do such and such.⁶

Societies regulate themselves and institutions act only in a metaphorical sense. Even in small and relatively homogeneous societies *men* must assume responsibility for the varied activities and operations of the social system. Why is this necessary? Why, if the functional model of society is accurate, cannot men simply follow its functional imperatives? The answer lies in the characteristics of social norms which, though they are guides to action, must not be confused with the actions themselves. If men were able to act as the rules dictate, they would be living in an "ideal" (or impossibly routinized) society, one in which the rational or logical structure corresponded perfectly with the social structure. In the absence of such a correspondence, some individuals must assume responsibility for translating functional prescriptions into workable rules. The individuals who do this for the social system are, in our view, the strategic elites.⁷

Study of the social origins and roles of these elites will help to avoid both of the problems depicted above. By shifting the level of analysis from norms and institutions to elites, the problem of reification disappears. These elites can never act solely in accordance with the functional requirements of their status. The moral and personal imperfections of men, the temptations of their surroundings, and also the characteristics of the social structure in which men participate prevent them from doing so. It is a sociological truism, applicable to leaders no less than to ordinary men, that individuals assume not one but many social roles. Those who act on behalf of the polity or the economy must balance their roles as leaders of these sectors against other roles as citizens and consumers. They may be oriented consciously and conscientiously to the fulfillment of their functional responsibilities, but they will rarely be oriented solely to them. By focusing, as we intend to do, on certain elites as the locus of functional responsibilities, we bring the model closer to empirical reality. The growth in size and complexity of industrial societies, accompanied by the increasing significance of large-scale organizations, centralized administration, and specialized social leadership, has brought these elites to the fore. Their emergence and proliferation, in fact, testify to the

incapacity of older institutional arrangements to cope with the pace of social change.

Strategic elites thus provide an important missing link between society as blueprint and society as reality. The following pages attempt to show that these elites, as they are gradually taking shape in expanding industrial societies, may be roughly aligned with Parsons' major functional problems. This alignment leads to a typology and is in part a heuristic device which, we argue, aids effective analysis. The analysis itself—of the number and specific functions of diverse elite groups—requires rigorous empirical investigation, of which this study is at least a beginning.

Emergent types of elites

The elites associated with social leadership are becoming more numerous and specialized in complex societies—a trend confined not only to elites. Since the organization of the social system and the organization of strategic elites are to some extent interdependent, the proliferation and specialization of these elites may be linked to the structural-functional differentiation of the social system noted by Parsons.⁸ The proposed classification is therefore only one possible way of ordering elites according to their major functional roles in society.

The pursuit of national goals or goal attainment is, according to Parsons, concentrated in the political sector of society. In the United States, the elite that today appears to represent the public interest rather than more narrow segmental objectives consists of a relatively small group of national officials—the President of the United States, his Cabinet appointees, Senators, and Representatives—who are responsible for safeguarding the national interest and welfare. A dramatic example of the growing powers of this elite to speak for the whole nation was provided by the clash between the U. S. Steel Corporation and the President over a proposed price increase by the steel companies in the spring of 1962. The swiftness of the President's countermoves and the capitulation of the steel executives demonstrated that, for the moment at least, "the United States is bigger than United States Steel,"⁹ and that what is good for U. S. Steel is not always good for the country. This marks an important shift in the internal balance of power from a

time when the economic elite, in pursuing its own interests, appeared to represent the general interest. Today's economic objectives, important as they are, are only one among several desirable objectives, and the economic elite must compete with other elites for the allocation of national energies and resources. Economic achievements, once the main measure of social progress, must now be balanced against military strength, international prestige, mass education, and scientific breakthroughs. Accordingly, national anxieties and national pride in accomplishment focus on political rather than on economic elites. One of the first actions of Colonel John H. Glenn, Jr. upon his historic orbiting of the globe was to meet with the President and address a joint session of Congress, thereby symbolically linking his achievement to them and through them to the nation as a whole.

The achievement of economic growth, political stability, or scientific advance depends on the discovery and effective utilization of available means and facilities. Parsons refers to the application of these means as adaptation and assigns this function to the economic sector of society. No doubt the modern economies—and the economic elites—do contribute essential services to the realization of these goals, but they are not alone in so doing. At least three additional elites, we propose, are currently also concerned with adaptation: the military elite, consisting of the highest ranking officers, whose principal tasks involve the protection and defense of the society; the diplomatic elite, the ambassadors and ministers who supervise the external public relations of society; and the scientific elite, inventors of new techniques and controls over nature and men. The purpose of the adaptive subsystem, it should be kept in mind, is to discover and utilize generalized means to given ends; the production of wealth is only one of these means. Security, international good will, and new ideas and inventions are others.

Success in national undertaking depends as much on public understanding and support as on sound planning and organization. If men are to make personal sacrifices and to subordinate private interests to the attainment of common objectives, they must be morally aware of and committed to these larger purposes. Internal conflicts, grievances, and doubts must be resolved and clarified. Yet success in resolving such problems often implies social change, and social change, in turn, menaces traditional standards and uni-

versal beliefs. Leaders are looked to for moral guidance and reassurance. Such guidance and reassurance in the modern world is provided by the integrative elites—eminent clergymen, philosophers, educators, and “first families”—who endeavor to clarify and coordinate conduct and beliefs in the light of moral and ethical traditions. The expanded role of the military in national life, the social responsibilities of the giant corporations, and the growth of big government—all are a part of the new problems in a rapidly changing society which men face today.

Finally, there are the elites—leading artists and writers, popular entertainers, film stars, and outstanding athletes—whose activities relate to less tangible but no less fundamental human needs. They are less well-organized than many other elites, but they fulfill an important function for the social system—that of promoting social solidarity and morale (pattern maintenance and tension management in Parsons' terms). By their acts and in their persons, these elites stand for novelty, variety, and play; they provide legitimate fantasy outlets for unrealizable wishes and hopes, for grievances and torments, and for the anxieties and disappointments that life often brings. Their power lies in their ability to hold up to men a mirror of their dreams, of what they might have or still may become, thereby helping to meet their inexpressible or unacknowledged needs and secret desires. Leading actors, artists, composers, film stars, and even playboys on the grand scale, provide vicarious identities for their audiences and publics. Their work on the stage, the canvas, or the printed page portrays the dramas and tensions of real life, their imaginary solutions taking the place of those often unattainable in reality. Societies have always developed such mechanisms which simultaneously provide insight into the human situation and afford release from the pressure of collective forces on individual destinies.

External and internal elites

Parsons, it may be recalled, further classifies the four subsystems into two main types: those concentrating on external and those concentrating on internal system problems. The first, involving goal attainment and adaptation, deals with problems posed by intractable nature, other societies, or an unknown future. The

second, involving moral integration and social solidarity, deals with moods, manners, and states of mind. This dichotomy is also useful in describing strategic elites, with the political, economic, military, scientific, and diplomatic elites on one side of the ledger, and the moral, aesthetic, religious, status, and intellectual elites on the other. Despite the increasing structural-functional autonomy of all strategic elites, there does seem to be a greater formal and substantive similarity between elites concerned with external problems and those concerned with internal problems.

During long periods of recorded history, internal problems such as morality and human solidarity received inordinate stress. Mankind did little to extricate itself from its enslavement to hunger, disease, and premature death. Since the industrial revolution, however, external problems have been emphasized, to the neglect of morality and morale. Demoralization, isolation, and estrangement are the bane of modern man. The official or public neglect of these problems is indirectly reflected in the intense private preoccupation with them. The tragedy of human existence, the irony of failure, the search by individuals for a meaningful life—none of these can be assuaged by economic, political, or diplomatic triumphs. In the long run, of course, preoccupation with neither external or internal problems is sound. In the first case, the society may prosper while entire strata are morally abused and personally desperate. In the second, individuals may be adjusted to their misery but do little to eliminate it.

Before considering some important differences between these two classes of elites it is important to note that neither exhaust the activities of the sectors they command. They are essentially the axes of these sectors, ultimately responsible for the successes and failures associated with them. But each sector includes an enormous variety of individuals and groups. Every instance of advice, encouragement, or sympathy, no matter when or where it is expressed, contributes to morale (pattern maintenance). Every ingenious or spontaneous solution to a crisis contributes to adaptation. Every discussion involving moral choices, proper conduct, injustice, and human cruelty contributes to integration. And every instance of pleasure and happiness—fleeting as it may be—contributes to goal attainment. The strategic elites are distinguished by the fact that their roles put them in charge of and make them re-

sponsible for long-range decisions and moral choices. Their range is thus broader and more inclusive than that of other participants. They are strategic precisely because they are the foci for the realization of collective aims. Their actions, words, gestures, impressions, and prejudices carry more weight than those of other men because they personify the aims, aspirations, and attitudes of multitudes. They come to stand for their sectors and all of their manifold ramifications. They are social models symbolizing the prizes of social life.

Modes of organization

Elites oriented to internal and those oriented to external problems differ in their modes of organization; not all are organized to the same extent. The American business elite consists of individuals holding leading positions in the largest corporations; the artistic elite, of persons enjoying a certain reputation among specific sectors of the public. The size of the business elite, in contrast to that of the artistic elite, is more or less predetermined by the number of positions available and is thus bound to an institutional framework. This has not always been the case, however. In ancient Egypt where sculptors and architects were technical experts, the artistic elite was more formally organized, resembling modern business elites. In ancient Rome the business elite exhibited many of the characteristics—spontaneity, individualism, and diffuseness—that we associate with the artistic elites of today.

One reason for this difference stems from the means used by elites to achieve their ends. Highly organized strategic elites depend for their success on the coordinated efforts of a variety of individuals and groups. The executives of Standard Oil could not carry out their functions without the cooperation of thousands of workers, specialized by skill and rank. Writers, painters, intellectuals, or actors, however, need only to organize themselves and apportion their time and efforts to produce books, plays, paintings, and performances. They need others to appreciate the results of their efforts—and to support them—but not to collaborate in realizing them.

In view of the tendency toward greater formal organization in many spheres, today's diffuse elites may be more organized tomor-

row. This will depend in part on the supply of potential candidates available and on the demand for their products. In ancient Egypt, the demand for sculptors, architects, and painters during certain periods exceeded the supply and they were subject to compulsory recruitment. Similarly, science was once the province of the lone individual working for his own satisfaction. Today the great demand for scientific talent leads to formalized recruitment procedures.

The degree of formal organization of strategic elites, however, must not be confused with their specialization, another matter altogether. Strategic elites are formally organized when their spheres of activity have been systematically coordinated and structured, that is, bureaucratized. But regardless of the degree of bureaucratization, they are specialized in the sense that their activities do not, in principle, overlap. Strategic elites are more specialized today than ever before and more of them are also bureaucratically organized, but not all specialized elites are bureaucratized. Specialization is related to the division of labor; bureaucratization is related to the size, scope, and purpose of an undertaking. If an increase in the division of labor in society is accompanied by an increase in the available labor supply, bureaucratization then seems inevitable. In this connection it is interesting to note that of the two eminent social theorists, Durkheim and Weber, one chose the division of labor, the other, bureaucratization, as the leading social trend in advanced industrial societies.

The greater formal organization of the elites oriented to external problems suggests, as a further hypothesis, that these elites will in general be more despotic than the diffuse and less organized internal elites. This stems from their aforementioned dependence on the wills, motivations, and cooperation of many others, and it may explain why politicians or priests*—historically the elites of goal

* An elite that has belonged variously to the internal and the external strategic elites is that of the priesthood. When priests were *the* elite of goal attainment, they were both highly organized and despotic—whether one looks to ancient Mesopotamia or to eleventh-century Italy. But when, as now, they are chiefly associated with moral integration, they are neither as highly organized nor as despotic. The thousands of churches and the many faiths coexisting side by side was as unthinkable in the Middle Ages as diverse political systems coexisting in the same state would be today. Elites, in short, can and do shift their functional roles from one aspect of the system to another. The artistic elites were not always a part of the strategic elites,

attainment—have often been despotic. This hypothesis may also explain why those who organize the process of industrialization—the upper bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, the Soviet leaders, or the emergent elites of Africa and Asia—frequently resort to despotic practices. Their despotism may stem from the fact that while their success is dependent on the efforts of many others in addition to themselves, the responsibility for failure rests solely on their shoulders.¹⁰

Instrumental and expressive aspects of elite roles

Strategic elites also differ in their public images and styles, which may be traced back, in part, to their classification along the external-internal axis. The elites primarily involved with goal attainment and adaptation tend to be judged on the basis of efficiency standards—how effectively and swiftly they get things done. The elites identified with moral integration and social solidarity tend to be judged according to their symbolic roles—what kind of impression they make on the public. All elites, of course, must try to satisfy both instrumental and symbolic demands. Generals may look the part splendidly, but are dismissed if they lose many battles; as, too, with corporation executives—their gray flannel suits and jutting jaws count for nothing if their firms consistently show little profit.¹¹ Artists, moral leaders, and members of high society, win half their battle by merely making the right impression. A mediocre actor often obtains a “heavy” role simply because he “looks like” a villain; just as appearing to be morally impeccable is often sufficient for those who would exert moral influence.

All strategic elites should thus create appropriate corporate images but such images are not equally crucial for all.

Strategic elites are both agents and symbols, and their public actions involve both instrumental and expressive features. In industrial societies, the elites primarily concerned with adaptive and goal attainment problems tend to be judged by what they accom-

certainly not when they were artisans for hire, as in some of the ancient civilizations. And it is not impossible that one day they may contribute to the formulation of national goals and policies in the light of aesthetic standards—and thus become involved with goal attainment. “Esthetics,” wrote Maxim Gorky, “will be the ethics of the future.”

plish, while those primarily concerned with integration and social solidarity tend to be judged by what they *represent*. The first type of elite is constrained to produce such tangible results as stability, victory, or a higher standard of living; the role requirements of the second type are directed toward intangibles—moods and states of mind, pleasure, the fear of death, and the will to live.¹² The differences in their functional responsibilities as well as their classification along the instrumental-expressive axis account in large part for different patterns of recruitment—a matter to be developed in a later chapter.*

Two main patterns of organization of social leadership may be historically identified: reliance on a single agent to assume responsibility for all four social system functions; and reliance on several agents, each of which specializes in one or more system functions. An example of the first is the chief in a small and comparatively homogeneous society who is at once high priest, king, leading warrior, and healer or saviour. When the society grows and specialization develops, the role of the chief is likely to be replaced by several specialized roles. The priest-healer, a role combining integration and pattern maintenance, is familiar in history rivaled only by the role of the king-warrior, a fusion of goal attainment and adaptation. With further growth in size, social leadership devolves upon an entire stratum such as a hereditary aristocracy, whose structural simplicity belies its functional complexity. As politicians and legislators, its members are identified with goal attainment; as landowners, soldiers, and scholars, with adaptation; and as noblemen and conspicuous consumers, with integration and pattern maintenance.

Each method has its advantages. The first clearly gains in unity what it may lose in efficiency, for a single agent is apt to be more unified in his acts than a group and far more unified than a number of groups cooperating with one another. But human limitations

* One problem requiring further attention and research is the extent to which each subsystem of society is in turn a complete social system unto itself. The economic elite, for example, performs the adaptive function for the society at large, but within the economy, this elite is identified with goal definition and goal attainment. Members of this elite, in short, wear two hats simultaneously, a possible source of confusion for them as well as for the public. In their larger social system roles, they are but one among several elites, whereas as leaders of the economic sector they are supreme within that sector.

being what they are, it is unusual, if not impossible, for a single agent to be equal to the demands of all four functional spheres.

The second method gains in efficiency what it loses in potential unity and cohesion. If a different group is assigned to a different functional sphere, each may become highly expert in its sphere, but the danger of rivalries, antagonisms, and misunderstandings among competing groups multiplies. One need only note the wars between monarchs and nobility, between popes and emperors, and the more recent conflict between scientists and priests. Rivalries among elites for supremacy may thus be expected to increase in highly differentiated societies with their differentiated elites. These elites, moreover, are both "individually necessary and jointly sufficient for survival."¹³ They will become increasingly divergent in their patterns of recruitment, manner of reward, and public style. Signs of this development are evident not only in the United States but also, as we shall see in the next chapter, in Germany, Great Britain, and in the developing countries of Africa and Asia.

Notes

1. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (1952), esp. Chap. v; "A Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organizations," in Talcott Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies* (1960), pp. 16-58. Parsons generally continues to discuss social systems in terms of impersonal social mechanisms, such as socialization, institutional insulation, and role segmentation. Increasingly, however, he is coming to stress power, leadership, and ruling groups—although here he largely confines himself to the political sector. "The most general features of the institutionalization of power or political function in social systems," he writes, "is differential responsibility or leadership." See "Authority, Legitimation, and Political Action," in Talcott Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, *op. cit.*, p. 183. The economy, however, continues to be discussed very much as a mechanical system with its regulatory devices and processes such as "contract," input-output, and facilities and rewards. See, Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society* (1956), *passim*.

2. One of the best attempts, by Sorokin, to systematize the study of elites floundered because Sorokin failed to link his various elite groups to the ongoing processes of the social system and thus left their influence sociologically unaccounted for. Sorokin, like Pareto before him, defined the elite as those individuals occupying high rank in "influential social groups—the state, church, class, language, and . . . other groups surveyed, including the professional groups. . . ." Sorokin, however, defines these elites as influential without locating the sociological sources of their influence. Why, for example, did he single out the state and the church but not the sphere of recreation? Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Society, Culture and Personality* (1947), p. 234.
3. The most explicit discussion of functional problems of social systems occurs in the following: Talcott Parsons, Robert F. Bales, and Edward A. Shils, *Working Papers in the Theory of Action* (1953), Chap. v, esp. pp. 172-90, 254-69; Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society* (1956), Chap. ii, esp. pp. 46-85; Talcott Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies* (1960), esp. the following essays: "A Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organizations," esp. pp. 44-7; "Some Principal Characteristics of Industrial Societies," pp. 132-68; and "Authority, Legitimation, and Political Action," pp. 170-99. See also Talcott Parsons, "An Approach to Psychological Theory in Terms of the Theory of Action," in Sigmund Koch (ed.), *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, III (1959), 612-711.
4. Talcott Parsons, "A Sociological Approach to the Theory of Organizations," *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, op. cit., p. 46.
5. "There was a time," MacIver writes, "when the family seemed to comprehend the whole of life, but if so, it was not the family as we know it, but rather a family community which on the ostensible basis of kinship included a whole group of social interests." Robert M. MacIver, *The Modern State* (1926), p. 7. See also MacIver's more comprehensive discussion of the family in Robert M. MacIver, *Society* (1937), Chap. xi, pp. 196-236.
6. This is germane to Gouldner's observation: "In Parsons' terms organizations are social systems which are primarily oriented to the attainment of a specific goal. But an organization as such cannot be said to be oriented toward a goal, except in a merely metaphorical sense, unless it is assumed that its parts possess a much lower degree of functional autonomy than can in fact be observed. The statement that an organization is oriented toward certain goals often means no more than that these are the goals of its top administrators, or that they represent its social function, which is another matter altogether." Alvin W. Gouldner, "Organizational Analysis," in Robert K. Merton, Leonard Broom, and Leonard S. Cottrell, Jr. (eds.), *Sociology Today* (1959), p. 420.
7. For an application of Parsons' categories to a special type of human community, see Amitai Etzioni, "Functional Differentiation of Elites in the Kibbutz," *American Journal of Sociology* (March 1959), pp. 476-87.
8. An important question about any society, according to Parsons, is the extent of its structural differentiation or fusion "with respect to the four functional problems." "Our own society," he goes on to say, "is remarkable for the degree to which functional subsystems are structurally differentiated from each other." Talcott Parsons, "An Approach to

Psychological Theory in Terms of the Theory of Action," in Sigmund Koch (ed.), *Psychology: A Study of a Science, op. cit.*, pp. 612-711.

9. James Reston, "Kennedy Can Beat 'Em but Can He Convince 'Em?," *The New York Times*, April 15, 1962.
10. Drucker's observations are pertinent here: "We speak of 'organization'—the formal structure of the enterprise. But what we mean is the organization of managers and of their functions; neither brick and mortar nor rank-and-file workers have any place in the organization structure. We speak of 'leadership' and of the 'spirit' of a company. But leadership is given by managers and effective primarily within management; and the spirit is made by the spirit within the management group. We talk of 'objectives' for the company, and of its performance. But the objectives are goals for management people; the performance is management performance. And if an enterprise fails to perform, we rightly hire not different workers but a new president." Peter F. Drucker, "The Tasks of Management," in W. Lloyd Warner and Norman H. Martin (eds.), *Industrial Man* (1959), p. 196.
11. The distinction between instrumental and expressive aspects of elite roles is reminiscent of Max Weber's discussion of the differences between patrimonial rule with institutionalized charisma, and feudalism with personal charisma. Loyalty to office, specialized training, and elaborate formal organization are characteristic of patrimonial rule, whereas spontaneity, individualism, and admiration for natural gifts are characteristic of the feudal code. See Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber, An Intellectual Portrait* (1960), pp. 360-8.
12. Robert Bierstedt's distinction between leaders and authorities, and authorities and experts, is applicable here. The formally organized elites consist largely of "authorities" and of "experts," whereas informally organized cultural and intellectual elites consist of "leaders." Authorities command, experts impress, but leaders influence, convince, and persuade. The basis of authority is formal office-holding, that of expertise, special skills, and that of leadership, force of personality. See Robert Bierstedt, "The Problem of Authority," in Morroe Berger, Theodore Abel, and Charles H. Page (eds.), *Freedom and Control in Modern Society* (1954), pp. 67-82.
13. For a discussion of this point, see Carl Hempel, "The Logic of Functional Analysis," in Llewellyn Gross (ed.), *Symposium on Sociological Theory* (1959), pp. 293-4.