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SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES 1

Social Stratification

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DEFERENCE¹

EDWARD SHILS

DEFERENCE

Into every action of one human being towards another there enters an element of appreciation or derogation of the 'partner' towards whom the action is directed. It enters in varying degrees; some actions contain very little of it, some consist almost entirely of appreciation or derogation, in most actions the appreciative or derogatory elements are mingled with others, such as commanding, coercing, cooperating, purchasing, loving, etc.

Appreciation and derogation are responses to properties of the 'partner', of the role which he is performing, of the categories into which he is classified or the relationships in which he stands to third persons or categories of persons—against the background of the actor's own image of himself with respect to these properties. This element of appreciation or derogation is different from those responses to the past or anticipated actions of the 'partner' which are commands, acts of obedience, the provision of goods or services, the imposition of injuries such as the withholding or withdrawal of goods and services, and acts of love or hatred.

These acts of appreciation or derogation I shall designate as *deference*. The term *deference* shall refer both to positive or high deference and to negative or low deference or derogation. Ordinarily, when I say that one person defers to another, I shall mean that he is acknowledging that person's worth or dignity but when I speak of a person's 'deference-position', that might refer either to a high or low deference-position. What I call deference here is sometimes called 'status' by other writers. There is nothing wrong with that designation, except that it has become associated with a conception of the phenomenon which I wish to modify. The term 'deference', with its clear intimation of a person who defers,

¹This paper is a further exploration of the theme of my earlier papers 'Charisma, order and status', *American Sociological Review*, vol. 30 (April 1965), pp. 199-213; 'Centre and periphery', in *The Logic of Personal Knowledge: Essays in Honour of Michael Polanyi* (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1961), pp. 117-30; 'The concentration and dispersion of charisma', *World Politics*, vol. XI, 1, pp. 1-19; and 'Metropolis and province in the intellectual community' in N. V. Savani and V. M. Dandekar (eds.), *Changing India: Essays in Honour of Professor D. R. Cadgil* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), pp. 275-94.

brings out the aspect which has in my view not been made sufficiently explicit in work on this subject in recent years.

Deference is closely related to such phenomena as prestige, honour and respect (and obscurity and shame, dishonour and disrespect), fame (and infamy), glory (and ignominy), dignity (and indignity).

Acts of deference are performed in face-to-face relationships and in the relationship of actors who have no direct interactive relationship with each other but who are members of the same society. (It can exist too in the relationships of individual actors or collectivities in different societies, although to the extent that this occurs the societies in question cease to be totally separate societies.)

The granting of deference entails an attribution of superiority (or inferiority) but it is not the same as an attribution of goodness or wickedness. It does however often have such overtones; occasionally there is a suggestion that the superiority requires goodness for its completeness. It is an attribution of merit (or of defect); it is an assessment which attributes worthiness (or unworthiness) which is quite distinct from an attribution of moral qualities. What this worthiness consists in is an obscure matter.

To be the recipient of deference from another actor, whether in some tangible or clearly perceivable and discrete form of action from other persons, or to possess it in an autonomous symbolic form which is regarded as an 'objectification of deference' quite apart from the deferential actions of concrete actors, or to possess it by believing oneself to be entitled to it through the possession of the qualities which are conventionally accepted as the grounds on which deference is elicited or granted, is a widespread desire of human beings. It might even be said that the desire to be 'worthy' is a 'need' of human beings in the way in which affection, erotic gratification and the satisfaction of organic needs such as nutriment and bodily warmth are 'needs'.

To grant or accord deference is also a 'need' of human beings aroused or generated by the process of interaction and by the fact of living in a society which goes beyond the limited radius of face-to-face interaction. Just as they wish to be worthy and to have that worth acknowledged by the deference of other persons, so they also often have a need to live in a social world implanted with worthiness, to acknowledge the embodiments of that worth and to derogate those who are unworthy.

Deference of the sort which I discuss in this paper is a way of expressing an assessment of the self and of others with respect to 'macro-social' properties. By macro-social properties, I refer to those characteristics which describe the role or position of persons in the larger (usually national) society in which they live. The act of symbolization of deference is an attribution of deference-position or status in the total

society. In acts of deference performed within face-to-face relationships or within limited corporate groups, the deference is often but not always accorded primarily with respect to status in the larger society. The deference accorded to a father as head of a family is not deference in my sense of the word when it does not make reference to the father's position in the society outside the family. The deference awarded to a superior or colleague within a corporate body is a mixture of deference with respect to intra-corporate status and to 'macro-social' status. The deference accorded to a woman or to women as a category or to a man or to men as a category is at the margin of macro-social deference. The deference accorded to age or youth is similarly marginal. Both age and sex are significant factors in the determination of the 'life chances' of a person and therewith of the likelihood that that person will receive deference. They are moreover themselves the objects of deferential judgments. Yet the deference granted to age or to sex seems to be of a different order from that deference which is an appreciation of worthiness or a derogation of unworthiness.

THE BASES OF DEFERENCE

The disposition to defer and the performance of acts of deference are evoked by the perception, in the person or classes of persons perceived, of certain characteristics or properties of their roles or actions. These characteristics or properties I shall call deference-entitling properties or entitlements. While they do not by themselves and automatically arouse judgments of deference, they must be seen or believed to exist for deference to be granted. Deference-entitlements include: occupational role and accomplishment, wealth (including type of wealth), income and the mode of its acquisition, style of life, level of educational attainment, political or corporate power, proximity to persons or roles exercising political or corporate power, kinship connections, ethnicity, performance on behalf of the community or society in relation to external communities or societies, and the possession of 'objective acknowledgments' of deference such as titles or ranks.

It is on the basis of the perception of these entitlements that individuals and classes or more or less anonymous individuals who are believed to possess some constellation of these entitlements are granted deference; it is on the basis of the possession of these properties that they grant deference to themselves and claim it from others. It is on the basis of simultaneous assessments of their own and of others' deference-entitlements that they regulate their conduct towards others and anticipate the deferential (or derogatory) responses of others.

Why should these properties be singled out as pertinent to deference?

What is it about them which renders them deference-relevant? Why are they and not kindness, amiability, humour, manliness, femininity, and other temperamental qualities which are so much appreciated in life, regarded as deference-relevant?

The cognitive maps which human beings form of their world include a map of their society. This map locates the primary or corporate groups of which they are active members and the larger society which includes these groups, but with which they have little active contact. The map which delineates this society entails a sense of membership in that society and a sense of the vital character of that membership. Even though the individual revolts against that society, he cannot completely free himself from his sense of membership in it. The society is not just an ecological fact or an environment; it is thought to possess a vitality which is inherent in it and membership in it confers a certain vitality on those who belong to it. It is a significant cosmos from which members derive some of their significance to themselves and to others. This significance is a charismatic significance; i.e. it signifies the presence and operation of what is thought to be of ultimate and determinative significance.

If we examine each of the deference-relevant properties with reference to this charismatic content, i.e. with reference to the extent to which it tends to have charisma attributed to it, we will see that each of these properties obtains its significance as an entitlement to deference primarily on these grounds.

Occupational role is ordinarily thought of as one of the most significant entitlements to deference. The most esteemed occupations in societies, for which there are survey or impressionistic data, are those which are in their internal structure and in their functions closest to the centres. The centres of society are those positions which exercise earthly power and which mediate man's relationship to the order of existence—spiritual forces, cosmic powers, values and norms—which legitimates or withholds legitimacy from the earthly powers or which dominates earthly existence. The highest 'authorities' in society—governors, judges, prime ministers and presidents and fundamental scientists—are those whose roles enable them to control society or to penetrate into the ultimate laws and forces which are thought to control the world and human life. Occupational roles are ranked in a sequence which appears approximately to correspond with the extent to which each role possesses these properties. The charismatic content of a given occupational role will vary with the centrality of the corporate body or sector in which it is carried on. The most authoritative role in a peripheral corporate body will carry less charisma than the same type of role in a more centrally located corporate body. The roles which exercise no

authority and which are thought to have a minimum of contact with transcendent powers call forth least deference.

Of course, occupational roles and their incumbents are also deferred to on account of certain highly correlated deference-entitling properties such as the income which the practice of the occupation provides, the educational level of its practitioners, the ethnic qualities of its incumbents, etc. Conversely, occupational roles which are ill-remunerated and the incumbents of which have little education and are of derogatory ethnic stocks receive little deference on the grounds of these traits as well as on the grounds of the nature and functions of the occupational role itself. Nonetheless, occupational role is an independent entitlement to deference.

Beyond occupational role, accomplishment within the role is a deference-entitlement both micro- and macro-socially. To be not only a judge but an outstanding judge, to be not only a scientist but an outstanding scientist constitutes a further deference-entitlement. It does this not only because outstanding accomplishment renders its performer more 'visible' and therewith more likely to be the recipient of deference but much more because accomplishment is the realization of the potentiality of creative action. Creativity is a feature of centrality; creative action makes the creator part of the centre.

Wealth is deferred to—great wealth is greatly deferred to, and poverty is derogated—because it is powerful. But without association with charismatic occupation or with political power, wealth is not as much deferred to as when it enjoys those associations. Wealth which is manifested only by purchasing power is not as esteemed as wealth which embodies its power in the ownership and management of landed estates or in the directorship of great industrial corporations, employing many thousands of persons. Wealth is, in one important aspect, purchasing power and as such it is like income; it is also the power to employ and the power to dismiss from employment. These powers over physiological existence and access to dignity are tremendous but they are not peculiar to wealth and are quite compatible with the propertylessness of those who exercise these powers. Wealth also calls forth deference when it is associated with a certain style of life, for which it is indeed a condition.¹ Wealth is therefore both a derivative and a conditional entitlement to deference. It is derivative from occupation, from the exercise of power, over persons and over the soil; it is conditional to a 'style of life'. It is

¹ Wealth alone calls forth a qualified deference. Until the wealthy acquire an appropriate style of life and associations, they do not gain 'acceptance' by those whom they equal or exceed in wealth and who already have a high deference position. The contempt shown towards the *nouveau riche* is well known and it often takes a generation for wealth to acquire the appropriate education, religion, occupation and style of life which are necessary for assimilation into a higher deference-stratum.

also conditional to income;¹ it itself and alone is significant primarily as a potentiality of power. To gain the deference which sociologists often assert is the reward of wealth it must find completion in a wider complex of properties such as the actual exercise of power through an authoritative occupational role, through a 'validating' style of life, etc.

Income too is regarded as an entitlement to deference as a manifestation of power, but it is a limited and segmental power which is exercised in the specific buyer-seller relationship in the purchase of goods and services. Purchasing power, confined as it is to very specific exchange relationships, is not a very weighty entitlement to deference. Income alone possesses only potential deference-entitlement.² Nonetheless, a high income, like a large fortune, is regarded as a valid entitlement to deference when it is used to acquire what it can most legitimately be used for, namely the style of life to which it corresponds, or to acquire those other purchasable entitlements like educational opportunity, and associational membership. Income is therefore a *conditional* deference-entitlement which acquires deference primarily when manifested in another category. In itself it possesses as little charisma as an immediate specific potential power confers.

A style of life is a deference-entitlement because it is a pattern of conduct which is a voluntary participation in an order of values. A style of life is value-permeated; it demonstrates connection with a stratum of being in which true value resides. The conventional and long-standing deference given to the 'leisure classes' was not given because idleness was a virtue or because work or occupation was a burden but because leisure permitted the cultivation and practice of a value-infused pattern of life. Like an authoritative occupation, it was a value-generating and value-infused existence. More than authoritative occupations, it belongs, despite its material embodiment, to the realm of

¹ Cf. the anomaly experienced in the contemplation of very wealthy persons who do not use their wealth in the practice of an appropriate style of life, who exercise no power through its use (employing no one, exercising no control over the agricultural or industrial properties in which it is invested), and who practise no occupation. All they have is the potentiality which we know from the observation of other cases wealth possesses. They enjoy such deference as they receive—apart from what they might receive by virtue of their family name—because of the potentiality rather than the actuality of their exercise of power. Potentiality is less instigative of deference than actuality. As a result, they are the objects of an ambivalent judgment, deference granted for the potentiality of power which wealth confers, deference withheld for their failing to complete the potentiality of wealth by manifesting it in the fuller pattern which is incumbent on anyone who is high in any single distribution.

² Although all resources in particular distributive categories contains the potentiality of conversion into a position in another distributive category, they vary in their degree of specificity. Income can be used to purchase objects at relatively fixed rates, e.g. household furnishings, books, education, etc.; education is not equally specific in the response which it is thought to be entitled to call forth. Neither is political authority. In general we can say that the more diffuse a potentiality, the greater is its entitlement to deference.

culture. It included eating ('commensality') 'in style', living in the midst of an appropriate *décor*, in an appropriate quarter ('a good address'), surrounded by servants who provide not just labour power but a ritual environment.¹ In its highest form, 'style of life' was found in courts and palaces, in great country houses and grand bourgeois establishments. Style of life requires income as a condition but it is an entitlement to deference not as a direct function of wealth and income or simply as an indicator of wealth and income. It is facilitated by wealth and income but it enhances them and transfigures them. It does so because it partakes of a charismatic quality which they contain only in the potentiality but not in their sheer and specific actuality.

The level of educational attainment possesses deference-entitling properties partly because it is often conditional to entry into authoritative, creative and remunerative occupational roles but even more because it is an assimilation into an ideal realm. It is an assimilation into a pattern of values and beliefs which are part of the centre of existence. The 'possessor' of a large amount of education is often an incumbent of an authoritative occupation and as an actual or potential incumbent of such an occupation he receives deference; he also has the likelihood of a higher than average income and an appropriate style of life and as such he receives deference also.² The educated person is one who has received the culture of beliefs and appreciations which are central in the society. These beliefs may be scientific beliefs about the way in which the world works, they may be beliefs about the 'essential' nature of the society, its history, its religion, its cultural traditions and objectivations. Education is also the acquisition of skills which prepare for participation in the centre of the society through the exercise of authority, technological performance, the discovery and transmission of vital truths about the universe, man and society, in short for *creating* and *ordering*. Education is an autonomous, non-derivative entitlement to deference because it is integral to and testifies to its possessor's participation in the charismatic realm.

The exercise of power whether in an occupation or through the employment of purchasing power is determinative of the life chances of the persons over whom it is exercised; therewith it shares in the charisma which is inherent in the control of life. It is difficult to separate power from occupational role because much or even most power is exercised in

¹ Of course, 'style of life' can be shrivelled to hedonistic self-indulgence, 'conspicuous consumption' or sheer illness, all of which are capable of gaining ascendancy within the pattern.

² The deference-entitlement of education is also affected by the institutions and countries in which it is acquired. Some schools and universities and university systems are thought to be more central than others. Those educated in them acquire more of a charismatically infused culture.

occupational roles, in corporate bodies, particularly if we include inherited, entrepreneurially initiated, appointed and elected incumbency in roles in the state, church, armies, economic organizations, universities, etc. Authority exercised through occupational roles becomes more diffuse the higher its position within any corporate hierarchy, whether the hierarchy be religious, political, military or whatever. Its diffuseness, which is another facet of its creating and ordering responsibility and capacity, is crucial to its deference-entitlement.

There is undoubtedly some power which is not occupational in the locus of its exercise. It might be worth while, therefore, to employ a separate category for power as a deference-entitlement for those persons whose charismatic ascendancy is not a function of an occupational role.¹

Where everyone in a society or at least all adults stand in at least one important respect in equal relationship to the exercise of authority in government by virtue of citizenship, deference is dispersed. The sharing of power and the attendant equalization of deference through citizenship does not abolish the inequality of power and thus the inequality of deference associated with the unequal distribution of authoritative occupational roles. It does, however, offset it and in some situations to a very considerable extent.

Relative proximity to persons in powerful roles is another deference-entitlement. The proximity may be a fiduciary relationship between the incumbent of a very authoritative role and his 'personal staff'; it may be a close personal relationship of friendship or affection; it may be little more than the acquaintanceship of frequent encounter; it may be the primordial tie of kinship. Whatever the content of the relationship, the important thing is that the magnitude of its entitlement to deference for a given person is assessed (a) by the deference-position of the person to whom he stands in proximity and (b) the degree of proximity. To be the son or cousin or the intimate friend of a person of no significant status adds no status to those in that degree of proximity; indeed it makes for the insignificant status of those who stand in such proximity. Being a close friend or a frequently met colleague of a person of a high deference-position confers more deference than would a slighter degree of friendship or a less intense collegial intercourse. The deference-position of the person at the end of the chain is determined by the properties already

¹ Just as within occupations, there are inter-individual differences in creativity or productivity, so it is perfectly conceivable that this creativity can manifest itself avocationally and outside the corporate bodies within which such activities are ordinarily carried on. There are religious prophets who arise out of the laity, revolutionary politicians who are not incorporated into the established political order, intimates of rulers who have no formal political occupation and whose own occupations are not constitutively endowed with power. All of these are exercisers of power in a way which is independent of their occupational roles. (Of course, the definition of occupation in this way has the danger of turning occupational role into a residual category.)

referred to; the relationship is the channel through which a fundamentally charismatic quality is transmitted. Just as the member of a corporate body participates in the charisma of his organization, whether it be a university, a church or a government, so membership in a personal relationship or in a primordial collectivity (e.g. family) is constituted by or results from a diffusion of the charisma of the central person or role of the collectivity. Those who stem from 'famous' families, those who keep the company of important persons, who move in 'important' circles, share in the charismatic quality of those whose charisma gives fame to families and importance to circles. The three modes of linkage—primordial, personal and collegial—are all different from each other and yet each has been regarded as a legitimate channel through which charisma and, consequently, the entitlement to deference can be shared.

Ethnicity is very much like the kinship tie—they are both primordial, being constituted by the significance attributed to a presumed genetic connection and the primordial unity arising therefrom. Unlike kinship connection as an entitlement to deference, ethnicity does not refer to a genetic link with a particular important person or persons. It is a link with a collectivity in which a vital, charismatic quality is diffused. It is thought to represent the possession of some quality inherent in the ethnic aggregate and shared by all its members. Indeed the possession of that 'essential' quality as manifested in certain external features such as colour, hair form, physiognomy and physique constitutes membership in the aggregate. In societies which are ethnically homogeneous, the ethnic entitlement is neutral; in societies which are ethnically plural, the ethnic entitlement can only be neutralized by an overriding civility or sense of citizenship or by the disaggregation of the society to the point where it almost ceases to be a society.

Areal provenience whether it be rural or urban, regional or local, provincial or metropolitan can also be a deference-entitlement in a variety of ways. In some respects, it can be derivative from occupational roles and the exercise of authority insofar as particular occupational roles and the exercise of authority tend to be more concentrated—although not necessarily in the same locations—to a greater extent in some areas than in others. It might also be derivative from the greater proximity to authority and eminence which is more likely in some areas than in others. But the soil and the city might be independent entitlements, one gaining ascendancy over the other in accordance with prevailing beliefs concerning the sanctity of the soil or the charisma of urban existence.

Religious adherence or affiliation is similar to ethnicity in that it is a deference-entitlement referring to membership in a collectivity, but in this case the collectivity is constituted by the sharing of beliefs about

sacred things and therewith by the sharing of the charisma of the church or sect. Whereas practically all societies are differentiated in occupational roles and in income and power or authority and are bound to be so by their nature as societies, ethnic and religious heterogeneity is not inevitable.

Indulgence conferred on the community or on society by protecting it from injury or by enhancing its position—power, wealth, deference—among communities or societies is regarded as an entitlement to deference for those who confer such indulgence. Successful military men, politicians and statesmen, diplomats, athletes in international competitions, literary men and artists are deferred to within their own societies in proportion to their external deference or their enhancement of the power of their own society *vis-à-vis* other societies. The enhancement of the deference-position and power of the society enhances the deference-position of its members by virtue of their membership in it. It is the same here as in the case of proximity to importance or membership in primordial collectivities. There is a sense of some shared essential quality with those who 'represent' the society.¹

A title or emblem conferred by the major deference-bearing institutions of the society is an entitlement to deference—such are the criteria by which deference is allocated in societies. They are not all of equal importance in the formation of deference judgments nor do their relative weights remain constant through time or among societies. Ethnicity, area, religion might vary considerably in their significance in accordance with the strength of the sense of civility and the extent and intensity of religious belief. Education might become more important when a larger proportion of the population seeks education and possesses different amounts and kinds of education. The more equal the distribution of any given deference-entitlement, the less weight it has in differentiating the deference-positions of the members of a society. This does not mean that it loses its significance in the determination of the allocation of deference, only that it ceases to differentiate the worth of individuals. In fact, while ceasing to differentiate, it might at the same time raise the deference-position of most individuals throughout the society. But there is also a possibility that a particular criterion might become irrelevant, or at least diminish in relevance, to deference, losing its influence on the level of deference as it ceases to discriminate among individuals, groups and strata.²

¹ There is a deference-stratification among societies. It includes the deference-stratification of whole societies and an international deference-stratification system of individuals which is however extremely fragmentary.

² If we can imagine a society, the technology of which has become so automated that a large part of the gainfully employed population ceases to be differentiated by occupation, we are confronted by a situation in which occupations, at least for a large part of the population,

DEFERENCE BEHAVIOUR

The phenomena of the stratification system are generally thought of as so massive in their impact on the rest of society that it is only natural that they too should be conceived of as having a substantial existence. Indeed they are spoken of as if they possessed a continuous, almost physical, tangibility which enables them to be apprehended by relatively gross methods of observation. In fact, many of these properties are very discontinuous or intermittent in their performance. When they are not actual, they fall into a condition of 'latency'. The different entitlements vary in the continuity and substantiality of their performance or manifestation. And what is true of entitlements to deference applies even more to deference behaviour itself.

First of all, however, before considering deference behaviour as such, I should like to consider the substantiality and continuity of the entitlements.

Occupational roles are, for example, performed for from one- to two-thirds of the waking life of the human being so employed for most of the days of each week for most of the weeks of the year over a period of forty to fifty or more years, through youth, adulthood and old age. A wealthy person usually has his wealth in the form of real property, chattels or convertible paper, available to him whenever he wishes to call upon it and as long as he owns it. The receipt and expenditure of income is a less continuous property, not only because the amount of income received fluctuates or varies over the course of a decade or a lifetime but also because once expended it ceases to be available, and because when not being used it is not visible. Only the results of expended income are visible in the material or tangible components of a style of life. Income is *recurrent* and it can be regularly recurrent as a disposable sum but not *continuously* and it is not always *substantially* manifested.

The style of life of a person or a family is a pattern heterogeneous in its composition and pervasive in apparel, speech, domestic arrangements, physical, social and cultural. Its material apparatus is grossly observable. Like occupational role, among the deference entitlements, it is performed, enacted or lived in a larger proportion of waking time (and even sleeping time) than the other deference entitlements. Style of life is, with occupational role, the most substantial and continuous of the various deference-entitlements. It is, with occupation, the most visible.

have lost their capacity to confer different deference-positions in their practitioners. This does not mean that the entire gainfully employed population has become occupationally homogeneous, but for that section which has become homogeneous occupation will count for no more than race in an ethnically almost homogeneous society.

Level and type of educational attainment is a different kind of thing. It is like kinship in the sense that it is membership in a category which entails no present action. (Indeed kinship entails no action on the part of the actor in question. It is a *past* biological connection, a *present* genetic composition and classification by self and other.) Level of educational attainment insofar as it is a past qualification for present incumbency in a role has ceased to exist except as a marker of a past accomplishment, like a medal awarded for heroism in a long past battle. Where it is interpreted as an approximate indication of present level of culture, it refers to very discontinuously performed actions. Insofar as it refers to the number of years in which studies were carried on, to the subjects studied and certifications which attest to amounts, etc., it refers to past events which provide a basis for present classification by self and other. Thus, while to an external analyst the level of educational attainment is a stable property of a person, it is not continuously operative in that person's action or interaction with others. It is a fluctuating and intermittent quality, sometimes of high salience, sometimes latent. It need not be so in all societies, in all strata or in all individuals. In societies or strata which are highly 'education-conscious', it will be more continuously salient as a categorial property than in those which are less 'education-conscious'. Persons of a given level of educational attainment will manifest it more substantially in their speech, thought and conduct.

Power, which is so closely and often associated with the performance of occupational role, resembles it in this respect too, since it is often exercised or performed for significantly continuous periods, with sufficiently regular recurrence. (It is also like occupational role in the sense that it places its practitioner in a category which calls forth responses from self and other in situations outside the occupational or power-exercising role.)

The foregoing observations were intended to render a little more explicit than is usually done the temporal discontinuity of entitlements, their intermittence and periodicity of performance and visibility. I have done this because these characteristics of entitlement affect their probability of being perceived and therewith of calling forth deference. I have also done it because I wish to call attention to what appear to me to be important, even if not readily evident, features of deference behaviour.

The term *status*, when it is used to refer to deference-position, ordinarily carries with it, as I suggested earlier, overtones of the stability, continuity and pervasiveness which are possessed by sex and age. A person who has a given status tends to be thought of as having that status at every moment of his existence as long as that particular status is not replaced by another status. One of the reasons why I

have chosen to use the term 'deference-position' in place of 'status' is that it makes a little more prominent the fact that status is not a substantial property of the person arising automatically from the possession of certain entitlements but is in fact an element in a relationship between the person deferred to and the deferent person. Deference towards another person is an attitude which is manifested in behaviour.

Acts of deference judgments are evaluative classifications of self and other. As classifications they transcend in their reference the things classified. A person who is evaluatively classified by an act of deference on the basis of his occupation is in that classification even when he is not performing his occupational role. The classificatory deference judgment, because it is a generalization, attains some measure of independence from the intermittence of entitlements. It has an intermittence of its own which is not necessarily synchronized with that of the entitlements.

Overt concentrated acts of deference such as greetings and presentations are usually shortlived, i.e. they are performed for relatively short periods and then 'disappear' until the next appropriate occasion. The appropriate occasions for the performance of concentrated acts of deference might be regular in their recurrence, e.g. annually or weekly or even daily, but except for a few 'deference-occupations' they are not performed with the high frequency and density over extended periods in the way in which occupational roles are performed. But does deference consist exclusively of the performance of concentrated deferential actions? Is there a 'deference vacuum' when concentrated deferential actions are not being performed? Where does deference go when it is not being expressed in a grossly tangible action?

To answer this question, it is desirable to examine somewhat more closely the character of attenuated deference actions. There are concentrated, exclusively deferential actions which are nothing but deferential actions just as there are exclusively power or style or life or occupational actions but in a way different from these others. Occupational actions are substantial; all effort within a given space and time is devoted to their performance. They can be seen clearly by actor and observer as occupational actions; the exercise of authority has many of these features, especially when it is exercised in an authoritative occupational role. Expenditures of money are of shorter duration but they too are clearly definable. The acts of consumption and conviviality which are comprised in a style of life are of longer duration but they too are also clearly defined. On the other hand, level of educational attainment and kinship connection and ethnicity are not actual actions at all, they are classifications in which 'objectively' the classified person is continuously present although once present in the class he does nothing to manifest or affirm.

But deference actions—deferring to self and other, receiving deference from self and other—are actions. They result in and are performed with reference to classifications but they are actions nonetheless. They are not however always massive actions of much duration. They occur moreover mainly at the margin of other types of action. Deference actions performed alone are usually very shortlived; they open a sequence of interaction and they close it. Between beginning and end, deference actions are performed in fusion with non-deferential actions. Throughout the process of interaction they are attenuated in the substance of the relationship in which the performance of tasks appropriate to roles in corporate bodies, to civil roles, to personal relationships, etc., occurs. Deference actions have always been largely components of other actions; they are parts of the pattern of speaking to a colleague, a superior or an inferior about the business at hand in an authoritatively hierarchical corporate body, of speaking about or to a fellow citizen, of acting towards him over a distance (as in an election). In other words, deference actions seldom appear solely as deference actions and those which do are not regarded, especially in the United States, as a particularly important part of interaction in most situations. Nonetheless, deference is demanded and it is accepted in an attenuated form.

This then is the answer to the question as to where deference goes when it ceases to be concentrated: it survives in attenuation, in a pervasive, intangible form which enters into all sorts of relationships through tone of speech, demeanour, precedence in speaking, frequency and mode of contradiction, etc.

Deference can, however, become extinct. A person who fails to retain his entitlements in the course of time also loses the deference which his entitlements brought him. He might not lose it entirely; ex-prime ministers, professors emeriti, retired generals, long after they departed from their occupational roles continue to receive some deference, although it is probably, other things being equal, less than they received while active incumbents. Kings in exile, great families fallen on hard times also lose much of their deference and some, sinking away into peripheral obscurity, cease to be known and their deference becomes entirely local.

The salience of deference behaviour is closely related to deference-sensitivity. Indifference to deference is a marginal phenomenon but individuals, classes and societies differ in the degree to which they demand deference—whether concentrated or attenuated—or are relatively unperceptive regarding its appropriateness, its presence or its absence. Snobs are persons whose demand for deference is great and for whom the deference-position of those they associate with is their most relevant characteristic.

It is one of the features of modern Western societies that they are moving in the direction of deference-indifference and attenuation. The movement is very uneven among modern societies with the United States, Canada and Australia in the lead, with other countries some distance behind but they too seem to be moving further along than they were a half century ago. The movement is also very uneven within societies, with marked differences between classes and generations.

The equalitarian tendencies of contemporary Western societies have not only witnessed the attenuation and retraction of deference, they have also seen it assimilated into the pattern of intercourse among equals. But can it be said that deference still exists in relations among equals? Is not equality a point where deference disappears? Concentrated and salient deference behaviour was a feature of the relations between the great of the earth and their subordinates. There is to be sure no elaborate ritual of deference between equals in contemporary Western societies and particularly in American society, except that which still obtains between heads of states, between heads of churches, heads of universities, on especially ceremonial occasions, etc.

Concentrated deference actions have by no means disappeared but they have become less elaborate and with their diminished elaboration they have been abbreviated. They have become less substantial and less separate from other actions. Ceremonial deference and formalized etiquette have diminished in magnitude and frequency.

The decline in the power of aristocracies and the diminution of the number of monarchies have been accompanied by a reduction in the amount or proportion of ceremonial deference in societies. Modes of spoken and written address have come to bespeak a more homogeneous distribution of deference throughout societies and in doing so they have moved towards simpler, briefer forms. The movement is not however all one way; the strata which previously were treated with the minimum of deference or indeed with negative deference have now begun to receive an enhanced deference although in the simplified and shorter forms of a less ritualized society.

The inherited rituals of deference tended largely to be concerned with the relations of superiors and inferiors. As an equalitarian outlook became more prominent, the rituals of deference fell into the same discredit as relationships which they expressed. It is however an open question whether equality or approximate equality is antithetical to rituals of deference. What seems fairly certain is that the relationships of equals can and do at present contain considerable elements of attenuated deference and can indeed not dispense with them.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to fail to acknowledge that contemporary societies are less oriented towards their centres with respect

to deference than their ancestors of a century ago. It is not merely on account of the decline of aristocracy and monarchy. These are only instances of a more general phenomenon, namely the diminution of the ruling classes in the various countries. When élites were smaller, educational opportunity more restricted and the kinship tie more respected than they are nowadays, the various sectors of the centre—the political, administrative, ecclesiastical, cultural and military élites—and to some extent the economic élite—were closer to each other through common origins, common institutional experiences, a shared conviviality and the linkage of kinship than they are now when the obligations of kinship are less observed in recruitment to the élite, when specialization has gone further and numbers greatly increased. One of the consequences of this pluralization of the élites is that their model is less imposing. Each sector is taken for what it is and, except for the very pinnacle of the head of state and the head of the government, the sense of difference in worth is felt to be less great than it once was.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF DEFERENCE

It has long been characteristic of the study of deference and of the deference-positions (status) which it helps to produce to ascribe to them a distribution similar in important respects to the distribution of entitlements such as occupational roles and power, income, wealth, styles of life, levels of educational attainment, etc. The entitlements are all relatively 'substantial' things which are not matters of opinion but rather 'objective', more or less quantifiable, conditions or attributes and as such capable of being ranged in a univalent and continuous distribution. Every individual has one occupation or another at any given period in time or for a specifiable duration; every individual has—if it could be measured—such and such an average amount of power over a specifiable time period. Every individual has some style of life, certain components of which at least are enduring and observable—and he either possesses them or does not possess them. There are of course cases of persons having two widely different kinds of occupational roles within the same limited time period ('moonlighting'), of persons having widely divergent incomes within a given period, but these and other anomalies can quite easily be resolved by specifiable procedures for the collection of data and for their statistical treatment and presentation.

Present-day sociological notions of deference (status, esteem, prestige, honour, etc.) grew up in association with the 'objective' conception of social stratification. For reasons of convenience in research and also

¹ The 'objective' conception concerned itself with the relatively substantial entitlements, the 'subjective' with the 'opinion'-like elements.

because common usage practised a system of classification into 'middle', 'upper', 'lower',² etc., classes, research workers and theorists attempted to construct a composite index which would amalgamate the positions of each individual in a number of distributions (in particular, the distributions of occupational role and education) into some variant of the three-class distribution. The resultant was called 'social-economic status' (sometimes, 'socio-economic status').

The 'subjective' conception of social stratification appreciated the 'opinion'-like character of deference but for reasons of convenience in research procedure and because of the traditional mode of discourse concerning social stratification, the 'subjective factor' itself tended to be 'substantialized' and it too was regarded as capable of being ranged in an univalent distribution.² Sometimes as in the Edwards classification in the United States or in the Registrar-General's classification in the United Kingdom, this 'subjective factor' impressionistically assessed by the research worker was amalgamated with the 'objective factors' in arriving at a single indicator of 'status'. Status was taken to mean a total status, which included both deference-position and entitlements, constructed by an external observer (not a participant in the system). But this conception has not found sufferance because it is patently unsatisfactory. Deference-position—or esteem, prestige or status—does belong to a different order of events in comparison with events like occupational distribution, income and wealth distribution, etc. It belongs to the realm of values; it is the outcome of evaluative judgments regarding positions in the distributions of 'objective' characteristics.

The improvement of techniques of field work in community studies and sample surveys has rendered it possible to collect data, relatively systematically, about these evaluations and to assign to each person in a small community or to each occupation on a list a single position in a distribution. Research technique has served to obscure a fundamental conceptual error. As a result, since each person possessed a status (or deference-position), they could be ranged in a single distribution. Such a distribution could occur, however, only under certain conditions. The

¹ The prevalence of the trichotomous classification and variations on it is probably of Aristotelian origin. There is no obvious reason why reflection on experience and observation alone should have resulted in three classes. This might well be a case where nature has copied art.

² It is quite possible that this pattern of thought which emerged in the nineteenth century was deeply influenced by the conception of social class of the nineteenth-century critics of the *ancien régime* and of the bourgeois social order which succeeded it. In the *ancien régime* the most powerful ranks were designated by legally guaranteed titles which entered into the consciousness of their bearers and those who associated with or considered them. These designations were not 'material' or 'objective'. They did not belong to the 'substructure' of society. They were therefore 'subjective' but they were also unambiguous. They could be treated in the same way as 'objective' characteristics. By extension, the same procedure could be applied to the other strata.

conditions include (a) an evaluative consensus throughout the society regarding the criteria in accordance with which deference is allocated; (b) cognitive consensus throughout the society regarding the characteristics of each position in each distribution and regarding the shape of the distributions of entitlements; (c) consensus throughout the society regarding the weights to be assigned to the various categories of deference-entitling properties;¹ (d) equal attention to and equal differentiation by each member of the society of strata which are adjacent to his own and those which are remote from it;² (e) equal salience of deference judgments throughout the society; (f) univalence of all deference judgments.

Were these conditions to obtain, then the distribution of deference-positions in such a society might well have the form which the distributions of 'objective' entitlements possess. There are, however, numerous reasons why the distribution of deference-positions or status does not have this form. Some of these reasons are as follows: (a) Some consensus concerning the criteria for the assessment of entitlements might well exist but like any consensus it is bound to be incomplete. Furthermore criteria are so ambiguously apprehended that any existent consensus actually covers a wide variety of beliefs about the content of the criteria. (b) Cognitive consensus throughout the society regarding the properties of entitlements and the shape of their distributions is rather unlikely because of the widespread and unequal ignorance about such matters as the occupational roles, incomes, educational attainments of individuals and strata. (c) The weighting of the various criteria is not only ambiguous, it is likely to vary from stratum to stratum depending on the deference position of the various strata and their positions on the various distributions; it is likely that each stratum will give a heavier weight to that distribution on which it stands more highly or on which it has a greater chance of improving its position or protecting it from 'invaders'. (d) The perceptions of one's own stratum or of adjacent strata are usually much more differentiated and refined and involve more subsidiary criteria than is the case in their perceptions of remote strata. Thus even if they are compatible with each other there is no identity of the differentiations made by the various strata. (e) Some persons are more sensitive to deference than are others and this difference in the salience of deference occurs among strata as well. Some persons think frequently in terms of deference position, other think less frequently in those terms. Accordingly assessments of other human

¹ Where these three conditions exist, there would also exist a consensus between the judgment which a person makes of his own deference-position and the judgments which others render about his position.

² It also presupposes equal knowledge by all members of the society about all other members.

beings and the self may differ markedly within a given society, among individuals, strata, regions and generations with respect to their tendency to respond deferentially rather than affectionately or matter-of-factly or instrumentally. The arrangement of the members of a society into a stratified distribution as if each of them had a determinate quantity of a homogeneous thing called deference (or status or prestige) does violence to the nature of deference and deference-positions; it further obscures in any case sufficiently opaque reality. The possibility of dissensus in each of the component judgments—cognitive and evaluative—which go to make up a deference-judgment can, of course, be covered by the construction of measures which hide the dispersion of opinions. If all inter-individual disagreements are confined to differences in ranking within a given stratum, the procedure would perhaps be acceptable. But, if 80 per cent of a population place certain persons in stratum I and if 20 per cent place them in stratum II, is it meaningful to say that the persons so judged are in stratum I?

The dissensus which results in inter-individually discordant rankings seriously challenges the validity of procedures which construct univalent deference distributions and then disjoin them into strata. This difficulty would exist even if there were agreement about the location of the boundary lines which allegedly separate one deference stratum from the other. But there is no certainty that there will be consensus on this matter, and the purpose of realistic understanding is not served by assuming that there is such consensus or by constructing measures which impose the appearance of such a consensus on the data.

The conventional procedure of constructing deference distributions has tended to assume a considerable degree of clarity and differentiatedness in the perception of the distribution of deference-entitling properties through the society. But as a matter of fact perceptions are vague and undifferentiated. Terminologies and classifications, particularly in relatively 'class-unconscious' societies, are not standardized and terms like 'poor', 'working people', 'lower classes', 'ordinary people', etc., are used in senses which the user has not reflected upon and which do not have a definite referent. There is no reason—at least until further research has been done—to think that they are interchangeable with each other although sociologists do treat them as if they are.

If differentiation and specificity are slight in speaking about strata adjacent to one's own, they are even less developed in reference to remoter strata of which the judging person has no direct experience. This does not mean that deference-judgments are not made about these remoter strata; it does mean that such judgments are made with scant knowledge of the extent to which these deference-entitlements actually exist in the persons or strata so judged. The cognitive stratification map

becomes vaguer with regard to those areas of the society far from the range of experience of the judging person. This too renders cognitive consensus impossible even if evaluative criteria were identical. What one judge looking at his own immediate stratification environment sees as highly differentiated, another who views it from a distance sees as homogeneous. Thus every sector of the stratification system is highly differentiated but only to those who are living in the midst of that sector.¹

Up to this point I have cast doubt on the conventional treatments of the distribution of deference positions by referring to the diverse sorts of dissensus among individuals, strata, regional cultures, etc. But I wrote as if each of these agents of judgment spoke with a single voice. There is some justification for this since there is a tendency in many societies to regard the deference system as something objective, as *sui generis*, as existing outside the judging persons and independently of their own evaluations and appreciations of persons and strata. This tendency to 'objectivize' the distribution of deference is in part a product of the perception of the deference judgments of other persons in one's own society. But it also represents a tendency to believe in the 'objectivity', the 'givenness' of deference stratification which is a product of a tendency to believe that in addition to our own tastes and dispositions there is a realm of normative being which exists independently of those tastes and values.

But alongside of this tendency to believe in an 'objective' order of worthiness, there is a widespread alienation from that order and the acceptance and alienation exist very often in the same persons. This ambivalence is very difficult to apprehend by present-day techniques of research and it is even more difficult to deal with it systematically—at least for the present. It exists nonetheless and it is apt to become stronger as society becomes more differentiated and as the 'ruling class' in the sense of a set of persons intimately interrelated through kinship, common institutional experiences and long personal friendships, filling most of the positions at the top of the various distributions, gives way before a less unitary and therefore less imposing élite.

There is nothing pathological about this ambivalence. Submission to the ascendancy of the centre and to the standards which affirm it is painful because the indignity of inferiority is painful. The society which focuses on the centre imposes such indignity on the periphery. The more highly integrated a society ecologically, the greater will be the strain on the periphery, and the less imposing the élite at the centre, the more likely the emergence of the negative side of the ambivalence. The impli-

¹ The question arises therefore whether a distribution of deference positions incorporates the perceptions and categorizations which are applied to one's own and adjacent strata or those which are applied to remote ones. Whichever alternative is followed, the factitious character of the distribution so constructed is evident.

cations of this ambivalent attitude are far-reaching and they cannot be gone into here. Let it suffice to say the presently prevailing methods of describing deference distributions cannot accommodate these simple facts. Yet without these simple facts of ambivalence and alienation in the stratification system, how can class conflict and movements for reform by the re-allocation of deference and its entitlements be dealt with? And what is one to make of the anti-authoritarianism and antinomianism which has been a fluctuatingly frequent phenomenon of modern societies? How does this fit into a picture which portrays deference positions as univalently and consensually distributed?

Finally, I should like to conclude these reflections on the problems of deference distribution with some observations on equality. In general, the prevailing techniques for representing deference distributions proceed with a fixed number of strata or by means of scales which rank occupations or persons on a continuum running from 0 to 100. Both procedures assume a constant distance between the extremes and between the intervals or strata. This does not however seem to accord with the realities of the movement of modern societies towards a higher degree of equality of deference than was to be found earlier.

The range of deference-distribution probably varies among societies. Some are more equalitarian than others. In what does this equalitarianism consist apart from increased opportunities or life-chances for peripheral strata? Does it not consist in an appreciation of the greater worthiness of the peripheral strata—a judgment shared to some extent throughout their society. It is indeed a matter of opinion but it is an opinion of profound significance for the stratification system. I cannot go into the causes of this development;¹ I wish here only to call attention to its relevance to any realistic description of deference systems.

DEFERENCE INSTITUTIONS AND DEFERENCE SYSTEMS

Whereas most of the things valued by men become the explicit foci of elaborate institutional systems concerned with their production, acquisition, protection, maintenance, control and allocation, the same cannot be asserted of deference. Unlike economic or military or political or ecclesiastical institutions, deference institutions are marginal to the valued objects which they seek to affect. There is a College of Heraldry, there are chiefs of protocol in departments of foreign affairs, there are *Who's Who's* and *Social Registers*, authors and publishers of books on deportment and on modes of address, there are advisers to prime

¹ I have attempted to explain the causes of this movement towards the narrowing of the range of dispersion of deference-positions in 'The Theory of Mass Society', *Dugones*, 39 (1962), pp. 45-66.

ministers and presidents on the award of honours, there is an *Almanach de Gotha*, a great many states have a system of honours and many have had systems of titles and orders. Armies award medals and universities award earned and honorary degrees. Armies have titles of rank as do universities. Civil services too have ranks and designations which denote differences and ranks of authority but which are also titles of deference. Many of those institutions have handbooks which specify orders of precedence. All of these institutional arrangements confer or confirm deference; they seek to express deference, to create and legitimate claims to deference, to specify who should receive it and to entitle particular persons in a way which objectifies their claims to deference. Only a few of these institutions have sought explicitly to determine a 'generalized' deference position, namely those who sought to control and guarantee membership in nobilities or aristocracies. Others awarded deference for rather specific qualifications and although in many of these cases the deference was generalized, in others it remained an indicator of a quite specific achievement and thereby attained scarcely any measure of generalization. But at best, they have touched only a small part of the societies in which they have functioned and although they intensify and strengthen the deference system they cannot be said to create it or to manage it.

The deference system of a society extends throughout the length and breadth of that society. Everybody falls within it, yet very few of those have their deference positions determined by the deference-conferring and deference-confirming institutions. The actual really functioning deference system of a society envelops the deference institutions and takes them into account but it is not predominantly determined by them.

Most of the deference-behaviour—the behaviour which expresses deference—occurs in the face-to-face interaction of individuals and very few of those who receive some allocation of deference have any titles or medals. The deference which they receive is received from other persons who respond not to titles or honours of which they have heard or emblems of which they see on the garments of the persons deferred to, but to the entitling properties which they believe are possessed by the person to whom deference is given. Titles and medals might be taken into account and even when the title is used in full and correctly, the use of the title in addressing the person deferred to is at most only a part of the deference expressed. The title is thought to stand for something more than itself, for kinship connections, acknowledgment by the sovereign or occupational role and these too are not ultimate; they are evocative of other characteristics, of positions on various distributions.

The deference granted is as I have said earlier expressed in overtones of speech and action. Much of it is expressed in relations of authority and

it appears together with commands and acts of obedience, with the giving of counsel and the taking of counsel, in the interplay of authorities and subjects, colleagues and neighbours performing the actions called for by authority, collegiality and neighbourliness. It is far more subtle and richer than the prescriptions for the ritual manifestations of deference and it is also often more impoverished. Being a duke or a professor or a colonel constitutes only one element—a quite considerable element—in the generalized deference which the incumbents of those ranks and the bearers of those titles receive. Those who associate with them and who defer to them respond to other things about them as well as to their ranks and titles. The excellence of their performance past and current, the power which they actually exercise or have exercised, the level of culture and their style of life, insofar as these can be perceived or imagined or are already known from previous experiences and from other sources, enter into the determination of the deference granted and expected.

Deference institutions are more important in some types of societies and in some strata than in others. In societies in which there is a sharp disjunction between centre and periphery, they will have more influence than in societies in which the periphery has expanded inwardly and overwhelmed the centre.

Deference institutions are especially important at or near the centre of society although ordinarily it is not the intention of those who manage them to confine their influence to that zone. But because deference is more intense in face-to-face relationships and direct interaction than it is in remote relationships, there is a tendency for deference systems to become dispersed in a particular way. Deference systems tend to become territorially dispersed into local systems which are more differentiated to those who participate in them than is the national system. I do not mean to say that the several systems ranging from local to national are in conflict with each other. Indeed they can be quite consensual and the local usually could not be constituted without reference to persons, roles and symbols of the centre. In the various zones and sectors of the periphery where the centre is more remote, the imagery of the centre still enters markedly into the deference system and local differentiations are often simply refined applications of perceptions and evaluations which have the centre as their point of reference. Thus, for example, local deference judgments will make more subtle internal distinctions about occupational role and authority, income and style of life than would judgments made from a distant point either peripheral or central. Still the distinctions will refer to distances from some standard which enjoys its highest fulfilment at the centre. It seems unlikely that centre-blindness can ever be complete in any society.

Nevertheless, the various systems do to some extent have lives of their

own. The local deference system is probably more continuously or more frequently in operation than the national system—although as national societies become more integrated and increasingly incorporate with local and regional societies, the national deference system becomes more frequently and more intensely active.

In all societies, the deference system is at its most intense and most continuous at the centre. The high concentrations of power and wealth, the elaborateness of the style of life, all testify to this and call it forth. It is at the centre that deference institutions function and this gives an added focus and stimulus to deference behaviour. The centre adds the vividness of a local deference system to the massive deference-evoking powers of centrality. Within each local or regional deference system, there are some persons who are more sensitive than others to the centre and they infuse into the local system some awareness of and sensitivity to the centre.

At some times and at others, individuals whose preoccupations are mainly with the local deference systems—insofar as they are at all concerned with deference—place themselves on the macro-social deference map. This self-location and the perception that others are also locating themselves is the precondition of a sense of affinity among those who place themselves macro-socially on approximately the same position in the distribution of deference. The placement of others is made of course on the basis of fragmentary evidence about occupational role, style of life, or elements of these and the sense of affinity is loose, the self-location very vague, very inarticulated and very approximate. In this way deference (or status) strata are constituted. They have no clear boundaries and membership cannot be certified or specified. It is largely a matter of sensing one's membership and being regarded by others as a member. Those one 'knows' are usually members, and beyond them the domain spreads out indefinitely and anonymously in accordance with vague cognitive stratification maps and an inchoate image of the 'average man'; within each stratum, an 'average man' possesses the proper combination of positions on the distribution of significant deference-entitlements.

Thus the formation of deference-strata is a process of the mutual assimilation of local deference systems into a national deference system. It is through class consciousness that deference-strata are formed.

In the course of its self-constitution a deference stratum also defines in a much vaguer way the other deference strata of its society. It draws boundary lines but, except for those it draws about itself, the boundaries are matters of minor significance. Boundary lines are of importance only or mainly to those who are affected by the location of the boundary, i.e. those who live close to it on one side or the other. The location of a line of division in the distribution of deference is regarded as important

primarily by those who fear that they themselves are in danger of expulsion or who are refused admission to the company of members of a stratum to whom they regard themselves as equal or to whom they wish to be equal and whose company they regard as more desirable than the one to which they would otherwise be confined. The members of any deference stratum are likely to be ignorant about the location of deference stratum boundaries which are remote from them and if they are not ignorant, they are indifferent.

The various deference strata of local deference systems are in contact with each other through occasional face-to-face contacts. They are present in each others' imaginations and this deferential presence enters into all sorts of non-deferential actions of exchange, conflict and authority.

In national deference systems too the different strata are in contact with each other, not very much through face-to-face contact but through their presence in each other's imagination. This presence carries with it the awareness of one's distance from the centre and it entails some acceptance of the centrality of the centre and some acceptance of the greater dignity of the centre. It is an implicit belief that the centre embodies and enacts standards which are important in the assessment of oneself and one's own stratum.

In some sense, the centre 'is' the standard which is derived from the perception, correct or incorrect, of its conduct and bearing. These remote persons and strata which form the centre might be deferred to, or condemned in speech, and the pattern of their conduct, bearing, outlook, etc., might be emulated or avoided. An 'objective existence' is attributed to the rank ordering from centrality to peripherality of the other strata and within this rank ordering one's own stratum is located. The ontological, non-empirical reality which is attributed to position in the distribution of deference makes it different from 'mere' evaluation and sometimes even antithetical to it.

On a much more earthly level, contacts between deference strata occur and in many forms—particularly through the division of labour and its coordination through the market and within corporate bodies and in the struggle for political power. This does not mean that the strata encounter each other in corporately organized forms¹ or that,

¹ Corporate organizations, membership in which is determined by a sense of affinity of deference positions and of positions in other distributions, seldom enlist the active membership of all the members of the stratum or even of all the adult male members of the stratum. Those who are not members of the corporate body are not, however, to be regarded as completely devoid of the sense of affinity with other members of their stratum. 'Class consciousness' in this sense is very widespread but it is a long step from this type of 'class consciousness' to the aggressively alienated class consciousness which Marxist doctrine predicted would spread throughout the class of manual workers in industry and Marxist agitation has sought to cultivate.

when there is interstratum contact in the encounter of corporate bodies, these bodies include all or most members of their respective strata. Much of this inter-stratum contact takes place through intermediaries who act as agents and who receive a deference which is a response both to their own deference-entitling properties and those of their principals. Those who act on behalf of these corporate bodies do so in a state of belief that they are 'representing' the deference-stratum to which they belong or feel akin.

A society can then have a deference system of relatively self-distinguishing and self-constituting deference strata, with the strata being in various kinds of relationship with each other. Such a situation is entirely compatible with the absence of the type of objective deference distribution which we rejected in the foregoing section. Each of the deference strata possesses in a vague form an image of a society-wide deference distribution but these images cannot be correct in the sense of corresponding to an objective deference distribution, which might or might not actually exist.

DIGRESSION ON PLURAL SOCIETIES

I have emphasized the importance of the self-constitutive character of the classes which make up a system of deference stratification. I have also emphasized the unreality of the construction of status distributions on which sociologists have expended so much effort and at the same time I have also stressed the elements of integration of the deference strata into a single system focused on the centre of society. Some writers contend that the deference system and the associated stratification systems of what are called plural societies are incompatible with this mode of analysis. By a plural society, they mean one in which various ethnic groups are so segregated from each other that they form societies separate and distinct from each other. Yet they do not go so far as to say that the various constituent societies are totally independent of each other; they acknowledge that they are integrated into a single economy and that they live under a single political authority. In that sense the constituent societies of a plural society are parts of a single society.

The problem which this poses for the study of deference systems is well worth consideration. What we find is that the ethnic entitlement is regarded in these societies, particularly by the more powerful, life chances controlling section of the dominant ethnic group, as so absolutely crucial, that it is made into such a salient criterion of deference that those whose deference-positions are affected by it are included into broad deference strata in comparison with which all other deference-entitlements are of secondary importance. These other deference-entitlements exist and they do determine differences in the allocation of

deference but they are only capable of generating differences within each of the major ethnically determined deference strata. Each ethnically determined deference stratum is internally differentiated in accordance with the distribution of deference-entitlements within it. Each approximates a completely self-contained deference system but it does not become completely self-contained. It fails to do so because despite its highly segregated pluralism the society does have a centre and this centre constitutes a focus of each of the partially separate deference systems. The latter bear some resemblance to the deference systems of whole societies because of the differentiation of occupational roles within each of the ethnic sectors but the occupational structure of each sector is not the complete occupational structure of the total society. That total occupational structure is distributed between the ethnic sectors and there is indeed some overlap between them. It is because of these points of overlap—between the bottom of the super-ordinate deference stratum and the peak of the subordinate deference stratum—that conflicts arise. These conflicts could only arise because the sectors or strata are parts of a peculiarly integrated single deference system.

DEFERENCE SYSTEMS AND STRATIFICATION SYSTEMS

When it is not treated as an unreal, conceptually constructed amalgam of a number of positions on a variety of distributions, deference has often been treated as an epiphenomenon. It is often considered as having relatively little weight in the determination of conduct—apart from the choice of companions in conviviality or in the motivation of emulatory conduct. Yet it is deference which is responsible for the formation of strata or classes.

Deference is, as a result of its properties of a generalization, the crucial link in the stratification system. Without the intervention of considerations of deference position, the various very differentiated inequalities in the distribution of any particular facility or reward would not be grouped into a relatively small number of vaguely bounded strata. The very idea of an equivalence among positions in different distributions could not be realized if there were no generalization to cut across them.

By a stratification system, I mean a plurality of strata within a single society with some sense of their internal identity, of the internal similarity and of their external differences *vis-à-vis* other strata. The stratification system is constituted by strata which are formed by persons who have approximately similar positions on a variety of separate distributions. This approximate similarity of positions is a precondition of the sense of affinity—because it strengthens the sense of identity of the self from which the sense of affinity of many selves is formed. If each person were

randomly heterogeneous in his cluster of positions the likelihood of identity and therewith of affinity would be much less than it is in fact.

The sense of identity is a vague perception of self and other and it refers to some pervasive qualities of those so identified. These qualities by which strata identify themselves and others are frequently referred to by a shorthand terminology such as 'wealth' or 'poverty' or 'rulers' or 'people' or 'workers' or 'bosses'. These terms refer to positions on particular distributions such as wealth and income, power and occupational role. Yet these terms have for those who use them a significance beyond the limited descriptive sense in which they are used. Each term stands for a position on each of a number of distributions and implies that positions in the various distributions are correlated and connected with each other. Those who are 'workers' are also 'poor' or in any case relatively low in wealth and income distribution. Those who are 'bosses' are also 'rich' or at least higher in the wealth and income distributions and they usually have more political power. Those who are 'well off' have more education and more authority through their occupational roles and through political participation.

The connections between the positions of an individual on the different distributions are of two sorts. One is the connection through 'life chances'. 'Life chances' are opportunities to enter into a higher position on any distribution from a lower position on that distribution or on several distributions. 'Life chances' are determined by the power of income, by personal, civil and kinship relationships and by occupational role and level of education. Any one of these can have a determinative influence on the allocation of 'life chances', i.e. on the opportunity to ascend on that distribution or in others.

A 'life chance' which arises from position on a particular distribution also affects chances for maintaining or acquiring 'life chances' for positions on other distributions. Income permits education to be purchased; the acquisition of education increases the probability of higher deference and higher income; higher education increases the probability of greater political influence; increased political influences increase the likelihood of a greater access to financial resources.

There is a widely experienced aspiration to bring positions on a series of distributions into an appropriate correspondence with each other. Each position provides resources for affecting positions on other distributions. Why should this be so? Why should there be thought to be an 'appropriate' relationship among positions, an equilibrium which should be striven for? Why, when a person has much political power does he not use his political resources exclusively to enhance or maintain his political power instead of expending them on bringing his style of life or the education of his children 'into line' with his political position?

(Of course, one reply to this question is to say that it is generally believed that improving positions on the non-political distributions is a necessary condition for maintenance or improvement of the position on the political distribution. But is not this very belief itself evidence of the belief in an appropriate pattern of positions which is thus a precondition for the more 'costly' political support necessary for further improvement in political position? Another reply to the question is that most human beings, given the opportunity, will strive to enhance their position in any particular distribution and that being in a better position on one distribution provides resources for betterment on others. But although there is some truth in this assertion it does not confront the fact that there is a sense of an appropriate pattern of positions on different distributions.)

The belief that it is appropriate that the several positions on the various distributions should be consonant or harmonious with each other is attributable to the belief that they each express a common, essential quality. An 'inappropriate' pattern of positions bears witness to the absence of the essential quality. There is something 'unseemly' or 'eccentric' or 'perverse' or 'unfortunate' about the individual or family whose positions are scattered at a variety of unequal points on the several distributions.

This common or essential quality is the charismatic quality which requires diffuse and pervasive expression in the various distributions. The cognitive element in an act of deference is the perception of the presence of this quality and its generalization beyond any specific manifestation in action is an acknowledgment of the apparent possession of charismatic quality by the person deferred to. The demand for deference is the demand for a diffuse acknowledgment of the diffuse charisma which is possessed in some measure by the self and which is above all in its earthly form resident in the centres of society. Self respect—deference to the self—is an acknowledgment of one's own charisma and of one's satisfactory proximity to the centre in an essential respect.

The cognitive and evaluative map of a stratification system is a differential allocation of deference to a series of aggregates of persons—for the most part anonymous—in accordance with their proximity to the centre and thus in accordance with the magnitude of their presumed charisma. The stratification system of a society is the product of imagination working on the hard facts of the unequal allocation of scarce resources and rewards. The charisma is imaginary but it has the effect of being 'real' since it is so widely believed in as 'real'. Deference which is basically a response to charisma is only a matter of opinion but it is an opinion with profound motivation and a response to profound needs in the grantor and the recipient of deference.

6

SOME MEASUREMENTS OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN BRITAIN

MARK ABRAMS

With one or two outstanding exceptions British sociologists have made little contribution to the theory of social stratification. At the same time, stratification is such a solid reality in our society that there is an abundance of empirical studies of the British people which have taken as their starting point the assumption that they can be divided into a handful of more or less self-contained strata that form an hierarchical order. These studies are to be found particularly in the two research fields of consumer behaviour and voting intentions.

Fundamentally the market researcher is concerned, usually through sample surveys, to identify among the population at large the determinants of differences in spending behaviour. Not surprisingly, working in a society long accustomed to considerable inequalities of income, he has taken for granted that the major differences in spending behaviour are to be explained by differences in income and that these differences in their turn are directly related to occupation. This approach has a long history and certainly antedates the emergence of market research. Even before the Registrar General in the Census of 1911 divided the population into social classes Charles Booth had set out an eightfold division of London's population ranging from the 1% of 'loafers, drunkards and semi-criminals' at the bottom of the income scale to the 18% 'lower and upper middle class' at the top. But the real forerunner of present-day stratification practices can reasonably be identified as F. G. D'Aeth, whose essay 'Present tendencies of class differentiation' appeared in the *Sociological Review* of October 1910.

In D'Aeth's view the traditional lines of demarcation between the different classes (derived from birth, family, estate etc.) had disappeared, and a new class structure, based upon different standards of living, had taken their place. To embrace the whole population he described seven such income/occupation standards and, to mark the break with the past, each structure was designated by a letter (A, B, C, etc.) and not by a word or phrase (e.g. 'the lower orders' or 'the gentry') that smacked of pre-twentieth-century English society. The general character of the members of each stratum was indicated in terms of occupation, income,