THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF C. WRIGHT MILLS


By

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AN ABSTRACT

Submitted to the College of Business and Public Service
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George Jay Weinroth

Beneath the several controversial publications of C. Wright Mills is a consistent, systematic theory. Moreover, there is a continuous effort to apply this theory to the political issues which are most in dispute in the United States today. Mills' discussions of "The Power Elite" are concerned with a ruling group whose political power differs in numerous respects from power in all previous political eras. Throughout his years of writing, Mills has addressed himself to social phenomena in various segments of American culture which contribute to the structure and powers of today's ruling group.

In The New Men of Power Mills depicted a political society which has been continually moving toward an artificially maintained economy, based on permanent preparation for war. He pointed out the growing importance of a false front of a popular government and an inner circle of unrecognized, really powerful groups. In White Collar he described the mechanisms of social status by which "Elite-Mass Society" fixes its populace in lives of worthless activity. At the same time this system automatically provides the opportunity for a group of elites to exercise wide power.

In The Power Elite he elaborated on the dangerous extent of actual elite power. This power has a surprising amount of dependence on the complex, confused workings of a society dominated by technocracy and alienation. In The Sociological Imagination he described the exten-

sion of the elite's influence into the sphere of social
science. He also rounded out his theory by outlining
the approach by which social scientists may seek to coun-
ter this entire historical trend toward completely bureau-
cratic society.

Much of Mills' writing has met with a superficial
rejection on the ground that it is not "scientific".
However the supposed gaps in his theory are only ones
of appearance. Mills has simply not bothered to repeat
himself in the various stages of his presentations.
Only a careful comparison of the bearing of some of his
ideas on others makes evident the elaborate construction
of evidence in his theory.

The rule of the power elite is indirect. Its mem-
bers usually play dual roles. The smiling political exec-
utive and the technical expert fill recognized social
roles. However they are also making "administrative"
decisions of nation-wide and world-wide significance,
frequently with no effective counter influence from any
other authority or group. This control would not be pos-
sible without the existence of a peculiar quality in
people's lives today, that of the bigness and artifici-
ality of things in our culture. The elite rule largely
by manipulating the populace into thinking that elite
policy is actually 'what the people want'.

Mills' point is that we are drifting into a kind of
society where the people have become "cheerful robots"

who have lost their human sense of reason. However,
Mills' solution is perhaps an unrealistic one. He seems
to limit the human being's opportunities for problem solv-
ing to the various molds which a culture's ideology can
give to the person's thinking. Thus he contrasts an
ideal 'democratic man' to today's 'mass man', and does
so with a vagueness which is out of place in his realis-
tic approach.

There are important relations between this approach
of Mills' and the positions of the classic theorists in
sociology. This is pointed out in detail in the anno-
tated bibliography of the thesis. There is also a not-
able difference in emphasis between the approaches of
sociology and of psychology to this problem. Mills'
approach to the origin of man's social actions is a ra-
ther unfortunate one, inasmuch as his overall theory of
contemporary elite-mass society points out a rather
drastic need for decisive action against today's disin-
tegration of political freedom.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE CONCEPT OF THE POWER ELITE

### Introduction

Content of chapters.-- There are four main points
which will be emphasized throughout the various chapters:
(1)the way in which an understanding of any one of Mills'
concepts hinges on a grasping of his overall theory;
(2) the intricacy of his concept of "the power elite";
(3) the meaning of "the social" as distinct from "social
structure"; (4) Mills' theory as a work of political phi-
losophy.

Following the introduction, Chapter I gives a ba-
sic description of the elite as a starting-point for fur-
ther analysis. Chapter II presents Mills' several wri-
tings concerning the psychological foundation of Elite-
Mass Society in general, leading up to an understanding
of his overall theory about such a society. Chapter III
covers Mills' writings on the particular state of organ-
ization of today's elite-mass society in the United States,
what its various parts are and why they have their par-
ticular form. Here will also be presented the major
part of the criticism in this thesis concerning Mills'
concept of social structure and power. Chapter IV is a
discussion of the meaning of Mills' approach--which he

styles "The Sociological Imagination"--in reference to his intentions and to the possible significance of his writing in twentieth century political thought.

On understanding Mills.-- The portions which one may read from Mills' writings are not particularly difficult from the standpoint of clarity, nor are there any significant problems involving technical definitions. However, the ideas and arguments which he presents are frequently difficult to consider sensibly without a general understanding of what he has written elsewhere. His often discussed concept of America's power elite is the most notable of such points of misunderstanding. Mills' writing has almost no repetition. Thus, he introduces a concept, and if it is mentioned in reference to a second item of discussion, something is added to it as it is used for the second time. His writing may be described as formative rather than formal.

Mills has written an interesting essay--one might call it a "confessions of a sociologist"--entitled "On Intellectual Craftsmanship." It was originally mimeographed for distribution by Columbia University, and Mills later included it in The Sociological Imagination as an appendix.[1] Here he talks about his own thinking

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[1] C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp.195-226. For Mills' comment on the trilogy of his works, see p.200. See pp. 201, 211-215 for Mills' descriptions of his method. More detailed attention will be given to the purpose which Mills' ascribes to his work in Chapter IV.

as it materializes in what he writes. It would seem
from his descriptions that he goes through a continual
'dialectic'. He may start with some point of writing--
his own or another's--or an item of historical fact.
By subjecting it to counter-arguments or rearranging the
items of fact, he ends up with a new central perspec-
tive for his subject matter. The Power Elite resulted
from the growing idea of turning his published work into
a trilogy on the three major classes in American society.
We shall be frequently concerned with the many origins
which his final concept of the power elite has in The
New Men of Power and White Collar.[2]

In line with the above considerations, there are
two purposes--a technical one and a theoretical one--
in the presentation of this thesis. The technical pur-
pose is to show the meaning of Mills' ideas by a simple
comparison of what he has written in one place with what
he has written in another. As explanations of the social
process, these ideas reinforce one another. The the-
oretical purpose is that of ascertaining what kind of
power Mills attributes to the power elite.

We may arrive at a view of Mills' elite as they
function within their society by comparing his descrip-
tions of: areas of irresponsible power within the socie-
ty; the populace, the necessary basis for any elite's

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[2]C.Wright Mills, The New Men of Power (New York:
Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948). White Collar (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1951).

power; the process of societal functioning in general.
As an introduction to this central purpose of the study,
the following three pages are a very brief examination
of the meaning of "power" in "power elite". After this
background I shall present in more detail the concept
to which we shall have constant reference, that of the
elite.

The meaning of power in power elite.-- In The Power
Elite, Mills characterizes contemporary society as "The
Mass Society", of which a central feature is lack of
effective flow of spontaneous, public discussion.[3] On
the formal level, the Congress--traditional center for
public debate--continues to vane in power as compared
with the executive branch. Technocracy, Freud's theo-
ries on irrational behavior, and Marx's theory of social-
ly determined thought have all tended to weaken the phi-
losophic base of rational democracy. With the growth of
the welfare state out of what was once merely welfare
legislation, and the disintegration of 'the public' into
'the mass', many American liberals have become more con-
servative, or politically detached, or quite unrealistic.

. Moreover, in "mass democracy", the givers of opin-
ions have largely become professionalized. On the nation-
al level the political celebrities speak through the mass
media and the public relations experts play an ever in-
creasing role in formulating the official American way

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[3] C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford
University Press, 1957).

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of life. On the lower levels, where the large interest groups stand between the elite and the individual, successful associational leaders separate from the group and join the elite. The association comes to make "decisions" desired by the elite while attempting wordings which still appeal to the masses.

Mills' power elite is a complex, subtle concept. The elite may be said to exert their 'wills' upon the mass in a rather indirect way. For the sake of analogy, let us imagine the power process likened to a complex system of wiring which may be activated by reaching into the system with a long pole and touching the wires. When the pole touches a particular place in the system, the already established circuits and connections will transmit an effect to other areas. The 'areas' and 'connections' meant here are not ones within political groups but instead are within the generally shared political thinking of the populace. The major way in which the elite--as Mills views them--differ from this analogy is that their manner of manipulation is very loosely organized and succeeds often in spite of ineptness.

However, to return to our preview of Mills' theory of the nature of elite control, we note further that the elite may manipulate opinion through universal compulsory education as well as through the media of communication. "Psychological illiteracy" is the interesting concept employed by Mills to describe the effect

of a daily experiencing of stereotyped fantasies. Social realities are mostly received second-hand. Personal fragmentary experience which contradicts the mass-produced picture tends to be discounted. Furthermore, personal experience becomes organized in terms of the same stereotypes. The media form mass man's self-concepts, in status, aspirations, and escape from the divergence between the two.

In addition to all this--Mills points out--modern American 'liberals' continue to portray the present society as still existing in a classical atmosphere of laissez-faire. Unwittingly, they have sustained the elite so that they need no ideology; 'sensible men' avoid interfering with a politics whose outcome is thought to be 'insignificant'. At the other extreme there is the rapidly growing bureaucratic ethos within social science. There we are shown that the psychic structure of man makes him perfectly fit for the super-organized and predictable military state.

Belief of the elite in their irresponsibility is thoroughly unchecked by the mass society. The masses even vicariously enjoy the exhibitions of the elite as celebrities. Mills draws our attention to a new pivotal social role in this world of mass media, that of the author-itative celebrity. In a nation of people who live on second-hand information and whose daily lives have little personal significance, the exciting world of public events and public people takes on a new, greatly increased aura

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of importance. Thus the appearance of the elite as cele-
brities—or as friends of professional celebrities—con-
tributes significantly to their acceptance by the popu-
lace at large.

From our last consideration, two questions arise.
(1) May those private benefits available to the elite
because of their institutional positions be considered
only 'salaries' for their jobs as authoritative celebri-
ties? In other words, are the powers and benefits held
by the elite in keeping with what the mass finds accept-
able, or are these benefits directly forced from a pro-
testing mass? (2) Are the elite seriously limited in
their influence upon national political policy by the
traditional standards of the institutions which they
represent?

Of course, such complex questions are not simply
answered. However, let us ignore various qualifications
and attempt to answer them simply. The result is para-
doxic. The question of whether the elite's powers are
accepted by the mass, whether their power roles are con-
sidered socially proper, is answerable with a "yes".
The question of whether the elite are limited by having
their power dependent on public recognition of their in-
stitutional roles is answerable with a "no". It may be
seen that this is the difficult, all-important concept
to which we shall want to attend in this study of Mills.

Mills argues that the elite rule through the 'abdi-

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cation' and occasional support of the psychologically-
illiterate masses. His conceptualized elite are rulers
by manipulation and gainers by virtue of institutional-
ized powers of which the masses are generally unaware.
These last-mentioned powers are derived from the wide
boundaries of present-day administrative decisions, in
economic policy, in international affairs, and especial-
ly in the informal spheres of business-government-mili-
tary enterprise.

An Introduction to the Elite

The meaning of an elite.-- Nowhere does Mills pre-
sent as plausible an image of the power elite as in the
artistic word-sketches which he skillfully employs through-
out his writing. Here is a passage in which he demonstrates
in a few paragraphs the practical significance of the dif-
ference between the lives of the elite and the non-elite:

> In the world of the celebrities, seen through
> the magnifying glass of the mass media, men and
> women now form a kaleidoscope of highly distrac-
> ting images. . . . .
> In Switzerland are those who never know win-
> ter except as the chosen occasion for sport, on
> southern islands those who never sweat in the sun
> except at their February leisure. All over the
> world, like lords of creation, are those who, by
> travel, command the seasons and, by many houses,
> the very landscape they will see each morning or
> afternoon they are awakened. Here is the old whis-
> key and the new vice; the blonde girl with the moist
> mouth, always ready to go around the world; the
> silver Mercedes climbing the mountain bend, going
> where it wants to go for so long as it wants to
> stay. . . . .
> Here are the officials at the big desks with
> the four telephones, the ambassadors in the lounge-
> rooms, talking earnestly but somehow lightly. Here
> are the men who motor in from the airport with a

secret service man beside the chauffeur, motorcy-
cled outriders on either flank, and another tailing
a block behind. Here are the people whose circum-
stances make them independent of the good will of
others, never waiting for anyone but always waited
upon. Here are the Very Important Persons who dur-
ing the wars come and go, doubled up in the General's
jeep. . . . .
Here are the names and faces and voices that
are always before you, in the newspapers and on the
radio, in the newsreels and on the television screen;
and also the names and faces you do not know about,
not even from a distance, but who really run things,
or so informed sources say, but you could never
prove it. Here are the somebodies who are held to
be worthy of notice: now they are news, later they
will be history. Here are the men who own a firm
of lawyers and four accountants. Here are the men
who have the inside track. Here are all the expen-
sive commodities, to which the rich seem appendages.
Here is the money talking in its husky, silky voice
of cash, power, celebrity.[4]

Mills points out that the common notions about the

existence of an elite in political affairs are not only

inaccurate, but they also contribute to the public ac-

ceptance of those who actually constitute the elite.

On the one hand, elites are conceived of as existing

somewhere "up there" in government, wherever one can

now and then point to some supposedly powerful man or

men in the headlines. For some people, the elite have

a magical omnipotence, virtually a "secular substitute

for the will of God." On the other hand, there is an-

other quite popular notion that political history is

shaped by the accidental combination of actions of those

in the leadership roles. Each person in the elite and

in the society in general has his own moves countered

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[4]Ibid., pp.92-93.

by such a diversity of other persons and interests that

only the historians of the future will understand what

our "impersonal collective fate" has been. Moreover,

> No American runs for office in order to rule or
> even govern, but only to serve. . . . .So firm a
> part of the style of power-wielding have /these
> terms/ become that conservative writers readily
> misinterpret them as indicating a trend toward an
> 'amorphous power situation.'"[5]

Having in mind the vagaries of the usual discus-

sion of the power of the elite, Mills proposes a work-

ing definition and then proceeds to refine it.

> By lowering the line, we could define the elite out
> of existence; by raising it, we could make the elite
> a very small circle indeed. In a preliminary and
> minimum way, we draw the line crudely, in charcoal
> as it were; by the power elite, we refer to those
> political, economic, and military circles which as
> an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decis-
> ions having at least national consequences. In so
> far as national events are decided, the power elite
> are those who decide them.[6]

Proceeding from this tentative concept, Mills out-

lines three keys to a study and understanding of the way

in which the power elite functions, and of the reason

for its powers and forms. The three keys are: the psych-

ology of the elite as a group or class; the institutional

structure of today's administrative hierarchies; the

definite intention on the part of some individuals within

the elite to establish a centralized control over impor-

tant areas of public administration. The overall view

in this approach is one of the merger of individuals and

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[5]Ibid., pp. 16-17.
[6]Ibid., p. 18.

groups in the various spheres of social power into a circle of elites. He notes that this occurrence is a most unsurprising consequence of ". . . .the development of a permanent war establishment by a privately incorporated economy inside a political vacuum."[7]

Mills' concluding point here is that modern elites determine the structure of their own political roles to a great extent, as opposed to the inability of non-elites to do so. This point will concern us frequently, in two respects. First, it establishes the context in which we shall be referring to Mills' concept of the elite. Their power depends on the continuing existence of a very complex social structure. People intend to give their loyalties to the culture's host of recognized institutions, in which the elite fill formal and informal roles. However, the elite's roles in the social process are to a great extent as they wish to define them.

The second point will be only briefly mentioned for the moment. The relationships which Mills points out between institutional structure and elite structure are quite important. Yet, he neglects the relationships which operate in the opposite direction, those between institutional structure and the underlying series of political beliefs which make the existence of institutions possible. The three keys to a study of the elite also neglect this point, that of the general structure

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[7]Ibid., pp. 24-25. (Italics mine).

of society as an original and indirect determining factor of the elite structure. Yet, in Chapter II we shall be concerned entirely with a great amount of material that Mills provides on the psychological background of elite-mass society.

The elite as men.-- With all that has been said, when we conceive of the elite in terms of the actual people who constitute it, the concept takes on considerably more meaning. Who are the elite? Mills writes:

> What is called the 'Washington military clique'
> is not composed merely of military men, and it does
> not prevail merely in Washington. Its members exist
> all over the country, and it is a coalition of gen-
> erals in the roles of corporation executives, of
> politicians masquerading as admirals, of corpora-
> tion executives acting like politicians, of civil
> servants who become majors, of vice-admirals who
> are also the assistants to a cabinet officer, who
> is himself, by the way, really a member of the man-
> agerial elite.[8]

The merger by such men into circles of elites has four factors contributing to its cause: the decline of public politics; the enlarged and military nature of the state; the permanent war-economy; the coincidence of these three trends. These factors were already noted in our introduction. In Chapter III they will receive detailed study. For the moment I want to provide a minimum description of these detailed subjects for the purpose of tying together this picture of the composition of the elite.

In the political sphere, the central factor has

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[8]Ibid., p. 278.

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been the failure of those who constitute the formal

parties and interest groups to represent changes in the

American social structure in their groupings.  As sources

of political support decreased for the professional pol-

itician--outside of his ability to poll votes--and in-

creased for the businessman, the politician has increas-

ingly found himself a taker of orders in the growing

interaction between government and business.  By degrees

the businessmen have quite openly come to occupy the

actual posts of state.  Centralization of national eco-

nomic activity during the New Deal and World War II had

much to do with accelerating this trend.

The vastly expanded role of military affairs and

military personnel in the political arena is seen by

Mills to stem mainly from the inadequacy of traditional

American political institutions for handling current

international 'problems'.  Into the vacuum in the govern-

ment apparatus have poured the experts, particularly the

chiefs of staff and their administrative assistants.

The factor of the permanent war-economy exists as a con-

necting strand between the ascendancy of business and mili-

tary leaders and the decline of the professional politi-

cian.  It is a grand-scale example of the fact that insti-

tutional practices and institutional leaders evolve in

an interrelated fashion.  Mills writes:

> The shape and meaning of the power elite today can
> be understood only when these three sets of struc-
> tural trends are seen at their point of coincidence:
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ists in a weakened and formal democratic system con-
taining a military order already quite political in
outlook and demeanor. Accordingly, at the top of
this structure, the power elite has been shaped by
the coincidence of interest between those who con-
trol the major means of production and those who
control the newly enlarged means of violence; from
the decline of the professional politician and the
rise to explicit political command of the corporate
chieftains and the professional warlords; from the
absence of any genuine civil service of skill and
integrity, independent of vested interests.[9]

Mills makes an interesting distinction between
"power elite" and "ruling class" as concepts, interesting
from the standpoints of the meaning of the concept, and
of his familiarity with Marxism as it bears on his sub-
jects of social analysis. By using this conglomerate
concept of a tri-part power elite, he hopes to avoid
both the simple liberal view that the men who fill recog-
nized political roles have complete power to make social
decisions, and the simple Marxian view that all social
power resides with those who dominate the economic sphere.

We see then that the prevailing situation in Ameri-
can political activity created not only a berth but a
demand for the 'high level' personage from the professions
of the military, corporate business, and government ad-
ministration. The question which follows is, who gets
to be high level and why? What are the personality dis-
positions and social backgrounds of the elite as men?

As Mills states the matter, "The power elite, as
we conceive it, also rests upon the similarity of its

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[9]Ibid., p. 276.

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personnel, and their personal and official relations
with one another, upon their social and psychological
affinities."[10]  In general his sociological surveys of
the membership of high-ranking circles within the elite
show that today's leaders are much more similar in social
origin than the leadership groups of the last generation.
The categories are familiar to all of us: family wealth
in great amount, along with professional standing; at
least a major part of the WASP characteristics; a degree
from one of the service academies or an Ivy League col-
lege.[11]

   However, ". . . .the power elite is not an aris-
tocracy." Its cohesiveness consists not as much in re-
cognition of social background as in a psychological ori-
entation toward one another's mannerisms. The members
of the three elites--financial, military, and administra-
tive--develop feelings of having in common a membership
in the "circle of success" and of being accustomed to
ordering other people about. They perpetuate their group
through their peculiar standards of admission, and fre-
quently co-operate with one another when they have no
ulterior motives. More will be said about these 'stan-
dards of admission' in the discussion of the 'mentality'
of the elite in Chapter III.

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[10]Ibid., p. 278.
[11]WASP refers to white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant. The
term denotes the characteristics of America's priveleged
stratum. See Andrew Hacker, "Liberal Democracy and Social
Control," The American Political Science Review, LI (1957),

A view of the formative years of the elite gives
us a picture of the 'elite-man', pursuing his duty to
himself and his class, working in the ways he knows best
under the umbrella of "the government".

> The chief executives, the warlords, and selected
> politicians came into contact with one another in
> an intimate, working way during World War II; after
> that war ended, they continued their associations,
> out of common beliefs, social congeniality, and
> coinciding interests. Noticeable proportions of
> top men from the military, the economic, and the
> political worlds have during the last fifteen years
> occupied positions in one or both of the other worlds:
> between these higher circles there is an interchange-
> ability of position, based formally upon the sup-
> posed transferability of 'executive ability,' based
> in substance upon the co-optation by cliques of
> insiders. As members of a power elite, many of
> those busy in this traffic have come to look upon
> 'the government' as an umbrella under whose author-
> ity they do their work.[12]

In Mills' view the entire developmental process--
at least on an overall scale--had its own logical rea-
sons for happening as it did. The key to the actions
of modern social leaders is financial gain, and in turn,
the key to really large modern financial gain is person-
nel who can handle the government-military-business com-
bination of interests. We note at once the interesting
inter-dependence between elite actions and the general
institutional setting of the culture. According to the
definitions of their roles, the elite could continue to
function as leaders only if they sought places in the
new, centralized power areas. Moreover, as institutional
roles came to be filled by men with this interest in cen-

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[12]Mills, The Power Elite, p. 287.

tralization, the scope of government-military-business
co-operation increased accordingly.

All of the above considerations indicate that the
membership of the elite have an entirely unlegitimated
authority in the supposedly democratic structure of Amer-
ican society. They not only answer to no-one for their
administrative conduct, but they also make the rules
governing their own appointment to authority. The formal
and informal United States constitutions have no provi-
sions concerning the branch of government composed of
generals, finance-bankers, corporation lawyers, and the
rest. Their recognized public posts are of course pro-
vided for in the system's legitimations, but largely
these men operate outside such formal limits.

Mills points out that it is not a sensible question
whether such an elite is moral or immoral in a general
sense. Their loyalties are to their class, and they
have learned all too well to believe that what is good
for General Motors _is_ good for the country. Nor can
the elite

> . . . .be truly thought of as men who are merely
> doing their duty. They are the ones who determine
> their duty, as well as the duties of those beneath
> them. . . . .They may try to disguise these facts
> from others and from themselves by appeals to tra-
> ditions of which they imagine themselves the instru-
> ments, but there are many traditions, and they must
> choose which ones they will serve. They face de-
> cisions for which there simply are no traditions.[13]

Mills summarizes the factors leading to the parti-

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[13]_Ibid._, p. 286.

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cular composition of the power elite as; the institutional trends we have discussed, political, military, economic; the social similarities between the elite and the interchangeability of their top positions; the cumulative effect of a continual increase of decision-making 'at the top'. The result is ". . . .the rise to power of a set of men who, by training and bent, are professional organizers of considerable force and who are unrestrained by democratic party training."[14]

This concludes our introductory survey of the nature of Mills' power elite. Throughout his ideas there runs a unique and useful analysis of the connections between political history on a broad scale, changes in specific institutions and leaders, and the significance of the consequences of these changes for future political history. Yet, what is the reason for his emphasis on ". . . .men who are unrestrained by democratic party training."?

We shall see in the next chapter that Mills' emphasis on "democratic training" is a rather unusual one in relation to the rest of his social theory. However, part of the reason for this emphasis may be seen in the nature of the roles which the elite play within their society. These men are the elite precisely because the discrepancy between their administrative power and their publicly sanctioned roles is unknown or unimportant to

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[14]Ibid., p. 296.

the populace.

The authoritative celebrity is a manipulator. He is concerned not at all with democracy as such, but only with democracy as the propaganda symbol, with democracy as he endorses it when he is making a public appearance. Under the pressures of modern world politics and the tutelage of the opinion-makers, the mass audiences seem content with the idea that this part of the elite which shows, the ceremonial performances, supports their vague notion of 'democracy'.

# CHAPTER II

## ON ELITE-MASS SOCIETY IN GENERAL:
## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Introduction

In Chapter I Mills' concept of the power elite was discussed mainly in respect to its internal structure and its very general relation to social institutions. Here we shall approach an understanding of the elite via a study of its specific social environment, the mass populace of the elite-mass society.

In White Collar Mills describes the socio-economic alienation which the various levels of white collar workers experience, and which dictates many of their concepts of social reality. His treatment of the alienated society will be discussed in the first section of this chapter. The second section will deal with his more specialized conception of the mass society. Finally these considerations lead into a fuller discussion of this power elite who rule largely by default of the other groups. In the second section of this chapter I shall also demonstrate some of the places in Mills' theory where he fails to adequately consider the concept of the cultural determination of beliefs.

## The Alienated Society

Elite power and social practice.-- As with our con-
cept of the elite, here also it will be helpful to begin
with one of Mills' artistic portrayals of elite-mass
society. Here is a symbolic scene, whose characters may
be extended in our imagination so that we see them going
through the entire sequence of life in such a society.

> Each office within the skyscraper is a seg-
> ment of the enormous file, a part of the symbol fac-
> tory that produces the billion slips of paper that
> gear modern society into its daily shape. From the
> executive's suite to the factory yard, the paper
> webwork is spun; a thousand rules you never made
> and don't know about are applied to you by a thou-
> sand people you have not met and never will. The
> office is the Unseen Hand become visible as a row
> of clerks and a set of IBM equipment, a pool of
> dictaphone transcribers, and sixty receptionists
> confronting the elevators, one above the other,
> on each floor.
> The office is also a place of work. In the
> morning irregular rows of people enter the skyscra-
> per monument to the office culture. During the day
> they do their little part of the business system,
> the government system, the war-system, the money-
> system, co-ordinating the machinery, commanding
> each other, persuading the people of other worlds,
> recording the activities that make up the nation's
> day of work. They transmit the printed culture to
> the next day's generation. And at night, after the
> people leave the skyscrapers, the streets are empty
> and inert, and the hand is unseen again.[1]

In this passage Mills demonstrates the ways in which
the elite's power depends on a literally countless number
of strained, artificial practices and usages on the part
of those who populate and maintain their society. "The
enormous file, the unseen hand become visible" comprises

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[1]Mills, White Collar, p. 189.

perhaps the most stifling and ominous of alienated work
locales because it is the processing center for the host
of other areas of alienated work. The alienated work
situation is seen by Mills at the core of the personality
orientation of the white collar masses, and its causal
significance in the structure of elite-mass society is
far reaching. Thus we are first concerned with the way
in which Mills describes this concept of alienation.

The concept of alienated work.-- Historically, phi-
losophies of or orientations toward work may be categorized
as basically relating either to the Protestant Ethic or,
to the spirit of craftsmanship for its own sake, which
flourished especially during the Renaissance. The white
collar masses experience the rewards of neither. There
are neither religious nor secular status benefits in the
successful work of the white collar worker, and his actual
work is normally so meaningless that the term "craftsman-
ship" is not at all applicable. The physical aspect of
alienation from one's work is shown by Mills in his dis-
cussion of "psychological ownership". The craftsman does
not desire to own the product of his work in a formal
sense. Rather, it is important that these end-results
of the labor which consumes a major part of his produc-
tive life-span be, in at least some small sense, artistic
efforts in which he achieves some expressive sense of
meaning.

The significance of alienation from expression in

one's work is that each worker carries the society closer to its complete transformation into an elite-mass culture. The worker must gear himself to the system of odious make-work and escape from it during 'leisure hours'. In such a process his sense of individuality and inventiveness is destroyed. This is the kind of man who contributes himself as a unit for the mass society.

This concept of alienation from expression in work is illustrative of the way in which Mills pieces together a comprehensive picture of mass man's world in White Collar; it is much more definite than his chapter on "The Mass Society" in The Power Elite. The complete picture shows us the political orientation of the masses as shaped by: (1) alienation from craftsmanship; (2) the self-defeating nature of the 'rewards' available to those on the lower levels of bureaucracy; (3) a widely practiced employers' public-relations program which seeks to inculcate morale and loyalty within the ranks of "the cheerful robots"; (4) "the big split" between working conditions and leisure time; (5) the continual pressure of "the status panic" under all these difficult conditions.

As we have already considered the factor of alienation from craftsmanship, we next examine the problem of the self-defeating nature of the rewards of alienated work. There are three points involved within this factor: effort expended for the bureaucratic system of

enterprise strengthens its hold over the workers; labor leaders fall into a bureaucratic way of thinking in trying to compete with the managerial system; alienated work finally scores a complete triumph by turning the workers' goals into sado-masochistic status striving.

The point concerning the strengthening of the bureaucratic enterprise has to do with the larger phenomenon which was mentioned in Chapter I, technocracy. Mills employs this concept in two ways. In the physical sense, we may represent technocracy as the dependence of ordinary modern man's daily routine on a nationally co-ordinated network of enormously and unnecessarily complicated machinery. Such circumstances bring him into a never-ending schedule of conforming to the times of the machinery's input and output. In the social and psychological sense, the mass public comes to accept the marshalling of everyone's working lives into bureaucratic organization for the purpose of serving the machines. Both of these concepts obviously owe their basic conceptualization to Marx, and Mills frequently states that his own concepts are modernizations of the Marxian view.

> The world market, of which Marx spoke as the alien power over men, has in many areas been replaced by the bureaucratized enterprise. Not the market as such but centralized administrative decisions determine when men work and how fast. Yet the more and the harder men work, the more they build up that which dominates their work as an alien force, the commodity; so also the more and the harder the white-collar man works, the more he builds up the enterprise outside himself, which is, as we have

seen, duly made a fetish and thus indirectly justified.[2]

I want to touch only briefly on the next point, that of the managerial ideology of labor leaders, because Chapter III will cover this in detail under the context of the historical foundations of the specific form of American elite-mass society. The key to this concept is that the unions have developed as their own goal ". . . .the pure and simple ideology of alienated work: more and more money for less and less work."[3]

The psychological world of the white-collar masses.--This brings us to the last point concerning the self-defeating nature of the rewards of alienated work, alienated status-striving. However, this concept is also in the same category with our three following points, "the morale of the cheerful robots", "the big split", and "the status panic". The category is that of the psychological belief-system by which alienated man pushes himself ever deeper into a self-defeating way of conceiving reality.[4]

Here is where the process seems indeed ironic, as the alienated worker takes over for his own values the concepts of reality--of the meanings and goals of human life--as these are defined by personnel managers and sales promoters. This series of reactions which we are

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[2]Ibid., p. 226.
[3]Ibid., p. 230.
[4]The term "belief-system" is referred to in Chapter IV in discussion of the personality theory of Milton Rokeach.

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about to discuss corresponds in many ways with what William White has observed as the syndrome of "The Organization Man". It is the way in which modern, middle-class, hard-working man helps destroy his own chances for sanity and freedom.

To continue, we return to the factor of alienated status-striving. The point is that work itself has become not only irrelevant to the needs of men, but is now also a continuous means toward the sole end of sado-masochistic power over those of lower status.[5]

> Victory over the will of another may greatly expand one's self-estimation. But the very opposite may also be true: in an almost masochistic way, people may be gratified by subordination on the job. . . . .To achieve and to exercise the power and status that higher income entails may be the very definition of satisfaction in work, and this satisfaction may have nothing whatsoever to do with the craft experience as the inherent need and full development of human activity.[6]

The next consideration is of that factor which Mills has called "the morale of the cheerful robots". It is an apt title for its subject, the manipulative techniques of modern personnel management. Modern man's situation is basically an alienated one because he has no place to go for his livelihood except within the bureaucratic enterprise. However, the directorate of the individual corporation or agency is not normally satisfied to have

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[5]"Sado-masochistic" is also a borrowed term here. It is Erich Fromm's concept and entails the view that sadism and masochism are often quite intertwined in the alienated status-strivings of modern man. See The Sane Society (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1955).
    [6]Mills, White Collar, pp. 222-223.

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merely a nine-to-five possession of the alienated worker's
time. Regardless of the value of the work, each corpora-
tion and agency's managers want some kind of output.

To obtain a certain amount of output, today's man-
agers frequently resort to a studied form of manipulation
within the organization. Apparently even the generally
alienated state of their workers' lives is not enough
to make people enjoy senseless work. In Mills' view,
this cultivation of the morale of the cheerful robot is
even more anti-humansitic than the previous century's
form of motivation, i.e. the Protestant Ethic. As we noted
at the beginning of this section, under the orientation
toward the Protestant Ethic, the man who was alienated
from craftsmanship in his work at least retained a belief
that his work was necessary.

Thus ". . . .the Protestant ethic. . . .is replaced
by the conscious efforts of Personnel Departments to
create morale." By means of a host of pseudo-status
gimmicks, they seek an inculcation of in-group values
for these organizations which have only meaningless and
unpleasant features in themselves. "What they are after
is 'something in the employee' outwardly manifested in
a 'mail must go through' attitude, 'the "we" attitude',
'spontaneous discipline', 'employees smiling and cheer-
ful.'"[7]

This state of affairs which we have been discussing

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[7]Ibid., pp. 234-235.

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as the morale of the cheerful robots is in turn respon-
sible for what Mills calls "the big split", the complete
split between work and leisure. Since men must pretend
within this system that they are devoted to the work
which they so thoroughly despise, they end up in a pecu-
liar, throttled position. They pursue the various ta-
lents of being competent and serious at their profession-
al specialities precisely because the higher salaries
in these jobs enable them to more lavishly escape from
the hateful pretense.

> Alienation in work means that the most alert
> hours of one's life are sacrificed to the making
> of money with which to 'live'. . . . .It means that
> while men must seek all values that matter to them
> outside of work, they must be serious during work:
> they may not laugh or sing or even talk, they must
> follow the rules and not violate the fetish of
> 'the enterprise'. In short, they must be serious
> and steady about something that does not mean any-
> thing to them, and moreover during the best hours
> of their day, the best hours of their life. Lei-
> sure time thus comes to mean an unserious freedom
> from the authoritarian seriousness of the job. . . .
> Each day men sell little pieces of themselves
> in order to try to buy them back each night and
> week end with the coin of 'fun'. With amusement,
> with love, with movies, with vicarious intimacy,
> they pull themselves into some sort of whole again,
> and now they are different men.[8]

Here we have an excitingly functional concept!
Alienated man desperately attempts to preserve his sanity
by playing the two sides of alienating culture against
each other. Having such an ulterior purpose, the 'lei-
sure' activities become almost less meaningful than the
working day. For evidence we may refer ourselves to the

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[8]Ibid., pp. 236-237.

the daily fetish of 'having fun'; as Erich Fromm calls it, the "taking in' of everything which we see or hear advertised.[9] Thus alienated man continues to slide deeper into a senseless, abstract existence. Furthermore, he must continually justify this sort of existence to himself, and as he gets more deeply involved in the big split, he has to work that much harder at his rationalizations.

Mills and Fromm are thoroughly agreed here. Both hold to the view that the greatest cultural inducement for modern mass man to support the socio-economic system from which the elite benefits is in this process of rationalization. Mass man has exchanged his own ability to determine reality and self-worth for a system of opinion-making which completely usurps his own judgments. Worse yet, such a system substitutes for self-understanding the standard of specific lack of self-understanding. The highest level of social worth becomes the willingness to be whatever those who can pay desire the person to be. In such a situation the average modern worker is vulnerable to the terrible threat of having his sense of his own worthlessness revealed to him. He has a desperate need to adhere to the beliefs of the very system

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[9]Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941). Fromm's terms coincide closely with Mills on these particular points. However, I shall show that Mills has a two-sided position in reference to this school of psychology. See the section of this chapter on the mass society.

which he serves in a rather subjugated manner.

The sado-masochistic character of status striving, the morale of the cheerful robots, and the big split all give us an idea of the psychological world in which the alienated white-collar masses live. The last of Mills' colorful concepts along this line, that of "the status panic", demonstrates these motivational factors in action within the social system. With the description of Mills' picture of alienated society completed, we shall consider what conclusions can be drawn from it regarding the nature of his power elite, and then proceed to a discussion of his conception of mass society.

The status panic: a summary concept.-- The general idea in this concept of the status panic is that the originally shaky basis of prestige for the white-collar class has become ever more precarious in recent years. As the bureaucratic enterprises which they serve continue to grow and to expand their concepts of personal worth into all areas of cultural life, the millions of persons who will never advance beyond the bottom rungs of the status ladder come to feel continually more insignificant. There are three most interesting points within this general idea.

First, the dominant standard of striving to advance --even to one of the lowest levels in the corporate hierarchy--has the result that the white-collar employee never becomes conscious of his alienated position. He

aspires to the positions of his superiors by prematurely adopting their anti-employee values. Secondly, ". . . .the leisure of many middle-class people is entirely taken up by attempts to gratify their status claims."[10]

Finally, all the energy expended by these people in the effort to better their alienated lots is directed with amazing frequency into the standardized channels in both work and leisure. On the job the middle-class strive to adopt the system which oppresses them. On 'vacation' they complete the parody by parting with their entire year's savings for the standardized two-week imitations of the way in which they dream of living every week. Such imitations are furnished by the usual resort hotels. The net result is that no insight may ever be said to occur for all their effort. There is only a continually reinforced alienation, interspersed with periods of escapism.

Conclusions on Mills' concept of alienation.-- We can see from the series of points considered in this section that Mills is not directly interested in the psychological factors behind social force. He wants only to deal with those psychological factors which operate in the activities centered around social status. His theory centers around the influence of social status on the ability of some persons to exercise control, and on the necessity for others to conform to this con-

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[10]Mills, White Collar, p. 256.

trol. He realizes the necessity for psychological explanation, but he more implicitly relies on it in his theories than he forwards it.

Thus Mills writes:

> If psychological feelings and political outlooks
> do not correspond to economic class, we must try
> to find out why, rather than throw out the econo-
> mic baby with the psychological bath, and so fail
> to understand how either fits into the national
> tub. No matter what people believe, class struc-
> ture as an economic arrangement influences their
> life chances. . . . .If their stratum has been ade-
> quately understood, we can expect certain psycho-
> logical traits to recur.[11]

Mills' lack of direct interest in human psychological processes is shared by many other sociologists. It is an understandable disposition. When one's subject matter is always viewed within the institutional struc- ture of societies, the phenomenon of people's attitudes toward the existence of social structure itself becomes a forgotten issue. This may well be permissible and even necessary for certain purposes of sociological analysis. In Chapter IV we shall examine Mills' own explanation as to why he adopts his particular method.

However, we shall see in this chapter and the next that Mills' emphasis on "democratic social structure" raises many problems for his overall theory. We shall also see that this emphasis is clearly related to his assumption that people's attitudes toward the existence of society itself are in the nature of relatively unvary-

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[11]_Ibid._, pp. 294-295.

ing, 'given' factors. In order to establish a point
of reference for the discussions that will follow, let
us consider this problem with sociological theory in
general, as stated by Jose Ortega y Gasset. He writes:

Today people constantly talk of laws and law,
the state, the nation and internationalism, public
opinion and public power, good policy and bad, paci-
fism and jingoism, 'my country' and humanity, soc-
ial justice and social injustice, collectivism and
capitalism, socialization and liberalism, the indi-
vidual and the collectivity, and so on and so on.
And they not only talk, in the press, at their clubs,
cafes, and taverns; they also argue. And they not
only argue; they also fight for the things that
these words designate. And once started fighting,
they kill each other--by hundreds, by thousands,
by millions. . . . .

One of /various/ precautions--humble, . . . .
but obligatory if a country is to pass unscathed
through these terrible times--is somehow to contrive
that a sufficient number of persons in it shall be
thoroughly aware of the degree to which these ideas
(let us call them ideas)--all these ideas about
which there is all this talk and fighting and argu-
ing and slaughter--are grotesquely confused and
superlatively vague. . . . .

Observe that all these ideas--law, code of
laws, state, internationalism, collectivity, author-
ity, freedom, social justice, and so on--even when
they do not explicitly express it, always imply,
as their essential ingredient, the idea of the social,
of society. . . . .

I shall never forget the surprise mingled with
shame and shock which I felt when, many years ago,
conscious of my ignorance on this subject, I hur-
ried, full of illusion, all the sails of hope spread
wide, to books on sociology---and found something
incredible--namely, that books on sociology have
nothing clear to say about what the social is,
about what society is. . . . .Their authors--our
esteemed sociologists--have not made any serious
effort to clarify--even to themselves, let alone
to their readers--the elementary phenomena in which
the social fact exists. . . . .They hurry over these
phenomena--which are, I repeat, preliminary and
indispensable--as over red-hot coals; and with an
occasional exception, never more than partial (Durk-
heim, for example), we see them rush on, with envi-
able boldness, to hold forth upon the most terribly

concrete themes of human living together.[12]

Mills' arguments concerning the significance of democratic social structure will be appropriately presented in the next section of this chapter, the section on "The Mass Society". Thus we shall also save the critique of his treatment of "the social" for that point in the presentation. We may observe for the moment that Mills' discussion of "The Alienated Society" and its problems always employs descriptions in terms of social roles and social structure. The people who are described as craftsmen and alienated workers all have psychologically helpful or harmful status and roles, democratic or undemocratic places within organizations, consistent or inconsistent modes of reacting to the social process. "The social" is a given, a cage with insurmountable walls that are yet as transparent as glass.

## The Mass Society

Political indifference.-- An accompanying feature of socio-economic alienation is political indifference.

> To be politically indifferent is to be a stranger
> to all political symbols, to be alienated from poli-
> tics as a sphere of loyalties, demands and hopes.
> . . . .To be politically conscious, either in loy-
> alty or insurgency, is to see a political meaning
> in one's own insecurities and desires, to see one-
> self as a demanding political force, . . . .no mat-
> ter how small. . . . .[13]

[12]Jose Ortega y Gasset, Man and People (New York: W.W.Norton and Company, 1957). pp. 11-13.
      [13]Mills, White Collar, pp. 326-327.

The phenomenon of political indifference leads
naturally into a discussion of mass society. For this
reason, and for the reason that the distinction between
alienated and mass society is only one of concentration
on different subject matter, I would like to give first
a general introduction to Mills' concept of the mass
society and then deal with his specific definitions.

Let us recall the discussion on "the meaning of
power in power elite" in the first chapter. We can re-
call three contexts in which the factor we are now cal--
ling political indifference operates. First, the person
in the mass is psychologically illiterate. He has no
real notion of what he is trying to do in life and what-
ever goals and traits he decides upon as 'his own' are
usually directly copied from the cues furnished by the
mass media. Secondly, the majority of Americans no lon-
ger have any feeling of belonging or of a particular
partisanship, other than to a vague something called the
American way of life. Finally, with a lack of any per-
sonal standards other than those of 'being sociable' and
going along with whatever is represented as group opin-
ion, mass man is remarkably open to manipulation from
all quarters.

This situation of being socially adrift and yet a
frantic adherent to cultural beliefs and practices is
what we shall be talking about in a discussion of the
mass society held together by mass media. The concept

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of mass society in a general sense is a concentration
on the bigness of everything in alienated society, and
the individual's sense of detachment from it all. The
modern worker is alienated from the work of his hands
because he does no more than one meaningless clerical
or mechanical action in a process involving millions of
workers, products, and consumers. In the same way, mass
man is really detached from most of the things that he
does in his overall life activity. Everything he does
or comes into contact with has been mass-produced accord-
ing to the artificial demand created by commercial ad-
vertising. It is sold or delivered to him as if he were
just another of the machines, a consuming machine.

Thus the study of mass society is a study of the
social and political consequences of bigness and detach-
ment. However, Mills points out the special signifi-
cance of this detachment as it applies to the ways in
which people come into contact with one another. People
in mass society are not only detached from the objects
of their daily lives, but also from one another, and even
from their awareness of themselves in the long run.

Beginning at least with World War II, modern man
has been a spectator of the squabblings of nations over
the right to expropriate the earth's human cattle-herds.
It has been presented to him in moderated, disinterested
form. ". . . .The individual became a spectator of every-

thing. . . . ."[14]  It was all so big as to be insensible--
or else disgusting, an alternative which was seldom if
ever allowed to rise to consciousness.  Mills cites an
anonymous comment which perhaps represents the feelings
of the dazed spectator if he were to verbalize them.

> We have the best system in the world, to be
> sure, but often we get to thinking that we are no
> more than spectators at a play--with the right to
> watch the actors (the managers) come and go, the
> right to applaud and hiss, and even to put on other
> actors.  But not the right to put on another script.
> For the play seems to be written once and for all--
> and not by us.
> What appalls us is that it is not written by
> the managers either. . . . .Our appointed managers
> were at their posts; the wars enveloped them like
> fog drifting in from sea---The agonizing question
> is, What do our managers control?[15]

"The agonizing question" is our introduction to one fur-
ther consideration of the society in which a power elite
control and yet do not control.

Mills' distinction between public and mass.-- Mills'
formal distinction between "public" and "mass" is this:
"In a community of publics, discussion is the ascendant
means of communication. . . . .In a mass society, the
dominant type of communication is the formal media, and
the publics become mere media markets."[16]  From an his-
torical standpoint, the now defunct process of public
discussion was originally considered by the members of
democratic society to be the legitimation for governmen-
tal authority.  Even in our present state of vast govern-

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[14]Ibid., p. 329.
[15]Ibid., p. 330.
[16]Mills, The Power Elite, p. 304.

mental and military organization, it would make a great
difference if those in the elite were responsible to a
community of actual publics. With a mass society, how-
ever, those who work for the elite are able to suggest
and formulate the opinions held by the consumers of
media.

Thus, from its once socially significant position
as the legitimation of democratic authority, "the public"
has become all those who are not represented by one of
the generic terms: "business", "labor", etc. They are
". . . .those remnants of the middle classes, old and
new, whose interests are not explicitly defined, organ-
ized, or clamorous."[17]  Herein also lies the signifi-
cance of the decline of the autonomy of interest groups,
which we noted in Chapter I.

Those who are not merely in the now amorphous public
but who yet identify themselves with one of the voluntary
associations are no better off. As soon as the associa-
tional leaders gain any degree of noticeable success in
the contest for places among the elite, they become inac-
cessible in any real sense to their membership at large.
Thereafter, ". . . .the decisions that are made must
take into account those who are important--other elites--
but they must be sold to the mass membership."[18]

Mills summarizes his concept of "being in the mass"

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[17]Ibid., p. 306.
[18]Ibid., p. 308.

as a lack of membership in a group which involves both a
mutual sense of responsibility of the members to each
other, and a group ability to be politically effective.
"To belong in this way is to make the human association
a psychological center of one's self, to take into our
conscience, deliberately and freely, its rules of conduct
and its purposes, which we thus shape and which in turn
shape us."[19]

Having completed our survey of Mills' concept of
the mass society, we are at an appropriate place to raise
questions concerning the significance which he places on
"democratic social structure" and "belonging to the human
association". There are two immediate objections to his
assertion that belonging to a public in a democratic
social structure makes the difference between being lost
in the mass and being politically conscious. The first
objection is the question of how the hypothetical 'old-
fashioned' public could have had much significance if
it did nothing to alter the process of its demise.

In Chapter III we shall review Mills' survey of the
historical developments leading up to the formation of
elite-mass society. We shall note that the transformation
from public to mass came about because of a continual
trivialization of public politics, accompanied by an
equally constant increase in professional manipulation.
Conclusions on this first objection will be discussed in

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[19]Ibid.

the next chapter.

The second objection concerns the question of whether people either have belonged or can belong to groups in the fashion which Mills describes. One way of exploring this issue is to return to the previously mentioned problem of the relationship between "the person" and "the social". Accordingly, we shall now turn to considerations of what Mills' position is in reference to the significance of the social, and finally to considerations of the relation between this general position and his notion of belonging in the democratic society.

Mills' approach to social reality.-- Mills--in collaboration with Hans Gerth--has given the most explicit presentation of his approach to the problem of the social in Character and Social Structure.[20] In this book there are extensive chapters on: "Organism and Psychic Structure", "The Person", "The Sociology of Motivation", and "Institutions and Persons".

Our interest in Mills' approach to the phenomenon of a person's self-image lies in the fact that the difference between the member of the public and of the mass is in the way he perceives himself. Gerth and Mills subscribe to the not very unusual notion that ". . . .the person learns to follow models of conduct which are suggested to him by others. . . ." and so develops his own

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[20]C.Wright Mills and Hans Gerth, Character and Social Structure (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953).

repertoire of roles in social life.[21] So far the con-
cept makes it difficult to distinguish between mass man
and politically conscious man. However, the existence
of individual personality in this complex of imitating
is explained by the fact that when the person becomes
an adult, "His own expectations and appraisals of self
thus acquired may enable him to accept, refract, ignore,
or reject the expectations of the current others."[22]
Thus the emphasis is apparently on fixation of the pro-
cess at a certain crucial time; it is this which is con-
ceived of as becoming an adult. They continue, "Indeed,
if this is not the case, if there is not some autonomy
of self-image and the adult person is completely and im-
mediately dependent for his own self-image upon what
others may currently think of him, he is considered an
inadequate person."[23]

Mills is faced with a serious dilemma here. If
there is no end to the process of forming one's ideas
by imitating what everyone else is saying, the person
indeed becomes a mass man. His self-image is derived
from the loudest of the mass-media, or from the most
domineering of his acquaintances. On the other hand,
if the person acts according to the only alternative which
Mills leaves him, he internalizes one pattern of beliefs

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[21]Ibid., p. 85.
[22]Ibid. The sociological meaning of "others" is ex-
plained on p.42 of the thesis.
[23]Ibid.

and holds to it. How then is he any less forced to believe something which others have arbitrarily set for him to believe? Mills cannot find any alternative to the dilemma of the person's being either a plastic personality or a fixed personality. However, this is because he denies the existence of either self or social thought <u>outside of</u> some <u>institutional</u> <u>structure.</u>

> The psychic structure, if it is to operate in a manner harmonious to a social order, must itself be quite socialized in specific directions, even stereotyped in some. The answer to the 'facade' self' and the 'real self' dichotomy is found not by trying to jump past the socialized portions of the personality and finding something more 'genuine' in the psychic or organic 'foundations,' but by viewing the social process of the self in a longitudinal way, and 'finding' a 'genuine self' that is buried by later socializations.[24]

What is the meaning of "viewing the self in a longitudinal way"? Apparently from what follows in their book, Gerth and Mills have in mind a reliance on personality theory as advanced by George Herbert Mead, and Harry Stack Sullivan. Both Mead and Sullivan were champions of the theory of "the generalized other", in sociology and psychology respectively.. In such a theory, a person's self is viewed as a file cabinet in which are stored and cross-referenced the images of oneself internalized from early life's 'significant others', e.g., parents, teachers, friends. Gerth and Mills conclude, "To know another's self-image we have to study the others who are sig-

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[24]Ibid., fn., p. 85. Gerth and Mills are writing here in rebuttal to Fromm's argument that the "social self" is a frustration of the person's "real self". Fromm's argument largely negates the entire argument of the generalized other.

nificant to him."[25]

For Mills, since people cannot 'get out of' the
dilemma of cultural determination of their thinking, the
alternatives for them are among various <u>personality-types</u>.
The broadest classification of such types would have
three categories; the unstable, confused personality of
mass man; the personality fixed in democratic beliefs;
all fixed personalities not grounded in democratic be-
liefs. The democratic, politically conscious type of
person is the necessary preventative of mass society.
This type of person does not have problems of isolation
from his fellow members of society, from the old-fashioned
public, because he and all the others were exposed to sig-
nificant others who taught them a 'democratic' value-
orientation. What final evaluation we may make of such
an approach I shall yet reserve for Chapter III and es-
pecially Chapter IV.

## Power By Default

<u>The role of manipulation in mass society</u>.-- We have
seen in this chapter that the populace of the alienated
and mass society over which the elite rule are bound to
their legion jobs and loyalties by a socialization process
gone mad. What we are ultimately searching for here is
an understanding that the rule of Mills' elite is mainly
by failure of the ruled to do anything about political

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[25]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 93.

events.  The power elite have their power entirely by

default.  Those in the elite circles have never declared

their authority as such nor had it openly recognized,

yet their presence in high places is even made a fetish.

If modern mass man is sure that the people rule, he is

equally sure that we should be lost if anything happened

to our leaders and experts.  The only thing about which

he is not certain is whether he has any real confidence

in anyone, including himself.

It is hoped that this point of elite power by de-

fault will be fully established by what is presented in

the remainder of this chapter and in Chapter III.  In

the next chapter we shall be concerned with the history

and development of American elite-mass society.  In this

section the concept of elite power by default will be

demonstrated in its most immediately apparent aspect.

This is the maintenance of popular support for elite ac-

tions through manipulating the mass populace's ideas as

to 'what the people want'.

We recall, in passing, the phenomenon of psycholo-

gical illiteracy:  ". . . .we often do not really believe

what we see before us until we read about it in the pa-

per."[26]  Mills insightfully points out that the acceptance

of stereotyped opinions amounts not so much to thinking

in any way as it is the gaining of ". . . .the good solid

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[26]Mills, The Power Elite, p. 311.

feeling of being correct without having to think."
Throughout this chapter we have seen that the American
populace--an alienated, mass populace--is open to mani-
pulation in a remarkably passive manner. We have noted
that this state of affairs is due most of all to the
psychological effect of an over-specialized technocracy
which molds all concepts of self into the machinery's
time schedule.

Yet we have not asked in a specific manner, why do
the elite take advantage of only this one psychological
factor, why do they not rule more openly? Mills' answer
essentially is that they cannot, at least not at present.
Their authority is unlegitimated, unrecognized, and non-
political. Thus far their power rests in: the accept-
ability of their ceremonial roles; the effectiveness and
secrecy which derive from the sheer size of their oper-
ations; the alienated and distracted frame of mind of the
masses.

However, this is in reality a somewhat static view,
and it may well be that in the future elite authority
will become more open. As we shall see in Chapter III,
a dynamic view of the elite-mass society is thoroughly
incomplete without the consideration that much of the
effort of the elite is devoted to stabilizing the pro-
cesses of psychological illiteracy so that the results
are predictable.

Manipulation becomes a problem wherever men
have power that is concentrated and willful but do

not have authority. . . . .It is in this mixed case
--as in the intermediate reality of the American
today--that manipulation is a prime way of exerci-
sing power. Small circles of men are making deci-
sions which they need to have at least authorized
by indifferent or recalcitrant people over whom
they do not exercise explicit authority. So the
small circle tries to manipulate these people into
willing acceptance or cheerful support of their
decisions or opinions--or at least to the rejection
of possible counter-opinions.

Authority formally resides 'in the people',
but the power of initiation is in fact held by
small circles of men. That is why the standard
strategy of manipulation is to make it appear that
the people, or at least a large group of them,
'really made the decision!.[27]

The complexity of elite-mass society.-- As we have

now considered Mills' theory of the elite in full detail,

we are able to note that this power elite thesis does

not deny the lack of dictatorial structure which David

Truman and Robert Dahl emphasize. It simply denies that

the masses have any power compared with the elites. It

is hence a theory of the existence of significant ine-

qualities of opportunity to manipulate, in a society

which is so chaotic that neither public influence nor

unified authoritarianism exist in any real sense.

Attempts to refute Mills in terms of what he would

cite as pseudo-liberal theories only serve to confuse

the issue with which he is concerned. The argument has

been made frequently and in many variations that our cur-

rent society is a modification, through growth, of its

original democratic social structure. It would seem that

Mills' theory is frequently misunderstood because he

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[27]Ibid., p. 316.

rejects such over-simplification. Included in his com-
plex argument is the point that the meaninglessness of
liberal democracy in today's society has nothing to do
with dictatorship. If the social situation has radi-
cally changed, then our form of analysis must also change,
rather than turning into a rationalization of the present
in terms of the past. Mills writes:

> The problem is who really has power, for often
> the tangled and hidden system seems a complex yet
> organized irresponsibility. When power is delega-
> ted from a distant center, the one immediately over
> the individual is not so different from the indi-
> vidual himself; he does not decide either, he too
> is part of the network by means of which indivi-
> duals are controlled. Targets for revolt, given
> the will to revolt, are not readily available. . . .
> As political power has been centralized, the
> issues professionalized and compromised by the
> two-party state, a sort of impersonal manipulation
> has replaced authority. For authority, there is
> a need of justifications in order to secure loyal-
> ties; for manipulation, there is exercise of power
> without explicit justifications. . . . .
> A network of expediencies and conventions, in
> a framework of power not entirely or firmly legi-
> timated, can hold together a society with high
> material standards of comfort. Still, it must be
> recognized that this is not the idea of democracy
> (based upon the old middle classes) we have known;
> that there is a struggle over men's minds even if
> there is no struggle in them. . . . .[28]

The most interesting question of all is one direc-
tly opposite the usual challenges put to Mills' theory.
Such a question would be one of why we do not presently
have an overtly dictatorial system. Mills demonstrates
the fanatic nature of alienated man's strivings, as well
as his tendency to be manipulated in almost any direction.

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[28]Mills, White Collar, pp. 348-351.

He demonstrates the possibility of the elite's becoming
more powerful within the limits of what is accepted by
the populace, and he demonstrates that at least some
of the elite are quite interested in doing so.

However, he also points out the all important fact
that there is very little comparison between the exercise
of power in past eras and the exercise of power today.
On the one hand, at least a good many of the elite know
well what they are about and present an unprecedented
threat to the freedom of the individual in this culture.
On the other hand, no other ruling class has depended
more thoroughly on the neurotic tendencies of the culture.
Thus Mills' elite-theory is at once both a demonstration
of the seriousness of elite social control and an expla-
nation of the obstacles to the elite's exercising com-
plete and open power.

# CHAPTER III

## THE PRESENT ELITE-MASS SOCIETY:

## ITS FORMS AND CAUSES

### Introduction

In Chapter I we considered what the power elite is,
as Mills describes it. In Chapter II we dealt with an
explanation of how such an elite can function, by rela-
ting the elite to the environment of elite-mass society
in general. However, this presentation has so far been
made from a necessarily static viewpoint. With basic
concepts now discussed, we turn to a more dynamic view
of elite-mass society, to a view of its past and pre-
sent political history. The crux of the matter is that
the power elite and the mass society do not stand still
with the passing of time. As with anything else we might
discuss, they exist in an interrelated and ever changing
state.

Thus the crucial question in regard to Mills' argu-
ment is not whether the trends of elite-mass society threa-
ten our lives and welfare at this moment. However, it is
a question of what the consequences are likely to be, in
the very near future, from the way in which elite-mass
society is continually evolving. This chapter of his-
torical description has a two-fold purpose. By under-

standing how elite-mass society has evolved into its pre-
sent form, we shall also understand the significance of
the difference between past and present political cir-
cumstances. By discussing the present actions of the
elite and the mass populace, we may perhaps draw conclu-
sions as to three questions: whether the elite are at-
tempting to make their rule more openly dictatorial;
whether the consequences of the present situation may be
be disastrous in themselves; whether the effect of psych-
ological illiteracy promises to support either or both
such developments.

The first section of this chapter will deal with
the past political history of American elite-mass society,
and the second with its present political context. At
the end of the first section there will be some additional
criticism of Mills' treatment of political symbols and
social institutions.

## The Main Drift

The five epochs.-- For Mills the proper study of
American political history is a study of the ways in
which the circles of national decision-making were con-
stituted during the various periods. This is so because
of the all-important factor in this political history,
the accomodation of social change by shifts within power
circles, accompanied by a lack of any serious re-organi-
zation of popular political alignments. We noted in the
introductory section of Chapter I that the failure of

professional political groups to represent social changes

in their groupings has been responsible for a continual

trivialization of public politics. Now we turn our full

attention to this issue. Mills writes:

> Except for the unsuccessful Civil War, changes
> in the power system of the United States have not
> involved important challenges to its basic legiti-
> mations. Even when they have been decisive enough
> to be called 'revolutions', they have not involved
> the resort to the guns of a cruiser, the dispersal
> of an elected assembly by bayonets, or the mechan-
> isms of a police state.' Nor have they involved,
> in any decisive way, any ideological struggle to
> control masses. Changes in the American structure
> of power have generally come about by institutional
> shifts in the relative positions of the political,
> the economic, and the military orders. From this
> point of view, and broadly speaking, the American
> power elite has gone through four epochs, and is
> now well into a fifth.[1]

The first period was of course that of very early

American political history, when public enterprise was

relatively small and easy to understand. The ambitious,

many-sided men, who until recently remained American

models of character, easily carried on public affairs

through personal contact. The second period centered

around the rise of Jacksonian democracy. Large numbers

of people were introduced into the arena of public con-

cerns and the American party-system which De Tocqueville

immortalized was in its height.

The third period followed the Civil War, and is gen-

erally known as the real era of an American ruling class,

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[1]Mills, The Power Elite, p. 269. In the passage in
quotations, Mills is citing Elmer Davis in But We Were
Born Free.

"class" denoting something quite apart from "elite".

Here arose the financiers and the corporations, on the
shoulders of an ideology that afforded them complete
government protection for their monopolies. The fourth
period began with the popular unrest and economic dif-
ficulties which culminated in The New Deal. This was
properly called a "political" period, in which interest
groups and compromises played a truly significant part.
Yet, Mills asserts that "The New Deal did <u>not</u> reverse
the political and economic relations of the third era."[2]
The monopoly on the initiation of public power remained
in the hands of collaborating elites within business and
government circles. Public politics remained divorced
from any real alignments or group conflicts. It was a
political period only in that several circles got into
the act, and no one group was able to control for a long
period of time.

With the shattering dislocations of the Great Depres-
sion and the bureaucratic social reorganization of The New
Deal, the elite and the mass stood poised, ready to play
their parts in the war and ensuing fifth epoch. However,
this is a matter for the second section of this chapter.
First we shall examine more closely the process of trans-
ition between the fourth and fifth periods, what Mills
has called "the main drift".

<u>Main drift and liberal rhetoric</u>.-- To understand

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[2]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 272.

what is meant by the main drift, it is helpful to first turn to a closely related concept of Mills, that of "the liberal rhetoric". He introduced both of these concepts in his early book, The New Men of Power, and apparently carried over their contents, without their titles, into his later writings. The liberal rhetoric concerns the stifling of the public's political consciousness through professional manipulation. It is the intriguing phenomenon of a speeded-up appeal to trivialized representations of the very concepts which are thus being sabotaged. The situation Mills describes is one in which both labor and business leaders discovered that their traditional, conflicting roles require more work with less personal gain than do the new roles of secret co-optation and public showmanship. Their goal is the 'stability' of informal nation-wide organization of their areas of industry.

This goal is sold to workers and consumers in terms of 'co-operation', which may be easily attained through eliminating 'some simple misunderstandings' between 'the spokesmen' of management and labor. After all is said and done, both sides want the benefits of the continuation of 'democracy and free-enterprise', and are certainly united against the common menace of 'communism'. It is an interesting illustration of the way in which it is possible to manipulate the populace into supporting the transition to total bureaucracy, distinguished by its thorough lack of responsibility to the mass. Moreover,

the rhetorical campaign represents the maneuverings of the various would-be-elites for a better position within the circle, where the most important asset has become unquestioning public confidence in one's propaganda.

The main drift is essentially the coming together of traditionally separate power circles, in an adoption of one manipulative approach to public policy--the permanent war-economy--for the purpose of solving the problems of a uselessly specialized corporate economy. The continual tendency of the over-extended corporate economy toward crises--despite the New Deal, despite the war years' boom, despite Keynesian economics--was the central causal feature of the main drift. The plausible alternatives were either socialism or an artificial maintenance of corporate expansion, based on continual preparation for war.

Mills was very quick to analyze and publicize the significance of these developments. The New Men of Power was published in 1948. Here he wrote:

> Mr. Wilson and Mr. Forrestal are logical and realistic spokesmen for their respective interests; they voice the economic and military requirements of the main drift. Each proposal supplements the other; together they present an image of a militarized capitalism in the defense of which they would conscript America.[3]

He noted statements by the Wilson who would not become Secretary of Defense until the Eisenhower administration "... .that we should henceforth mount our national

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[3]Mills, The New Men of Power, pp. 248-249.

policy upon the solid fact of an industrial capacity

for war, . . . .'" and that war is "'. . . .inevitable

in our human affairs. . . .a basic element in evolution-

ary peace.'" Mills further noted:

> If the sophisticated conservatives have their way,
> the next New Deal will be a war economy rather than
> a welfare economy, although the conservative's li-
> beral rhetoric might put the first into the guise
> of the second. In the last transition from peace
> to war, WPA was replaced by WPB.[4]

The central question which Mills posed in The New

Men of Power was one as to why labor leaders, who had

considerably more public prestige ten years ago, failed

to do anything to counter the main drift; why did they

make no attempt to lead rather than follow? His answer

is that the union leaders were in such a position that

resistance to the main drift would have been quite diffi-

cult. Their acquisitions of power were based on attain-

ment of higher wages rather than recognized public author-

ity for labor, on a lobbying appeal to government and

business officials rather than an appeal to the public

for labor as a representative of the majority interests.

> . . . .The strategy of the labor leader in his pre-
> sent situation is to narrow the struggle by working
> for its institutionalization. . . . .He begins with
> the sanctity of union contracts and he moves toward
> control of labor-management relations by a govern-
> ment over which he has little real power.[5]

Thus, the labor-management statements and controver-

sies which reach the headlines usually have as their object

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[4]Ibid.
[5]Ibid., p. 237.

the insubordinate local union leader or the uninformed
union-busting employer, who threaten to upset the finely
balanced stability. However, the most important point
is that the public--or the mass-public--believes the ar-
gument of the liberal rhetoric. In general there is a
popular demand for the punishment of the non-conformists.
Such popular response lends further support--within the
areas of power--to the new managers of the main drift.

Mass trivia and the two-party state.-- The liberal
rhetoric and the main drift are those historical features
of the transition toward elite-mass society which have
origins directly within the circles of decision-making.
The two remaining considerations to which we now turn are
phenomena which belong to the more general American poli-
tical process. These are the trivialization of political
affairs by the mass media, and the separation of impor-
tant value conflicts from the public discussion of poli-
tics. We have briefly mentioned the second phenomenon
several times, and will give it more detailed attention
here. It will not be surprising to find that these two
matters are interrelated.

By assuming a passive, mechanical role for themselves,
the formulators of mass media content have long aided the
encroachment on modern mass man's political consciousness.

> To banalize prevailing symbols and omit counter-
> symbols, but above all, to divert from the explic-
> itly political, and by contrast with other inter-
> ests to make politics dull and threadbare--that
> is the political situation of the mass media,
> which reflect and reinforce the political situa-

tion of the nation.[6]

The second concept concerning the American path to elite-mass society is that of the elimination of important issues from public discussion. Unlike European politics, the American version of contention between political interests has never had any real individuation of positions concerning social issues. The only class which has ever been physically represented in politics has been the propertied class. The sub-groups and parties contesting with each other have been formed from the members of this same broad class of the propertied, according to what and how much they own.

> This political order has given rise to the patronage machine, rather than the ideological party, to the trade unions rather than the 'worker's movement'. Party contests have been contests between varied types and sizes of property, rather than between property and propertylessness, and unions have taken their place within and alongside the dominant parties, rather than in opposition to them.[7]

The result has been what would be expected when serious issues exist every day in society and there are no recognized interests to represent them in the formal process of politics. Rather than decision on social policy there has been the never-ending politicking by piecemeal lobbying and patronage, interspersed with periods of

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[6]Mills, _White Collar_, pp. 335-336. Mills' reference to symbols and counter-symbols will be discussed under the general criticism which directly follows this section. This use of "symbol" is roughly equivalent to a culturally accepted belief about a political institution or practice, represented by cue-words.
     [7]_Ibid._, p. 343.

righteous indignation in the media. Just as the spokes-
men of the main drift cite the necessity of stability,
so commentators on the American political scene have
incessantly extolled the virtues of our peaceful, gen-
erally disinterested politics. Mills notes:

> The U.S. political order has been continuous for
> more than a century and a half, and for this con-
> tinuity it has paid the price of many internal com-
> promises and adjustments without explicit reformu-
> lations of principle or symbol. Its institutions
> have been greatly adaptive; its traditions, expe-
> dient; its great figures, inveterate opportunists.[8]

The farcical and lifeless character of American
politics stems from the simple fact that the people who
composed the neediest and largest stratum of the popu-
lace have seldom, if ever, received even an acknowledge-
ment of their right to contend. In this situation the
political parties have developed into meaningless show
troupes in themselves, and into serious social problems
inasmuch as they have become the privileged, permanent
representatives of "the two-party state."

> The compromises in the two-party state tend to occur
> within the party formations; when they do occur be-
> tween the parties, they often take the form of non-
> publicized, even non-publicizable, deals. So popu-
> lar will is less effective than the pressure of
> organized minorities; where power is already distri-
> buted in extremely disproportionate ways, the prin-
> ciple of hidden compromise is likely to work for
> the already powerful.[9]

It is here that we return to the question of how the
mass-public has responded to this process of the disin-

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[8] Ibid., pp. 344-345.
[9] Ibid., p. 346.

tegration of political meaning.

Institutions and symbols: the problem of the social.--
Our discussion here is the one which was suggested in
Chapter II, on "Mills' approach to social reality".
There I raised objections suggesting that Mills' empha-
sis on "belonging to a public" in a "democratic social
structure" is inadequate as a remedy for the trend toward
total elite-mass society. The two objections raised were
that the democratic public was apparently ineffective
in preventing its own destruction, and that people per-
haps cannot 'belong' to groups in the manner which Mills
describes. We have already discussed the problem of be-
longing to some extent. On the historical background of
the transition from public to mass, we shall now give
further consideration to Mills' overall treatment of the
concept of the social. Our inquiry will center around
the question of how the individual in the old-fashioned
public could communicate with all the members of his
large group--in a meaningful way--any more than mass man
can communicate with his fellow members of society.

Mills has remarked, "We study history, it has been
said, to rid ourselves of it, and the history of the
power elite is a clear case for which this maxim is cor-
rect."[10] However, if some parts of his reasonings con-
cerning the formation of elite-mass society are inade-
quate, then we shall not be able to rid ourselves of the

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[10]Mills, The Power Elite, p. 274.

threats posed by it, for we shall make mistakes somewhere along the line. In Chapter IV we shall discuss Mills' general plan to alter the present direction of elite-mass society's course of evolution. The central point of this plan is that we attempt to return to a society of democratic publics with power to take action, in an environ of democratic socialism in industry.

We have just noted the possibility that this argument of Mills does not explain why people originally, 'democratically', decided upon the steps which led them into unnecessary industrial expansion, specialization, and ultimately a complete delegation of authority to officialdom. Beneath the surface of this inconsistency in his argument, our question becomes one as to what level of confusion can prevail in human communications before the society becomes a machine that coerces its unsuspecting members.

It seems necessary to bring more specific questions to bear on Mills' theory of mass and public. Did men in the old democratic publics have any more power than men in the mass, where "power" means the ability to provide for one's own welfare? Did men in the old society of democratic publics have any clearer idea of what they wanted and could attain, or did they only have a more arbitrary idea which was easily held because the customs of the social order were then more familiar to them? Did they, in fact, have a part in political decisions,

or was it merely that the stage on which the local elite
performed was nearer to them?

From what we considered in Chapter II, it would seem
that Mills' answer is that all human communication must
necessarily take confused forms which depend on insti-
tutional usages rather than on the individuals' senses
of meaning.[11] The most important issue involved in the
psychological foundation for Mills' theory is that of the
influence of symbol-associations in politics. In the
approach of Gerth and Mills, communications in terms of
symbols are of significance only as they possess a cer-
tain amount of implicitness within the culture. This
is a point to which we may readily agree. These are

> .. . .the doctrines which do not seem to be 'doc-
> trines' at all, but rather facts. In the experi-
> ence of men enacting the roles of their time, they
> seem 'inevitable categories of the human mind.
> Men do not look on them merely as correct opinion,
> for they have become so much a part of the mind,
> and lie so far back, that they are never really
> conscious of them at all. They do not see them,
> but other things through them.'[12]

The key to the existence of political authority is
in the appealing appearance of these symbols. While the

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[11]Several theorists of today disagree. However,
to simplify the presentation, we shall be concerned with
most of the countering theories in Chapter IV. Here I
want to only present Mills' theories on social structure,
keeping in mind a comparison with what Ortega y Gasset
wrote in reference to the social. From the latter's
standpoint, the confused, ordinary social process, with
its myriad hidden usages, is not nearly adequate for a
solution of our social problems.

[12]Gerth and Mills, Character and Social Structure,
pp. 276-277. The quoted passage is from T.E.Hulme's
Speculations.

symbol is certainly imposed from outside the person's own ideas, the teaching of it is such that it is made to seem something inside oneself. Hence it is a great source of motivational control for those in authority.[13] In this approach, an extensive emphasis is given to the differences in social structure which occur when there are different degrees of monopoly in reference to the central or "master" symbols of a society. To the degree that there is no significant challenge to master symbols, these become ". . . .'existential' categories of which the prevailing philosophers speak. If referred to at all, they are preceded by 'of courses' and they make up the higher 'common sense' of a period and order."[14]

It is difficult for people within the society, speaking its language, to even entertain a questioning of such symbols, since there are no verbal concepts available for comparisons. "Countersymbols" arise only under circumstances of prolonged challenge to the traditional order. According to Gerth and Mills, all social communication is thus necessarily in terms of some symbolization. The institutional guardians of the original master symbols respond to the countersymbols by creating an involved system of dogmatics where previously stood only commonly unquestioned loyalty.[15]

This view of the dependency of men upon symbols

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[13]Ibid., see pp. 280-284.
[14]Ibid., p. 287.
[15]Ibid., p. 288.

reinforces what we have already noted of the mass soci-

ety's tendency to aid and virtually demand its own mani-

pulation by the elite. The difference between democra-

tic and mass man is apparently that the latter's master

symbols have been trivialized in the mass media, while no

counter-symbols arise in the nonsensical political arena.

Alienated and isolated, mass man develops the personality

syndrome we discussed in Chapter II, and lends his anony-

mous voice to the clamor for self-destruction at a faster

pace. However, the same problem which was encountered

in Mills' approach to the relation between the person and

social institutions arises also in reference to his gen-

eral position on social structure. Gerth and Mills write:

> Symbols can 'make a difference' only if they answer
> to some feature of the character structure and the
> roles of individuals, and these character structures
> and roles are shaped in large part by institutional
> arrangements. . . . .To say that there is no symbol
> order, but rather a symbol sphere, or symbol spheres,
> is to deny /the/ 'idealistic' theory of history and
> society.[16]

In other words, this theory does not contend that

people come to be members and adherents of particular

political institutions because of a system of symbolic

thought which leads them to make common responses.

Rather, the overall concept of the influence of symbols

on socialized man's behavior is reduced to a view of them

as the mere expression of underlying institutional struc-

tures. Symbols are no more than tools, which are neces-

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[16]Ibid., p. 298.

sary because the institution depends on human beings for

maintenance, and human beings can be communicated to only

through use of symbols . The institution seems here to

have a life of its own; the social remains the given,

the insurmountable walls of glass.

Ortega y Gasset's writing can again serve to demon-

strate the objections to this view in sociology. He

writes:

> A creeping intellectual vice that has never
> been wholly cured impedes seeing social phenomena
> clearly. It consists in not being able to perceive
> a social function if there is not a specialized
> social organ to serve it. In this way, until quite
> recently, ethnologists, studying the most primi-
> tive societies in which there are no judicial magis-
> tracies nor a body or individual that legislates,
> supposed that Law—that is, the juridicial function
> of the State—did not exist among them.
> The same thing happens in regard to public
> power. It is seen only when, in a very advanced
> stage of social evolution, it takes the form of a
> special armed body, with its regulations and its
> commanders at the orders of those who govern.
> But the truth is that public power has constantly
> acted on the individuals who make up the collecti-
> vity from the time that a human group has existed.
> . . . .What happens is that, because it is so con-
> stant and ubiquitous, we do not perceive it as
> such. . . . .
> The entire accomplishment of a sociology rests
> on seeing this clearly. When something is usage,
> it does not depend on the adherence of individuals;
> on the contrary, it is usage precisely because it
> imposes itself on them. . . . .In this regard we
> are suffering from an optical error that we inherit
> precisely from its having been an opinion in obser-
> vance, a reigning commonplace, for almost a century
> —the majority principle which our great-great-
> grandfathers and great-grandfathers stupidly believed
> must ineluctably follow from the democratic idea.[17]

Thus Ortega y Gasset specifically describes

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[17]Ortega y Gasset, Man and People, pp. 267-269.

democratic social structure as a "usage". It has existence
and meaning because we were taught to believe that it is
there. Being a usage, it is such a widespread belief that
its acceptance is invisibly imposed on the individual, so
that for all purposes of daily societal functioning, it
makes little difference whether we call it a belief or
an institution. However, from the standpoint of social
theory, it makes a great deal of difference. For Mills,
the cumbersome, physically installed institution somehow
springs up, keeps going, and gives beliefs very little
chance to change.

Of course the accuracy in such a view is that insti-
tutions are physically established phenomena and do exert
a great restraining tendency on change in social beliefs.
Mills could argue quite appropriately that it is unrea-
sonable to expect any social change to come about without
the vehicles of institutional structure to organize the
directions of people's action. However, we have seen
that he does not make this kind of an argument, and in
the long run one is led to conclude that he does not sus-
pect the importance of majoritarian conformity on the road
to elite-mass society. Yet, this one serious difficulty
with his theory does not seem to detract at all from the
general accuracy of his power elite thesis.

We shall return to some final considerations of this
problem in the next chapter, following the last section
of this chapter, on the formation of today's elite.

The Formation of the Present Elite

Introduction.-- We began this presentation with a general inquiry into Mills' concept of the power elite, and we are really concluding our quest with this section. Here we shall attempt to round out a dynamic view of the elite circles, especially with regard to the potential consequences of their actions.

The elite would not hold their positions if it were not for the bureaucracies through which they can manipulate business, military, and government activities. But within the corporate hierarchy, who is distinguished a s a member of the elite? Mills notes that the persons in the bureaucracy who may accurately be called members of the elite are those who are referred to in bureaucratic jargon as the Number One men. No-one within or outside the organization holds them responsible for their decisions. Their trust is the sacred one of being wholly alerted to financial profit, or at least to the maintenance of the elite's profit system. Hence, they are completely above matters of technical competence in any specific field. Rather, they are the more successful the more they know nothing but how to hire and manipulate the man who does know how to do the job.

Just as 'managerial ability' consists largely in getting someone else to accept a salary for what you cannot do, 'ability' on the lower levels consists of the degree of conformity one has to the ways of the higher

circles. Here is the curious standard of elite perpetuation which was mentioned in Chapter I.

> When it is asked of the top corporate men:
> 'But didn't they have to have something to get up
> there?' The Answer is, 'Yes, they did.' By defi-
> nition, they had 'what it takes.' The real ques-
> tion accordingly is: what does it take? And the
> only answer one can find anywhere is: the sound judg-
> ment, as guaged by the men of sound judgment who
> select them. . . . .
> So speak in the rich, round voice and do not
> confuse your superiors with details. Know where
> to draw the line. Execute the ceremony of forming
> a judgment. Delay recognizing the choice you have
> already made, so as to make the truism sound like
> the deeply pondered notion. Speak like the quiet
> competent man of affairs and never personally say
> No. Hire the No-man as well as the Yes-man. Be
> the tolerant Maybe-man and they will cluster around
> you, filled with hopefulness. Practice softening
> the facts into the optimistic, practical, forward-
> looking, cordial, brisk view. Speak to the well-
> blunted point. Have weight; be stable: caricature
> what you are supposed to be but never become aware
> of it much less amused by it. And never let your
> brains show.[18]

The Rich: the corporate executives.-- In spinning

out the full fabric of a dynamic concept of the elite,

Mills builds each new conclusion upon the last until

the original, rough, working definition is a very com-

plex one. Whenever the existence of an elite is dis-

cussed in every-day conversation, it is almost without

fail the simple idea that 'the rich' have taken over

'the government'. Accordingly Mills first places in

context those persons in the elite who may be categorized

primarily as 'the rich'. Within their realm of activity

--manipulation in corporate profits--Mills shows that the

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[18]Mills, The Power Elite, pp. 141-143.

already rich exercise the most rigid of monopolies on opportunity. This of course is already widely understood.

Next he makes the necessary point that in a culture where money wields the dominant social power, it is rather naive to depict the rich man as ultimately unhappy, saddled with millions and ulcers. We know from our own television sets that the rich have what is a very good time by the <u>prevailing</u> <u>standards</u> of our alienated culture; in fact, they represent 'the good time' to others. If the whole of their lives is ultimately unhappy in its private corners, the middle-class suffer from both this wasting away of life <u>and</u> of being caught in the treadmill of making ends meet.

Three points follow from these considerations. First--simply--rich men have every reason imaginable to try to take over political affairs. The second point--also fairly obvious--is that in a formal government which has become so concerned with the allocation of enormous sums and financial projects of vast size, the big businessman is the one who is most concerned, and most needed by the new bureaucrats. The third point is the more complex one. It is the concept of the tri-parte committee of elites in an overview of the entire permanent war-economy. This concept will be fully developed only as we finish the following sections of this chapter.

<u>The military</u>.-- We turn to considerations of the military's part in the power elite for a more comprehensive

understanding of our larger concept. The military have come to have an omnipresent role in the elite structure for two major reasons. First, their formal training in bureaucratic communication and management makes them best fitted of all contenders for the jobs in the combined business-government-military projects of today. Not the least of these capabilities is the inculcation of narrowly-defined ways of thinking. Secondly, the thorough reversal of civilian attitudes toward the military has had much to do with the reversal of their power status. National defense, loyalty, and "massive retaliation" have replaced economics, civil liberties, and international diplomacy. Under these circumstances, it becomes difficult to distinguish the political views of government officials from those of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. This is especially true when the same men have been in both roles.

Mills points out the presence of numerous top-ranking military men in government, and their new concept of themselves as modern saviours who should be given unlimited power. Within that part of the elite's role which is open to public view, we have such classic statements as that of "Old Soldier MacArthur":

> I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown
> and dangerous concept that the members of our armed
> forces owe primary allegiance and loyalty to those
> who temporarily exercise the authority of the Exe-
> cutive Branch of government rather than to the coun-
> try and its Constitution which they are sworn to

defend. No proposition could be more dangerous.[19]

The more important influence is wielded by these men in the secret areas of elite operations, the "officially secret" areas. They frequently serve as permanent members of executive and legislative committees concerned with 'national defense'. They also appear before the federal agencies and Congressional committees to offer their 'expert' testimony. Mills contends that such expert testimony is usually accepted by the committees as the only possible conclusion on the matter.[20]

Yet, if any one point is significant in itself about what Mills calls "the military ascendancy", it is the military's public use of propaganda. Here the dynamic role of the elite becomes readily apparent, for the military are the most industrious--if not the most skilled--of the elites in propagandizing. A kind of "military reality" may be seen creeping into the mass media as well as in the language and thinking of civilian elites. Basically there are three essentials to military realism.

Foremost among these three essentials is the attitude that "pacificism is treason". As Mills describes this situation:

> Peace is no longer serious; only war is serious. Every man and every nation is either friend or foe, and the idea of enmity becomes mechanical, massive, and without genuine passion. When virtually all negotiation aimed at peaceful agreement is likely to be seen as 'appeasement', if not treason, the active role of the diplomat becomes meaningless.[21]

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[19]Ibid., p. 204.
[20]Ibid., pp. 204-205.
[21]Ibid., p. 206.

The two corollaries to this attitude are anti-intellect-
ualism and the elitism of the self-appointed experts.
The good military realist distrusts a theorist, even a
military theorist. Mills argues that much of the recent
campaign against the career personnel of the State Depart-
ment has been mainly for the purpose of getting rid of
the intelligent well-spoken persons who make the new hard-
heads uncomfortable. It is also, of course, a good way
to create jobs for the right people. The attitude of
the self-appointed expert presents itself as the most
open statement of elitism. The public is informed that
they are incapable of deciding for themselves, ". . . .
that there are such things as purely military factors
and that questions which involve them cannot be adequate-
ly assessed by a civilian."[22]

However, the point of Mills' power elite thesis is
not in showing the excessive and blatant exercise of
power by particular groups. Rather it is in showing that
so many indications of the elite's intentions and advan-
tages fall together again and again. If these intentions
and advantages are now employed in an exploratory manner,
they are certainly accompanied by an outrageous view on
the part of the elite concerning their own status as elites.
Mills points out that the military are busily at work in
an amazingly varied and expensive program for impressing
the populace that the only possible choice in political

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[22]Ibid., p. 210.

orientation is to continually expand the size and author-
ity of the armed forces. The tax-paid military adverti-
sing campaign, which costs annually an estimated five to
twelve million dollars, is overshadowed by the publicity
program which is provided free by commercial firms.

Mills points out the significance of these activi-
ties for a functional concept of the power elite:

> In all of pluralist America, there is no inter-
> est--there is no possible combination of interests
> --that has anywhere the time, the money, the man-
> power, to present a point of view on the issues
> involved that can effectively compete with the views
> presented day in and day out by the warlords and
> by those whom they employ.
> This means, for one thing, that there is no
> free and wide debate of military policy or of poli-
> cies of military relevance. But that, of course,
> is in line with the professional soldier's training.
> . . . .It is also in line with the tendency in a
> mass society for manipulation to replace explicitly
> debated authority, as well as with the fact of total
> war in which the distinction between soldier and
> civilian is obliterated.[23]

This survey of the military partners' roles in the
elite concludes with two points. The immediate goal of
the military, the new-comers to the scene of political
power, is to build up the mass's concept of the the mili-
tary's status. This is done by exhibiting the power of
the "warlords" to defend the cherished "god, home, and
country". Secondly, it may be seen that the power elite
is the circle of those who benefit from the privileges
of being wealthy, geared of necessity to the workings of
military management, and finally requiring the sanctity

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[23]Ibid., p. 221.

of the co-operation of the formally recognized politician.

The formal realm of politics.-- This brings us to our final consideration on the composition of the present elite, the formal realm of politics. The formal realm of politics is dominated by the ascendancy of the executive branch and the decline of Congress.[24] The steadily declining significance of the Congressman was anticipated in our discussion of the gradual trivialization of national politics. When the political system demands a grand side-show combined with very careful respect for the status quo--regardless of the importance of particular issues of policy--today's results come as no surprise. The career men are clowns and desk-warmers, while the politically important are the non-professionals, 'drafted' into the administration.

Four factors have combined to reduce the prestige of the Congressman; his status as an indecisive balancer of all his parochial constituents; the distracting competition of the mass media; the inability of Congress to compete or even function amid the new agencies of big government; the traditional campaign emphasis away from questions of national policy and toward personal trivia.

Mills concludes:

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[24]There is no need to describe the actions of the elite in the executive branch of the national government. In discussing the activities of the very rich, the corporate executives, and the warlords, we have already described the new personnel of the administration.

More and more of the fundamental issues never come
to any point of decision before the Congress, or
before its most powerful committees, much less be-
fore the electorate in campaigns. The entrance of
the United States into World War II, for example,
in so far as it involved American decision, by-
passed the Congress quite completely. . . . .'Exec-
utive agreements' have the force of treaties but
need not be ratified by the Senate: the destroyer
deal with Great Britain and the commitment of troops
to Europe under NATO. . . .are clear examples. . .
. .And in the case of the Formosa decisions of the
spring of 1955, the Congress simply abdicated all
debate concerning events and decisions bordering
on war to the executive.[25]

Conclusion.-- In summary, there is simply no effec-

tive countering force to today's power elite, which is

what in effect makes them the elite. They are organized

where the others are not. The sphere of old-fashioned

liberal politics has become a side-show with manipulative

overtones, and such is therefore the fate of the various

interest groups, 'the counter-vailing powers'. Most im-

portant of all, the power elite have managed to attain

an unpublicized and hence rather unassailable form of

power in every area where the society's beliefs do not

yet accept their rule.

For Mills this situation is the culmination of

America's history of power and policy changes by virtue

of a continual procession of adjustments which were always

outside of the open political process. For 150 years

Americans have continued toward becoming the people most

specialized in political hypocrisy, telling themselves

that they maintained one set of cultural values and

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[25]Mills, The Power Elite, p. 255.

pursuing a completely different set.

Today it finally dawns upon us with explosive sur-
prise that the men who have wide control over public af-
fairs occupy their positions by virtue of possessing some
rather despicable characteristics. Among these, four out-
standing qualities are: the ability to vividly imagine
and speak in terms of a thoroughly platitudinous value-
system for purposes of mass consumption; the ability to
manage those who technically manage the profit-making and
war-making system, an ability which comes mostly from
being born in the right family; the ability to publicly
lie as to the difference between the first two practices;
the realization that there is a lot of money in these
quite simple talents. This is the power elite.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE MEANING OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL
## IMAGINATION: MILLS' VALUES

### Introduction

We noted in Chapter I that Mills' writing was sometimes difficult to fully appreciate because of the dialectic-like process which goes on while he writes. There is also another singular feature in his style of writing. He does not draw an arbitrary distinction between his subject matter and his philosophy. This is perhaps a "capsule meaning" of what he calls "the sociological imagination". It is at one and the same time both a philosophy about the theory which Mills has written, and a continuation of it. In this final chapter we shall consider four topics: a general introduction to the meaning of the sociological imagination; a view of social science of the new field of combat in the battle for democracy; the views of some other theorists regarding the relation between the self and society; considerations of Mills' philosophy in relation to Marxism, democracy, and radicalism.

### Mills' Concept of The Sociological Imagination

A sociology of social scientists.-- In The Socio-

logical Imagination, Mills declares,

> It is my aim in this book to define the meaning
> of the social sciences for the cultural tasks of
> our time. I want to specify the kinds of effort
> that lie behind the development of the sociolog-
> ical imagination; to indicate its implications for
> political as well as for cultural life; and per-
> haps to suggest something of what is required to
> possess it.[1]

In this recent expression of Mills' thinking, the
practice of social science comes under the same scrutiny
to which America's socio-economic classes have been sub-
jected in his other books. Thus, when Mills discusses
social science he is concerned primarily with the lives
and activities of social scientists as persons within a
political society, effected in a personal way by the con-
sequences of that society, and peculiarly qualified to
effect it in turn. We know that mass man, in Mills' view,
is psychologically incapable of helping himself. Thus,
a good part of Mills' purpose in what he has written over
the years was to awaken the intellectuals who were not
yet pulled into the morass of mass mentality.

However, a brief glance at the activities of social
science today presents us with a strange sight of intel-
lectuals making the strongest possible bid for acceptance
into the elite. What is more important, they take up a
methodological system designed to give a pseudo-scienti-
fic status to their maneuverings. They have become trapped
in a militant belief of their own making, through needing

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[1]Mills, The Sociological Imagination, p. 18.

to believe that their new status standards correspond
to what they really want.

The sociological imagination as a formal concept
is Mills' plea to the intellectuals in the social sci-
ences to let themselves out of their own trap.

> Just now, among social scientists, there is
> widespread uneasiness, both intellectual and moral,
> about the direction their chosen studies seem to
> be taking. . . . .
> Not everyone shares this uneasiness, but the
> fact that many do not is itself a cause for fur-
> ther uneasiness among those who are alert to the
> promise /of the social sciences/ and honest enough
> to admit the pretentious mediocrity of much current
> work. It is, quite frankly, my hope to increase
> this uneasiness, to define some of its sources,
> to help transform it into a specific urge to rea-
> lize the promise of social science. . . . .[2]

The theory of the sociological imagination.-- For
Mills, social science is properly a medium through which
we perceive the connections between men's personal pro-
blems in social life and those human difficulties which
are directly a part of the social structure. It is the
theoretical counter-part of political consciousness.
Mills' idea of the sociological imagination is that one
understands particular political events through tracing
their functional relations with more basic events. The
latter are existing institutional structures whose pre-
sence makes such a difference in how people see and act
that we may call them "forces". "To be aware of the idea
of social structure and to use it with sensibility is to

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[2]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

be capable of tracing such linkages among a great variety of milieux."[3]

Such an analysis in terms of the prevailing structure of informal socio-economic institutions demonstrates that those institutions which take the form of beliefs and practices determine the power of actual agencies and officials. However, as we noted before, to the extent that this approach limits man's sense of reality to dependence on some variety of institutional structure, it fails to attain a certain insight into the phenomenon of man _qua_ man. The implications of this problem for Mills' philosophy will become evident in the other sections of this chapter.

## The Last Battle-Field

Science and ideology.-- The relation between the social scientist and social pressure is shown most clearly by Mills in his discussion of epistemology and so -called value judgments. He points out that bureaucratic 'practicality', which determines acceptable subject matter for many social scientists, represents a political as well as an epistemological orientation.

> The social scientist who spends his intellectual force on the details of small-scale milieux is not putting his work outside the political conflicts and forces of his time. He is, at least indirectly and in effect, 'accepting' the framework of his society. But no one who accepts the full intellectual tasks of social science can merely assume that structure. In fact, it is his job to make that

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[3]_Ibid._, pp. 10-11.

structure explicit and to study it as a whole. To take on this job <u>is</u> his major judgment.[4]

If intellectuals--particularly social scientists-- comprise the only group who have the potentiality of seeing through the process of elite-mass society, and if there are already forces at work to prevent this po- tentiality from developing, then the social sciences are truly becoming the last battle-field in the evolution of elite-mass society. This is the concept to which we now turn.

"To detect 'practical' problems is to make evalua- tions."[5] This is the viewpoint from which Mills discus- ses the current conflicts within the activities of soc- ial science. He assails two recurring value-positions which frequently appear disguised as the unassuming pro- cedure of the sensible, objective researcher. The first of these is the treatment of human reactions in terms of the adjustment of the individual to the social pat- terns of conformity, as if this culture's patterns repre- sented a universal way of human life. The second such value-position is the discussion of group activity in terms of "human engineering".

The first above-mentioned value-position coincides with American surface beliefs. These were discussed in Chapter III as the system of national symbols which are maintained in a trivialized fashion while the standards

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[4]Ibid., pp. 78-79.
[5]Ibid., p. 90.

of elite-mass society continue to operate. The second
value-position, on the other hand, is directed toward
the second system of beliefs, those which are actually
in operation, those of the manipulative society.

Human engineering.-- The new bureaucratic practi-
cality in the social sciences is seen by Mills to have
a direct origin in the workings of elite-mass society,
and one important causal factor within the academic world.
There are three developments in elite-mass society at
large that contribute to this practicality: first--of
course--the reliance of the elite on manipulation of
the mass; secondly, the disturbing amount of pro-labor,
anti-business sentiment created by the past several years
of economic slump; thirdly, the growing need to attune
the populace to the regimentation and specialization
of the corporate state.

The sophisticated conservatives have frequently
made it understood that the academic endeavor which ends
up formulating useful ideology and personnel techniques
has the highest market value. As for the academic fac-
tor contributing to this state of affairs, Mills suggests
that all of this would not have been possible without the
traditional lack of education in matters of critical soc-
ial analysis among American academicians.

If we grant that all or much of what Mills says here
is an accurate description, even then, is there that
much harm in these developments? Mills looks upon the

human-engineering orientation as a game with deadly con-
sequences. He condemns in particular the orientation of
the "social science factories", where it is first argued
by a pseudo-philosophy of science that one's purpose is
'to predict', and then prediction is carried on entirely
in terms of being able to control the subjects. ¡

> The slogans of the human engineers serve to carry
> the bureaucratic ethos beyond the actual use of this
> style of thought and method of inquiry. To use
> these slogans as a statement of 'what one is about'
> is to accept a bureaucratic role even when one is
> not enacting it. . . . .To act in this as-if-I-were
> -a-human-engineer manner might be merely amusing
> in a society in which human reason were widely and
> democratically installed, but the United States is
> not such a society. Whatever else it is, surely
> this is evident: it is a society in which function-
> ally rational bureaucracies are increasingly used
> in human affairs and in history-making decisions.
> . . . .Moreover, it is a period and a society in
> which the enlargement and the centralization of the
> means of control, of power, now include quite wide-
> ly the use of social science for whatever ends those
> in control of these means may assign to it. To talk
> of 'prediction and control' without confronting the
> questions such developments raise is to abandon
> such moral and political autonomy as one may have.[6]

Psychology and abstracted empiricism.-- The gen-
eral commentary which Mills makes concerning the disci-
pline of psychology provides us with an important insight
into his own psychological premises about the human self
and its relation to the social process. We have noted
several times that, while his psychological postulates
vindicate his theory of a power elite, they leave many
other questions unanswered. Most important is the ques-
tion of why Mills goes so far in denying the versions of

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[6]Ibid., pp. 115-116.

'reality' which are popular in today's intellectual circles, and yet stops short of coming to grips with the basic situation of Man in Society, with the social.

In The Sociological Imagination he states in detail the nature and purpose of his use of "psychology". It is of particular use for him as an epistemological base for social analysis. Mills stresses the point that psychology must not be a rigidly followed system of possibly meaningless and abstract concepts. Rather, it should be an orientation--an effort--to obtain an accurate understanding of the experiences of the people who we are to find responsible for complex social activity. He rejects most of the current work in formal psychology since he has seen it consisting of attempts to break down man into manipulatable stimulus-response units.

> We cannot adequately understand 'man' as an iso-
> lated biological creature, as a bundle of reflexes
> or a set of instincts, as an 'intelligible field'
> or a system in and of itself. Whatever else he
> may be, man is a social and an historical actor who
> must be understood, if at all, in close and intri-
> cate interplay with social and historical structures.[7]

Before exploring the significance of this statement, let us first consider what Mills writes in general concerning "Abstracted Empiricism". He deals with this outlook in general as a philosophy to be countered in every field of the social sciences. It is evident that his criticisms of formal psychology rest on that discipline's work falling under the heading of abstracted empiricism. He

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[7]Ibid., p. 158.

argues that what he terms the abstracted-empirical ap-

proach not only abets the growth of elite-mass society,

but that it is in itself an authoritarian substitution

of method for thinking. Thus it often results in _erron-_

_eous_ or meaningless conclusions even when its adherents

are sincere. Mills describes the abstracted-empirical

approach as a problem which involves the most central

issues of the practice of social science in any form.

> There is of course much generous comment in
> all schools of social science about the blindness
> of empirical data without theory and the emptiness
> of theory without data. But we do better to exa-
> mine the practice and its results, as I am trying
> to do here, than the philosophical embroidery.
> In the more forthright statements, such as Lazars-
> felds's, the working ideas of 'theory' and of 'em-
> pirical data' are made quite plain: 'Theory' be-
> comes the variables useful in interpreting statis-
> tical findings; 'empirical data', it is strongly
> suggested and made evident in practice, are restric-
> ted to such statistically determined facts and re-
> lations as are numerous, repeatable, measurable.
> With both theory and data so restricted, the gen-
> erosity of comment about their interplay appears
> to shrink to a miserly acknowledgement, in fact,
> to no acknowledgement at all. There are no philo-
> sophical grounds, and certainly no grounds in the
> work of social science, . . . .so to restrict these
> terms. . . . .
> So far as ideas are concerned, you seldom
> get out of any truly detailed research more than
> you have put into it. What you get out of empi-
> rical research as such is information, and what
> you can do with this information depends a great
> deal upon whether or not in the course of your work
> you have selected your specific empirical studies
> as check points of larger constructions. As the
> science-maker goes about transforming social phi-
> losophies into empirical sciences, and erecting
> research institutions in which to house them, a
> vast number of studies result. There is, in truth,
> no principle or theory that guides the selection
> of what is to be the subject of these studies.
> . . . .It is merely assumed that if only The Method
> is used, such studies as result--scattered from El-
> mira to Zagreb to Shanghai--will add up finally to

a 'full-fledged, organized' science of man and so-
ciety. The practice, in the meantime, is to get
on with the next study.[8]

In reference to these matters, Mills' value position

is that the intellectual in the social sciences has the

responsibility of preserving man's sense of individuality,

not the duty to obliterate it. Thus Mills seeks to de-

fend the self of man by stressing that the difference

between a person who can love and hate and choose--be-

tween this and "a bundle of reflexes"--is to be found in

the self's "intricate interplay with social and histori-

cal structures."

Without any disrespect for this most humanistic

intention, it may be said that Mills displays a degree

of naivite in his references to psychoanalytic theory in

The Sociological Imagination. He makes exception to his

rejection of formal psychology in stating his support

for the psychoanalytic theorists. He praises the approach

of Freud, as long as it is modified by considerations

of the influence of socially originated patternings of

personality development. He praises Freud mainly for

the latter's emphasis on the influence of childhood learn-

ing upon our later choices in various life situations.

He praises G.H. Mead for his theory that the human self-

is no more than the product of what society, as "the gen-

eralized other", sets as a pattern for identification.

We noted in Chapter II that Mills adopts this idea in

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[8]Ibid., pp. 66-67.

his own theory of personality and social structure.
He consents to include Fromm because the latter applies
his psychoanalytic approach to historical settings and
social problems. At the same time Mills' theory negates
Fromm's central concept of the intrinsic self, and it
seems possible that Mills is unaware of Fromm's thorough
opposition to many points of the original Freudian ap-
proach.[9]

To illustrate the significance of what may seem
fine points of distinction, let us devote some attention
to the actual writings of three personality theorists:
Milton Rokeach, Erich Fromm, and Abraham Maslow. It is
hoped that a discussion of some excerpts from these men's
writings will serve as a final and adequate demonstration
of the significance in this one problem with Mills' ap-
proach. We shall be concerned here with various quali-
fications which need to be added in order to overcome the
erroneous over-simplification that the individual forms
his personality only through "contact" with "others".

Self and Society: Theoretical Approaches

Rokeach: the open and the closed mind.-- Let us
first consider Milton Rokeach's theory of "belief-dis-
belief systems". It is a theoretical approach to the
relationship between a person's cognitive organization
and his being relatively open-minded or closed-minded.

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[9]Ibid., see pp. 159-160.

The belief-disbelief system is Rokeach's concept concerning the formation of the self through learning. A person begins with "primitive beliefs" about his identity and the meaning of what he is told by others, and he proceeds to the more "peripheral beliefs" which make up his concepts of the world in which he lives from day to day.

Between the primitive beliefs and the peripheral beliefs of a person's belief system are the "intermediary beliefs". These are the areas of belief in which concepts of reliable authority are formed. Thus, the peripheral beliefs of a person will be relatively closed-minded if he has formed his belief system around authoritarian intermediary beliefs. He will tend to accept whatever precepts the authoritarian sources of information have communicated to him. Only if his cognitive organization is a creative one--responsive to the intrinsic requirements of each particular situation--will he be very open-minded in personality orientation. .

The relation between these considerations and Mills' dilemma seems fairly clear. The consequences of one's social learning depend as much on the way in which he learns to think as it does on what he learns. However, Rokeach's concept of the operation of primitive beliefs bears most directly on Mills' theory of institutions and symbols. Rokeach writes:

> The concept of a belief-disbelief system. . . . .
> includes all of a person's beliefs and therefore

is meant to be more inclusive than what is normally
meant by ideology. Ideology refers to a more or
less institutionalized set of beliefs--'the views
someone picks up.' Belief-disbelief systems con-
tain these too but, in addition, they contain high-
ly personalized pre-ideological beliefs.[10] . . .
What seems important to know about these primitive
beliefs is their specific content about the physi-
cal and social world, the latter including the per-
son's self-concept and his conception of others.
Such content, it is assumed, will have much to do
with the formal organization of the rest of the
belief-disbelief system.[11]

This concept serves to point out that the indivi-

dual originally comes into contact with the society's

institutional structure through a series of primitive

beliefs as to what he is experiencing. While that which

a person is taught to believe is important, it is pro-

bably more important how he is taught to believe. After

all, the ultimate goal is not to produce persons who

believe in something which they all call democratic ac-

tion, but rather to have persons who will perceive real-

istically. Elite-mass society can be averted only by

persons who perceive originally in each new situation--

even if they are occasionally mistaken because of what

they previously learned.

The most important goal is to avoid the vicious

cycle which occurs in mass man's belief system. The open-

minded person is rather the opposite of mass man in this

respect. He has this ability which we do experience

within ourselves, that of being able to act with a good

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[10]Milton Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind (New
York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960), p. 35.
    [11]Ibid., p. 40.

deal of freedom from the enculturated ways that he was

originally taught. While it may be difficult to construct

a theory which thoroughly explains this ability, it makes

less sense to deny its existence, as Mills seems to do

in his dilemma. Rokeach writes:

> The extent to which information about the world
> is coerced into /one's already established/system
> depends upon the degree to which the total belief-
> disbelief system is closed or open. At the closed
> extreme, it is the new information that must be tam-
> pered with--by narrowing it out, altering it, or
> containing it within isolated bounds. In this way,
> the belief-disbelief system is left intact. At
> the open extreme, it is the other way around: New
> information is assimilated as is and, in the hard
> process of reconciling it with other beliefs, com-
> municates with other peripheral, as well as inter-
> mediate beliefs, thereby producing 'genuine' (as
> contrasted with 'party-line') changes in the whole
> belief-disbelief system.[12]
> The more open one's belief system, the more
> should evaluating and acting on information pro-
> ceed independently on its own merits, in accord
> with the inner structural requirements of the sit-
> uation. Also, the more open the belief system, the
> more should the person be governed in his actions
> by internal self-actualizing forces and the less
> by irrational inner forces. Consequently, the more
> should he be able to resist pressures exerted by
> external sources to evaluate and to act in accord
> with their wishes.[13]

Fromm: the destructive social self.-- Now let us

turn from Rokeach's theory to Erich Fromm's considera-

tions on modern man and his formation of self. Fromm

writes:

> The 'self in the interest of which modern man acts
> is the social self, a self which is essentially
> constituted by the role the individual is supposed
> to play and which in reality is merely the subject-
> ive disguise for the objective social function of

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[12]Ibid., p. 50.
[13]Ibid., p. 58.

man in society. Modern selfishness is the greed
that is rooted in the frustration of the real self
and whose object is the social self.[14]

In the making of man into a commodity-value, all init-

iative to actualize one's self has been replaced with an

economically oriented desire to have the proper social

habits poured into one's personality. In such a situa-

tion, "If there is no use for the qualities a person offers,

he has none; just as an unsalable commodity is valueless

though it might have its use value. Thus, the self-con-

fidence, the 'feeling of self', is merely an indication

of what others think of the person."[15]

As we have seen, Mills makes some similar observa-

tions concerning the meaning of modern man's social life.

Yet, while Mills is ultimately concerned with the poor

result that is modern society's standard type, Fromm goes

to the root of the matter. Fromm's criticism is directed

against all processes of education that replace the child's

natural sensitivities with arbitrary cultural patterns of

response, devoid of intrinsic meaning.

Early in his education, the child is taught to have
feelings that are not all 'his'; particularly is he
taught to like people, to be uncritically friendly
to them, and to smile. . . . .Friendliness, cheer-
fulness, and everything that a smile is supposed
to express, become automatic responses which one
turns on and off like an electric switch.[16]

The process of conformity gains driving support

from the fact that social man has lost his actual iden-

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[14]Fromm, Escape From Freedom, p. 117.
[15]Ibid., p. 219.
[16]Ibid., p. 243.

tity. Thus non-acceptance by society would amount to being utterly lost, a vanishing of the last shred of identity, artificial as it may be. Of man in this predicament, Fromm writes that:

> He thinks, feels, and wills what he believes he is supposed to think, feel, and will. . . . .If I am nothing but what I believe I am supposed to be-- who am 'I'. . . . .This loss of identity then makes it still more imperative to conform; it means that one can be sure of oneself only if one lives up to the expectations of otners.[17]

It is rather obvious that Fromm is not at all satisfied with a notion of the human personality's being determined by the generalized other. Our concern with this problem is demonstrated by the consideration of how the man of Mills' democratic public would be much better than mass man in answering the question, "If I am nothing but what I believe I am supposed to be--who am 'I'?"

Maslow; society and self-actualization.-- For our final consideration of personality theory we turn to the writings of Abraham Maslow. Maslow also criticizes the idea of human beings set in motion only by a series of regulations established by a social structure. However, he goes much further in stressing that whole, developed behavior in the human as an "organism" has nothing to do with the Freudian concept of motivated behavior. When

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[17]Ibid., p. 254. It is necessary to note that there are many other considerations of a very different nature in Fromm's theories. Of particular interest are his constructive descriptions of the ways in which individual man actually goes about discovering reality for himself, when he has become himself. However, the scope of this presentation precludes such a discussion.

he maintains that habitual continuation of eating, sexual

satisfaction, sense of security, etc., do not deserve to

be called motivated behavior, he is not denying that

these various activities are still desired by people.

What he does deny completely is the Freudian theory that

an already satisfied need can continue to act as a dom-

inant motivation for human behavior. When it has become

a normal occurrence for the person to have his more basic

needs satisfied with little or no effort, it is a mistake

to speak of such needs as permanent motivational factors

in his life activity.[18]

As with our previous considerations, such an approach

is a negative view of the Freudian orientation which Mills

seems to approve and partially use. Maslow goes on to

point out that the concept of a man who is continually

motivated by a sense of need--of deprivation--in basic

areas of life is simply a description of a sick man.

Until his environment becomes something other than a world

in which he feels continual threat because of such depri-

vation, he will not be able to become conscious of his

own intrinsic desires to create. "A healthy man is pri-

marily motivated by his needs to develop and actualize

his fullest potentialities and capacities."[19]

From this viewpoint, man's basic nature, his spon-

taneous animal impulse, appears to be the means by which

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[18]Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality
(New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), see p. 105.
   [19]Ibid..

he will most easily accomplish a more ethical, indivi-
dualistic life. At least with man's present state of evol-
ution, the society's system of 'moral education' must be
restricted to a carefully controlled instrument for mere-
ly assisting man to find his own preferences. The social
structure remains--in an instrumental sense--a naturally
essential ingredient for personality development. How-
ever, no society in history has yet to do anything but
use its educational process to change man's natural abil-
ities into disabling neuroses.[20]

Democracy, Marxism, Radicalism?--Conclusions

Final considerations.-- There are two broad areas
of consideration in which we shall want to draw some con-
clusions concerning Mills' political philosophy. First,
we shall review the stand which he takes in accordance
with the predictions of his theory. Secondly, we shall
make an assessment of the contribution which he makes to
twentieth century political thought.

The society of cheerful robots.-- Mills concludes
two points in reference to "rationality" in today's soc-
iety. First, what past cultural experience had esta-
blished as the alternatives of rationality and irration-
ality in social action no longer apply to the ways in
which people are now related to one another. Secondly,
the assumption that they still do apply has been one of

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[20]Ibid., see pp. 151-154.

the primary mistakes of liberals as well as Marxists. "Rationality" is represented by the processes we discussed as prediction and control. "Reason", however, involves a comprehension of the overall human significance of an event and a decision.

With modern society's blight of over-organization, over-complexity, over-specialization, and over-production, the elite as well as the mass lose comprehension of everything except their daily, isolated tasks of manipulating specific things and persons. Even the social scientist has a difficult time in understanding anything approaching the meaningful whole of the process. The result is that rationality no longer leads to reason.

Mills is afraid that ultimately we will completely attain the state of a society of cheerful robots. The standard human product of the mass society will become so ignorant of his own human nature that he will come to enjoy being manipulated. Today's celebrity-worshippers, television addicts, organization men and Americanistic fanatics are perhaps not far from attaining this mechanical status.

Social democracy and social science.-- What then are the prospects for the future? Looking at the United States political scene in 1948, Mills noted that there were only two clearly conceived systems of socio-economic planning. These were the programs of the sophisticated right and the far left. Now, as then, he still

holds to an approximation of the program of the left as
the only solution to the menace-becoming-reality in the
ultimate goals of the sophisticated right.[21] This is per-
haps the most obvious demonstration of the significance
of Marxian concepts in his general theory of elite-mass
society. In The New Men of Power he has made some very
instructive and concise summaries of the relation between
socialist thought and the contemporary state of socio-
economic affairs.

The key-note to his views on democratic social struc-
ture is perhaps contained in the thought that "The dif-
ference between Thomas Jefferson and Karl Marx is a half
century of technological change."[22] Thus the primary
emphasis in left movements has been a demand for the ex-
tension of democracy beyond its formal maintenance in
elections. Such a demand is one for democracy in the
areas of social life which are in reality the areas of
all important social power, those centered around con-
ditions of production. The program of the left repre-
sents a solution to the menace of the main drift. 'The
left' calls upon the workers to ignore the contest for
dominance of the stabilized industrial system, as there
they cannot hope to win. Rather, the workers should
concentrate on the simple, devestating power which they
could exercise in every workshop or other unit of work-

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21Mills, The New Men of Power, see p. 240.
22Ibid., pp. 251-252.

ing locale.[23]

Ten years later, in The Sociological Imagination
Mills continues to prescribe a restoration of democratic
social structure as the remedy for the severing of rea-
son from rationality and for the possibility of the soc-
iety of cheerful robots.[24]  He defines two requisites
for a democratic social structure.  Social status must
be organized in such a way that publics are able to func-
tion and to be politically effective.  Those who are
effected by a particular political policy must have ac-
cess--physically and psychologically--to an appropriate
public.

We recall that the most significant ideological
feature of elite-mass society is that of the elite's
continual effort to usurp the thinking process of the
people in the mass, promulgating an official doctrine of
reality by every available means of mass media.  The neces-
sity for scientific expertise is stressed in all matters
of policy, implying the insignificance of public discus-
sion in such cases.

It is for this reason that the bureaucratization of
social science is such an important issue for Mills.  It
is not a side issue that must be considered a matter for
polite theoretical speculation.  It is directly the next
and perhaps the last focal point in the battle between

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[23]Ibid., see pp. 251 ff.
[24]Mills, The Sociological Imagination, see pp.188-193.

individual reason and the mindless, mechanically sustained bureaucracy for bureaucracy's sake.

Thus it is the responsibility of social scientists to orient their professional thinking in accordance with their intellectual consciences, and not in accordance with academic bureaucracy. Since the struggle has shifted to the academic field, the sociological imagination represents the battle-front for the democratic cause of today. Comprehension of today's political situation depends as much on a rejection of the kind of social science that the elite would like to see practiced as it depends on a general insight into the social process.

Nevertheless, Mills' plea for a return to democratic social structure does not seem a convincing remedy for the threat of a society of cheerful robots. So many of Mills' own points speak against the adequacy of such a solution, e.g.; the trivial nature of liberal politics; the strong influence that institutions and symbols have on men's thinking in a society; the failure of labor, white-collar workers, and even intellectuals to resist the pressures of bureaucratic psychology.

Mills concludes that he cannot see a very assured answer to the question of the cheerful robot. However, we noted in Chapter III that he perhaps sets too rigid limits to the potentialities of the human personality. In this chapter we have also noted some theoretical alternatives to the view which Mills takes, and which suggest that he poses an unnecessary dilemma when there are

enough problems of other sorts. Mills cripples his hypo-
thetical man by keeping him too close to a dependency on
social education--formal and informal--for his thought-
content. Hypothetical man is condemned to ways of acting
which are no better than the best that he has ever done
under 'democracy', and which will probably be much worse,
under modern conditions.

Social determinism and social reform.-- It seems
quite appropriate to end this study of Mills on a con-
sideration of the significance of "the program of the
left" in relation to his general value-position on elite-
mass society. The program of the left is synonymous with
his plea for the creation or restoration of publics in
our political society. It is almost unnecessary to point
out that Mills' social analysis--aside from its twenti-
eth century perspective--owes much to Marx, the origina-
tor of the most fully developed theory that political
beliefs are dictated and accepted in accordance with the
sub-structure of socio-economic status. Mills' analysis
also owes much to Marx as the radical detective and sat-
irist of the unrealities of bourgeois social life. Fin-
ally, Mills' hopes for the future have much in common with
those of Marx the dreamer, whose perfect type--the at-
long-last exasperated, reality-conscious proletariat--
would be immune to the evils of cultural determinism.

Mills proposes to eliminate Marxian short-sightedness
with the consideration that cultural determinism is ines-

capable. With this view he rolls a psychological boulder
in front of the only exit from the world of meaningless
work and unnecessary hardship. Perhaps we have a right
to be disappointed, because of the great promise of his
insight. While his criticisms of contemporary society
are of the most enlightening nature, his description of
man's goal as belief in democratic social structure leaves
us rather uninformed. One has a feeling like that of
peering into the small end of a funnel--into which have
been drawn the contents of the social universe--to see
why something more has not trickled out from all this
content.

We can perhaps receive from his writing more of a
criticism of social science's ways of looking at society
than a criticism of this society. Mills wins his small
battle. It seems obvious from what we have considered
that the critics of his power elite theory may be easily
rebutted. Yet, perhaps this immediate battle cannot
really be won, considering the number of his foes and
the strength of their ignorance.

The large battle which he loses is the ultimate ap-
peal to a more radical philosophical and political revol-
ution. As it stands, his theory provides at least one of
the most adequate foundations available today for such an
appeal. Perhaps it is not at all unfair to say that the
enormous value in Mills' work would be much more applica-
ble to what is needed in social analysis today if the

considerations of someone such as Fromm were added to it.

Mills' political philosophy in retrospect.-- The
nature of social theory is reputed to be a most peculiar
one within the activities of men. While it may be no
more than another exercise within the framework of pre-
scribed cultural activity, it can also be the one thing
which breaks down the psychological walls of cultural
prescription. Mills has certainly used social theory
in the latter way, as a weapon against the forces of
inertia in contemporary society.

With the exceptions that we have noted, his writings
have a convincing, factual nature. The presentations are
theoretical, but one does not lose sight of the actual
people and events with which they are concerned. This
fact, in combination with the radical nature of what
he says, should give his readers an uncomfortable sense
of urgency. In an age of mass propaganda and widespread
escapism, this is no small thing.

We would hope that all of the evaluations which have
been made of Mills in this discussion are important in
themselves. However, the final evaluation of him as a
political philosopher would seem to be this; if one were
a "Mills-ist", would his orientation toward political
society be thereby distinguishable from other approaches?[25]

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[25]The suffix "-ism" has usually been attached only
to philosophies which have served as ideologies for actual
movements. However, it is also used frequently in a word-
coining fashion in order to describe beliefs or practices
which are patterned after a particular writer's philosophy.
Of course, the term is used here in the second way.

It is obvious from all the points which we have considered that Mills successfully meets this criterion. Of course, he accepts and repeats several ideas on social structure from the classical social theorists, and he borrows many of his ideas on psychology from others. However, few, if any, of his indictments of the hidden power relations operating in political society have been demonstrated by any other writer. The entire point of Mills' elite thesis is that of the seriousness of the threat posed by elite-mass society. Besides this general emphasis, there are perhaps five ideas which are the essentials of what is most clearly the original contribution of his philosophy.

(1) Elite-mass society has an unprecedented degree of finality. If it continues in its present modes of functioning, the reaction patterns of the mass and the manipulation patterns of the elite will come to dominate all areas of cultural activity. There is no need at this stage of our presentation to belabor the point that Mills' appeal for democratic social structure is a strange sort of campaign for saving the world. It is sufficient to remark that he points out what practices need to be eliminated if any movement of political reform does come about.

(2) Such indirectly maintained power as that of America's power elite is also open to indirect attacks. Its weak spots are as innumerable as its sources of control. They exist in every neurotic cultural practice

which can be unmasked and eliminated.

(3) The elite are as much caught in alienated soc-
iety as anyone else.  In the long run the necessary way
of eliminating the elite from society lies in widening
the alternatives for social living.  Elite-mass society
is the expected result when the only alternatives for
people in a society are those of either a meaningless,
anxious life or a meaningless, powerful one.

(4) No change in such a society will come about
easily.  The motivations, reinforcements, and causal
connections in social action are frequently hidden from
people's awareness.  It is therefore difficult if not
impossible to rationally dissuade these people from act-
ing in their present manner.

(5) Elite-mass society is quite real; in large part
it is already here.  This is what it is going to look
like.  The most fatal mistake that can be made is to tol-
erate and support today's elite because they come not in
the guise of our traditional bogey-men but in the guise
of heroes.  Politically conscious individuals would do
well to stop trying to convince themselves that we still
live in a democratic society.  They would do better to
spend their time observing and publicizing the extremely
serious collaboration which is going on among the men who
are adored six times a day on the television newsreels.

Altogether Mills' philosophy is a warning that if
today's generation of human beings cannot generate some

honest disgust and conviction in reference to modern society's degradation of the individual, then they might as well reconcile themselves to living in the elite-mass society.

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    various chapters in his other books.  Of exceptional

interest in the book are his comments on the U.S.
and U.S.S.R. reinforcing each other's war-scares,
and a set of propositions which intellectuals should
present to today's elite in order to alter the trends
which are carrying us toward World War Three.

..... "The Conscription of America," Common Sense, (April,
1945). This discussion centers around the plans of
Forrestal to develop a required integration of car-
eers for business, military, and government person-
nel.

..... "The Conservative Mood," Dissent, (Winter, 1954).
This concerns current thinking such as Russell Kirk's
regarding an elite, i.e., a throwback to the notion
of an elite as aristocracy free from the base pas-
sions of the masses. The significance of this no-
tion is that most actual members of today's elite
have nothing of the sort in mind.

..... "A Diagnosis of Our Moral Uneasiness," The New York
Times Magazine, (November 23, 1952). This concerns
the inculcated attitude of irresponsibility as a more
of our times.

..... "Liberal Values in the Modern World," Anvil and
Student Partisan, (Winter, 1952). Concerns current
thinking regarding the existence of an elite. Here
Mills attempts to document his conviction that none
of the currently revised versions of traditional
'liberalism' have any relevance to the facts of
today's political scene.

Mills, C. Wright, and Gerth, Hans. "A Marx for the Man-
agers," Ethics, LII, no. 2 (January, 1942). A re-
jection of James Burnham's argument that managers
have actually taken away the social power of cor-
porate owners on the elite level.


Background Material

Almond, Gabriel A. The American People and Foreign Pol-
icy. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951.
Almond's book would seem to be one of the most not-
iceable efforts to incorporate an open attitude of
elitism into contemporary social science. He argues
that a "democratic discipline" must be taught in
the universities if we are to avoid those "devia-
tions from consensus" which are responsible for the
confusion among the present elite makers of foreign
policy.

Durkheim, Emile. Emile Durkheim on the Division of Labor

in Society. Translated by George Simpson. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933. Durkheim's treatment of the two forces of organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity. Division of labor refers not to mere manufacturing systems, but to a division of functions throughout the society, from which comes human progress, provided division is softened here and there with aspects of stability. Durkheim is one of the sociological theorists whose traditional establishment of social organization over individual expression may be responsible for such an expression of value in Mills.

..... Sociology and Philosophy. Translated by D.F. Pocock. Glencoe: Illinois, 1953. A particular stressing of the idea of supremacy of social enterprise over the whims of the individual, which underlies his theory of division of labor.

Gini, Corrado. "The Scientific Basis of Fascism," Political Science Quarterly, XLII (1927). Gini's analysis of the rationale for fascism serves mainly to point out the great modifications of elite maintenance in the rule of Mills' power elite. Gini notes that the fascist elite is distinguished by its concern for the future of the state over the interests of the individuals of the present. The state is viewed as an organic unity and the ruling elite are a minority publicly known to be dedicated--to the point of death--to their continued rule. Such fascism under the necessary and right circumstances is the natural course for a national state in a world of competing states. This aspect of elitism is shared by Mills' elite more in their attitudes of irresponsibility and assumed right to use the elite-mass society for their own purposes than in public declarations or show of force.

Lenin, V.I. The Teachings of Karl Marx. New York: International Publishers, 1930. The particular interest of this work of Lenin's is in its description of Marx's materialist modifications of Hegel's dialectic of history. For Hegel--we may note--dialectic evolution stopped short with the Prussian nation-state; for Marx the class-conscious proletariat would end pre-history; for James Burnham the managerial society had evolved on the passing of the socialist state of history. Thus Mills carries on the modification of the dialectic with his idea of the combination of elites who barely gave the managers a chance to monopolize control, if indeed they ever did.

Marx, Karl, and Engels, Friedrich. The German Ideology.

Reprinted in Capital and Other Writings by Karl
Marx. Edited by Max Eastman. New York: Random
House, Inc., 1932. In "Outlines of a Future Socie-
ty", Marx and Engels presented a portrayal of the
idyllic life of the free, efficient, classless and
unoppressed man, which would seem to place Mills'
ideal of 'the democratic public' in a harsh light.
It is most interesting to read this discussion of
alienation and man's social growth and compare it
with the bitter experience of the New Deal's world,
wherein Mills' perspective permits him knowledge
which Marx could not have foreseen.

..... Manifesto of the Communist Party. Chicago: Henry
Regnery Company, 1955. The Manifesto is one of the
readiest sources for seeing the insight which Mills
must have gained from Marx concerning the driving
political force of the technological process. The
destruction of the lower middle class by the big
bourgeoise parallels Mills' description of the eros-
ion of upper and middle class American society by
the new corporate circles. Most obvious of the re-
lations of the Manifesto to Mills' elite theory is
the continual emphasis on history as a succession
of socio-economic class struggle.

Michels, Roberto. Political Parties: A Sociological
Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Demo-
cracy. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1949.
In reference to the transitional character of elite
membership, the tendency of the public to degen-
erate into a manipulated mass, and the need for re-
educating the masses and making them politically
conscious, Michels would certainly seem to have been
quite relevant to Mills' search for an adequate no-
tion of the elite. His description of the elite
as an oligarchy who use the society's laws rather
than being restricted by them is also quite rele-
vant.

Mosca, Gaetano. The Ruling Class. New York: McGraw-Hill,
1939. Mosca's emphasis concerning society was that
every governmental system is merely another variation
in form of oligarchy. Perhaps the most important
consideration in his theory in reference to Mills is
Mosca's point that the elite seldom rule by force
of a recognized nature. Indeed, in one sense they
do serve their subjects, for they satisfy people's
desires for a sense of purpose and order. For this
reason, an elite is never permanent but rises and
falls according to the underlying pattern of cul-
tural activity.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Philosophy of Nietzsche. New

York: The Modern Library, 1954. In "Beyond Good
and Evil", Nietzsche's idea of the elite is an ex-
cellent example of one of history's more convincing
arguments for elitism, and of what Mills' elite
most definitely is not. Nietzsche saw a world
aristocracy as the only possible way for a human
race of generally weak members to escape the alien-
ation of mass culture. Mills is rather unique among
elite theorists in that he points to today's elite
as ruling somewhat in the fashion of 'Brave New
World', along with the '1984' aspects of their desire
to conscript the nation into a permanent war-econo-
my. Ironically, it was precisely the 'Brave New
World' development that Nietzsche proposed to avoid
through the rule of an elite.

Pareto, Vilfredo. Vol. IV, The Mind and Society. New
York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935. The most
important consideration in Pareto's monumental work
is his formal theory of elite structure. In gen-
eral, elites rise and fall according to the type of
"residues" and "derivations" (i.e., derivations from
sentiments) which come to prevail in a period. Par-
ticularly, every society is composed of an elite and
a non-elite. The elite consists of a governing elite
and a non-governing elite, the latter being the privi-
leged professional classes. The governing elite was
further divided into an inner and outer group whose
respective functions were power and authority. The
important thing for society was that elites continue
to alternate in keeping with overall change.

Weber, Max. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Trans-
lated by H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York:
Oxford University Press, 1946. At least three as-
pects of Weber's thinking are very like emphases
in Mills. Weber's form of social analysis was to
divide the social function or area of behavior into
categories or types and to use typologies as gen-
eral principles of sociology. He was further con-
cerned that reason prevail in the activities of men
in order that their society eventually evolve into
a form beneficial to all, rather than exerting a
tyrannical form of tradition. Finally, the demo-
cratic society was said by Weber to be a desireable
goal, thoroughly compatible with social stability,
since tendencies toward authority and aristocracy
within it were more than sufficient. Bureaucratic
organization--even under the aegis of science--was
seen by him as a dangerous enemy of the welfare of
the individual.

Wells, H.G. The Shape of Things to Come. New York: The
MacMillan Company, 1933. From among his many books

on social ills and ideals, Wells provided here a
prescription for recruiting the new elite (he addressed
himself to the same subject somewhat in What Are We
to Do with Our Lives? and New Worlds for Old). Wells'
position is most interesting inasmuch as in this era
of militant elitism, he proposed a Platonic notion
of the elite as guardians, which was also consider-
ably more humanistic than the proposals of Plato.


## Secondary Sources


### Books

Burnham, James. The Managerial Revolution: What is Hap-
     pening in The World. New York: The John Day Com-
     pany, Inc., 1941. Burnham's famed theory argued
     in 1941 that the Managerial Revolution was theoret-
     ically under way, being then in its early stage of
     transition. While the power position of the managers
     naturally rested on the resulting complexity of tech-
     nology and bureaucracy, Burnham made the salient point
     that the decisive factor in establishing a period of
     rule by one class is the full development and gen-
     eral acceptance of an ideology which assures control
     to the new class. The point he contributed to Marx-
     ian analysis is that all attempts at socialism have
     proved themselves impossible due to the one factor
     of the inevitable rise of a managerial class, immed-
     iately removing the socialistic character from the
     society. In 1941 he predicted that Fascism, Com-
     munism, and New Dealism would be the three groupings
     of world managerial control. Since 1941--for what
     reasons one could hardly say--Burnham seems to have
     made a fetish of being resigned to this division of
     the world between the groups of managers.

Fromm, Erich. Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psycho-
     logy of Ethics. New York: Rinehart and Company, 1947.
     This book of Fromm's provides invaluable background
     for consideration of the ways in which the ethical
     alternatives of today's political society relate to
     some rather permanent psychological characteristics
     of man. The elusive problem with which Fromm wrest-
     les here is that of the individual's ability to de-
     termine his own course of action in an age of clash-
     ing claims of cultural determinism. As an alterna-
     tive to both elitism and mass-ism, Fromm's answer
     is that it is not only reconcilable with sanity but
     essential for sanity that the individual rely ulti-
     mately only on his faith in himself, not on the dog-
     ma of any group for proof that he has worth.

..... The Sane Society. New York: Rinehart and Company, 1955. The well-known theme of this book is that the basic nature of man sets certain requirements for his way of life, and that the plight of modern society is explained by the fact that it is a thoroughly sick society. Social institutions of today prohibit people from achieving any personally meaningful fulfillment of their needs, but at the same time these institutions substitute prescribed cultural activities which--so to speak--harness the energy which people are trying to exert for fulfillment of their actual desires. Thus, Fromm notes that men can be led without leaders, can strive with no visible aim other than to keep on the move. The system is self-perpetuating, for we must ask of today's political conformism, "Who can revolt against Noboby?".

Lasswell, Harold D. Power and Personality. New York: W.W.Horton Company, 1948. Lasswell's major emphasis is that a cultural pattern in which children are taught deprivation, submission, and force as dominant values must necessarily produce both leaders and followers of an undemocratic nature. The leaders are usually--not always--merely those who have learned the ways of agression as rewarding in their families. As every person who is able to exercise social power may be said to be within what is defined as his society's elite, the realistic solution is to strive for inclusion of every person within the society into the elite. The alternative to this is a world of garrison-states in which leaders keep their followers forever in preparation for the inevitable millenium to which the one obstacle is the existence of 'the enemy'.

Mannheim, Karl. Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge. Translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936. Mannheim's approach to the sociology of knowledge has a noticeable amount of similarity to Mills' concept of the sociological imagination. The free-floating intelligentsia must realize their responsibility in a world which has always had its concepts of reality determined by various ideologies, and which today is beset with the new problem of cynicism. In science as well as politics, the intelligentsia must make clear the needs of man apart from the framework of accepted ideologies.

Marx, Fritz Morstein (ed.). Foreign Governments: The Dynamics of Politics Abroad. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1949. Fritz Morstein Marx makes a contribution to the field of contemporary social theory

from the unusual corner of comparative government.
He notes the great increase of bureaucracy and
sacrifice of the individual to the totalitarian
state enterprise in a variety of national situations.
The hope which he presents is that people every-
where will realize the importance of a campaign to
relocate political responsibility in groups where
people actually know and respect one another. Other-
wise observation teaches us that people will continue
to cling to the rationalizations of their respective
cultures for whatever shreds of security they can
derive there.

Neutra, Richard. Survival Through Design. New York:
    Oxford University Press, 1954. Here is a rather
    solitary contribution to contemporary social theory,
    from an architect grounded in the study of philoso-
    phy and biology. Neutra points out that man can take
    a continual series of steps out of the clutter of
    his modern technological civilization if he will
    design his material objects in accordance with his
    individual needs and away from problematic tradit-
    ional ways.

Orwell, George. Nineteen Eighty-Four, A Novel. New York:
    Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949. This novel has
    been for some time an inevitable item in discussion
    of the trends of contemporary society. Orwell's
    importance lies in his pointing out the logical con-
    sequences of social practices in which we are al-
    ready engaged, particularly our fanatic conviction
    that our culture's ignorance is the world's most
    important truth.

Pappenheim, Fritz. The Alienation of Modern Man. New
    York: Monthly Review Press, 1959. Tracing the inter-
    relations between existentialism, Marx's concept of
    alienation, psychoanalysis's concept of it, and re-
    cent controversy in and about social theory, Pap-
    penheim proposes to treat the subject of alienation
    itself as an object for study. Alienation is thus
    discussed as a general phenomenon, as a causal fac-
    tor which permeates modern man's conception of his
    life. Part of the work is a special concentration
    on some of Marx's writings on alienation which have
    not yet been translated into English.

## Articles

Bell, Daniel. "The Theory of Mass Society: A Critique,"
    Commentary (July, 1956). Bell, one of the 'new con-
    servatives', makes here a refutation of the wide-
    spread emphasis that modern industrial society holds

holds prospects only of further alienation. He does so on the grounds that the 200,000 voluntary membership associations in America have an aggregate (although widely overlapping) membership of 80 million. The argument is that we should not make so much of the dislocation of modern man from the primary associations when he has so many opportunities to replace them. Of course, this argument refers to only one aspect of 'alienation', and perhaps a lesser one.

Bendix, Reinhard. "Max Weber's Interpretation of Conduct and History," American Journal of Sociology, LI. Bendix discusses Weber's emphasis on all social history being a product of the overall consequences of the particular orientations in "social thought" that all the individuals of a society happen to have. Bendix criticizes Weber for having an atomistic concept of the social process. Mills affirms Weber's position that social events must indeed pass through--so to speak--the personality systems of the culture's individuals.

Braybrooke, David. "Diagnosis and Remedy in Marx's Doctrine of Alienation," Social Research, XXV (Autumn, 1958). Here is an elaboration on what is technically involved--from the standpoint of necessary action --in the application of a Marxian view to the problem of alienated man in today's industrial society. Braybrooke points out that from Marx's considerations, and from ours, the meaningfulness of Marxian remedies for technological alienation depends on the employment of appropriate techniques. The most important of these is a maintenance of individual ability to effect decisions in economic planning despite an involvement of several million persons in the society.

Guthrie, Elton F. "Sociological Theory and Historical Materialism," Sociology and Social Research, XXI. Guthrie stresses the relevance of Engel's and Marx's combination of the dialectic and materialism to the unattained goal of sociological theory. The latter is in his view a concept of overall social functioning which would provide a continual index as to how consistently theorists are working toward a whole picture of social history. Guthrie reflects upon the misfortune of western mechanists who will not even hear of approaching the 'dogmatics' of Marx.

House, F.H. "Pareto in the Development of Modern Sociology," Journal of Social Philosophy, I. House goes to great lengths to show that Pareto's two emphases for sociological theory were the irrational behavior of people and the need to arrive at a mathe-

matical computation of the forces involved in the
social process of "equilibrium". The first, he says,
was not very important, but the latter has been un-
fortunately neglected. Throughout, his position
that Pareto stands rather isolated in sociology leads
one to conclude merely that there has been a lack
of interest in elite theory.

Marx, Fritz Morstein. "The Bureaucratic State--Some
     Remarks on Mosca's Ruling Class," Review of Politics,
     I (1939). From the analytic standpoint, Marx points
     out that Mosca was the foremost critic os the bureau-
     cratic state, including its tendencies to destroy
     humanistic culture and to arise under such occurren-
     ces as the Soviet movement. Mosca is seen as point-
     ing out the interrelation of social democracy--as
     a movement--, bureaucratization, and massification
     of culture. He would be perhaps the most signifi-
     cant of classic elite theorists where Mills is con-
     cerned.

Lowith, Karl. "Man's Self-alienation in the Early Wri-
     tings of Marx," Social Research, XXI (Summer, 1954).
     An interesting analysis which seems to both coincide
     with wider treatments of Marx and to throw detailed
     light on the subject. Much of this article centers
     around the content of Marx's doctoral dissertation
     where he stated his humanistic principles without
     working them into the heavier later terminology of
     his economic analysis. Not yet having to argue
     against bourgeois idealism, Marx here labeled him-
     self "an idealist" in the sense that he held the
     dominant consideration in ethics to be the preser-
     vation of individual man's use and control of him-
     self for himself. The ideology wherein man became
     a thing, an object of use for others as a commodity,
     was labeled by Marx "positivism" and "perverse mat-
     erialism".

Simpson, George. "Durkheim's Social Realism," Sociology
     and Social Research, XVIII. Simpson discusses Durk-
     heim's arguments for a sociology dealing only with
     collectivities, only with "social thoughts". Durh-
     heim's argument centered around the approach that
     the necessity of the individual as an ingredient for
     society does not make society merely a conglomera-
     tion of individuals. Simpson criticizes Durkheim
     mainly for projecting his positivist desire for
     certainty into society, choosing to call "social"
     only what could be fitted into this desired science.

Wilson, Ethel M. "Emile Durkheim's Sociological Method,"
     Sociology and Social Research, XVIII. Wilson char-
     acterizes Durkheim's method of theorizing as one

oriented entirely to exterior and often merely sta-
tistically appearance of social events.  As what peo-
ple in a society think to be real is a social fact
for Durkheim's theory, analyzing the meaning of ac-
tions in one's own opinion is to be avoided as a
bias which will prevent one from getting 'scienti-
fic' results.

Worthington, R.V.  "Pareto: The Karl Marx of Fascism:
A Scientific Sociologist," Economic Forum, I.  Par-
eto's significance in reference to Marxism was in
his pointing out that the various factors involved
with the process of social equilibrium tend to
counter the influence of economic determinism.  This
is quite relevant in Mills' synthesis of ideas on
elite theory.