3. Classes, Status Groups and Parties

The structure of every legal order (not only the 'state') has a direct influence on the distribution of power, whether economic or of any other kind, within the community concerned. By 'power' we mean very generally the chances which a man or a group of men have to realise their will in a communal activity, even against the opposition of others taking part in it. 'Economically determined' power is not, of course, the same thing as 'power' in general. On the contrary, economic power may result from the possession of power which rests on other foundations. Conversely, men do not only aspire to power for the sake of economic enrichment. Power, even economic power, may be valued for its own sake, and it is very often the case that men seek power in part for the sake of the honorific social 'status' which it brings. Not all power, however, brings status with it. The typical American 'boss', like the typical large-scale financial speculator, consciously renounces such status; and generally speaking it is precisely 'pure' economic power, especially power based on 'naked' cash, which is not accepted in any way as a basis of social 'status'. On the other hand, power is not the only basis of social status. Quite the contrary: social status or prestige can be, and very often has been, the basis of power, even of economic power. The legal system may guarantee both power and status. But, in normal circumstances at least, it is not their primary source; it is merely an extra factor which increases the chances of possessing them but cannot always make it certain. The mode of distribution of social 'status' among typical groups of members of a community will be called the social order. Its relation to the 'legal order' is, of course, very similar to that of the economic order. It is not the same as the economic order, by which we mean only the mode of distribution and consumption of economic goods and services. But it is of course very much affected by the economic order and interacts with it.

The distribution of power in a community is reflected in the existence of 'classes', 'status groups' and 'parties'.

Classes are not 'communities' in the sense we have adopted, but merely possible (and frequent) bases of communal action. The term 'class' will be used when (i) a large number of men have in common a specific causal factor influencing their chances in life, insofar as (ii) this factor has to
do only with the possession of economic goods and the interests involved in earning a living, and furthermore (iii) in the conditions of the market in commodities or labour. This we shall call 'class situation'. It is an elementary fact of economic life that the manner in which the disposal of property in goods is distributed within a human group whose members encounter one another in the market for purposes of exchange and compete with one another is in itself sufficient to create specific chances in life. In accordance with the principle of marginal utility, it excludes the propertyless from taking part in the competition for highly valued goods in favour of the propertied and thus in practice gives the latter the exclusive opportunity to acquire such goods. It means that, other things being equal, those who, being already provided with goods, are not dependent on exchange, alone have the exclusive opportunity of profiting from exchange. Thus, in general at least, it increases their power in the price struggle against those who, having no property, have nothing to offer but their labour-power, either in its natural form or in the form of the products of their labour, and so are compelled to sell this labour and its products in order to keep body and soul together. It means that only those who own property have the possibility of shifting what they own from the sphere of benefit as 'wealth' to the sphere of employment as 'capital': hence they alone can become entrepreneurs and have the chance of directly or indirectly participating in capital profit. All this applies in the sphere of pure market conditions. 'Property' and 'propertylessness' are thus the basic categories underlying all class situations, whether in the form of struggles over prices or struggles between commercial competitors.

Within this general framework, however, class situations may be further differentiated in terms of the nature of the property which is a source of income, on the one hand, and in terms of the nature of the services offered on the market, on the other. The class situations of property-owners may be distinguished by the differences in the kind of property which they own: dwelling-houses, workshops, warehouses or shops, agricultural land (this last may be further subdivided in terms of the size of landholdings - a quantitative difference with possible qualitative consequences), mines, livestock, men (slaves), disposal of moveable means of production or industrial tools of all kinds, above all money or objects readily exchangeable for money at any time, products of one's own or other people's labour (this last depends on the stage of development of consumption), or commercially viable monopolies of any kind. Their class situation depends as much on these differences in kinds of property as on the 'meaning' which they can and do give to the use made of their property, especially their property with a money value; such factors determine whether, for instance, they belong to the rentier or the entre-
Classes, Status Groups and Parties

preurial class. There is an equally marked distinction amongst those who have no property but only their labour to offer, depending as much on the nature of the services performed as on whether these services involve them in a continuous or only a casual relationship to the consumer. The element which is always present in all cases where the concept of 'class' is applied, however, is that it is the nature of chances in the market which is the common factor determining the fate of a number of individuals. In this sense, the 'class situation' is ultimately a 'market situation'. It is only a first step towards the formation of genuine 'classes' when in cattle-breeding societies the effect of pure, naked ownership as such is to give over those without property into the power of the cattle-owners as slaves or bondsmen. But it is certainly true that such situations first reveal, in the practice of loaning cattle and the sheer rigour of the law on debt in such communities, the way in which the mere ownership of property as such can determine the fate of an individual: in this there is a sharp contrast with agricultural communities based on labour. The debtor-creditor relationship first formed the basis of 'class situations' in the towns, where a credit market of a rather primitive kind developed, with interest rates which increased in proportion to the degree of distress and with virtual monopolisation of lending by a plutocracy. With this, 'class struggles' began. By contrast, when the fate of a group of men is not determined by their chances of using goods or labour in the market (as in the case of slaves), that group is not in the technical sense a 'class' but a 'status group'.

As we are using the term, then, 'classes' are clearly the product of economic interests, bound up with the existence of the 'market'. Moreover, the concept of 'class interests' becomes ambiguous, indeed ceases to be in any way a clearly empirical concept, as soon as it is taken to mean anything but the actual direction taken by the interests of a specific cross-section of those subject to a class situation, and following from the class situation with a specific probability. In the same class situation, even when other things are equal, the probable direction of the interests of an individual worker will vary greatly according to whether, in terms of native ability, he is highly, averagely or poorly qualified for the occupation in question. It will depend likewise on whether or not there has developed out of the 'class situation' either communal action on the part of a larger or smaller section of those collectively involved in it, or even some form of association, such as a trade union, from which the individual can expect definite results. It is by no means always the case that some form of association or even of communal action emerges from the common class situation. Rather, its effects may be limited to generating an essentially similar reaction: that is, to use the terminology we have adopted, to generating a 'mass action'; and even this may not always result. Often,
moreover, such communal action as results is only of an amorphous kind. An example of this is the 'grumbling' by workers which was recognised in ancient Eastern ethical codes – the moral disapproval of their master's behaviour. Presumably this had much the same practical significance as the phenomenon which has once again become increasingly typical within precisely the most recently developed sectors of industry – the 'go-slow', or deliberate restriction of output by tacit agreement among the workers.

The extent to which there emerges from 'mass action' by the members of a class some form of 'communal action', or even possibly of 'association', depends on general cultural conditions, especially of an intellectual kind, and on the extent of the contrasts which have emerged on the basis, above all, of the visibility of the connexions between the causes and the consequences of the 'class situation'. Differences in chances in life, however marked, are certainly not sufficient in themselves, as experience shows, to create 'class action' in the sense of communal action by the members of a class. For that, it must be possible clearly to recognise that they depend on and result from the class situation. Only then can the contrast in chances in life be experienced as something which is not merely given and to be endured, but which results either (i) from the existing distribution of property or (ii) from the structure of the concrete economic order, and only then, therefore, can reactions to it take the form not of sporadic acts of irrational protest but of rational association. 'Class situations' of the first category existed in just such a characteristically blatant and visible form in the ancient world and in the Middle Ages in the towns, especially where great wealth had been accumulated by a virtual monopoly of trade in the local industrial products or food supplies; and they existed also in agricultural societies at various periods when commercial exploitation was on the increase. The most important historical example of the second category is the class situation of the modern 'proletariat'.

Every class may therefore give rise to some form of 'class action', of one of the numerous possible kinds; but it need not do so. In any case, a class itself is not a community, and it is misleading to treat classes as conceptually equivalent to communities. Finally, it is wrong to operate with such concepts as those of 'class' and 'class interest' in the kind of pseudo-scientific way which is all too common today, merely on the strength of the fact that men in the same class situation, faced with situations as emotionally charged as are those of economic life, regularly react by mass action in the direction which best approximates to their average interest – a fact which is as important for the understanding of historical events as it is basically simple. The most classical expression of this pseudo-scientific use of concepts is the contention of a gifted writer
that the individual may well mistake his own interests, but the ‘class’ is ‘infallible’ about its interests.

If classes are not themselves communities, then, class situations arise only in the context of a community. The collective action which leads to the emergence of a class situation, however, is not in its essence an action undertaken by members of the same class but one involving relations between members of different classes. For example, the forms of communal action which directly determine the class situation of workers and entrepreneurs are the labour market, the commodity market and the capitalist enterprise. The existence of a capitalist enterprise in its turn, however, presupposes the existence of a form of collective action which is ordered in a very special way – one which protects the possession of goods purely as such, and in particular the power of the individual in principle to dispose freely of the means of production: that is, it presupposes the existence of a ‘legal order’ of a specific kind. Every sort of class situation, since it is primarily based on the power conferred by property as such, is realised in its purest form when all other factors which might determine the significance of the mutual relations between classes are excluded as far as possible, with the result that the use of the power of property on the market holds maximum sway. Amongst the impediments to a consistent realisation of the naked market principle are ‘status groups’, which for the moment and in the present context are only of interest to us from this point of view. Before dealing briefly with them, we may simply point out that there is not much to be said in a general way about the more specific kinds of opposition between ‘classes’ (in the sense of that term which we have adopted). The radical change which has taken place between the past and the present may be connected, if a certain imprecision is admissible, with the fact that the struggle by which class situations are brought about has progressively shifted from the area of consumer credit, first to that of competition on the commodity market and then to that of price conflict on the labour market. The ‘class struggles’ of the ancient world – insofar as they were genuine ‘class struggles’ rather than conflicts between status groups – were primarily struggles between debtors threatened with debt-slavery (mainly peasants, but also including artisans) and their creditors who lived in the towns. For debt-slavery, both among cattle-breeders and in commercial towns, especially towns engaged in sea-borne trade, is the normal consequence of inequalities of wealth. The debt relationship as such gave rise to class action even as late as the time of Catiline. The next development, which resulted from the increasing tendency for the town’s needs to be provided by foreign corn importers, was the struggle over the food supply, in the first instance the provision of bread and its price. This struggle lasted right through antiquity and the whole of the Middle Ages; it grouped
together all those without property in opposition to those who had a real or supposed vested interest in a high price for bread, and came more generally to cover all goods essential for the maintenance of life, including those required for artisan production. Conflicts over wages were not an issue in the ancient world or in the Middle Ages; even well into the modern era they existed only in embryonic form and were slow to develop. They took second place in every way not only to slave rebellions but also to struggles in the commodity market.

The objects of protest for those without property in the ancient world and the Middle Ages were such things as monopolies, pre-emptions,cornering of the market, or the holding back of goods from the market in order to raise their price. By contrast, today the central issue is the determination of wage levels. The transitional stage is represented by those struggles over access to the market and the determination of commodity prices which occurred between retailers and artisans working in cottage industry in the earliest days of the modern era. It is a general feature of those class conflicts which result from the market situation, and must therefore be mentioned here because of its generality, that the conflict is usually at its most bitter between those who actually and directly participate as opponents in the price struggle. It is not the rentier, the shareholder or the banker who suffers the resentment of the workers, even though it is his coffers which are filled by much more profit (for which he has done much less work) than are those of the manufacturer or the director of the enterprise. Rather it is the latter against whom resentment is directed, as the immediate opponents in the price struggle. This simple fact has often been decisive in determining the role of the class situation in the formation of political parties. It has, for instance, made possible the several varieties of patriarchal socialism and the attempts frequently made, at least in earlier times, to forge an alliance between threatened status strata and the proletariat against the 'bourgeoisie'.

Status groups, in contrast with classes, are normally communities, though often of an amorphous kind. In contrast with the 'class situation', which is determined by purely economic factors, we shall use the term 'status situation' to refer to all those typical components of people's destinies which are determined by a specific social evaluation of 'status', whether positive or negative, when that evaluation is based on some common characteristic shared by many people. This status may also be bound up with a certain class situation: class differences are connected in manifold ways with status differences, and, as remarked earlier, the ownership of property in itself comes to acquire a status value, not in every case, but with remarkable frequency in the long term. In the type of neighbourhood association to be found in subsistence economies in
all parts of the world it is very often the case that the richest man as such becomes 'chief', which often means only a certain precedence in status. In modern 'democratic' society in what is called its 'pure' form, that is, in the form in which all explicitly regulated status privileges for individuals are done away with, it is the case, for instance, that only families belonging to broadly similar taxation groups dance with each other: this is reported, for example, of some of the smaller Swiss cities. But 'status' is not necessarily connected with a 'class situation': normally, it stands rather in glaring contradiction to the pretensions of naked property ownership. Furthermore, those who own property and those who do not may belong to the same status group: this frequently happens and its consequences are very noticeable, so precarious may this 'equality' of social assessment become in the long run. The 'equality' of status of the American 'gentleman' finds expression, for instance, in the fact that, outside the context of the 'enterprise', where subordination is determined by purely realistic factors, it would be considered the height of bad taste - wherever the old tradition prevails - for even the richest 'chief' to treat his 'clerk' as in any way at all of unequal rank, even in the evening at the club, over billiards or at the card table. It would be unacceptable to treat him with that kind of condescending affability which marks a difference in position, and which the German chief can never avoid entirely - one of the most important reasons why German club-life has never managed to seem so attractive there as the American club.

In content, social status is normally expressed above all in the imputation of a specifically regulated style of life to everyone who wishes to belong to the circle. This goes together with a restriction of 'social' intercourse - that is, intercourse which does not serve any economic, commercial or other 'practical' purposes - including especially normal intermarriage, to the circle of status equals; this can extend to the point of totally exclusive endogamy. As soon as a communal action of this nature is in question - not a purely individual and socially irrelevant imitation of an alien style of life, but an action based on mutual consent - we say that 'status' development is under way. A typical development of articulated 'status' grouping of this kind on the basis of conventional life-styles is taking place at present in the United States, where it is emerging out of a long-established democracy. One example of this is that only those who reside in a certain street ('The Street') are regarded as belonging to 'society' and as fit for social intercourse, and are accordingly visited and invited. The outstanding example, however, is the strict submission to the fashion prevailing for the moment in 'society', to an extent unknown in Germany, which is taken, even among men, as a sign that the person in question has pretensions to be regarded as a gentleman and so decides at least prima facie that he will also be treated
as such. This is as important, for instance, for his chances of securing a position in a 'good' company, and above all of mixing socially and intermarrying with 'well-regarded' families, as being qualified to fight a duel is in Germany. For the rest, social 'status' is usurped by certain families who have resided in a certain area for a long time (and who are, naturally, correspondingly well-to-do), such as the 'FFV' or 'first families of Virginia', or the descendants, real or alleged, of the 'Indian princess' Pocahontas or the Pilgrim Fathers, or the Knickerbockers, or the members of some extremely exclusive sect, or all kinds of circles of associates who mark themselves off by some criterion or other. In this case it is a matter of a purely conventional social differentiation based essentially on usurpation (although this is admittedly the normal origin of almost all social 'status'). But it is a short step from this to the legal validation of privilege (and lack of privilege), and this step is usually easy to take as soon as a certain arrangement of the social order has become effectively 'settled' and has acquired stability as a result of the stabilisation of the distribution of economic power. Where the consequences are followed through to the limit, the status group develops into a closed caste. That is, distinction of status is guaranteed not only by convention and law, but also by ritual sanction to such an extent that all physical contact with a member of a caste regarded as 'inferior' is held to be ritually polluting for members of the 'superior' caste, a stain which must be religiously expiated. The individual castes, indeed, in part develop quite separate cults and gods.

Status differentiation, to be sure, only as a rule develops into these extreme forms when it is based on differences which are regarded as 'ethnic'. The 'caste' is actually the normal 'societal' form in which ethnic communities which believe in blood-relationship and forbid intermarriage and social intercourse with outsiders live alongside one another. This is true of the 'pariah' peoples which have emerged from time to time in all parts of the world - communities which have acquired specific occupational traditions of an artisan or other kind, which cultivate a belief in their common ethnic origin, and which now live in a 'diaspora', rigorously avoiding all personal intercourse other than what is unavoidable, in a legally precarious situation, but tolerated on the grounds of their economic indispensability and often even privileged, and interspersed among political communities. The Jews are the most striking historical example. A system of 'status' differences which has developed into a 'caste' system differs in structure from a system of purely 'ethnic' differences in that the former creates a vertical social hierarchy out of the horizontal relationships of the latter, in which different groups co-exist side by side in an unsystematic way. To put it more accurately: a more comprehensive consociation unifies the ethnically distinct communities
to the point where they can engage in communal action of a specifically political kind. The difference in outcome is that the horizontal relationships of ethnic groups, which lead to mutual repulsion and contempt, permit each ethnic community to consider its own status as the highest, whereas a caste system brings with it a hierarchy of subordination and a recognition of the 'higher status' conferred on the privileged castes and status groups by virtue of the fact that the ethnic distinctions become differences of 'function' within the political sector of the total social system (warriors, priests, craftsmen whose work is of political importance for war, public building and so on). Even the most despised pariah people usually finds some way, moreover, of cultivating the belief in its own specific 'status', which is equally characteristic of both ethnic and status communities. This is true, for instance, of the Jews.

Only amongst underprivileged status groups does the 'sense of worth', the subjective precipitate of social status and of the conventional claims which the privileged status group makes on the life-style of its members, take a specifically deviant turn. Privileged status groups naturally base their sense of their own worth on their 'being', which does not transcend them – their 'beauty and excellence' (καλόκαρδος). Their kingdom is 'of this world': they live for the present and on the strength of their glorious past. The underprivileged strata, naturally, can only relate their sense of worth to the future, in this world or the next, but at all events at some point beyond the present: in other words, it must be nourished by a belief in a providential 'mission', in a specific status before God as a 'chosen people', and so by the conviction that there will either be a world beyond in which 'the last shall be first' or there will appear in this world a saviour who will bring out into the light the special status of the pariah people (such as the Jews) or pariah status group, which was hidden from the world which rejected them. It is this simple fact, whose significance is to be discussed in another connexion, and not the 'ressentiment' which Nietzsche emphasises so strongly in his much-admired account in the Genealogy of Morals, which is the source of the type of religion cultivated by pariah status groups – a type of religion which, by the way, as we saw, is found only to a limited extent and, indeed, not at all in the case of one of Nietzsche's chief examples, Buddhism. Moreover, it is by no means normal for status systems to originate from ethnic differences. On the contrary, since it is by no means always the case that subjective feelings of 'ethnic' community are based on objective 'racial differences', it is right that all questions about an ultimately racial foundation for status differentiation should be treated strictly on the merits of the individual case: very often a status group determines by effective exclusion the selection of personal qualities (as when knights select those who are physically and mentally fit for military service) and by so doing creates
a pure-bred anthropological type. But selection on the basis of personal qualities is far from being the only, or the predominant, way in which a status group is formed: political membership or class situation is the deciding factor at least as often, and nowadays the latter is by far the most important. After all, the possibility of maintaining the life-style of a status group is usually conditional on economics.

In practice, status differentiation goes together with monopolisation of cultural and material goods and opportunities in the manner we have already acknowledged to be typical. In addition to the specific honorific status, based always on distance and exclusiveness, and its associated privileges, such as the right to certain costumes or kinds of food forbidden by taboo to others, the right to bear arms (so important in its consequences), or the right to engage in certain non-utilitarian or dilettante forms of artistic activity (such as the use of certain musical instruments), there are also material monopolies of various kinds. These are seldom the only motive for the exclusiveness of a status group, but they are almost always to some extent the most effective one. Where intermarriage within a circle of status equals is concerned, the interest of families in monopolising control over their daughters as marriage partners is almost equally matched by their interest in having a monopoly of potential suitors within the circle in order to make provision for these same daughters. As status groups become increasingly exclusive, so the conventional priorities of opportunity for particular appointments develop into a legal monopoly over certain posts for certain groups defined in terms of status. Certain kinds of goods (characteristically, manorial estates), the ownership of bondsmen and serfs, and finally certain sectors of industry come to be the monopoly of particular status groups. This is true both in the positive sense that a particular status group alone has the right to own and exploit them, and in the negative sense that it may not own or exploit them because of the need to maintain its specific life-style. For it is a consequence of the fact that it is life-style which determines social status that status groups are specifically responsible for all 'conventions': all 'stylisation' of ways of life, however expressed, either originates with a status group or is preserved by one.

Despite the enormous differences, there are certain typical features to be seen in the principles on which status conventions are based, especially amongst highly privileged strata. It is very common to find that privileged status groups are disqualifed on the grounds of their status from engaging in the usual forms of physical labour: the first signs of this phenomenon can now be seen in America, although it runs counter to the diametrically opposed traditions which have long existed there. It is very often the case that all rational employment of a gainful kind, especially entrepreneurial activity, is regarded as disqualifying a person from high
status; furthermore, artistic and literary work, if engaged in in order to earn a living, or if associated with hard physical exertion, is considered to be degrading. For instance, the sculptor, who works in overalls, like a stonemason, is thought to be of lower status than the painter, with his salon-like studio, or than certain kinds of musical performer who have an accepted status.

The extremely frequent disqualification of 'gainful employment' as such is, apart from the particular causes to be discussed later, a direct result of the ordering of society on 'status' principles, in contrast with the regulation of the distribution of power by purely market principles. The market and its economic processes are, as we saw, 'no respecter of persons': it is dominated by 'concrete' interests. It knows nothing of 'status'. The ordering of society in terms of status means precisely the opposite: differentiation in terms of 'social standing' and life-styles peculiar to particular status groups. As such it is fundamentally threatened when purely economic gain and purely economic power, completely naked and clearly displaying the marks of its origin unconnected with status, can confer on everyone who has acquired it the same 'standing' which the interested status groups claim for themselves in virtue of their way of life – or even a consequentially higher standing, given that ownership of property adds an extra element, whether acknowledged or not, to the status of someone who is otherwise of equal standing. The interested parties in every status system therefore react with especial bitterness precisely against the claims of mere economic acquisition as such, and the more they feel threatened, the greater is their bitterness. The respectful way in which peasants are treated in the works of Calderon, in contrast with the open contempt shown by Shakespeare, writing at the same time, for the 'canaille', is an illustration of these differences in reaction. Calderon was writing within a clearly articulated status system, Shakespeare within one which was economically tottering. Their different reactions are an expression of a universally recurrent situation. Privileged status groups have for that reason never accepted the 'parvenu' personally, and genuinely without reservations, however completely he has adopted their way of life; it is his descendants who are first accepted, since they have been brought up within the status conventions of their social stratum and have never defiled their standing as members of the status group by their own employment for gain.

In general, then, only one factor, though admittedly a very important one, can be cited as a consequence of status differentiation: the restraint imposed on the free development of the market. This applies, first, to those goods which status groups have directly withdrawn from free trade by either legal or conventional monopolisation: one example is inherited wealth in many Greek cities during the period when considerations of
status were dominant and (as the old rule of trusteeship for spendthrifts shows) in the early days of Rome also; other examples are manorial estates, peasant landholdings, church property and above all the goodwill of a craft or trade held by a guild. The market is restricted, and the power of naked property as such, which places its stamp on 'class formation', is held back. The effects of this may be various: they do not necessarily, of course, have any tendency to weaken contrasts in economic situation – often the reverse. At all events, there is no question of genuine free market competition as we nowdays understand it when status differentiation permeates a community as completely as it did in all the political communities of the ancient world and the Middle Ages. But even more far-reaching than this direct exclusion of certain goods from the market is a consequence of the opposition mentioned earlier between the status order and the purely economic order. This is that, in most cases, the concept of honorific 'status' involves a general revulsion from precisely the most characteristic feature of the market, namely bargaining, both between close associates within the status group and occasionally between members of a status group in general. The result is that there are status groups in all societies, and often the most influential of them, which regard all forms of overt participation in trade as totally contaminating.

One might say, therefore (with a certain amount of oversimplification), that 'classes' are formed in accordance with relations of production and the acquisition of wealth, while 'status groups' are formed according to the principles governing their consumption of goods in the context of specific 'life-styles'. An 'occupational status group', furthermore, is still a 'status group': normally, that is, it successfully lays claim to social 'status', by virtue first of all of its specific life-style, which in some cases is determined by the occupation which it pursues. Admittedly, it is often the case that the different types shade into each other, and it is precisely those communities which are most sharply separated in status – the Indian castes – which nowadays display (albeit within very strict and definite limits) a relatively high degree of indifference towards 'trade', which is pursued in the most varied forms, especially by the Brahmins.

In connexion with what has just been said, only one completely general point may be made about the general economic determinants which lead to the prevalence of status differentiation: a degree of relative stability in the bases on which goods are acquired and distributed favours it, whereas all technological and economic convulsions and upheavals pose a threat to it and thrust the 'class situation' into the foreground. Those ages and countries in which the naked class situation is of prevailing importance are generally periods of technological and economic upheaval; while every deceleration of the process of economic change
Classes, Status Groups and Parties

immediately leads to the growth of ‘status’ structures and restores the significance of ‘social standing’.

‘Classes’ are properly at home in the economic order, ‘status groups’ in the social order, that is, in the sphere of distribution of status; starting from this point, both reciprocally influence each other and influence the legal order and are in turn influenced by it. Parties, on the other hand, are primarily at home in the sphere of power. Their activity is concerned with social power, that is, with exerting influence on communal action, whatever its form: there can in principle be ‘parties’ in a social ‘club’ as much as in a ‘state’. Communal action by parties, as opposed to classes or status groups, always requires the forming of an association. For it is always directed towards a goal which is pursued in accordance with a plan: the goal may be an ‘objective’ one, in the sense of the fulfilment of some programme for ideal or material ends, or it may be a ‘personal’ goal, in the sense of sinescures, power and, as a consequence, status for the leader and members, or, and indeed usually, all these things at once. Such activity is therefore only possible within a community, which, for its part, is in some way or other constituted as an association, that is, which possesses some form of rational organisation and an apparatus of personnel which is ready to bring about the goals in question. For the whole aim of parties is to influence such an apparatus and, wherever possible, to ensure that it is made up of party members. In individual cases, parties may represent interests determined by class situation or status situation and recruit their membership accordingly. But it is not necessary for a party to be purely representative of either a class or a status group: mostly, parties are such only in part, and often not at all. They may be either ephemeral or permanent structures, and their methods of achieving power can be of the most varied kinds: naked force in all its forms, soliciting votes by both crude and subtle means – money, social influence, rhetoric, insinuation, clumsy trickery – or, finally, the use of obstructive tactics, both of the cruder and the more sophisticated kind, within parliamentary bodies. Their sociological structure necessarily differs in its basis, depending on the structure of the communal action which they strive to influence: it depends, indeed, on whether or not the community is, for instance, differentiated by status groups or classes, and above all on the structure of ‘domination’ within it. For the aim, as far as their leader is concerned, is normally to take control of this structure. Parties, in the sense defined here, did not first emerge from specifically modern forms of domination: we wish to include under the term all ancient and medieval parties, despite the fact that they differ so much in their basic structure from modern examples. At all events, because of this difference in the structure of domination, it is wrong to say anything about the structure of the party, which is always an organisation which
strives for domination and so is itself organised, often very rigidly, in terms of domination, without discussing the structural forms of social domination in general. To this central phenomenon of all social life we shall, therefore, now turn.

Before doing so, however, one general point which should be made about classes, status groups and parties is that, in saying that they necessarily presuppose a more comprehensive association, and especially a framework of communal political action within which they function, one is not saying that they themselves are confined within the boundaries of a particular political community. On the contrary, since time immemorial it has always been the case that an association, even an association which aims at the common use of military force, transcends political frontiers. Examples are the solidarity of interests amongst oligarchs and democrats in ancient Greece, or amongst Guelphs and Ghibellines in the Middle Ages, or the Calvinist party in the time of the Wars of Religion, or more recently, the solidarity of landowners in the International Agrarian Congress, or of princes in the Holy Alliance or the Carlsbad Decrees, or of socialist workers or of conservatives (as in the longing of Prussian Conservatives for Russian intervention in 1850). The only reservation is that the goal in such cases is not necessarily to establish a new international political (that is, territorial) domination, but usually to influence the existing one.