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THE PROFESSIONS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE*

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COMPARATIVE study of the social structures of the most important civilizations shows that the professions occupy a position of importance in our society which is, in any comparable degree of development, unique in history. Perhaps the closest parallel is the society of the Roman Empire where, notably, the Law was very highly developed as a profession indeed. But even there the professions covered a far narrower scope than in the modern Western world. There is probably in Rome no case of a particular profession more highly developed than in our own society, and there was scarcely a close analogy to modern engineering, medicine or education in quantitative importance, though all of them were developed to a considerable degree.

It seems evident that many of the most important features of our society are to a considerable extent dependent on the smooth functioning of the professions. Both the pursuit and the application of science and liberal learning are predominantly carried out in a professional context. Their results have become so closely interwoven in the fabric of modern society that it is difficult to imagine how it could get along without basic structural changes if they were seriously impaired.

There is a tendency to think of the development and application of science and learning as a socially unproblematical process. A vague sort of "curiosity" and beyond that mere possession of the requisite knowledge are held to be enough. This is evidenced by the air of indignant wonder with which technologically minded people sometimes cite the fact that actual technical performance is well below the theoretical potentialities of 100 percent efficiency. Only by extensive comparative study does it become evident that for even a moderate degree either of the development or the application of science there is requisite a complex set of social conditions which the "technologically minded" seldom think of, but incline to take for granted as in the nature of things. Study of the institutional framework within which professional activities are carried on should help considerably to understand the nature and functions of some of these social "constants."

The professions do not, however, stand alone as typical or distinctive features of modern Western civilization. Indeed, if asked what were the most distinctive

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features, relatively few social scientists or historians would mention the professions at all. Probably the majority would unhesitatingly refer to the modern economic order, to "capitalism," "free enterprise," the "business economy," or however else it is denominated, as far more significant. Probably the only major exception to this would be the relatively prominent attention given to science and technology, but even these would not be thought of mainly in relation to the professional framework, but rather as handmaidens of economic interests.

Not only is there a tendency for empirical concentration on the business world in characterizing this society, but this is done in terms which tend to minimize the significance of the professions. For the dominant keynote of the modern economic system is almost universally held to be the high degree of free play it gives to the pursuit of self-interest. It is the "acquisitive society," or the "profit system" as two of the most common formulas run. But by contrast with business in this interpretation the professions are marked by "disinterestedness." The professional man is not thought of as engaged in the pursuit of his personal profit, but in performing services to his patients or clients, or to impersonal values like the advancement of science. Hence the professions in this context appear to be a-typical, to some even a mere survival of the mediaeval gilds. Some think that their spheres are becoming progressively commercialized, so that as distinctive structures they will probably disappear.

There are various reasons for believing that this way of looking at the "essence" of modern society is a source of serious bias in the sociological interpretation of the situation. The fact that the professions have reached a uniquely high level of development in *the same society* which is also characterized by a business economy suggests that the contrast between business and the professions, which has been mainly stated in terms of the problem of self-interest, is not the whole story. Possibly there are elements common to both areas, indeed to our whole occupational system, which are at least as important to their functioning as is self-interest to business, disinterestedness to the professions. The concrete interpenetration of the two, as exemplified in the rôle of engineers and lawyers in the conduct of business enterprises would suggest that. The study of the professions, by eliminating the element of self-interest in the ordinary sense, would seem to offer a favorable approach to the analysis of some of these common elements. This paper will deal with three of them which seem to be of peculiar importance to the modern occupational structure as a whole, including business, the professions, and government.

But before entering on their discussion a further point may be noted. In much of traditional thought about human action the most basic of all differences in types of human motivation has been held to be that between "egoistic" and "altruistic" motives. Correlative with this there has been the tendency to identify this classification with the concrete motives of different spheres of activity: the business man has been thought of as egoistically pursuing his own self-interest regardless of the interests of others, while the professional man was altruistically serving the interests of others regardless of his own. Seen in this context the professions appear not only as empirically somewhat different from business, but the two fields would seem to exemplify the most radical cleavage conceivable in the field of human behavior.

If it can be shown that the difference

with respect to self-interest does not preclude very important institutional similarities in other respects, a further possibility suggests itself. Perhaps even in this respect the difference is not so great as our predominantly economic and utilitarian orientation of thought would lead us to believe. Perhaps even it is not mainly a difference of typical motive at all, but one of the different situations in which much the same commonly human motives operate. Perhaps the acquisitiveness of modern business is institutional rather than motivational.

Let us, however, turn first to the elements of the common institutional pattern of the occupational sphere generally, ignoring for the moment the problem of self-interest. The empirical prominence of industrial technology calls attention immediately to one of them. Industrial technology in the modern world has become to a large extent "applied science." One of the dominant characteristics of science is its "rationality" in the sense which is opposed to "traditionalism." Scientific investigation, like any other human activity when viewed in terms of the frame of reference of action, is oriented to certain normative standards. One of the principal of these in the case of science is that of "objective truth." Whatever else may be said of this methodologically difficult conception, it is quite clear that the mere fact that a proposition has been held to be true in the past is not an argument either for or against it before a scientific forum. The norms of scientific investigation, the standards by which it is judged whether work is of high scientific quality, are essentially independent of traditional judgments.

What is true of science as such is in turn true of its practical applications. In so far as a judgment of what is the "best" thing to do rests on scientific considerations, whether it be in technology or in medicine, the merely traditional way of doing it as "the fathers" have done it, fails to carry normative authority. The relevant questions are rather objective, what are the facts of the situation and what will be the consequences of various alternative procedures? Furthermore rationality in this sense extends far beyond the boundaries of either pure or applied science in a technical sense. The business man, the foreman of labor, and not least the non-scientific professional man such as the lawyer, is enjoined to seek the "best," the most "efficient" way of carrying on his function, not to accept the time-honored mode. Even though the range of such rational considerations be limited by ends which are institutionally kept outside discussion, as the financial well-being of the enterprise or, as in the law, certain accepted principles of the Common Law, still within the limits traditionalism is not authoritative.

It should be noted that rationality in this sense is institutional, a part of a normative pattern: it is not a mode of orientation which is simply "natural" to men. On the contrary comparative study indicates that the present degree of valuation of rationality as opposed to traditionalism is rather "unnatural" in the sense that it is a highly exceptional state. The fact is that we are under continual and subtle social pressures to be rationally critical, particularly of ways and means. The crushing force to us of such epithets as "stupid" and "gullible" is almost sufficient indication of this. The importance of rationality in the modern professions generally, but particularly in those important ones concerned with the development and application of science serves to emphasize its rôle in the society at large. But this is even more impressively the case since here it is

divorced from the institutionalized expectation of self-interest typical of the contractual pattern of business conduct.

In quite a different way the rôle of the professions serves to bring out a second widely pervasive aspect of our general occupational pattern. There is a very important sense in which the professional practitioner in our society exercises authority. We speak of the doctor as issuing "orders" even though we know that the only "penalty" for not obeying them is possible injury to the patient's own health. A lawyer generally gives "advice" but if the client knew just as well what to do it would be unnecessary for him to consult a lawyer. This professional authority has a peculiar sociological structure. It is not as such based on a generally superior status, as is the authority a southern white man tends to assume over any Negro, nor is it a manifestation of superior "wisdom" in general or of higher moral character. It is rather based on the superior "technical competence" of the professional man. He often exercises his authority over people who are, or are reputed to be his superiors in social status, in intellectual attainments or in moral character. This is possible because the area of professional authority is limited to a particular technically defined sphere. It is only in matters touching health that the doctor is by definition more competent than his lay patient, only in matters touching his academic specialty that the professor is superior, by virtue of his status, to his student. Professional authority, like other elements of the professional pattern, is characterized by "specificity of function." The technical competence which is one of the principal defining characteristics of the professional status and rôle is always limited to a particular "field" of knowledge and skill. This specificity is essential to the professional pattern no matter how difficult it may be, in a given case, to draw the exact boundaries of such a field. As in all similar cases of continuous variation, it is legitimate to compare widely separated points. In such terms it is obvious that one does not call on the services of an engineer to deal with persistent epigastric pain, nor on a professor of Semitic languages to clarify a question about the kinship system of a tribe of Australian natives. A professional man is held to be "an authority" only in his own field.

Functionally specific technical competence is only one type of case in which functional specificity is an essential element of modern institutional patterns. Two others of great importance may be mentioned to give a better idea of the scope of this institutional element. In the first place, in the classic type of "contractural relationship" rights and obligations are specifically limited to what are implicitly or explicitly, the "terms of the contract." The burden of proof is on him who would exact an obligation, that it is really owed, while in many other types of relationship the opposite is true, the burden of proof is on the one who would evade an obligation, that it is *not* due. Thus in an ordinary case of commercial indebtedness, a request for money on the part of one party will be met by the question, do I owe it? Whether the requester "needs" the money is irrelevant, as is whether the other can well afford to pay it. If, on the other hand the two are brothers, any contractual agreements are at least of secondary importance, the important questions are on the one hand, whether and how urgently the one needs the money, on the other whether the second can "afford" it. In the latter connection it comes down to a question of the possible conflict of this

with what are recognized as higher obligations. In the commercial case it is not necessary even to cite what other possible uses for the money may be involved, the question is only *why* should it be paid. In the kinship case the question is immediately why the request should *not* be met, and the only satisfactory answer is the citing of higher obligations with which it conflicts. Commercial relations in our society are predominantly functionally specific, kinship relations, functionally diffuse.

Similarly if a doctor asks a patient a question the relevant reaction is to ask why he should answer it, and the legitimizing reply is that the answer is necessary for the specific function the doctor has been called upon to perform, diagnosing an illness for instance. Questions which cannot be legitimized in this way would normally be resented by the patient as "prying" into his private affairs. The patient's wife, on the other hand would according to our predominant sentiments, be entitled to an explanation as to why a question should *not* be answered. The area of the marriage relationship is not functionally specific, but diffuse.

Functional specificity is also essential to another crucial pattern of our society, that of administrative "office." In an administrative or bureaucratic hierarchy, authority is distributed and institutionalized in terms of office. By virtue of his office a man can do things, particularly in the sense of giving orders to others, which in his "private capacity" he would not be allowed to do at all. Thus the treasurer of a company, in the name of the company, can sometimes sign checks for very large amounts which far exceed his private resources. But the authority of office in this sense is strictly limited to the powers of the particular office, as defined in the structure of the hierarchy in question. Authority in this sense is not enjoyed by virtue of a technical competence. The treasurer does not necessarily have a skill in signing checks which is superior to that of many of his subordinates. But this kind of authority shares with that based on technical competence the fact that it is functionally specific. The officer of a concern is condemned or penalized for exceeding his authority in a way similar to that in which a doctor would be for trying to get his patient to do things not justified as means of maintaining or improving his health. As in the case of rationality, the concentration of much of our social theory on the problem of self-interest has served to obscure the importance of functional specificity, an institutional feature common to the professional and the commercial spheres. Again, as in the case of rationality, this cannot be taken for granted as "natural" to human action generally. The degree of differentiation of these specific spheres of authority and obligation from the more diffuse types of social relation—like those of kinship and generalized loyalty to "leaders"—which we enjoy is most unusual in human societies, and calls for highly specific explanation. It is one of the most prominent features of the "division of labor."

It is not uncommon in sociological discussion today to distinguish between "segmental" and "total" bases in the relationships of persons. What has above been spoken of as functional specificity naturally applies only to segmental relationships. But relations may be segmental without being functionally specific, in that the separation of contents of the different relations in which a given person stands need not be carried out primarily on a functional basis. Friendships are usually segmental in this sense, one does not share all his life and interests

with any one friend. But aside from structurally fortuitous variations due to the fact that there may be different areas of common interest, friendships are more apt to be differentiated on the basis of degrees of "intimacy" than on that of the specific functional content. Hence the distinction cuts across the one we have been discussing. But it serves to direct attention to the third pattern element not taken account of in the discussions of self-interest. The more two people's total personalities are involved in the basis of their social relationship, the less is it possible for either of them to abstract from the particular person of the other in defining its content. It becomes a matter of what A means to B as a particular person. To a considerable extent in all three of the types of functionally specific pattern discussed above it is possible to abstract; to the professional man the other party is a "case" or a "client," to the business man a "customer," to the administrative officer a "subordinate." Cases, customers, and subordinates are classified by criteria which do not distinguish persons or the particular relations of persons as such. Cases are "medical" or "surgical," customers are "large" and "small," or good and poor credit risks, subordinates are efficient or inefficient, quick or slow, obedient or insubordinate. On the other hand in kinship relations such "objective" and universal bases of classification cannot be used. A's father is distinguished from all other males of an older generation, not by his physiological or pathological characteristics, not by his financial status, nor by his administrative qualities, but by virtue of the particular relation in which he stands to A.

The matter may be approached from a slightly different point of view. A heart specialist, for instance, may have to decide whether a given person who comes to his office is eligible for a relatively permanent relation to him as his patient. So far as the decision is taken on technical professional grounds the relevant questions do not relate to *who* the patient is but to *what* is the matter with him. The basis of the decision will be "universalistic" the consideration of whether he has symptoms which indicate a pathological condition of the heart. Whose son, husband, friend he is, is in this context irrelevant. Of course, if a doctor is too busy to take on all the new patients who apply, particularistic considerations may play a part in the selection, he may give special attention to the friend of a relative. But this is not the organizing principle of the doctor-patient relationship. Similarly within a relationship once established it is possible to make the same distinction with respect to the basis on which rights are claimed or obligations accepted. A patient's claim on his doctor's time is primarily a matter of the objective features of the "case" regardless of *who* the patient is, while a wife's claim on her husband's time is a matter of the fact that she is his wife, regardless, within limits, of what the occasion is. The standards and criteria which are independent of the particular social relationship to a particular person may be called universalistic, those which apply by virtue of such a relationship on the other hand are particularistic. Like all such analytical distinctions it does not preclude that both elements may be involved in the same concrete situation. But nevertheless their relative predominance is a matter of the greatest importance.

The fact that the central focus of the professional rôle lies in a technical competence gives a very great importance to universalism in the institutional pattern governing it. Science is essentially universalistic, *who* states a proposition is as such irrelevant to the question of its

scientific value. The same is true of all applied science. But the rôle of universalism is by no means confined to the professions. It is equally important to the patterns governing contractual relationships, for instance in the standards of common honesty, and to administrative office.

It is one of the most striking features of our occupational system that status in it is to a high degree independent of status in kinship groups, the neighborhood and the like, in short from what are sometimes called primary group relationships. It may be suggested that one of the main reasons for this lies in the dominant importance of universalistic criteria in the judgment of achievement in the occupational field. Where technical competence, the technical impartiality of administration of an office and the like are of primary functional importance, it is essential that particularistic considerations should not enter into the bases of judgment too much. The institutional insulation from social structures where particularism is dominant is one way in which this can be accomplished.

While there is a variety of reasons why disinterestedness is of great functional significance to the modern professions, there is equally impressive evidence for the rôle of rationality, functional specificity and universalism, as well as, perhaps, other elements which have not been taken up here. In both respects the importance of the professions as a peculiar social structure within the wider society calls attention to the importance of elements other than the enlightened self-interest of economic and utilitarian theory. On the one hand it does so in that the institutional pattern governing professional activity does not, in the same sense, sanction the pursuit of self-interest as the corresponding one does in the case of business. On the other hand, the very fact that in spite of this difference the professions have all three of these other elements in common with the business pattern, and that of other parts of our occupational structure, such as government and other administration, calls attention to the possibility that the dominant importance of the problem of self-interest itself has been exaggerated. This impression is greatly strengthened by the results of extensive comparative study of the relations of our own institutional structure to that of widely different societies which, unfortunately, it is impossible to report on in this paper.

Returning to the professions, however, study of the relation of social structure to individual action in this field can, as it was suggested earlier, by comparison throw light on certain other theoretically crucial aspects of the problem of the rôle of self-interest itself. In the economic and related utilitarian traditions of thought the difference between business and the professions in this respect has strongly tended to be interpreted as mainly a difference in the typical motives of persons acting in the respective occupations. The dominance of a business economy has seemed to justify the view that ours was an "acquisitive society" in which every one was an "economic man" who cared little for the interests of others. Professional men, on the other hand, have been thought of as standing above these sordid considerations, devoting their lives to "service" of their fellow men.

There is no doubt that there are important concrete differences. Business men are, for instance, expected to push their financial interests by such aggressive measures as advertising. They are not expected to sell to customers regardless of the probability of their being paid, as doctors are expected to treat patients. In

each immediate instance in one sense the doctor could, if he did these things according to the business pattern, gain financial advantages which conformity with his own professional pattern denies him. Is it not then obvious that he is "sacrificing" his self-interest for the benefit of others?

The situation does not appear to be so simple. It is seldom, even in business, that the immediate financial advantage to be derived from a particular transaction is decisive in motivation. Orientation is rather to a total comprehensive situation extending over a considerable period of time. Seen in these terms the difference may lie rather in the "definitions of the situation" than in the typical motives of actors as such.

Perhaps the best single approach to the distinction of these two elements is in the question, in what do the goals of ambition consist? There is a sense in which, in both cases, the dominant goal may be said to be the same, "success." To this there would appear to be two main aspects, a satisfactory modicum of attainment of the technical goals of the respective activities, such as on the one hand increasing the size and improving the business position of the firm for which the individual is in whole or in part responsible, or attaining a good proportion of cures or substantial improvement in the conditions of patients. The other aspect is the attainment of high standing in one's occupational group, "recognition" in Thomas' term. In business this will involve official position in the firm, income, and that rather intangible but none the less important thing "reputation," as well as perhaps particular "honors" such as election to clubs and the like. In medicine it will similarly involve size and character of practice, income, hospital and possibly medical school appointments, honors, and again reputation. The essential goals in the two cases would appear to be substantially the same, objective achievement and recognition: the difference lies in the different paths to the similar goals, which are in turn determined by the differences in the respective occupational situations.

There are two particularly important empirical qualifications to what has been said. In the first place certain things are important not only as symbols of recognition, but in other contexts as well. This is notably true of money. Money is significant for what it can buy, as well as in the rôle of a direct symbol of recognition. Hence in so far as ways of earning money present themselves in the situation which are not strictly in the line of institutionally approved achievement, there may be strong pressure to resort to them so long as the risk of loss of occupational status is not too great.

This leads to the second consideration. The above sketch applies literally only to a well-integrated situation. In so far as the actual state of affairs deviates from this type the two main elements of success, objective achievement which is institutionally valued, and acquisition of the various recognition-symbols may not be well articulated. Actual achievement may fail to bring recognition in due proportion and vice versa achievements either of low quality or in unapproved lines may bring disproportionate recognition. Such lack of integration inevitably places great strains on the individual placed in such a situation and behavior deviant from the institutional pattern results on a large scale. It would seem that, seen in this perspective, so-called "commercialism" in medicine and "dishonest" and "shady" practices in business have much in common as reactions to these strains.

Even in these cases, however, it is

dubious whether such practices result primarily from egoistic motivation in the simple sense of utilitarian theory. The following seems a more adequate account of the matter: "normally," i.e. in an integrated situation, the "interests" in self-fulfillment and realization of goals, are integrated and fused with the normative patterns current in the society, inculcated by current attitudes of approval and disapproval and their various manifestations. The normal individual feels satisfaction in effectively carrying out approved patterns and shame and disappointment in failure. For instance courage in facing physical danger is often far from "useful" to the individual in any ordinary egoistic sense. But most normal boys and men feel intense satisfaction in performing courageous acts, and equally intense shame if they have been afraid. Correlatively they are approved and applauded for courageous behavior and severely criticized for cowardice. The smooth functioning of the mechanisms of such behavior which integrates individual satisfactions and social expectations is dependent upon the close correspondence of objective achievement and the bases and symbols of recognition. Where this correspondence is seriously disturbed the individual is placed in a conflict situation and is hence insecure. If he sticks to the approved objective achievements his desires for recognition are frustrated; if on the other hand he sacrifices this to acquisition of the recognition symbols he has guilt-feelings and risks disapproval in some important quarters. Commercialism and dishonesty are to a large extent the reactions of normal people to this kind of conflict situation. The conflict is not generally a simple one between the actor's self-interest and his altruistic regard for others or for ideals, but between different components of the normally unified goal of "success" each of which contains both interested and disinterested motivation elements.

If this general analysis of the relation of motivation to institutional patterns is correct two important correlative conclusions follow: On the one hand the typical motivation of professional men is not in the usual sense "altruistic," nor is that of business men typically "egoistic." Indeed there is little basis for maintaining that there is any important broad difference of typical motivation in the two cases, or at least any of sufficient importance to account for the broad differences of socially expected behavior. On the other hand there is a clear-cut and definite difference on the institutional level. The institutional patterns governing the two fields of action are radically different in this respect. Not only are they different; it can be shown conclusively that this difference has very important functional bases. But it is a difference in definition of the situation. Doctors are not altruists, and the famous "acquisitiveness" of a business economy is not the product of "enlightened self-interest." The opinion may be hazarded that one of the principal reasons why economic thought has failed to see this fundamentally important fact is that it has confined its empirical attention to the actions of the market place and has neglected to study its relations to other types of action. Only by such comparative study, the sociological equivalent of experimentation, is the isolation of variables possible.

These are a few of the ways in which a study of the professions can, indirectly and directly, throw light on some of the essential features of the occupational structure of modern society. In conclusion two further related lines of analysis

may be suggested, though there is no space to follow them out. Naturally the occupational structure of any social system does not stand alone, but is involved in complex interrelationships, structural and functional, with other parts of the same social system. Above all most or at least many of these other structures involve quite different structural patterns from those dominant in the occupational sphere. In the case of the modern liberal state and the universalistic Christian churches there is a relatively high degree of structural congruence with the occupational system; hence the elements of conflict are more those of scope and concrete content of interests than of structural disharmony as such. But certain other parts of the system have structurally quite different institutional patterns. Among these notably are family and kinship, friendship, class loyalties and identifications so far as they are bound up with birth and the diffuse "community" of common styles of life, and loyalty to particular leaders and organizations as such independently of what they "stand for." In all these cases though in different ways and degrees, particularism tends to replace universalism, and functional diffuseness specificity. To a less degree they have tendencies to traditionalism. Absolute insulation of these other structures from that of the occupational sphere is impossible since the same concrete individuals participate in both classes. But much depends on the degree of relative insulation which it is possible to attain. In particular the kind of deviation from the norms of institutional integration in the occupational sphere which was discussed above creates a situation in which a breakdown of the institutional pattern itself in favor of one structurally similar to these other types can readily take place.

This danger is greatly accentuated by the fact that the maintenance of the dominant pattern in the occupational sphere is subject to many severe strains. The reference is not to the problem of "enforcement" as such. There is much deviant behavior in violation of normative patterns which does not significantly involve the emergence of alternative normative patterns. The problem of keeping down the murder rate does not involve in any serious way a conflict of values in which one group stands out for the right to murder. But in certain situations such conflicts of values and resultant loyalties become of great importance. One prominent example may be cited.

Our administrative hierarchies, for instance, in a business corporation or a government agency, involve an institutional pattern which is predominantly universalistic and functionally specific. Authority is distributed and legitimized only within the limited sphere of the "office" and the claim to it is regulated by universalistic standards. But such a pattern is never fully descriptive of the concrete structure. The various offices are occupied by concrete individuals with concrete personalities who have particular concrete social relations to other individuals. The institutionally enjoined rigid distinction between the sphere, powers and obligation of office and those which are "personal" to the particular individuals is difficult to maintain. In fact in every concrete structure of this sort there is to a greater or less degree a system of "cliques." That is, certain groups are more closely solidary than the strict institutional definition of their statuses calls for and correspondingly, as between such groups there is a degree of antagonism which is not institutionally sanctioned. The existence of such clique structures places the individual in a conflict situa-

tion. He is for instance pulled between the "impartial," "objective" loyalty to his superior as the incumbent of an office, and the loyalty to a person whom he likes, who has treated him well, etc. Since in the society generally the patterns of personal loyalty and friendship are prominent and deeply ingrained, it is easy for these considerations gradually to come to predominate over the main pattern. Obligation to the duties of office, including submission to authority, is replaced by loyalty to an individual, that is a particularistic is substituted for a universalistic basis. Similarly a superior in the clique structure may feel entitled to ask "favors" of his subordinates which go well beyond the strictly defined boundaries of their official duties, hence tending to break down the specificity of function. The processes involved are highly complex, but it is by no means impossible that they should be cumulative in one direction and lead to a serious impairment of the older occupational pattern. Indeed the evidence generally points to the conclusion that the main occupational pattern is upheld as well as it is by a rather precarious balance of social forces, and that any at all considerable change in this balance may have far-reaching consequences.

The importance of the professions to social structure may be summed up as follows: The professional type is the institutional framework in which many of our most important social functions are carried on, notably the pursuit of science and liberal learning and its practical application in medicine, technology, law and teaching. This depends on an institutional structure the maintenance of which is not an automatic consequence of belief in the importance of the functions as such, but involves a complex balance of diverse social forces. Certain features of this pattern are peculiar to professional activities, but others, and not the least important ones, are shared by this field with the other most important branches of our occupational structure, notably business and bureaucratic administration. Certain features of our received traditions of thought, notably concentration of attention on the problem of self-interest with its related false dichotomy of concrete egoistic and altruistic motives, has served seriously to obscure the importance of these other elements, notably rationality, specificity of function and universalism. Comparison of the professional and business structures in their relations to the problem of individual motivation is furthermore a very promising avenue of approach to certain more general problems of the relations of individual motivation to institutional structures with particular reference to the problem of egoism and altruism. Finally the often rather unstable relation of the institutional structures of the occupational sphere including the professions, to other structurally different patterns, can throw much light on important strains and instabilities of the social system, and through them on certain of its possibilities of dynamic change.