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Some Principles of Stratification: A Critical Analysis: Comment

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5-6. *Types of Rewards.*

The Davis-Moore article mentioned a rough tripartite classification of types of rewards occurring in stratified positions. Tumin says these may be unequally employed, that one society may emphasize one type more than another. This is true; we said nothing to the contrary. Tumin goes on to say that societies give approval to behavior that conforms with norms. This we certainly never disputed; indeed, in connection with positions, Davis has given a name to it—*esteem*, the kind of approval that comes with the faithful fulfillment of the duties of a position.<sup>4</sup> The approval that comes with *having* a position, i.e., approval attached to the position and not to the degree of faithfulness in performing its duties, is called *prestige*. Whatever the words used, the distinction is important, but Tumin has confused the two. A social system, though it certainly utilizes esteem, is not entirely built on it, because there must be motivation not only to conform to the requirements of positions held but also to strive to get into positions. Esteem alone tends to produce a static society, prestige a mobile one. Tumin's statement that the position of the parent vis-a-vis the child is not part of the stratified system is true, but it agrees perfectly with Davis' distinction between stratified and non-stratified statuses, already mentioned as an essential part of the theory overlooked by Tumin.

7. *Inevitability and Disfunctionality.*

As the grand climax of his restatement of our views, Tumin has us concluding that social inequality is *inevitable* in society. Let it be repeated, we were not concerned with the indefinite or utopian future but with societies as we find them. No proof or disproof of a proposition about inevitability is possible. As "evidence" of his view of inevitability, Tumin *hopes* to see

<sup>4</sup> "Conceptual Analysis of Stratification," *loc. cit.*, pp. 312-313; *Human Society*, pp. 93-94.

a society based on "the tradition that each man is as socially worthy as all other men so long as he performs his appropriate tasks conscientiously." But this is, once again, the idea of a society based exclusively on esteem. The question would still remain, how do people in the first place get distributed in their different positions with their "appropriate tasks?" One can hardly criticize a theory by ignoring the problem with which it deals.

Tumin goes on to point out ways in which stratification is disfunctional. In most of what he says, however, "stratification" is being used in the sense of inheritance of status. In so far as his assertion of disfunctionality is true, then, the culprit is the family, not the differential positional rewards. He also mentions unfavorable self-images, but the disfunctionality of these is not clear, because an unfavorable self-image may be a powerful stimulus to competitive and creative activity. The same comment can be made about the alleged disfunctionality of class conflict. Incidentally, in this part of his critique Tumin makes pronouncements of functionality with firm confidence, although in the early part he doubted the functionality could be determined.

The truth is that any aspect of society is functional in some ways and disfunctional in others. Our theory was designed to suggest some of the ways in which institutionalized positional inequality contributes to societies as going concerns. Otherwise it seems difficult if not impossible to explain the universal appearance of such inequality. Excrescencies and distortions certainly appear, but they do not completely negate the principle. Tumin's analysis of the disfunctions is unsophisticated because of his confusion as to what it is that *has* the disfunctions, because of his uncritical concept of function, and because of his lack of any clear notion of a social system as an equilibrium of forces of which the stratified positional scale is only one.

## COMMENT

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I generally concur with Professor Davis' reply, which is somewhat more comprehensive than the comments I had prepared independently. However, I should like to emphasize that there is no reason to deny to Professor Tumin the right and even the propriety of a theoretical approach to an equalitarian system, as long as relevant principles of social structure are somehow taken into account. I do not believe Professor Tumin has met the latter qualification.

With regard to the relevance of his criticism of our paper, I suggest that Professor Tumin made the major mistake of not explicitly defining social stratification, which in turn led him to assume that differential rewards and inequality of opportunity are the same thing. Neither theory nor evidence will support this equation, and making it true by implicit definition can only stand in the way of theoretically significant research.