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ON THE CONCEPT OF INFLUENCE

BY TALCOTT PARSONS

Many of the fundamental ideas underlying studies of the effect of communications, persuasion, the shaping of attitudes, and the formation of voting intentions can be generalized in terms of a common idea: the concept of influence. The development of effective concepts of wide applicability, like establishing a formal garden in the wilderness, necessarily involves a great struggle to bring order out of obscurity and chaos, and a great deal of systematic planting and cultivation after the initial clearing and pruning have been done. This article is not light reading and some readers will find it easier at least to skim the comments by James Coleman and Ray Bauer before they proceed very far into the main article.

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This article and the comments on it are based upon a paper presented at the meeting of the American Association for Public Opinion Research at Lake George, New York, on May 19, 1962, and the invited discussion of that paper.

IT MAY plausibly be held that the development of research technology in the field of opinion and attitude study has outrun the development of theory. The intention of the present paper is to help to redress the balance by essaying a contribution in the theoretical area to try to bring to bear on the opinion field a more generalized conceptual scheme that has been worked out mainly in other connections.

First, let me state the main context of problems within the field on which I would like to concentrate. The first step beyond immediate description and classification of opinions is, of course, to attempt some analysis of determining factors, to answer such questions as why or under what conditions certain opinions are held or changed. It is within this area, rather than that of categories suitable for description and classification, that I wish to operate. To narrow the field still further, it is a question of whether anything can be said about *generalized* kinds of process or mechanism through the operation of which such determination, notably of change of opinions, comes about. It is as such a generalized mechanism by which attitudes or opinions are determined that I would like to conceive "influence," for the purposes of this paper.¹

¹ It is taken for granted here that there is no formal standardization of terminology

A further step in specification is to restrict my consideration to the problem of the operation of generalized mechanisms in the process of social interaction in its intentional forms. Thus, if a person's opinion has been changed by his experience of a natural event, such as a hurricane, or even by social events that could not conceivably be understood as intentionally oriented to having an effect on his opinions, such as a business depression, I shall not speak of these as "influence" in the present sense—similarly with the famous example of the alleged relation between a judge's legal opinions and the state of his digestion. Influence is a way of having an effect on the attitudes and opinions of others through intentional (though not necessarily rational) action—the effect may or may not be to change the opinion or to prevent a possible change.

GENERAL MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION:
THE CASE OF MONEY

What, then, is meant by a generalized mechanism operating in social interaction? There are various ways of approaching this question. Language is perhaps the prototype and can serve as a major point of reference. Having an effect on the action of others, thus possibly "influencing" them, through linguistic communication, is to present them with "symbolic" experiences in place of the concrete things or objects to which the symbols refer, which they "mean." Thus, a sign, "Beware the dog," may induce caution without the passer-by's actually seeing or hearing a dog. "Intrinsically," the language symbols do not have any caution-inducing properties; the black marks on the signboard have never bitten anyone, nor have they even barked.

In the well-known formulation of Jacobsen and Halle,² a language must be understood to involve two aspects: on the one hand, the use of language is a process of emitting and transmitting messages, combinations of linguistic components that have specific reference to particular situations; on the other hand, language is a *code* in terms of which the particular symbols constituting any particular message "have meaning." In these terms, a message can be meaningful and hence understood only by those who "know the language," i.e. the code, and accept its "conventions."

Language, as that concept is generally understood, is not an isolated phenomenon. In the field of social interaction, many mechanisms have

in this field, and that, hence, there is inevitably an element of arbitrariness involved in giving technical meaning to a term in such general usage as "influence." I make no apology for doing this, since in the social sciences the only alternative in this and many other cases is coining neologisms, the objections to which are overwhelming.

² Roman Jacobsen and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language*, The Hague, Mouton & Co., 1956.

properties so similar to those of language that it is not too much to say that they *are* specialized languages. Mathematical and artistic symbol systems are cases in point, but one that is both well known and lies close to our concern is money. Hence, for my purposes, I would like to say not merely that money resembles language, but that it *is* a very specialized language, i.e. a generalized medium of communication through the use of symbols given meaning within a code.³

I shall therefore treat influence as a generalized medium which in turn I interpret to mean a specialized language. I should like now to attempt, using money, because of its familiarity, as an illustration, to outline a paradigm of such a generalized medium, preliminary to stating the principal properties of influence as another such medium.

Seen in this light, money is a symbolic "embodiment" of economic *value*, of what economists in a technical sense call "utility." Just as the word "dog" can neither bark nor bite, yet "signifies" the animal that can, so a dollar has no intrinsic utility, yet signifies commodities that do, in the special sense that it can in certain circumstances be substituted for them, and can evoke control of relations with them in the special kind of process of social interaction we call economic exchange. This means that holders of objects of utility will, on occasion, be willing to relinquish control over them for money, and, conversely, holders of money will be able to acquire, by use of the money (its "expenditure"), control over objects of utility.⁴

The economic value called utility, however, is the basis of a type of *interest* in objects in the situation of action. It defines an aspect of their actual or potential meaning, under which rubric I wish to include not only what they "are" but what they "do," if they are actors, and what can be done *with* them, such as "consuming" them in the economist's sense, if they are commodities, or "utilizing their services," if they are persons. For symbolization to take place, it is necessary for the basis of this interest to be defined with sufficient clarity and specificity, just as the category of object "dog" must be adequately defined if the linguistic symbol is to designate it unambiguously. In the case of money,

³ This perspective on money as a language is strongly suggested by the usage of the classical economists (e.g. Adam Smith, Ricardo, and J. S. Mill), when they spoke of the dual nature of money, first, as a "medium of exchange" (message transmission) and, second, as a "measure of value" (code).

⁴ It is important to note that the linguistic parallel holds here. The experience of an encounter with a ferocious dog can be "converted" into words, in that, for example, the person frightened can tell another about it in the absence of the dog and evoke in him appropriate reactions. Conversely, in our example above, linguistic warning can evoke an attitude set appropriate to dealing with such an animal in the absence of direct experience of the dog. The linguistic symbols do not have the properties either of dangerousness or of capacity to cope with danger, but they can *mediate* the action process by "orienting" an actor to danger.

this involves a very high level of generalization, since the variety of objects of utility is immense; furthermore, it means a very strict quantification on a linear scale.

In addition to the relevant category of value for human actors on the one hand, the basis of interest in objects in their situation on the other, there are two further indispensable references in the conceptualization of a generalized symbolic mechanism. One of these is to the "definition of the situation," i.e. the categorization of objects in the situation with reference to their bearing on the type of interest in question. In the economic-monetary case, the situation consists in "objects of utility," i.e. those in which actors may have an economic basis of interest. Implementation of the interest consists in acquiring control over such objects to the extent that this is a condition of "utilizing" them. The "way" of acquiring such control is through exchange, which, if money is involved, may be called "market" exchange.⁵

In the case of money as a symbol, one of its meanings is clearly in the field of "procurement," of the opportunities of using it to gain access to and control over objects of utility. The first component of the situation needing definition, then, consists in the manifold objects that not only have utility but are available within the exchange system: thus certain objects of potential utility, such as full control of other human beings by owning them as chattels, are excluded in our property system. The second component concerns sources of supply, namely, units in the interaction system which, on the one hand, have control of such objects and, on the other, may be presumed to be willing to relinquish such control in exchange for other utilities, including especially money. The third component concerns the conditions on which terms of exchange can be settled, the most important one being the institutionalization of the offer of specific sums of money as a way of inducing transfer of control. And, finally, the fourth component concerns the question of the time relations involved in bringing the two ends of a chain of exchange of utilities together, e.g. the relinquishment of control over labor services to an employer, and the acquisition of control over consumer's goods.

By contrast with the two "pre-monetary" modes of exchange mentioned above—ascriptive and barter exchange—money introduces altogether new degrees of freedom in all four of these respects. Thus, unlike the holder of a specific commodity in surplus—relative to his

⁵ There are two modes of exchange that involve levels of differentiation of the interest in utility short of what I am here calling the "market" level, namely, ascriptive exchange, the case of obligatory gifts, well known to anthropologists (cf. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1954), and the case of barter. Both lack the involvement of a generalized medium that specifically symbolizes utility, namely, money.

own wants—who wants to barter it for another commodity, the holder of money is not bound to find a specific partner who has what he wants and wants what he has. He has the whole range of the “market system” open with respect both to the items for which he wants to spend his funds and to the sources from which he might wish to purchase each item—so long as the market for the item is not monopolized. Exceedingly important, he is not bound to any particular time, since money, unlike virtually all commodities, does not intrinsically deteriorate through time and has minimal, if any, costs of storage. Finally, he has much greater freedom to accept or reject terms, and to negotiate them.

These freedoms, like all freedoms, are bought at a price. Money, being a symbol, is “intrinsically” worthless. Hence, in relinquishing control of objects of “real” utility for money, one risks never gaining an equivalent in return and being “stuck” with the symbol; similarly, if one relies on a sign rather than on actually seeing a dog, one risks being fooled, either by being alerted when there is no danger at all, or by being prepared to deal with a dog when in fact a tiger is lurking in the neighborhood.

There have doubtless been heroic figures in the history of market exchange who have risked everything on a conception of the sheer *value* of money without the existence of any institutionally established normative framework of rules according to which such a medium should be used. It seems clear, however, that, without such a framework, a *system* of market exchanges in which participants will regularly put major interests into monetary assets that, in our sense, are “intrinsically” worthless can hardly be expected to function. The most elementary of these rules is the condition of reciprocity in the acceptability of money. This may be formulated as follows: He who urges money on others in exchange for “real assets” must be willing in turn to accept money from others in exchange for his assets. Only mutual acceptability can make money a functioning medium rather than simply a way of getting something for nothing. From this central point, the network of norms that we ordinarily think of as the institutions of property and contract can be worked out. This is the fourth of the basic components of the complex that constitutes a generalized medium.

If a symbol or category of symbols is to function as a generalized medium in mediating the processes of social interaction, there must therefore be, I have contended, specific definition and institutional acceptance in four basic respects: (1) a category of *value*, of respects in which needs of the acting units are at stake; (2) a category of *interest*, of properties of objects in the situation of action that are important in the light of these values; (3) a *definition of the situation*, of the features of the actual situation that can be “exploited” in the implementation

of the interest; and (4) a *normative framework* of rules discriminating between legitimate and illegitimate modes of action in pursuit of the interest in question. Only with institutionalization in all four respects can the risks inherently involved in accepting the "symbolic" in lieu of the "real" be expected to be widely assumed by whole categories of acting units.

WAYS OF GETTING RESULTS IN INTERACTION

Because it is highly institutionalized and hence familiar, and because the conditions of its functioning have been very thoroughly analyzed by professional economists, I have used money as the example in terms of which to elucidate the nature and conditions of a generalized medium in the sense of this paper. In approaching a fuller analysis of the primary object of our concern, influence, a next step is to attempt to place both it and money in the context of a wider family of mechanisms. It is my view that money belongs in such a family, of which another well known member is power, in the broadly political sense. These mechanisms operate in social interaction in a way that is both much more specific and more generalized than communication through language. Furthermore, they have in common the imperative mood, i.e. they are ways of "getting results" rather than only of conveying information. They face the object with a decision, calling for a response such as the acceptance or rejection of a monetary offer.

These considerations indicate the approach. Such mechanisms are ways of structuring *intentional* attempts to bring about results by eliciting the response of other actors to approaches, suggestions, etc. In the case of money, it is a matter of offers; in the case of power, of communicating decisions that activate obligations; in the case of influence, of giving reasons or "justifications" for a suggested line of action. How can these various modes of getting results be classified?

My suggestion is that there is a very simple paradigm of modes by which one acting unit—let us call him "ego"—can attempt to get results by bringing to bear on another unit, which we may call "alter," some kind of *communicative operation*: call it "pressure" if that term is understood in a nonpejorative sense.⁶ It can be stated in terms of two variables, the cross-classification of which can then yield a fourfold typology. The first variable is whether ego attempts to work through potential control over the *situation* in which alter is placed and must act, or through an attempt to have an effect on alter's *intentions*, independently of changes in his situation. Let us call this the "channel"

⁶ The closest approach to this paradigm with which I am familiar from the literature is Herbert C. Kelman, "Processes of Opinion Change," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 25, 1961, pp. 57-78.

variable. Thus an offer in economic exchange operates situationally, in that it offers control either of an object of utility or of money, which in turn is exchangeable for control of such an object.

Offers are contingent—they say that, *if* alter will do something ego wants done, ego in turn will do something that is situationally advantageous to alter. There is, however, the limiting case in which ego confers a situational advantage on alter without giving him any option—this would be the pure case of the gift. This element of contingency, varying to the limit of no option, applies throughout the present typology.

The second variable concerns the nature of the contingent *consequences* for alter of ego's intervention in his action-complex, i.e., in one aspect, the kind of decision with which alter is faced. So far as the element of contingency is involved, this concerns whether the *sanctions* contingently imposed by ego are positive or negative in their significance to alter, i.e. constitute advantages or disadvantages to him. Thus, in the case of economic exchange, ego *promises* that if alter will do what he wants, he in turn will do something which alter presumably wants, i.e. defines as advantageous. Giving him money or control of an object of utility are prototypical cases. On the other hand, ego may attempt to get alter to do something by saying, in effect, "You must, should, or ought to do so and so." Alter may then say, "But what if I choose not to?" If ego takes this approach and "means it," he must contend that in some sense the consequences of alter's choosing non-compliance (if he can "do anything about it") will be disadvantageous to alter. If the channel is situational, this will put him in the position of having to *threaten*, contingent on noncompliance, to do something disadvantageous to alter. On the other hand, he may give alter reasons why noncompliance will, independent of ego's intervention in the situation, prove to be unacceptable, so that *intentional* noncompliance cannot make sense to alter. Here the negative sanction would be internal or intentional, and not situational so far as alter is concerned.

The limiting case where alter is given no option is, in the situational-negative combination, compulsion: ego simply structures the situation so alter *must* comply.

Cross-classification of these two variables for the case of contingency yields the set of four types shown in our table. (1) Inducement is ego's attempt to get a favorable decision from alter by an offer of situational advantages contingent on ego's compliance with his suggestions. (2) Deterrence is ego's corresponding attempt to get compliance by invoking commitments in such a way that noncompliance exposes alter to a contingent threat of suffering a situational disadvantage.⁷ (3) Acti-

⁷ This case, as well as the setting in which it fits, is much more fully discussed in

vation of commitments is ego's attempt to get compliance by offering reasons why it would, from alter's own point of view, be "wrong" for him to refuse to act as ego wished. And, finally, (4) persuasion is ego's attempt to get compliance by offering reasons why it would, from alter's own point of view, independent of situational advantages, "be a good thing" for him to act as ego wished.

<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Channel</i>	
	<i>Intentional</i>	<i>Situational</i>
Positive	Persuasion	Inducement
Negative	Activation of commitments	Deterrence

I should now like to suggest that this simple paradigm of modes of gaining ends in social interaction is matched by a paradigm of generalized media by which, in the appropriately structured type of interaction system, an enhanced capacity to gain such ends is made possible, provided the risks of acceptance of such a medium in the requisite situation are assumed. Seen in these terms, money should be regarded as a generalized medium of inducement, and influence as a generalized medium of persuasion. I shall try presently to elucidate further what the latter conception implies, but it will be useful first to put it in the context, not only of a comparison with money, but of this still more general classification of media.

Money and influence may be conceived to operate as positive sanctions in the above sense, money through the situational, influence through the intentional, channel. The negative medium corresponding to money on the situational side is then power in the political sense; on the intentional side, the negative medium corresponding to influence is generalization of commitments. The relation between the two pairs requires some elucidation.

Inducement and persuasion are ways of eliciting positively desired responses. Imposition of sanction and response correspond here. Deterrence, on the other hand, is intended to establish an inverse relation between sanctioned act and desired response. The purely negative side is the withholding of sanction in case of "compliance." What ego desires, however, is precisely compliance, the performance of obligation. He imposes sanctions only if "forced to."

It is hence not appropriate to define power simply as a generalized medium of deterrence, but rather of mobilizing the performance of

my forthcoming paper, "On the Concept of Political Power," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Philadelphia, 1963. Generally, this is a companion piece to the present paper.

binding obligations, with the conditional implication of the imposition of negative sanctions—in the situational case, “punishment”—in case of noncompliance. The intention of ego, however, is not to punish but to secure performance. Hence, we may speak of power as generalized capacity to secure performance of binding obligations in the interest of effective collective action (goal attainment). Parallel to this, on the intentional side (so far as alter is concerned), we may speak of the generalization of commitments as the capacity, through appeal to a subjective sense of obligation, to motivate fulfillment of relevant obligations without reference to any threat of *situational* sanctions (thus differentiating it from power). In this case, however, tendencies to noncompliance will be met with evaluative expressions on ego’s part (disapproval of noncompliance) that are calculated to help activate alter’s sense of obligation and threaten him with guilt feelings if he fails to comply.⁸ We may then insert the four generalized media in the paradigm of sanctions, as follows:

<i>Sanction</i>	<i>Channel</i>	
	<i>Intentional</i>	<i>Situational</i>
Positive:		
Mode	Persuasion	Inducement
Medium	Influence	Money
Negative:		
Mode	Activation of commitments	Deterrence
Medium	Generalization of commitments	Power

NOTE: For readers familiar with the more general paradigm of the analysis of action on which various associates and I have worked for some years, it may be of interest to note that I conceive inducement and money to have primarily adaptive functions in the social system; deterrence and power, primarily goal-attainment functions; persuasion and influence, primarily integrative functions; and, finally, activation of commitments and the generalized commitments so activated, primarily pattern-maintenance functions.

Let us now attempt to get somewhat closer to the analysis of influence by calling attention to another aspect of the generalized media as mechanisms operating within the social system. This is the sense in which they bridge the gap between normative and factual aspects of the system in which they operate. This is to say that, from the point

⁸ Ego can implement this threat through use of the *attitudinal* sanction of *disapproval*, and, in the case of compliance, by using influence he can reward alter with his *approval*.

of view of the acting unit, whether it be individual or collectivity, there is one "direction" in which the medium serves as a means of furthering its interests, and this includes the structuring of conditions under which, in various contingencies, its interest is more or less secure. On the other hand, what from the acting unit's point of view are certain norms or rules to which it is subject in furthering its interest are, from the point of view of the system, a set of conditions under which process in it can be carried on stably, without disturbance to its integration and other essential functions.

In the case of money, the rock bottom of security for the unit is the possession of the proper quantity and combination of concrete objects of utility to the unit itself, namely, full "economic self-sufficiency" in terms of "real assets." The next level is possession of objects such as gold, diamonds, land, which can be exchanged in almost any contingency and the value of which is not subject to deterioration. Institutionalized money has the advantage of a far wider usefulness in exchange than such goods but the disadvantage of vulnerability to disturbances in the system. Money, however, as we have insisted, is a symbol, the "meaning" of which (in this case, its economic value) is a function of its mutual acceptability. In one direction, this acceptability is well-known to depend on its convertibility into objects of rock-bottom economic security, notably the monetary metal. Convertibility, however, is one thing, but frequent insistence on actual conversion is quite another.

The point is very simply that the insistence on actual conversion can be met only by measures that destroy the very degrees of freedom that make money an advantageous mechanism from the points of view *both* of the unit and of the system.⁹ The maintenance of the degrees of freedom, however, is dependent on minimum levels of compliance with the norms of the economic complex with respect to the fulfillment of contractual obligations and the rights and obligations of property. It is by this path that we come to the conception that, while in one context the value of money rests on its "backing" by convertibility into a secure utility, e.g. metal, in another and probably more important context, it rests on the effective functioning of a ramified system of monetary exchanges and markets. This, in turn, is one major set of factors in the productivity of the economy of which these markets are a central part. No economist would suppose that such productivity can be created simply by adding to the supply of monetary gold.

I suggest that this duality of reference is characteristic not only of money as a mechanism, but of the whole set with which we are con-

⁹ The most important reason concerns the role of banking and credit, the bearing of which on the functioning of influence will be taken up later.

cerned—indeed, more broadly, of language, law, and various others. For the case of power, the basis of unit security corresponding to economic “real assets” consists in possession of effective means of *enforcing* compliance (i.e. fulfillment of wishes or performance of obligations) through implementing coercive threats or exerting compulsion. In this context, it is well known that physical force occupies a special place, a place which, it may be suggested, is parallel to monetary metal in the economic case. This is above all because force is the deterrent sanction par excellence. In turn, the most important aspect of this deterrence is very generally blocking channels of communication; for example, the most important feature of imprisonment is preventing the prisoner from communicating with others except in ways and through channels his custodians can control.

But just as possession of stocks of monetary gold cannot create a highly productive economy, so command of physical force alone cannot guarantee the effective fulfillment of ramified systems of binding obligations. The latter is dependent on such factors as the institutionalization of a system of norms in the fields of authority, and the legitimation of the power of leadership elements. The mutuality of the institutionalization of authority, on the one hand, and the acceptance of the legitimacy of its exercise, on the other, is the parallel of the mutual acceptability of “worthless” money in exchange. Clearly, the functioning of a *system* of power is preeminently dependent on the effective implementation of this normative structure. The analogue of economic productivity here may be said to be the *effectiveness of collective organization*.

INFLUENCE AS A SYMBOLIC MEDIUM OF PERSUASION

Let us now attempt to apply this line of argument to the field of influence. There is a sense in which all four of the mechanisms under consideration here depend on the institutionalization of attitudes of trust. In the economic case, the actor relinquishes his interests (in commodities or labor) to the market, and the question is on what basis he can have confidence or trust that he will receive “fair value” in return for what he has relinquished. We have argued that there are two distinct foci of the problem of trust, namely, the convertibility of money into “real assets” and confidence in the functioning of the “system,” which for the actor means the fulfillment of his more or less legitimate expectations from actual and potential exchange partners. Similarly, in the case of power, an actor may relinquish his coercive self-sufficiency: he cannot then defend himself adequately with his own strong right arm alone. In entrusting his security to a power *system*, there is on the one hand his possible identification with actual

control of coercive means (in the last analysis, force), on the other his confidence that his expectations will be effectively fulfilled through agencies beyond his personal control, because the power *system* is effective.

In order to fit influence into this scheme, it is necessary to ask what influence symbolizes. In the case of money, it symbolized utility; in the case of power, effectiveness of collective action.¹⁰ An answer seems to be given in our paradigm of interactive performance—sanction types. Influence is a means of *persuasion*. It is bringing about a decision on alter's part to act in a certain way because it is felt to be a "good thing" *for him*, on the one hand independently of contingent or otherwise imposed changes in his situation, on the other hand for positive reasons, not because of the obligations he would violate through noncompliance.

It then seems that, to correspond to the intrinsic "want-satisfiers," which the economist calls "goods and services," there should be a category of intrinsic "persuaders." The most obvious member of this category is "facts" from which alter can "draw his own conclusions." Ego, that is, can persuade by giving alter information which, given his situation and intentions, will lead him to make certain types of decision.¹¹ It seems probable that information is indeed the proper parallel to commodities, with a special kind of information—the announcement of firm intentions of action on the part of significant others—the parallel to services.¹² Influence as a symbol, however, cannot be either of these, but must be more generalized relative to both.

The crucial thing to look for seems to be a symbolic act or component of action on ego's part which communicates a generalized intention on the basis of which trust in more specific intentions is requested and expected. This may operate in the realm of information. Here there must be some basis on which alter considers ego to be a trustworthy source of information and "believes" him even though he is not in a position to verify the information independently—or does not want to take the trouble. It can also operate in the realm of ego's intentions, and

¹⁰ For reasons of space, no further attempt is made here to ground this statement. Cf. my paper on political power, *op.cit.*

¹¹ To take an extreme example, a middle-aged man might stubbornly refuse to make a will because of a kind of phantasy of immortality. If, however, a physician informed him that because of incurable cancer he had only a few months to live, this might well be enough to persuade him to make the will.

¹² For many purposes, economists have bracketed "goods and services" together as the two ultimate "want-satisfiers." For certain purposes of economic sociology, however, the distinction is vital, particularly because the concept of services constitutes one perspective on labor as a factor of production. (Cf. Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, *Economy and Society*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1956, p. 157, for a preliminary discussion of the importance of the distinction.)

this is indeed a crucial matter; for example, agreeing to a contract is essentially an announcement of intentions which can perhaps be fulfilled only by a long series of performances over an extended period of time.

The monetary metal is not "just" one among many commodities; it is one with certain properties that favor security and maximum exchangeability. Similarly with force as an instrument of coercion-compulsion. Is there, then, any comparable "intrinsic" source of persuasion that has a special likelihood of inspiring trust? If, in answering this question, we remember that we are dealing specifically with social interaction, it seems reasonable to suggest that the most favorable condition under which alter will trust ego's efforts to persuade him (independent of specific facts or "inherently" trustworthy intentions) will be when the two stand in a mutual relation of fundamental diffuse solidarity, when they belong together in a collectivity on such a basis that, so long as the tie holds, ego *could not* have an interest in trying to deceive alter. We may then suggest that common belongingness in a *Gemeinschaft* type of solidarity is the primary "basis" of mutual influence, and is for influence systems the equivalent of gold for monetary and force for power systems.

This, however, can be only the security *base*. Just as a ramified monetary system cannot operate with an exclusively metallic medium, so a ramified influence system would be stultified if only close *Gemeinschaft* associates ever trusted each other beyond completely concrete levels of information and binding intentions. The degrees of freedom associated with the market are here matched by those of "communication" systems, e.g., freedom of the press and the like. Like any other interchange system, the stability of a free communication system is dependent on regulation by a set of institutionalized norms corresponding to those of property and contract. These have to do with the conditions normatively regulating types of association of people with each other, the kinds of obligations assumed in making assertions and giving opinions, and the kinds of obligations involved in statements of intention. Thus, the very fundamental principle of freedom of association may be said to be the normative principle in this sphere that corresponds to freedom of contract in the sphere of market organization; in both cases, of course, the freedoms are far from absolute, being subject to such restrictions as are imposed by the interests of third parties.

What, then, can be said in general about the nature of these normative references? In the case of money, the reference, within the range of freedom of contract, is to value equivalences in the utility sense. Money functions here as the measure of value, and price is a statement

of the assessed value of an exchangeable item. In the case of power, the reference is to authorization, in the sense that a unit with power is, within the given limits, authorized to make decisions that bind not only himself but certain categories of others and the relevant collectivity as a whole. Thus, the vote is an exercise of power, and, subject to the electoral rules, the aggregate of votes in an election will determine bindingly the incumbency of office.

In the case of influence, I suggest that the corresponding conception should be the normative justification of generalized statements about information or intention (*not* their empirical validation). The user of influence is under pressure to justify his statements, which are intended to have an effect on alter's action, by making them correspond to norms that are regarded as binding on both.¹³ With reference to items of information, justification is necessary, since influence is a symbolic medium. The function of justification is not actually to verify the items, but to provide the basis for the communicators' *right* to state them without alter's needing to verify them; for example, ego may be a technically competent "authority" in the field. With reference to intentions, justification may be regulated by various aspects of status that are regularly invoked to indicate that such intentions should prove trustworthy when stated by persons in the category in question.¹⁴ A very important category of the justification of influence is what is ordinarily meant by "reputation." The same statement will carry more "weight" if made by someone with a high reputation for competence, for reliability, for good judgment, etc., than by someone without this reputation or with a reputation for unreliability. The common component may be called "fiduciary responsibility." A unit wields influence in proportion as, in the relevant context, its unverified declarations of information and intention are believed to be responsibly made. This is the "reputational" parallel to financial credit standing.

Put in familiar sociological terms, the associational base of influence may be regarded as primarily particularistic. The question is *who* the wielder is in terms of his collectivity memberships. The normative reference, however, is primarily universalistic. It is not what he is saying, which is a "content" matter, but what "right" he has to expect to be taken seriously, over and above the intrinsic cogency of what he says.

I spoke above of influence as "based" on *Gemeinschaft* solidarity, on

¹³ The term "justification" here refers to the level of norms. It seems useful to distinguish it from "legitimation," by which I would mean reference to the level of values. Cf. Talcott Parsons, Part II of General Introduction, in Talcott Parsons *et al.*, editors, *Theories of Society*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1961, Vol. I, pp. 43-44.

¹⁴ This, it should be noted, is independent of the assumption of formally binding obligation.

the elementary, diffuse kind of belonging-togetherness of which, in a society like ours, the family is the prototypical case. The relevance of associatedness in collectivities is not, however, exhausted by this limiting case. Indeed, we may say that at many levels being "one of us" is a factor enhancing influence, whether it be membership in a local community, an occupational or professional group, or any one of many others. For this reason, nonmembers of groups must exercise special care in matters concerning the affairs of the group, lest they be felt to be "interfering." An obvious case is a foreigner speaking about a nation's domestic politics, especially one holding an official position at home. If this is true, then, conversely, attempting to influence is to a degree an attempt to establish a common bond of solidarity, on occasion even to bring the object of influence into common membership in a collectivity. Thus, being subject to mutual influence is to constitute a "we" in the sense that the parties have opinions and attitudes in common by virtue of which they "stand together" relative to those differing from them. There are, of course, various other conditions for establishing a full collectivity besides openness to mutual influence among its members, but we can certainly say that this is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition of a stable collectivity.

There is a very clear relation between this point and the findings of the study *Voting*, by Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, concerning the importance for voting behavior of the solidary group structures in which individuals are involved, starting with their families, but going on to occupations and ethnic, religious, and other groupings.¹⁵ The broad presumption seems to be that a person will tend to vote with others whom he defines as "my kind of people" and that it is the "cross-pressured" groups which are mostly likely to break away from this tendency—cross-pressuring being itself a consequence of the increasing role pluralism of a complex society. Indeed, this finding was one of the most important points on which it seemed to me possible to relate empirical studies of voting behavior to the broad scheme of analysis of social interaction that has been the point of departure of the present essay.¹⁶

TYPES OF INFLUENCE

We may now approach the problem of classification of types or modes of influence. Here it is essential to bear in mind that the influence system is not a closed system. On the one hand, of course, it is used to

¹⁵ Bernard Berelson *et al.*, *Voting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1954.

¹⁶ Cf. Talcott Parsons, "'Voting' and the Equilibrium of the American Political System," in Eugene Burdick and Arthur J. Brodbeck, editors, *American Voting Behavior*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1959.

get consent to particular attitudes and opinions that are to influence what particular commodities and services are to money. In this sense, we may think of influence as a "circulating" medium. To get consent, an "opinion leader" must expend some of his influence. He must therefore carefully husband it by choosing the occasions on which to intervene and the appropriate mode of intervention. The classic type of thriftless expenditure is illustrated by the nursery story about the repetition of the cry, "Wolf! Wolf!" so that when the wolf actually came, the warning was not believed. This is to say that by wasting his influence, the author of the cry had lost his influence, i.e. his capacity to convince.

The circulating character of influence as a medium can be brought out more clearly if we break it down into types, since in each context it is easier to identify the nature of the flow in both ways than if it is treated on the more general level. I should like to suggest the following tentative classification: (1) "political" influence, (2) "fiduciary" influence, (3) influence through appeal to differential loyalties, and (4) influence oriented to the interpretation of norms. The fact that, in order to characterize the last two types, it is necessary to resort to cumbersome phrases rather than succinct single-word designations indicates clearly that the subject is rather undeveloped and needs elucidation. An important guide line for interpreting the first three types lies in the convertibility of each with one of the other three types of generalized media we have discussed.

1. When speaking of political influence, I mean it in an analytical sense, but one in which there is a directly significant relation between influence and power. The prototypical structural context is that of the democratic association, whether it be in the field of government at any one of several levels, or of private associations. The democratic association is characterized by a structure of offices the incumbents of which are authorized to take certain decisions binding on the collectivity as a whole and, hence, on its members in their respective capacities.¹⁷ Such authorization is for action defined within constitutional norms, and there are also constitutional procedures by which incumbents of office are chosen, summed up as election and appointment.

The making of decisions binding on a collectivity I interpret to be an exercise of power, which includes the exercise of the franchise in the electoral procedure, since it is the aggregate of votes which determines who is elected to office. But both in seeking election and in office, officers and candidates are continually using other ways of getting the

¹⁷ Of course, for this analysis to be relevant, the association in question need not be "fully" democratic, but this problem of ranges in degrees of democracy need not concern the present very limited discussion.

results they want besides the use of power in a strict sense. They are, of course, giving information and announcing intentions, in the detailed sense. They may well be offering inducements, making coercive threats outside the context of the power of office, and activating their own and others' commitments. But they are, above all, operating with influence, in our technical sense.

There are, as I conceive it, two main contexts in which this is the case. Because associations are typically differentiated on the axis of leadership-followership, we may use this axis here. One focus of influence, then, is the establishment of leadership position or reputation, either as incumbent of office or as explicit or implicit candidate, so that, for the followership in question, there will be a basis of trust going beyond the direct exercise of power, the giving of specific information and the like, and also beyond the manipulation of inducements, informal threats, etc. A leader, I suggest, must try to establish a basis on which he is trusted by a "constituency," in the symbolic sense of this discussion, so that when he "takes a position," he can count on a following "going along with him" on it, or even actively working for its implementation according to their respective capacities and roles. We often put this by saying that a leader "takes responsibility" for such positions. In any case, I would treat the concept of leadership as focusing on the use of influence, and the concept of office, on the use of power.

The other context is the obverse, that of the processes by which units not in a leadership position in the relevant respects can have and use influence oriented to having an effect on leadership. This is by and large the well-known field of "interest groups," very broadly in the sense of parts of the constituencies of parties and officeholders. The influence may be used in electoral processes, trying to establish terms on which electoral support—a form of power—will be given. Or, it may play on incumbents of office by trying to influence their decisions of policy. In either case, it is the use of a basis of presumptive "trust" and, hence, "right to speak" to try to swing a balance in favor of what the influencer advocates—or opposes—relative to alternatives, whether these be candidates or policies.

Political influence, then, we would conceive as influence operating in the context of the goal-functioning of collectivities, as generalized persuasion without power—i.e., independent of the use of power or direct threat,¹⁸—used, on the one hand, by units either exercising or

¹⁸ Incumbents of office, though they have power, are often very careful when pleading for certain measures to make clear that they will not directly bring their power to bear in the particular case. A good example is when officeholders who are

bidding for leadership positions and, on the other, by nonleaders seeking to have an effect on the decisions and orientations of leaders. Though political influence is analytically independent of power, we conceive the two to be closely interconnected. Very generally, leaders expect a major share of their influence to be translated into binding support, particularly through the franchise, and constituents in turn expect an important part of theirs to be translated into binding decisions congenial to them. But the independence of influence from power means that the influence system is an open one. To tie it to power in direct, matching terms would be to reduce the power-influence relation to a barter basis, and thus destroy the element of symbolic generalization we have treated as essential.

2. The second type of influence suggested has been called "fiduciary." The relevant context here is not the effective determination of an attainment of collective goals, but the allocation of resources in a system where both collectivities and their goals are plural and the justification of each among the plural goals is problematical. The interests in control of resources and in attainment of goals are the classical instances of the operation of "interests" in social systems. In a more or less pluralistic system, the allocation of resources must, however, be subject to normative control; distributions must be justified by reference to norms more general than the mere desirability to the unit in question of getting what it wants. Furthermore, resources constitute, from the point of view of goal attainment, the principal opportunity factor that conditionally controls prospects of success. Hence, influence bearing on the allocation of resources is a particularly important field of trust.

There is a relation to money in this case which is in certain respects parallel to that to power in the case of political influence. This derives from the fact that, in a society in which the economy is highly differentiated relative to other elements of the social structure, money becomes the most important allocative mechanism, not only over commodities, but over human services. Hence, the focus of the fiduciary function is in the allocation of funds, because the possessor of funds is in turn in a position to claim, through market channels, control over the indicated share of "real" resources.

The interchanges we have in mind here do not constitute the use of money as a circulating medium, but rather as a measure of value. On the monetary side, an example is setting up a budget. The various interests that expect to share in a budget "assert their claims," and the

adherents of a particular party lend their influence to strictly nonpartisan causes. Thus a state governor who is a good Republican may plead for *all* the people, regardless of party, to contribute generously to the Red Cross campaign.

budget-making agency reaches some kind of allocative ranking of these claims. This is the expression of need and of "right" in monetary terms. But both claims and accession of right in turn are subject to standards of justification, in our technical sense. These are never assertions of value as such, because the agency, dealing as it does with scarce and allocable resources, must always consider situational exigency and competing claims. It operates, that is, at the level of norms, not of values. Those who assert claims may concretely, of course, use power to gain them; they may use inducements—in the extreme case, bribery—or various other means. But a special role is played by influence. A good example would be, in budgetary negotiations, the assertion of a highly qualified and trustworthy technical expert that to fulfill expectations he must have a certain specific minimum of resources at his disposal—an assertion that a budgetary officer, not himself an expert in the field, will find it difficult to contest. On the other hand, decisions of allocation in turn must be justified by reference to agreed standards of proper priority in claims. Such standards, of course, are likely to be made most explicit where there is an unaccustomed stringency of resources and hence sacrifices must be justified. Just as the budgetary officer is often unable to judge the needs of the technical expert, so the latter, operating only in one specialized sector of the system, is not qualified to judge the urgency of the claims competing with his own. Hence the necessity for mutual influence to operate to cover this gap.

The case of a budget is the neatest case, because the relevant system is more or less closed by unitary organizational control of the resources and by power, in the strict sense, to make the allocative decisions binding. The same basic principles, however, apply in processes of allocation through free market channels. The economist's ideal of free competition is here the limiting case in which influence as an independent factor disappears. Here, then, it is in two areas that influence is most obviously operative. One is the establishment of norms by which the allocative process is regulated, as through tax legislation and the like; the other is through such modifications of "pure" market process as the involvement of voluntary contributions in allocation. The very term "fiduciary" also is most generally used for cases where certain "interested parties" cannot be expected to protect their interests without help, for example, administration of the property interests of minors by "trustees," i.e. people who can be trusted to apply acceptable standards even though their actions are not dictated by personal financial interest.

3. The third category has been called "influence through appeal to differential loyalties." Whereas in the political influence case the differentiation on the axis of leadership was the central structural

focus, and in the fiduciary influence case it was the problem of allocation of scarce resources, in this case it is the pluralistic structure of memberships in society. This operates at the level both of individuals in roles and of collectivities. The more highly differentiated the society is structurally, the more every concrete unit is a responsible member of a plurality of collectivities.¹⁹ He is therefore in a position of having to balance the claims of these plural collectivities on his loyalties, i.e. a class of his normative commitments.

For the individual, particularly the adult male, the most important case is normally the relation between kinship and occupation, since for most men it is essential to participate in both, and in modern societies they are structurally independent of each other. Generally, in a reasonably stable situation, the broad lines of allocation of obligation are institutionally settled, but there are always areas of indeterminacy and of shift in the light of changing circumstances. Moreover, our society is rapidly changing, and one of the principal aspects of such change is the rise of new collectivities, and hence loyalties to them, and the decline of old ones. A large part of the population is thus faced with decisions about whether to take on new commitments or to sacrifice old ones, or both, or to shift balances among loyalties.

The commitments we have in mind are grounded in institutionalized values, which can, for purposes of analysis, be presumed to be shared by members of a society. But it is in the nature of a differentiated society that there is an important difference between asserting, however sincerely, the desirability of a value and, on the other hand, taking personal responsibility for its implementation, since the capacities and opportunities of units for effective contribution are inherently limited, and, moreover, some kinds of attempt would infringe the prerogatives of other units. It is with this problem that the present type of influence is concerned. It is a matter of the justification of assuming particular responsibilities in particular collectivity and subcollectivity contexts.

A person, then, will be faced by manifold demands for commitment through participation in collectivities, and will often be put in a position of having to justify the allocative decisions he makes. The normative structure (of "commitments") governing such processes then involves, on the one hand, appeals to common values and, on the other, assertion of norms governing the practical decisions of allocation of commitment among plural loyalties. The categories of influence, then, are, first, the plea that an actor ought, as a practical matter, to undertake such and such a collective responsibility (not merely that

¹⁹ For the collectivity as unit the relevant membership is that in more inclusive collectivities; e.g. a department is a subcollectivity in a university faculty.

it is desirable that the function be effectively performed independently of *his* commitment; that is an assertion of its value), and second, the assertion of the norms it is held should govern such decisions, again at the level of practical allocation.

In one sense, this, like the last category of influence, concerns the allocation of "resources." But what I am here referring to as loyalties are not the same kind of resource as money and power, or the concrete utilities and modes of effectiveness controlled by them. From the point of view of the unit, the question is not with what means he will implement his commitments, but *whether he will undertake the commitment in the first place*. It is not, given that he "intends" to do something, a question of *how* he is to accomplish it, but rather whether he *ought*—in our sense of justification—to undertake it at all. Commitments in this sense surely constitute a societal resource, but, in the analysis of unit action, they concern the "orientational" side, not the situational side, of the action paradigm.²⁰

As noted earlier in this paper, I consider generalized commitments to constitute a symbolic medium operating on the interaction process in the same basic sense that money, power, and influence do. Any promise by which the actor forecloses certain alternatives may be regarded as a *particular* commitment. By invoking a *generalized* commitment, however, the actor is enabled to command a series of more particular commitments, to be in a position to "activate" them in response to appropriate circumstances as we have said above. A good example is securing the acceptance of a job offer. Commitment to the job by the prospective employee then entails a commitment to perform a complex series of more particular acts as occasion arises, including commitment to accept certain types of authority within the organization.

Being grounded in values, generalized commitments in some sense involve the "honor" of the actors concerned, the more so the more generalized they are. They therefore in general cannot lightly be altered. Nevertheless, in a pluralistic and changing society complete rigidity of commitments would introduce an intolerable rigidity into its structure. Commitments must therefore involve priority scales of seriousness, i.e. be referred to general standards, and there must be norms defining the situations in which particular commitments may be changed, not only new ones assumed but also old ones abandoned, even where this means the breaking of promises made and accepted in good faith. A good example here is the general norm that even in occupations where rules of tenure bind the employing organization,

²⁰ Cf. Talcott Parsons, "Pattern Variables Revisited," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 25, 1960, pp. 467-483, for an elucidation of this essential distinction.

incumbents of such positions are generally considered entitled to resign subject only to giving "reasonable" notice. The category of influence with which we are now concerned operates in this range of flexibility of commitments and concerns the relation between the justification for change and the more generalized loyalties to fulfillment of commitments made.

4. The three types of influence so far discussed deal with the relations of the normative or integrative system to the other primary functional subsystems of the society, namely, what I should call the "polity," the "economy," and the "pattern maintenance" (in a structural aspect, the value maintenance) systems respectively.²¹ The fourth and final type, which was referred to as influence oriented to the interpretation of norms, is internal to the integrative system. Here the prototype is the process of interpretation of legal norms in the appellate phase of the judicial process.

Since norms mediate between value commitments and particular interests and situational exigencies, they are, in formulation, in need of continual adjustment to the variations at these levels. Furthermore, since their primary function in the social system is integrative, the problem of consistency is a particularly important one. Hence, in a complex system of normative regulation, the interpretive function is highly important. A category of influence is organized about it of which the best example is the influence involved in the reputations of judges and lawyers. As in so many other fields, substantive arguments, i.e. particular justifications, of course play a central part. But there is the same need for symbolic generalization here as in the other fields. Another type of example of interpretive influence would be in the field of exegesis of ethical norms, which plays such an important part in many religious traditions.

This has been an exceedingly sketchy and tentative attempt to review a typology of the different contexts of the operation of influence. All, I think, are fields in which the general themes of the above analysis can be illustrated in sufficiently well known terms to carry conviction of the reality and importance of the phenomena here called "influence." Let me reiterate that the critical common factor is a mechanism of persuasion that is generalized beyond appeal to particular facts, particular intentions, particular obligations and commitments, particular normative rules. The general suggestion is that, in the absence of a ramified system of influence in this sense, there would either be a much

²¹ This refers to a generalized paradigm of analysis in terms of four functional categories, elaborated more fully, for example, in the General Introduction to *Theories of Society* and in "Pattern Variables Revisited," as cited.

more pervasive atmosphere of distrust than in fact obtains, or the level of trust could be raised only by introducing more rigid specification as to who could be trusted in what specific ways, which would greatly limit the ranges of flexibility so important to a complex society.

IS INFLUENCE A FIXED QUANTITY IN A SOCIAL SYSTEM?

One further major topic is so essential to the general understanding of symbolic media that the discussion would be seriously incomplete without a brief treatment of it. It concerns a problem that has been particularly prominent in the history of the analysis of money and power, but the technical analysis of influence has been so primitive that it has scarcely arisen in that connection. It may be put in terms of the question whether any or all of these media are in general subject to a "zero-sum" condition of their operation.

At certain levels and in certain contexts it is obvious that this condition does hold. For a unit with fixed money income, increase of expenditure for one purpose must be balanced by reduction for one or more others. Similarly in power systems, electoral rules mean that a vote cast for one candidate must be denied to others, and persons in authority must choose between mutually incompatible alternatives in making many decisions. Important as this is, it is not, however, the whole story.

The most familiar case in the monetary field in which the zero-sum conception fails to apply is the creation of credit through banking. Money in one aspect is the most important object of property rights. Depositors in a bank in one sense "lend" their property to the bank. But, unlike most contracts of lease, they do not, even for a term, relinquish any of their rights: the main feature of a deposit is that it is repayable on demand, subject only to rules such as those regulating banking hours.

The bank, however, does not simply act as custodian for its depositors' funds. It lends a certain proportion to borrowers on contractual terms that enable the latter to "spend" them so long as they are presumptively in a position to repay at the term of the loan, and of course pay interest and any other charges. This means that *the same dollars* are functioning doubly as circulating media, so that the bank loans outstanding constitute a net addition to the quantity of the circulating medium.

This commonplace of economics has a very important implication. Clearly, an operating bank is in *one* important sense always formally "insolvent," in that its deposits are held on demand whereas its loans are on term. If all the depositors demand repayment at the same time, the bank cannot meet its obligations without outside resources. It usually keeps sufficient cash—and other resources—on hand to meet

expected rates of withdrawal, with a margin of safety, but if it were completely "liquid," it would cease to be a bank. Financial panics are, precisely, occasions on which an abnormal rate of demands puts the bank in a difficult if not impossible position, in the extreme case forcing its "failure."

The question arises whether there are, with respect to the other media, phenomena analogous to those of banking and credit in the monetary field. The dominant opinion in the field of analysis of power seems to have been that there are not,²² but this position can be questioned. The most appropriate context seems to be the relation between the grant of power to leadership in the democratic association and the use of that power by leadership.

Elected leaders may be said to be the recipients of a grant of power through the exercise of the franchise. This grant is, moreover, typically and in principle revocable, if not on demand, then at the end of a stated term of office, when the voter can transfer his support to a rival candidate. It could be argued, then, that this is a "deposit" of power, which is at the disposal of the depositors for the "purchase" of political benefits through the decisions made by the incumbents of office somewhere in the system, not necessarily this particular office. This would make it a "circulating" system where the amounts of power balanced.

It may be suggested, however, that this is only part of the story. Some of the power acquired through election to office may be "invested" in collective enterprises that are not direct responses to the interest-demands of constituents, and this power in turn may be utilized by agencies other than constituents. Since power is in certain circumstances convertible into money, for example through taxation, it may be suggested that some of the use of tax funds, as in the support of scientific training and research, is a process of "investment" by officeholders—in both the executive and the legislative branches—that puts the funds at the disposal of scientists and educational institutions. If the electorate, like the bank's depositors, should demand immediate and strict accounting of power, the system would, like a good bank, turn out to be "insolvent" in the sense that these commitments could not be liquidated all at once. Often, however, politicians can shrewdly estimate the latitude it is safe to assume in making commitments other than those specifically demanded by the constituents on whom they are dependent. Politically organized collectivities, including government, can probably serve as agents of creative social change mainly by virtue of this type of mechanism, namely, the creation of increments

²² For example, this seems to be the position of Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1950.

of new power, since generating direct constituency demands for these changes may involve much more serious difficulties.

It would seem logical that the same reasoning should apply to influence. The case in which the zero-sum concept should particularly apply is political influence, because, on the economic analogy, this is a kind of "circular flow" situation in which the process of eliciting collective decisions in a ramified system is mediated.²³ The economic parallel lies in the markets for consumers' goods and for labor.

In the field of influence, the analogy with banking and credit seems most obvious in connection with the allocation of loyalties. The postulate on which our whole analysis in this area is based is that it applies most clearly to a highly pluralistic social system in which the allocation of loyalties cannot be wholly based on direct assessment of the importance of the intrinsic issues involved, but that commitments are widely made in response to influence. If the quantity of influence is not fixed, but is expansible along the lines suggested by monetary credit, then it becomes possible for influence to operate as a mechanism by which a given capacity for commitments (in our technical sense) can be reallocated, in that the influence to command such commitments can be more or less directly and deliberately put in the hands of certain agencies.

My suggestion is that the principal way in which this is done in a society like the American is through voluntary associations that, unlike government even in its "democratic" aspect, are not primarily concerned with political functions—again in our technical sense. The "joiners" of such associations are analogous to depositors. They have, as we often put it, "lent their names" to the association and its leadership. But such an association often does more than simply collect increments of influence; it creates the effect of adding to the total amount of influence in circulation. This can occur in proportion as leadership exercises *independent* judgment in how to use the "name," not of individual members but of the association, to encourage commitments which they consider to be desirable, generally in quarters outside the membership itself.

Such associations may thus be considered to be a kind of "influence bank." Like money banks, they are formally "insolvent." Hence, if their members call for strict accounting—"You shall not use the name of the association without explicit consent of all the membership to the detailed implications"—this, of course, destroys the freedom of action of leaders, and leads to a deflation of "influence credit." The effect of this in turn is to deprive many agencies, dependent on the

²³ For the concept of circular flow, cf. J. A. Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1934, Chap. 1.

“backing” of such influence purveyors, of the basis on which they can “afford” to make important commitments. In more ordinary circumstances, however, leaders of such associations operate on a judgment of the acceptable margins of their independence. They do, in fact, make commitments of the association’s name beyond the level of explicit authorization—though not of realistic expectation of “justification”—by the membership. In so doing, they add to the net amount of influence circulating in the system and have an effect on the distribution of commitments in the society in the direction of promoting the “causes” they hold to be desirable.

It should be clear from the above argument that phenomena analogous to deflation and inflation in the economic case should be found in the fields of power and influence as well. We have already indicated the direction that deflationary trends would take in these fields. In the field of power it is toward progressively increasing reliance on strict authority and coercive sanctions, culminating in the threat and use of physical force. In the field of influence it is toward undermining the basis of trust in reputations and fiduciary responsibility through increasing questioning of broader loyalties and rising insistence on narrow in-groupism.²⁴

Inflationary process, on the other hand, is, for influence, the extension of claims to authoritative diagnoses of situations that cannot be validated with solid information and, on the other hand, the declaration of praiseworthy intentions that will not be backed by actual commitments when occasion arises. Unfortunately, there is no space here to develop these themes as they deserve.

It should go without saying that this essay has been very tentative indeed. It cannot claim to be more than the barest approach to the very complicated problems of this area. I hope, however, that it can serve as a useful basis not only for discussion but for the stimulation of serious research.

²⁴ McCarthyism was a classic instance of a deflationary episode entering in the influence field, which at its culmination approached panic proportions: the demand for “absolute loyalty” was analogous to the demand for a return to the gold standard in the financial area. Cf. E. A. Shils, *The Torment of Secrecy*, and “Social Strains in America,” Chap. 7 of my book of essays, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1960.