

THE CONCEPT OF STATUS AND ITS DIMENSIONS

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Abstract: As a bio-psycho-social being “within the mistery and revelation”, as Lucian Blaga claimed, the man enters a multitude of relations diminishing implacably his solidarity. He occupies a position identifying him with the society itself, defines him in his relations with the others, but also in his own relation with the society as an individual. Objectively speaking, the relation between society and individual becomes a phenomenon within the *status*. Within the societal reality, the statuses group depending on different degrees of cohesion, arising groups (categories) of human individuals bearing similarities. The present study represents an extension of the idea of status as Bryan S. Turner explains, as well as the essential differences between the consensual perspective and the conflictual one in approaching the concept of *status*.

1. Introduction. Theoretical considerations

The status issue preoccupied the sociological research, either American, or European. It has had movements of emphasis from individuals toward groups, attempts to substitute some concepts considered out of date at a given moment (for example, the social classes, and economic classes), and bearing elements common to citizenship or cultural lifestyle. Thus, the research in the domain is rather rich, than simplifying.

The issue of the social stratification – as a real and inevitable issue – correlates with differentiating the statuses because of the continuous struggles to allocate the insufficient cultural resources. Defined as the *individual position within the society*, the status connects the society and the individual; the statuses belong to the social structures, with individuals appropriating this position, yet also, individuals denying their status.

We have mentioned before that Max Weber opens the perspective of a new discipline in USA, yet at the same time influencing large areas of the European political science, especially of the contemporary French political science. Having his own theory – as an alternative of Karl Marx’s analysis on economic classes, Weber also makes possible passing from the definitions of the individual status to the notions of groups or staus communities, even collective styles of life. This aspect will be the topic of yet another study.

Correlated with the prestige, rewards and honours, the concept of individual status illustrates the extent to which people feel the others' perceptions on themselves (Lipset, Warner, Lunt, Turner etc.). Yet this is another dimension differentiating the new approaches within the American sociology from the European sociology.

Starting from the possibility of grouping the individuals in many content dimensions, we reiterate the practical coordinate to enact the dimensions of the profession through statutes: the statute of the public servant, the statute of the magistrate, the statute of the teaching staff, the statute of the police officer etc.

2. *The concept of status and its dimensions*

The status designates the position of the individual within the society, by achieving the connection between the society and the individual¹. Objectively speaking, these statuses refer to the social structure, with different degrees in which the individuals join to it, depending on the modality they become responsible of their position and role or on the contrary, they avoid to identify to this position. Similarly, there are statuses of great responsibility giving rise to people fully aware of their position, who turn their duties into vocation². This kind of people represent what Henri H. Stahl calls characters³. Yet, there are statuses, which people refuse to take on, avoiding – explicitly or tacitly – to identify with them, failing to recognize their position.

Nonetheless, within the social system, there is a great diversity of individuals. Since the statuses designate the position of the individuals within the society, with direct connection between the social and individual perspective, they appear as intermediate between the society as a system and the multitude of individuals. This fact leads to the possibility to group the individuals in many dimensions, especially content dimensions: profession, education, gender, age, position within the family etc. Nevertheless, the history of the human society displays some social cleavages, social stratifications, socio-political conflicts etc. This is the reason why, each of the content dimension is evidently bidimensional. They are two formal dimensions: a horizontal dimension of equality and a vertical one, of hierarchy, each allowing a double perspective analysis. There is a *consensual one*, insisting on functional interdependence and the *conflictual one*, emphasizing the domination reports and tensions among different statuses⁴.

Etimologically, the notion of status originates in the Latin *stading*, a term explaining both somebody's position in the society as well as his rights and duties deriving from the respective position. Moreover, since the notion of status encompasses the political and legal rights of some individuals within the socio-political communities, the issues related to the status evidently correlate to the status of citizenship⁵. This is precisely why the status is possible to be defined as the position in the society conferred to the individual having some rights and obligations, as the citizen within the political community⁶.

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¹ Cosmina Larionescu, *Introducere la ediția românească la Bryan, S Turner, Statusul*, Editura Du Style, București, 1998, p.9

² Ibidem

³ Henri H. Stahl, *Statuses, roles, characters and social personalities in Miron Constantinescu* (coord.) *Sociologie Generală*, Editura Științifică, București, 1968

⁴ Cosmina Larionescu, op. cit. p.9

⁵ Bryan S. Turner, *Statusul*, Editura Du Style, București, 1998, p.25

⁶ Ibidem

An issue connected to the motivations of the individuals to occupy these positions within the social structure arises. The structural-functional perspective considering the unity status-role as representing the essential element of the social stratification has brought some clarifying¹.

In other words, the notion of social status is, in many situations, correlated with the notion of *role*. The role represents a set of expectations defining the position of an individual in the society. The role's definition, “a bunch of attributes and expectations socially determined, associated to some social positions”².

Therefore, the sociological analyses insist also on other coordinates. Thus, for the sociologists, the notion presents utility also from the perspective that the positions within the society are generally hierarchical through prestige and privileges of different degrees. The remark is worth referring to that the multidimensional character of the features depending on which the sociologists and not only, can determine the status of a person in the society, the relation among the dimensions being variable and complex. “For instance - B.S. Turner remarks - my status in the society can be simultaneously determined depending on my income, the degree of education, ethnic roots or gender.

In the situation when all these aspects are coherent among them, the sociologists often speak about a consistency or crystallization of the status”³. The idea of consistency cannot be ignored.

Insisting upon this aspect, B. Turner demonstrates the way in which some sociologists, starting from the attribute of *consistency of the status*, come to demonstrating the genesis of the radicalism in the social groups defined by the *absence of status crystallization*. This idea encompasses some “psychological presuppositions regarding the level of frustration resented by the individuals whose position within the society characterizes through tensions or contradictions among the different dimensions of their status”⁴. Authors as Bell, Lipset, Raab etc. associate the political reactionary or right wing movements with the anxieties, tensions and frustrations of those groups faced with “fear of status”, following their uncertain situation in the present society⁵. Moreover, the anxieties connected to the status characterize the social groups whose position in the society is threatened by the profound economic and social changes, through radical reform, inevitably leading to mutations within the habitat of the respective groups. This means many separations at the level of some legitimities of traditional positions generating alienations, refusal to adjustment, conflicts ultimately.

Specialized literature also accomplishes other distinctions referring to the status. Such a distinction considered “common” is that between the *prescribed status* and the *acquired status*. *The prescribed status* represents those attributes of some people upon which the people have no

¹ See K. Davis, W. E. Moore, *Some principles of stratification*, American Sociological Review, 1945, vol. 10, p.p. 242-249; W. Wesolowski, *Some notes on the functional theory of stratification*, The Polish Sociological Bulletin, nr: 3-4, 1962, p.p. 28-38

² S. N. Hill Abercrombie, B.S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1984

³ Bryan S. Turner, op. cit. p.p. 25-26; The author refers to E. G. Lenski, *Status Crystallization: a non-vertical dimension for social status*, în M. S. Lipset și N. Smelser (ed.) *The progress of a decade*, Edglegwod Cliffs, New Jersey, Princes Hall, 1961

⁴ Bryan S. Turner, op. cit. p. 26

⁵ See D. Bell, *The Radical Right*, New York, Anchor Books, 1965; S. M. Lipset, E. Raab, *The Politics of Unreason*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970

control or they have an extremely reduced control. This type of status envisages the race, gender and the life itself.

The acquired status represents the position which some individuals acquire through education, decent life conditions, stimulating habitat etc. It is worth mentioning that among authors, the idea crystallizes that the two types of statuses correspond to different types of societies. Thus, Parsons and Turner claim that the prescribed status corresponds to the pre-modern societies, while the acquired status corresponds to the modern societies and late modernity. The latter were societies in which the values and norms covering these values derive from greater attachment toward equality, and especially chances equality¹.

It is worth stating clear that these opinions are fundamental as long as the contemporary society launches public policies of positive discrimination regarding employment and promoting some ethnies, youngsters, disadvantaged groups etc. pluralism and pluralist societies are answers of the contemporary society to lack of tolerance toward the diverse forms of discrimination.

Moreover, more sociologists analyse the development of the present society from the perspective of a transition from a *system of particular prescribing standards or of values* to a system based on *universally permissive values*². This kind of approach is based on the real contemporary society with a greater emphasis on the individual social mobility rather than on the traditional standards of *prestige and honour*³.

Ever since John Stuart Mill (*About Freedom*, 1859), the modern societies emphasize particularly the self-accomplishment through education. Education is the only domain where the non-interventionist principle does not apply – Mill claimed when he stated the general objections toward the governmental action. “Now this well-intentioned and reasonably civilized government can believe without arrogance that it possesses or believes to possess a degree of education above average in the community it governs. Consequently, it should be able to defend a better education and training of the people, than the majority of them would spontaneously ask. Consequently, the education is one of the domains, which the government should naturally offer to the people. In this case, the non-interventionist principle does not apply necessarily or universally”⁴. This is a demonstration of trust in the reason of the civilizing history. Emphasizing the self-accomplishment, the modern societies show that “the success in education and acquiring the references is crucial for the distribution of prestige and rewards.”⁵ This aspect determined some sociologists to call the modern society, a credential society”⁶.

We introduce at this point a last distinction regarding the social status: that of *objective status and subjective status*, between the status as a social position determined from the outside and the status as an autoperception. Thus, in developing certain elements of Weberian analysis

¹ T. Parsons, *The Social System*, New York, Free Press, 1952; T. Parsons, *Egalty and inequality in modern society, of social stratification revised*, in E.O. Laumann (ed) *Social Stratification: Research and Theory the 70s*, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970, pp 13-71; Bryan S Turner, op. cit. p.26.

² Bryan S. Turner, idem

³ T. Parsons, *Age and sex in the social structure of the United States*, *American Sociological Review*, 1942, vol7, pp604-16; T. Parson, și S.H. Lipset (ed) *Class, Status and Power: a reader in social stratification*, Chicago Free Press, 1953, pp 92-129.

⁴ John St. Mill, *Despre libertate*, Editura Humanitas, 1994, p 73.

⁵ Bryan S. Turner, op cit. p. 27

⁶ R. Collins, *The Credential society, And Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*, New York, Academic Press, 1979.

on status, M. Lipset achieved a more complex definition of status. In other words, the status represents “the positive or negative evaluation of reputation or prestige conferred to an individual or to a social position. Thus, the concept of status supposes that the people feel the others’ perceptions on them”¹. Turner speaks about a new cultural environment created in the American society as a follow up of the emphasis on *consumerism, social mobility and self-accomplishment*, an environment where the importance of the perception of one’s own position in the society increases.

The new cultural environment generated to move the stress in the sociological research from the stratification of the society towards *self-perception of the prestige* (Lynd, Warner, and Lunt)². In Mayer’s opinion, “the prestige is a socio-psychological category. An individual or a group cannot find satisfaction unless others recognize his pretensions to prestige, who are willing to respect him. Thus, the differences in status matters depend on recognition of some degrees of prestige”³. At this point, Turner rightfully remarks the different type of approaching the individual prestige in the American society, which relatively new, comparatively to the European tradition. In the European tradition, the status envisaged an objective position within the social structure. This position conferred rights and privileges, yet less self-perception. Comparatively, the American approaches (the research communities of W. Lloyd Warner) the status frequently represents the equivalent of the social prestige and less the equivalent of the social rights and duties⁴.

As Parsons crucially stresses, the status represents a position within a social structure, through which the community assesses an individual according to his prestige and reputation and according some criteria prescribed or acquired.⁵ Since the evaluation may be both subjective and objective, it is obvious that the selfassessment cannot but take into consideration the external assessment, which an individual receives from other individuals significant for him, depending on the position in the social hierarchy. This lead the specialised literature to identify two domains of the status: a *subjective* dimension – the individual perception of the prestige – and an *objective* dimension – the socio-legal rights of the individual⁶. Both dimensions have theoretical and practical implications in redefining the individual status, and in explaining the status groups and life statuses.

3. From the individual status to lifestyles

Regarding the analyses of Max Weber upon the *status groups*, it is worth underlining that they represent an alternative to Karl Marx’s analysis upon the economic classes. In fact, Weber introduces an opposed point of view to that of Karl Marx. Weberian analyses underlie our endeavour, at the same time achieving the passing from the definitions of the individual status to the notion of status groups or communities or collective lifestyle.

¹ S.M. Lipset, *Social stratification, social class, în Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*. New York, Crowell Collier și Macmillan, 1968, pp 301-302.

² See Bryan S. Turner, op cit p 27.

³ B. K. Mayer, *Class and Society*, New York, Random House, 1955, p.66

⁴ Bryan S. Turner, *op. cit.* pp. 27-28; J. Littlejohn, *Social Stratification and introduction*, London, Allen și Unwin, 1972, p. 48

⁵ T. Parsons, *Equality and inequality in modern society, or social stratification revised*, în E. O. Laumann (ed.) *Social Stratification: Research and Theory for the 70s*, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., pp. 13-71

⁶ Bryan S Turner, *op.cit.*, p. 27

Weber does not go on with the American sociological tradition (centred especially on the issues of the individual status). He introduces a point of view concerning the groups and communities status, as integrating and combative social collectivities¹.

Therefore, in *Economy and Society*, Max Weber identifies and prestigeifies diverse meanings of the status and prestige, yet, based on Turner's analyses, two are significant enough²:

- a) The status as a system of social conditions; a society (especially that feudal autarchic) is divided according to a series of cleavages generated by the legal, custom, social and cultural privileges. These cleavages generate caste groups, distinct and separate. In L. M. Bush and M. Keen's opinions, the status groups become social conditions when their privileges gather in a system of legal and economic immunities, which are not subject to external control and regulations. The tradition and religion protect this system³;
- b) Status groups and communities, with historic and social functions, the communities sharing a similar lifestyle, a unique moral code, a common culture and language as well as religious differences. The common cultural features lead to building separate and solidary communities. These communities organize themselves with the aim to protect and promote social and/ or cultural benefits and privileges. "From this perspective – B. S. Turner remarks – the social stratification refers to the creation, maintenance and distribution of different forms of power in the society via the mechanisms of political monopoly, cultural reproduction and social exclusion"⁴.

The sociological approaches on status have led to two other notions correlated with status: *the cultural status* (status as a lifestyle) and *the status as politico-legal right* (the citizenship feature of the status).⁵

Weber defines *Ständische Lage* (the position of status) as the social claim of the respect or reputation in terms of positive and negative privileges alike. The status substantiated in a certain lifestyle, a formal education, a formal prestige derives from certain occupational positions in the society. Turner also exemplifies phenomena as means through which the status defined by Weber maintains and expresses: *comensualism* (common commitments regarding habitation and meals),

monopolist satisfaction of the privileged access to wealth and power, *connubium* (social solidarity arising from marriage alliances), *conventions* based on traditions and even on status⁶. Weber explains the status as a plurality of social actors claiming and obtaining social honours and enjoys specific social privileges in a wider social environment, while *the group status* are common groups of privileged access to rare resources, especially when the resources correlates with cultural, moral and symbolic attributes⁷.

Max Weber compares the economic classes and status communities based on two criteria: *solidarity and their combatant character*. Thus, he regards the economic classes approved by individuals united by a certain type of economic relations (production, distribution, exchange,

¹ Ibidem

² Ibidem, pp.28-29

³ L. M. Bush, *Noble Privilege*, New York, Holmes și Meier, 1983; M. Keen, *Chivalry*, New Haven și London, Yale University Press, 1984

⁴ Bryan S Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 20

⁵ Ibidem

⁶ Ibidem

⁷ Idem, pp.29-30

consumption). Per a contrario, the status groups have as a main characteristic *community coordinated* (social collectivities regarded as communities). This characteristic requires a characteristic lifestyle and conveying the cultural inheritance. As community organizations, the status communities self-preserve, eliminating the certain entropical tendencies precisely through this type of self-organization (*community*).

Accomplishing the community organization, the status groups cover a double purpose: that of defence and that of maintaining their social rights and privileges.

Bryan S. Turner¹ envisages that by accomplishing these formal definitions, Weber aimed to elaborate some comparative historic studies upon the social structure and change. Thus, Weber attempts at finding the proper arguments regarding the fact that the economic wealth is not the only criterion to determine the social power and influence. Even more, he brings into discussion examples of societies where the prestige acquired through education or culture defer the power based on production means. The literary education substantiating the professional skill, the religious beliefs on purification are also arguments to illustrate maintaining some status groups.

We mention here the work *The Religion of China* where in studying the Chinese society, Weber remarks the political and cultural status of the Men of Letters in more than 12 centuries. Throughout these centuries, in this country, the professional skill determined with priority the social degree by reference to the material condition. “In turn – Weber wrote – the education determined this qualification especially through tests/ examinations. In a more exclusive manner, China made the literary education, the benchmark of social prestige. In this sense, it is even more exclusive than Germany or Europe in the Humanistic period”². What is the importance of this kind of political and social status? From Weber’s perspective, underlying some comparative analyses, the cultural category professionally skilled in this domain has had a determinant role in maintaining the the social stability and traditional values in China. The fact was possible because of a certain adjustment of *the lifestyle of the civil servant* after *Confucius ethics*.

Preoccupied by the relation of power in the human society, opposed to the formal development of *the conceptual distinctions* among class, status and party”³, Weber analyses in *The Religion of India*, the modalities through which the religious beliefs about purification have had an utmost importance in the organization and maintaining the caste system⁴.

We have made clear above that Weber utilized the concept of status groups in order to state a point of view opposed to the concept of economic class, analysed by Karl Marx. Weber insisted upon the integrative, community character of the status groups, on their political awareness more advanced comparatively to the political classed, defined by them as “aggregated in the market economy”.

Thus, the status groups⁵ are crucially dependant on the exclusive lifestyle; the exclusive lifestyle oriented upon preserving some cultural monopoly; the status groups try to reproduce through educational mechanisms; reproduction of the status groups through educational mechanism has double aims:

¹ Ibidem, p. 30 and the next.

² Max Weber, *The Religion of China*, New York, Macmillan, 1951, p.107

³ Bryan S Turner, op.cit. p. 31

⁴ See M Weber, *The Religion of India*, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press

⁵ Bryan S. Turner, idem

- To prevent the social mobility of intruders
- To emphasize the exclusive feature and their speciality.

Along Lipset's line, Turner compares Thorstein Veblen's¹ opinion stated as early as 1899 with Weber's idea of status. Lipset's remark is interesting enough: "Both Erber and Veblen claim that the function of the ostentatious waste – an emphasis of the consumption styles, pragmatically speaking, which need many training years – was to prevent mobility and institutionalize the privileges of those on top of the pyramid in the previous or years. The status groups identify considering the specific lifestyle"².

The status groups are not immutable: besides the organizational coordinate, having as a goal maintaining or extending of the social privileges, a coordinate which renders the safety of the group via some mechanisms of social inclusion (a mechanism protecting the monopoly of existent privileges of intruders), the status group suppose a *usurping* coordinate. This enable a pre-ordained dynamic, substantiated within the process of increasing the privileges by reference to the superior status group (usurpation).

It is worth keeping in mind that the existence of the status groups involve undeniably conflicts and social clashes, even if many of these forms of struggle sometimes disguised or hidden³. Based on previous mentioning, a new question arises: are the social relations *consensual* with priority or *conflictual* with priority?

Depending on the answer to this question, the sociological theories group into *theories of the consensus* – claiming that social order and stability are the result of acceptance and accountability of some common values and desiderata⁴ – and *theories of the conflict* – emphasizing the priority of the social conflicts, a priority objectified within their dimension and 'ubiquity', tensions and disorder. Consequently, in accordance with the theories of the conflict, misunderstandings, roughness, disputes have a universal character (both from spatial perspective and that of the status groups), while the 'harmony' zones, understanding and consensus are particular aspects of the social relations⁵.

Although Turner remarks an intermediate position between the two theories – J.C. Alexander's position that claims that the social relations refer to the consensus and conflict alike – he also considers that the sociology of the conflict brings arguments that are more powerful in approaching the status groups and the struggle for the status. "In this study I try to demonstrate that, through its nature, the status imply ceaseless fights for the access to the rare resources, especially the cultural ones"⁶.

Turner justifies his option through the following arguments he had in view when writing his study. The tendency to monopolize the advantages of belonging to a group by the groups themselves through social closure (excluding the competition from possessing privileges). Loyalty toward the group makes the individuals's expectations to envisage benefits arising from belonging to that particular group, the benefits consolidating the loyalty (through a reward).

¹ It is about Veblen's book *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, published for the first time in 1899

² M.S. Lipset, *Social stratification, social class, in Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, New York, Crowell Collier și Macmillan, 1968 p. 296 și urm.

³ Bryan S. Turner, *op. cit.* pp. 31-32

⁴ See T. Parsons, *The Social System*, New York, Free Press, 1952

⁵ See J. Rex, *Key Problems of Sociological Theory*, London, Routledge și Kegan Paul, 1961

⁶ Bryan S. Turner, *op. cit.* p. 32

Social solidarity depends on distribution of the rewards and privileges of a group in exchange for continuing to belong to that group¹.

Between solidarity and rewards the same relation continues: “whether the solidarity depends on matching certain values to the general culture, we may also say that belonging to the group represents, in a certain extent, a timed choice of its members”².

In fact, an exchange emphasizes among the members of the group, considering that the *perspective of belonging* depends on the *continuity, perpetuation* of the rewards³. Besides, in the half of the 20th century, to be more precise, in 1953, David Easton introduces a new vision upon the policy and politics, substantiating his conception on the *political behaviour*. Since it has become “the place of politics”, the theorists analyse the political system “as a system of interactions, distinct from the other social behaviours, through which the values are to be imperatively distributed”⁴. Consequently, the social rewards (including those at the level of the groups), represent a coordinate of the social control (the values imperatively distributed), substantiating the perfection of its members’s wishes to maintain that group. The plan is classical; perpetuating the rewards produces perpetuating the belonging, whereas perpetuating the belonging (by perpetuating the wishes) maintain the existence and functioning of the status groups.

4. Conclusions

The idea of imperatively distributing the values connects with the idea of status group *prestige*. Bryan S Turner evokes here W.J. Goode who developed this characteristic of the social regulations – the prestige – in his study *The Celebration of Heroes*.

Goode directly connects stability with the social processes within a social system through which the members are given prestige. Via the formal rewards given through a public procedure, the control of the politics is achieved upon the social community: the distributed rewards are instruments through settling the belonging. It also represents the instrument to recognize the contribution brought within the social group, the individual attachment to the group, the plus of prestige earned by the group etc. The prestige represents, concomitantly, acknowledgement and public reward, whereas the respect for the rewards are the perpetuation of prestige. Regarded from the perspective of the relation group status – the individual status, the prestige objectifies hierarchies and re-hierarchies, hierarchies and re-hierarchies legitimated through the values imperatively distributed.

The reverse situation cannot occur, as long as the rewards and honours symbolize or indicate the values that lead a social group, whereas the rewards determine the individual status, at least partly, within the hierarchy of the group, depending on the rewards and awards formally conferred. By simplification, we may state that the regulations of a group stem from a system of values, the individual behaviour appreciated and rewarded through the attachment to these values. The degrees of the attachment fathomed in the legitimate hierarchies, yet, imperative.

¹ Ibidem, pp. 32-33

² Ibidem

³ Here, Turner mentions P.M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New York, John Wiley, 1964;

M. Hechter, *Principles of Group Solidarity*, Berkeley și London, University of California Press, 1987 ș.a.

⁴ See David Easton, *A framework for Political Analysis*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1965

Speaking of hierarchies, under the conditions in which the honours indicate the dominant values in a society (group), it is obvious that among the groups (and within them, among individuals) a completion arises.

The competition itself has a triple role: it reconfirms the belonging to the group, enabling the rewards deriving from status; emphasizes the equity of the system, as it offers bonuses for significant contributions; it strengthens the legitimate authority of the status group since the honours confirm and reconfirm the fact that the organization has the authority of offering rewards.

In analysing Goode's ideas, Turner notices that, in the theoretician's opinion, "The honours contribute to strengthening the social commitment by ensuring the loyalty of the individuals toward the group, a larger institution or a community"¹.

The public procedure to award the rewards involves theatrical aspects of the rituals in these occasions, leading in Goode's opinion to accomplishing a double aim. Creating and amplifying the feeling of integration and identity of the group itself as well as reconfirmation of the importance in point of belonging to the group.

It is important to mention many authors, among whom C.W.Mills and P.A. Taylor² regarding the privileges and rewards in a context – historic context, with differences among the societies and states, in this sense. Up to one point, it is natural, as long as there are differences among civilizations, systems of life, ways of life etc. Thus in the feudal societies, the privileges link to the noble titles, the inequalities perpetuating and accepting, thus, the pre-established hierarchies. The equality of chances and justice are values specific to the modern times.

Besides, the aristocratic honours and rewards, traditionally feudal characterized all the societies. The mentioned authors refer to the USA where the absence of tradition make the rewards absent. The American lifestyle, existent in the American mindset and the democratic equality lead to reporting the rewards to another system of values, the prestige being a consequence of these kind of relations. The system of formal awards, via its competitiveness, becomes important through the forms of American political organization shaped also by the criteria of the rewards. These criteria lead to the status of a military hero or a scientist at NASA or an astronaut, in the social hierarchy, be above the status of an American aristocrat displaying, theatrically, the political values (Hills), as a consequence of the superior appreciations which the society awards to the former. Taylor takes the idea further more, insisting upon the different effects of the rewards derived from the status and the general rewards. Thus, while the rewards derived from the status are part of the *competitive and conflictual* relations among the social groups, the general system of formal rewards in a society may get an important role in achieving the national unity and legitimacy of the national state.

Regarding these conclusions, we can state that, although many classifications are on the topic discussed, they can only reactivate unilateral considerations even exaggerated of some American schools of sociology in analysing the historical evolution of the social strata.

¹ Bgryan S Turner, p.p. 33-34

² See C. W. Mills, *The Power Elite*, New York, Oxford, 1956; A.P. Taylor, *The celebration of heroes under communism: on honours and the reproduction of inequality*; American Sociological Review, vol 52, p.p. 153-154