

1973-06-15: [FAMILY, Size & Extension] Family & State

Toy with the idea that the modern state is actually nothing but a bundle of leading families forming a community of interests to have proprietary rights to most of the goods of society, give usufructory rights to utilize those goods to a middle managerial class, and the rest of society does the work. This would be much like Mills' idea of the power élite, save that he does not see the diachronic family function as particularly significant (to my knowledge). He is, in the main, a one-sided functionalist interested in the ruling element. What he needs to see is that the continuity of the élite comes from the continuity of the families of wealth that are ultimately the proprietors, though the managerial element might have family continuity too. If one were to break the continuity of proprietary rights within a family, so that those who in their life became the proprietors according to their talent, and could not sustain it in the family by bequests to descendants, then the psychology of the ruling élite would have to be different. If the power élite, in whatever form or level it exists, saw its heirs as an undeterminable group of talented people who would rise by talent from all kinds of social origins, then its sense of the common good would have to be diffuse in respect to choosing specific persons to succeed them; above all, descendants would be excluded a priori from succeeding the parents in a directly related position, unless it be one where formal and tested professional standards were met (as lawyer, doctor). The élite, that is to say, could not have the notion of continuing its values in terms of "their own" over time. All idea of a divine or genetic superiority would have to be forsaken. The élite, one might say, would bud, bloom, and die like the flowers in the field, to adopt one of Spengler's metaphors, and their sense of mission during their bloom and control would almost surely be more directed to the common good of mankind than in the present state where they pass on as much as they can to their kin.