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ABSTRACT

The author contrasts the views of two theorists on leadership and communications, Raymond B. Cattell and Kurt Lewin. Cattell takes the authoritarian view that leaders are born, not made, and proposes the application of eugenic measures to develop the leaders that society needs, also stressing the importance of research to help to identify leaders. Lewin assumes the more democratic view that leadership qualities can be learned and that everyone is potentially a leader in the framework of group decision. The author holds that both Cattell and Lewin hold optimistic views of the future and the nature of man and that they are equally scientific and humanitarian. Lewinians might avail themselves more widely of the precision of Cattell's methods, whereas Cattell could profitably employ the Lewinian principle of active experimentation with change. The possibilities for synthesis of the two approaches suggest interesting prospects for future research, training, and action. (Author/RN)

LEADERSHIP AND SOCIETY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF KURT LEWIN AND RAYMOND B. CATTELL

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The crucial point at which theory is translated into practice is the moment when the question is asked, as Glaucon asked Socrates, "How will they proceed?" (11, VIII, 540). Socrates and his friend in this book of the Republic have discussed in detail the structure of the ideal state, one in which "philosophers are kings . . . and political greatness and wisdom meet in one" (11, V, 473).

If not read as a satire, the theory expressed by Plato may be viewed as a sincere and well-reasoned plan for the betterment of the human condition. The style of leadership proposed is thoroughly autocratic, but these autocrats are to embody such virtues as only the most extreme visionary could suggest--comprehensive education, the most desirable of personality traits, and wide experience of life, combined with genuine altruism and lack of personal ambition. When such leaders are born into a state, and become aware of their responsibility to assume leadership, Socrates avers, the ideal state may cease to be a mere dream, and become a reality. It is at this point that Glaucon asks, "How will they proceed?" and Socrates answers: "They will begin by sending out into the country all the inhabitants of the city who are more than ten years old, and will take possession of their children. . . . These they will train in their own habits and laws, I mean

in the laws which we have given them (11, VIII, 540)." The satiric note is inescapable as Plato has Glaucon calmly answer, "Yes, that will be the best way. And I think, Socrates, that you have very well described how, if ever, such a constitution might come into being." The two discussants agree that "nothing more need be said."

But much, much more has been said, in the years intervening between Plato's day and the present, as to the means of achieving an "ideal state." Plato's system of government, which he termed autocracy, was one based on the inherent inequality of men; the democratic state is one based on a theory of the inherent equality of men. The similarities and differences between these systems come into focus when the question is asked, "How will they proceed?"

With respect to the problem of leadership as it provides the structure necessary to organized society, theories divide on the view of man's basic status of equality or inequality. This paper will briefly describe two views from modern psychology, those of Kurt Lewin and Raymond B. Cattell.

Cattell is a modern Platonist. His views, which stress the overriding influence of heredity and environment on the structure of personality, lead him to urge eugenic applications of scientific psychology. He states, "Against the view that it is safest to do nothing about human selection, we must recognize that in the last resort societies, like individuals, have to be adventurous (4, p. 39)."

Plato's adventurous proposal forcibly to separate children from their parents is hardly less acceptable in today's society to some than are the proposals for compulsory birth control, sterilization of the "unfit", or eugenic experimentation and control. But in contrast to Plato's tone, there is no aura of satire when Cattell proposes:

> In a progressive society the birth-rate obviously needs to be encouraged in a way to produce adjustment rather than dislocation between occupations and the necessary talents for occupations. More social conscience in attending to this thirty years ago. . . might have saved society from the heavy load of unemployed it now complains of. . . and supplied it with more brilliant political leaders, scientists, and artists (4, p. 41).

One difference between the nature of Plato's proposal and Cattell's is that Cattell has several generations of scientific advancement behind him, as Plato did not. The possibilities of the scientific-humanistic regimentation of society are no longer so remote, nor their methodologies so unacceptable in the public mind. Further, Cattell's proposal is stated less bluntly than Plato's, and in such a way as to persuade those whose support is most needed to effect such change.

With specific reference to the selection of leaders, Cattell writes, "Philosophers from Plato to Bernard Shaw have sketched utopias in which leaders are selected on explicit test data rather than dubious popular report (4, p. 353)." Cattell defends these views from such caricaturists as Huxley and Orwell by pointing out that "The advance of the social sciences. . . is entirely compatible with a democratic framework

. . . . Indeed, the capacity of democracy to survive in competition with other systems will depend on a rich application of the findings of behavioural science, with the individual's consent and insight (4, p. 353)."

Here is implied a correlation of the two views, one which would utilize the techniques of inequality in order to attain equality. It is hard to tell which comes first. The scientist says, "This will be best;" the majority agrees; and inequality is enforced by the educated consent of the governed. Cattell, however, fails to take the next necessary step and state how he proposes to achieve this "consent and insight" of the individual, other than to publish the findings of psychological measures. He states:

> There can surely be little doubt that the present process even for "democratic election" of political leaders is extremely inefficient and erroneous. . . . It is impossible for the intelligent voter to find out what [the candidate] is really like, how emotionally stable he may be or how firm psychologically his attitudes are on vital values. . . . Psychology has reached a stage where something of this kind could in fact be done (4, pp. 353-354).

Cattell's studies lead him to conclude that "scientific principles apply to leadership dynamics. "Such research suggests that although the present haphazard process manages to select people with some characteristics a good leader needs, it also accepts others which may be positively dangerous. . . . It is within the realm of practical possibilities today to improve the process of election by making objective psychological measures available (4, 356-357)."

There is not the deterministic pessimism about Cattell's proposals for the improvement of society that inhered in the

views of William Graham Sumner when, in the late nineteenth century, he wrote:

> The sociologist is often asked if he wants to kill off certain classes of troublesome and burdensome persons. No such inference follows from any sound sociological doctrine, but it is allowed to infer, as to a great many persons and classes, that it would have been better for society, and would have involved no pain to them, if they had never been born (12, p. 88).

Comparing the negativism of this statement to the positive optimism of Cattell's work is like comparing night and day. From the chilly heights of Sumner it is almost pleasant to return to the utopian meadowland of Cattell's vision when he writes, "Theoretically, the hope exists, therefore, that eugenics can in time breed a society which is not only more intelligent but more responsible and altruistic (4, p. 45)."

Nowhere in Cattell's work, so far as I can discover, appears the idea of the responsibility of the social scientist to attempt to influence change of existing behavior--an idea integral to the work of Kurt Lewin. As we have seen, Cattell proposes no plan for developing leaders and the traits of leadership. His emphasis is rather on the observation of what is, the employment of eugenic control, and the attempt to influence the selection of leaders through the dissemination of information about their psychological characteristics. This view differs fundamentally from that of Lewin, who operates on the triad of "research, training, and action."

Plato, Sumner, and Cattell seem to have in common that none of them says precisely who decides what the laws shall be (Plato); what improvements are best (Cattell); or who determines who shall live (Sumner). There is a gap in all these views, an unelucidated step in the bringing about of the social change which they individually envision. The Lewinian view is in decided contrast. Lewin attempts to fill the gap by saying that the group itself shall decide its structure and the direction of its change. It is a democratic view, based on the belief in the potential equality of man.

Given this philosophy, the answer to the question, "How will they proceed?" takes another form. Lewin's student, Ronald Lippitt, gives one answer, describing a procedure for developing leaders in a democracy: "Researches during the last decade have pointed out. . . that "average persons" can be equipped with adequate interpersonal relationship skills to effectively assume leadership roles in a variety of life situations in a democratic culture (9, p. 286)."

In 1942, Lewin and his student, Alex Bavelas, reported a simple study which contained revolutionary implications. Recognizing the importance of good leadership "as one of the outstanding conditions in any field of group life or cooperative endeavor" (1, p. 175), they conducted an experiment to test a method of retraining leaders whose attitudes previously had been either apathetic or authoritarian, with a view to "changing the attitudes of the leaders and changing their techniques (1, p. 180)." The laboratory approach developed

involved direct experience and observation on the part of the trainee in new ways of leadership, closely monitored by a trainer-researcher. This method, accorded tentative success in the 1942 report, was to undergo extensive development and refinement of technique, both as to methods employed and research tools utilized, in the National Training Laboratories founded by Lewin, and in other laboratory approaches to evolve in subsequent years.

Having begun with a scientific examination of various styles of leddership, and having experimented with methods of effecting a change in existing leadership styles, the third step, as Lewinian procedure evolved, was to develop techniques which would make the leader, as such, less important. Lewin's later work placed the major emphasis on the importance of group decision in the bringing about of social change (7).

That the influence of the discussion leader in such group decisions constitutes "manipulation" appears to be an unfair charge. Witness, for example, the tenor of the 1948 report of the National Training Laboratory, which states: "As knowledge about group processes increases and as skill in leadership develops with that knowledge, it becomes important that there be developed a code of ethics which can serve as a means of control over the exercise of leadership skills. Otherwise skill in group processes can easily become manipulation of people for ends they do not understand or agree to (10, p. 38)."

Bonner and Gordon both see a flaw in the dual stress of Lewinian group dynamics on the necessity of a leader, or "central person," as well as on leadership-sharing, or "diffused leadership (3, pp. 498-499, passim)." Gordon's term for this dual stress is "apparent confusion (5, p. 89)." Gordon, having praised Benne's stand in favor of the concept of "leader as facilitator" within a group which employs the "principle of participation by all persons affected (5, p. 90)," states that Lewin "does not seem as clear about this norm of democratic operation." He quotes Lewin as follows: "Sometimes people must rather forcefully be made to see what democratic responsibility toward the group as a whole means (5, p. 90)." But a check of the original citation in Benne reveals that Lewin continues as follows:

> There is no space here to discuss in detail what to some might appear as one of the paradoxes of democracy. The more the group members become converted to democracy and learn to play the roles of democracy as followers or leaders, the more can the power of the democratic leader shift to other ends than converting the group members (2, p. 57).

The "paradox of democracy" seems to be that it takes some pretty directive leadership to get one started. There is a paradox, but there should be no confusion as a result of it. Lewin continues: "It is, furthermore, very important that the people who are to be changed from another atmosphere toward democracy be dissatisfied with the previous situation and feel the need for a change (2, p. 57)."

In other words, the group must give its consent to the change--a democratic principle encountered earlier in this

paper when it was enunciated by Cattell as a prerequisite to the use of the findings of behavioral science for the betterment of man. It seems to me that Gordon is somewhat confused himself, if he can approve of Benne and not of Lewin. An examination of the cited work of Benne reveals a direct evolution from and expansion on the principles first enunciated by Lewin; e.g., Benne on "shared leadership": "Persons should become capable of alternately exercising leadership and serving under the leadership of another. We have Lewin's authority for the soundness of this idea (2, pp. 128-129)."

Whether in the single leader or in shared leadership, Lewin's method of providing the structure necessary to a healthy society may be characterized as democratic, or based on a belief in the existing potential of man for equality. In contrast with Cattell, and others of an authoritarian mold, Lewin does not so much state the "truth" as conduct a continuing inquiry into what the truth may be.

It has not been my intention to create an absolute dichotomy between these two different scientists of human behavior. There are many similarities between them. Both Lewin and Cattell hold an optimistic view of the future, and their motives appear to be equally scientific and humanitarian. I will attempt a synthesis of their views. I have abstracted three major procedures, two from Cattell and one from Lewin. To review them:

1. Eugenic control to raise the level of intelligence of the population as a whole.

2. Wide dissemination of the results of psychological measurement to aid in the selection of political leaders.

3. "Research, training and action." Research into the status quo; training to bring about change in existing attitudes and styles of leadership; and action to implement this change.

There is no reason for Lewinians to fail to avail themselves of the high degree of precision of Cattell's methods. Their own attitudinal and personality measures seem to me to be the weak point of their research, which so often results in ambiguous or uncertain findings (cf. 5, Ch. 11 and 6, Ch. 27).

Through democratic, Lewinian, group-centered procedures, it should be possible to come to some conclusions as to the desirability of eugenic measures--whether to accept or reject--and how to gain the consent required. For his part, Cattell could employ profitably the principle of active experimentation with change; he has in fact stated his approval of the "application of 'group dynamics' laws concerning the way in which certain constellations of personalities will work out in teams (4, p. 288)." To move from <u>observation</u> of those factors to observation of the <u>application</u> of them should be a challenging shift of emphasis. The possibilities of a synthesis of the two methods provide an exciting prospect for research, training and action, and an answer to the question, "How will they proceed?"

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