

**LEFEBVRE AND KOHLBERG ON PSYCHOLOGICAL
ADJUSTMENT TO ECONOMIC CHANGE**

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is psychological adjustment in Russia following the collapse of Soviet Union. I believe the paper is appropriate for this conference since the former Soviet Union could be regarded as a colonial power. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union creates the opportunity for both Russians and Americans to liberate themselves from Cold War thinking.

Let me begin with some personal background. In the early 1980s I began arranging meetings between American and Russian scientists in the field of systems theory and cybernetics. I had attended many international conferences, so I felt prepared for the task, even though I expected some difficulties due to the Cold War rivalry. However, I was completely surprised by the magnitude of the differences in thinking that I encountered. Relative to my previous experiences, the Russians I began to deal with were simply "off the charts." Their behavior, namely the intrusion of political considerations into scientific discussions, was vastly different from anything that I had encountered before. In an effort to understand their behavior, I began reading Russian history and Marxist-Leninist thought. But the work that was most helpful to me was Vladimir Lefebvre's theory of two types of ethical cognition.

LEFEBVRE'S THEORY OF ETHICAL COGNITION

Lefebvre is a Russian emigre, now living in California, whom I met at a conference of the American Society for Cybernetics. When he was in Russia, he worked for a while as a military strategist. In this work he thought about two adversaries, how much each knew about the other, and how much doubt each had about his knowledge of himself and his knowledge of the other. Since he is a clever mathematician, Lefebvre developed an algebra to describe these relationships. However, a problem arose when he had to choose the sign to use when combining terms. The sign could indicate either addition or multiplication. Lefebvre decided that there were two fundamentally different ethical systems with different conceptions of heroism, sainthood, guilt, and suffering. Furthermore, he speculated that what he called the "first" ethical system was characteristic of the West whereas the "second" ethical system was characteristic of the Soviet Union. Perhaps the simplest way to describe the difference between the two ethical systems is to say that in the first ethical system the end does NOT justify the means, whereas in the second ethical system the end DOES justify the means.

To test his supposition that the two ethical systems were characteristic of the United States and the Soviet Union Lefebvre gave a questionnaire to a group of Californians and to a group of

Soviet emigres. Since the emigres were not a typical sample from the Soviet Union, he told them to answer as would a "typical Soviet citizen" (see Table 1).

An American audience often has difficulty understanding the second ethical system. Here are some quotations which may help to illustrate it.

Example 1

"In a breathtaking act of loyalty, Molotov quietly abstained when the Politburo voted to arrest his Jewish wife in a postwar wave of purges. Molotov defended the betrayal simply: 'Because I am a member of the Politburo, I must obey party discipline.' (*Newsweek*, November 24, 1986, p.98.)

Molotov believed the end justifies the means. To aid the advance of socialism he was willing to sacrifice his wife.

Example 2

In his book, *Manipulated Science*, Mark Popovsky describes a fire in a classified scientific research lab in the Soviet Union. When the firemen arrived at the laboratory to put out the fire, the guards at the door would not admit them because they did not have security clearances. An intense argument ensued between the firemen and the guards. Finally the firemen went around to the side of the building and entered through a window. The guards did not stop them because their job was to guard the front door. A later board of inquiry ruled that both the guards and the firemen had acted appropriately. Both sides had been uncompromising in carrying out their duty or achieving their ends.

Example 3

"When are you going to stop killing people?" Lady Astor bluntly asked Joseph Stalin in 1931, when he was liquidating the kulaks (wealthy farmers) in his drive to collectivize the land. His reply: "When it is no longer necessary."

Hence, the end justifies the means.

Example 4

Perhaps the clearest statement of the second ethical system was made by Lenin in 1920: "We repudiate all morality that proceeds from supernatural ideas or ideas that are outside class conceptions. Morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of class war. Everything is moral that is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting social order and for uniting the proletariat."

John LeCarre in his novel, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (p.70), made reference to the two ethical systems.

"I once heard someone say morality was method. Do you hold with that? I suppose you wouldn't. You would say that morality was vested in the aim, I expect. Difficult to know what one's aims *are*, that's the trouble, specially if you're British."

Are both ethical systems present in the U.S.? Yes, indeed, as the data in Table 1 show. Some of you may have seen the movie *Platoon*. In this film Sergeant Elias represented the first ethical system, while Sergeant Barnes represented the second ethical system. The main character in the movie was torn between the two and felt that the two were battling for his soul. This moral conflict is expressed most clearly in a voice-over in the final scene when the central character is in a helicopter composing a letter.

In my experience Americans sometimes think the point here is that one ethical system is good and the other is evil. But, on the contrary, each sees ITSELF as good and the other as evil. Lefebvre's claim is that there are two quite different ways of deciding what is good and what is evil.

In the days of the Soviet Union Lefebvre's work could not be published in Russia. In recent years it HAS been published and has won an enthusiastic following among a few thousand scientists. They propose using Lefebvre's theory as the basis for educational programs which will help the people of Russia move from the second ethical system to the first ethical system. However, a profound change in a society's conception of morality requires not only a rational change of mind.

MORAL SUFFERING

In 1985 I met a recent Soviet emigre at a party who told me how delighted he was to be living in the U.S. I asked why. He replied, "In the U.S. it is possible to be both successful and honest. In the Soviet Union one must choose."

The issue he was pointing to I shall call "moral suffering." Here is an example. On a trip to the Soviet Union in 1988 I heard an official describe how he had once been in charge of salaries for a firm. He was asked why people who were doing the same job had different salaries. He replied that he felt that those who were better workers should earn more. He was told to change the salaries so that everyone earned the same amount. He paused and looked down. He said that he had made the changes. He clearly was in pain. The old system was not only inefficient because it destroyed initiative, it also warped personalities. The dual ethical system - what one believed was right vs. what the state said was right - created anguish and suffering.

Ironically, the current reforms have not eliminated the suffering. Virtually everyone in Russia has compromised themselves to one degree or another. Now they are asking themselves, "Did I really have to go along? Whom have I hurt? Should I have resisted more?" Hence, the relief felt due to greater freedoms is tempered by guilt and soul searching. Those most reflective and conscientious feel this kind of suffering most acutely.

Not only Soviet officials but also average Russian citizens feel uncomfortable with the new openness. One young Russian academic said to me in 1988, "There are people who have worshipped Jesus Christ all their lives. Suppose they are suddenly told that Jesus Christ was a mass murderer and ample evidence is presented to support the charge. You may be surprised, but that is the way many people in the Soviet Union felt about Stalin. Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalin was not distributed outside a very small group in the Soviet Union." Discussions of Russian history are resisted not only by those who have something material to lose but also by those who feel they are losing something spiritually. Whatever the public pace of democratization, the private pace of moral realignment is limited by the courage to know.

Furthermore, an American colleague, Jerry Harvey, has suggested that some people may resist the new openness because they fear that they are *gaining* something spiritually. Knowledge and freedom imply responsibility. Some citizens will choose denial and a limited but predictable existence. Hence, the personal pace of change can also be limited by what Paul Tillich called "the courage to be."

Western experts on the management of market economies usually do not give much attention to considerations such as helping people to deal with moral suffering.

Some insight into the process of grieving is provided by the literature on death and dying (Kubler-Ross, 1970). Scholars in this field have suggested that when a person is told that he or she has a terminal illness, a predictable sequence of psychological changes occurs. First, there is denial, or at least doubt that the diagnosis is correct. The patient may seek a second and third opinion. Second, there is grief. Third, the person accepts the diagnosis and the coming end of life. Finally, the patient begins to put his or her affairs in order.

Suppose we consider an analogy between personal death and the process of societal adjustment to the death of a particular social order. We could identify four steps in the process of social transformation: 1) recognition of failure, 2) grief, 3) designing an alternative system, and 4) implementation. Academics and government officials who have already been through the first two steps tend to focus their attention on the last two steps. But the first two steps should not be neglected, since different individuals and groups within a society go through the four steps at different rates.

CONSTRUCTING A THIRD ETHICAL SYSTEM

In addition to recognizing the suffering and grief associated with the profound changes occurring in Russia, it would be useful to have some indication of how the two ethical systems might be combined to produce a new synthesis. Lefebvre's theory provides no guidance on how to make the transition from one ethical system to the other. Indeed, Lefebvre believes that these ethical systems are learned at an early age and not greatly altered by subsequent experiences.

However, Richard A. Graham has made a suggestion for a new point of view which might be regarded as a synthesis of Lefebvre's two ethical systems. Graham's suggestion is based not on Lefebvre's theory but rather on Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Graham worked for several years with Kohlberg at Harvard University.

Very briefly, Kohlberg (1984) proposed that there are several stages in the development of moral reasoning (see Table 2). Kohlberg contends that individuals (and societies) progress from less complicated to more complicated reasoning patterns and that people in all societies strive for justice in the form of more satisfactory ways of relating to one another. Based on this idea Graham created a table with three columns (see Table 3). The three columns depict three policy orientations that the U.S. might adopt toward Russia, or that Russia might adopt toward the U.S. The first column represents a hard line policy. The second column indicates a more liberal or softer policy. The third column describes the policy that Graham is suggesting. The policy in the third column is based on Kohlberg's theory.

This table suggests how the tension between Lefebvre's two ethical systems might be resolved. Graham's left column is similar to Lefebvre's second ethical system. Graham's second column is similar to Lefebvre's first ethical system. Graham's third column suggests a resolution of the two ethical systems. The fact that Graham's table was originally created to describe policy

positions in the U.S. suggests that in the post Cold War period there is a need for moral realignment in the United States as well as in Russia.

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Table 1

Data from a study comparing Soviet and American attitudes toward ethical compromise and ethical confrontation

Source: Vladimir Lefebvre, Algebra of Conscience

Number of pair	Number of Statement	Statements	Americans		Soviets	
			Percent in agreement	Two-tailed confidence interval for p=95%	Percent in agreement	Two-tailed confidence interval for p=95%
1	1	A doctor should conceal from a patient that he has cancer, in order to diminish his suffering	8.0	±6.8	89.0	±6.7
	2	A doctor should not conceal from patient that he has cancer, in order to diminish his suffering.	80.5	±9.9	15.8	±8.0
2	3	A malefactor can be punished more severely than the law requires, if this may serve as a deterrent for others.	11.5	±8.0	84.5	±7.8
	4	A malefactor cannot be punished more severely than the law requires, even if this may serve as a deterrent for others.	83.6	±9.4	28.0	±9.9
3	5	One may give false evidence in order to help an innocent person avoid jail.	19.9	±8.4	65.0	±10.0
	6	One must not give false evidence even in order to help an innocent person avoid jail.	82.25	±9.6	42.5	±10.7
4	7	One may send a cheat sheet during a competitive examination to a close friend.	8.0	±6.8	62.0	±10.1
	8	One must not send a cheat sheet during a competitive examination, even to a close friend.	90.3	±7.4	37.5	±10.3

Table 2**Stages of Moral Development According to Kohlberg (1981)**

<i>Stage</i>	<i>What is considered to be right</i>
Stage 1: Obedience and punishment orientation	To avoid breaking rules backed by punishment, obedience for its own sake, avoiding physical damage to persons and property.
Stage 2: Instrumental Purpose and exchange	Following rules only when it comes to someone's immediate personal interest; acting to meet one's own interests and letting others do the same; right is an equal exchange, a good deal.
Stage 3: Interpersonal accord and conformity	Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect of people in your role; being good is important.
Stage 4: Social accord and system maintenance	Fulfilling the actual duties to which you have agreed; laws are always to be upheld except in extreme cases where they conflict with other fixed social duties; right is also contributing to society, the group or institution.
Stage 5: Social contract, utility, individual rights	Being aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions, that most values and rules are relative to your group but should usually be upheld because they are the social contract; some non-relative values and rights like life and liberty, however, must be upheld in any society regardless of the majority opinion.
Stage 6: Universal ethical principles	Following self-chosen ethical principles; particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles; when laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle; principles are universal principles of justice: the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons; the reason for doing right is the belief, as a rational person, in the validity of universal moral principles and a sense of personal commitment to them

Note: Stages 5 and 6 are not distinguished for research purposes; there is also a transition stage (e.g., 2/3) between each of the stages.

Table 3
Ten characteristics of three perspectives for U.S.- Soviet Relations

	1) The historical - anthropological perspective	2) The common concerns shared - humanity perspective	3) The human & societal development perspective
The most important referent for international relations	Past national behaviors and cultural traits	The present thinking and sensibilities of leaders and publics	Recent and projected changes in the pattern of citizens' judgment
Adherents of the perspective	Sovietologists, diplomats, military strategists and some	Citizen diplomacy groups and peace activists; much	Some developmental psychologists and philosophers

	of the general public	of the general public	
Philosophical foundations for the perspective	Cultural superiority	Cultural relativity	Supracultural universality (as an ideal)
Underlying concepts of human nature & behavior	Human nature is basically unchanging; behaviors reflect this & cultural traditions	Human nature is mostly fixed but perceptions, opinions and behaviors are changeable	In modern societies, human nature changes rapidly at first, then more slowly and unpredictably
General aims of nations and their peoples	Wealth and power	Security, identity & peace	Liberty & virtue
Foreign policy goals	Supremacy	Fair exchange	Justice & beneficence
Objectives of negotiation	Geopolitical advantage or stand-off	Fair exchange consensus and reduced animosity	Supranational fairness
Means and preferred metaphors for negotiation	Negotiation from strength; sharp bargaining or an arms length business deal	A search for mutual accord; a Quaker meeting or therapeutic intervention	Universalistic reasoning; ideal discourse
Negotiation model or strategy	Metternich or Kissinger	Camp David	Rawls's "Veil of Ignorance"
Foremost requirements for negotiators	Knowledge of both sides' history, national traits, traditions & language	An open mind, free of stereotypical prejudice and contrived animosity	Principled judgment

The distinctions between aims are not rigid; e.g., liberty may have high priority from each perspective but may be seen as mostly depending upon power. Further, it is not suggested that the goals of a perspective are attainable by its means or that its means could not, in time, lead to other ends of another perspective. The hypothesis is that each of the three perspectives is necessary for triangulation on both the ends and means of U.S. - Soviet relations.

Ideal discourse, a concept developed by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, produces a stable consensus that expresses the "objective truth" as agreed upon at length by rational agents under conditions of complete freedom.

John Rawls's "Veil of Ignorance" calls for the decision one would make about what is fair when one doesn't know who one would be in a negotiation.

Source: Richard N. Graham