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Aaron Wildavsky: The Rise of Radical Egalitarianism Study Guide

Steven Alan Samson

Liberty University, ssamson@liberty.edu

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**AARON WILDAVSKY:
THE RISE OF RADICAL EGALITARIANISM
STUDY GUIDE, 2009
Steven Alan Samson**

**CHAPTER 5: THE THREE CULTURES: EXPLAINING
ANOMALIES IN THE AMERICAN WELFARE STATE**

Outline

- A. RISE OF A CRITICAL CULTURE (101-102)
 - 1. **Lionel Trilling** [literary scholar who wrote *The Liberal Imagination* and favorably reviewed Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*]: Adversary Culture
 - 2. **Irving Kristol** [founder of neoconservative movement]: New Class [Milovan Djilas had earlier used the same designation for the Communist *nomenklatura*]
 - 3. **Egalitarianism**: A Cultural Impulse, Not a Class
 - 4. Rise of a Critical Culture
 - 5. Integrative Institutions under Attack
 - a. Disintegrative movements
 - b. Old boundaries are breached
 - c. New boundaries replace them
 - 6. Changes in the Old Patterns: In Whose Interest?
- B. CENTRAL QUESTIONS ARE UNIVERSAL (102-104)
This model is borrowed from the anthropologist Mary Douglas
 - 1. **Hierarchical Collectivism**
 - a. Division of labor
 - b. Control of envy
 - 1) Collective ostentation
 - 2. **Competitive Individualism**
 - a. Bidding and bargaining
 - b. Envy mitigated by social mobility
 - c. Risk is opportunity
 - d. Their alliance
 - 3. **Egalitarian Collectivism**: Opposed to Both Establishment Cultures
 - a. Animating principle: Organization without authority [Slogan of the '68ers in Paris: "It is forbidden to forbid"]
 - b. Equality of condition [or result]
 - c. Criticism [cf. J-J. Rousseau]
 - 1) Endless discussion [cf. focus groups and group therapy]
 - d. **Envy** handled by uniformity, expulsions, schisms
 - e. No concern with wealth creation
 - 1) Taking wealth for granted while criticizing a failure to redistribute
 - 4. Resulting Anomalies
- C. OF INTEGRATIVE AND DISINTEGRATIVE INSTITUTIONS (104-106)
 - 1. Decline of American Political Parties
 - 2. Vetting [Examination] and Nomination of Candidates for Office
 - a. Function has been transferred to **primaries** [lack of accountability, integration]
 - b. Coalitions for governing are formed after the election [backloaded]
 - c. Nominee selection removed from larger community and office holders
 - 3. Excess of Issue-Making over Issue Containment [officeholders become independent brokers rather than disciplined by their party or constituents]

- a. Demand for purity of principle [tendency toward extremes rather than the middle]]
- 4. Consequence: **Public Apathy**
 - a. Correlation with proportional representation
- 5. Congressional Reforms
 - a. Correlation with poor collective performance
 - b. Less cohesion [less party discipline]
 - c. Result: Popular dislike of the institution
- 6. Congressional Incompetency
 - a. Growth of **caseload** [constituency service trumps all else]
 - b. Congress is doing worse as a governing body
 - c. Consequence: Early retirement and denigration of the institution
 - d. Disintegration of the **budgetary process**
- 7. Presidency (this section is dated)
- 8. Success of **disintegrative institutions**
 - a. **Single-issue special interest groups** are known by what they do not do: *i.e.*, **reconcile preferences** and **establish priorities** among a wide range of issues
- D. THE POLITICAL ANOMALIES: ENDS WITHOUT MEANS (106-108)
 - 1. Crescendo of Criticism as Government Grows Bigger
 - a. **Egalitarian hypothesis**
 - 1) Tension between equality of result and hierarchical authority
 - 2) Insufficiency and dependency are seen as success rather than failure
 - 2. **Egalitarians Cannot Govern** Except for Brief Periods
 - a. They are **Max Weber's sectarians**
 - 3. Uncertainty of the Presidential Role
 - a. Only an egalitarian culture expands the aim of leadership but refuses the means [Colin Dueck calls this "limited liability"]
 - 4. The **Paradox**: Opposition to Economic Growth and Demand that It Be Redistributed
 - 5. **Permissive Society**
 - a. Stricter rules governing behavior of public officials
 - 1) Sunshine laws
 - 2) Ineradicable stain
- E. FAIRNESS WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY (108-109)
 - 1. Distinguishing European and American Welfare States
 - 2. Important Difference: Regulation
 - a. Why there is so much regulation in the United States
 - b. Hierarchies rely on experts rather than regulation
 - 3. The turn to the **regulatory state** in America
 - a. The egalitarian desire to punish departures from equality
 - 4. Regulation wreaks **havoc with localism**
 - a. Prejudice against state and local government: Too narrow and resistant to virtue
 - b. Fear of large, bureaucratic organizations is shifted to big business
 - 5. Demand for Increasing Bureaucracy and Decreasing Authority
 - a. Contradictions
- F. BUREAUCRACY WITHOUT AUTHORITY (109-110)
 - 1. Support of Populist Democracy and Judicial Activism
 - a. Blaming the system
 - b. Judges held undemocratic only if they hold to personal instead of systemic guilt [*i.e.*, it is society's or institutions' and not the individual's fault]
 - 2. **Attitudes towards the Courts** about Fairness and Responsibility
 - a. **Individualist** view: equal opportunity in competition
 - 1) Importance of failure
 - b. **Hierarchical** view: Following the focus and functions
 - c. **Egalitarian** view: Fairness follows outcome
 - 1) Irresponsibility for success or failure
- G. HISTORY WITHOUT WINNERS (110-111)
 - 1. **C. Vann Woodward**: Seller's Market for Guilt

- a. Ancestral sinners
- b. American history as the history of oppression
- 2. Shift in Historical Writing from Oppression to the Oppressed
 - a. Authority identified as coercion; inequality as injustice
 - b. Designated victims and the disadvantaged
 - c. Entire regions seek designation as "underprivileged"
 - d. Subsidization of these categories
- 3. Gloom and Persuasive Sense of Loss
 - a. Establishment of collectivist and individualist cultures is under attack, slipping
 - b. Restrictive web of regulations on corporations
 - c. Formal prerogatives of the presidency have contracted
- 4. Egalitarians Exist Not to be Satisfied
- H. **EGALITARIANISM IS A CONTRADICTIONARY CULTURE (111-113)**
 - 1. Contradictory Demands on Government and Society
 - 2. **Causes of Ungovernability**
 - a. Programming the government for failure
 - 3. Collectivism and Individualism Are Balanced Cultures
 - a. Rejection of authority and redistribution of resources cannot be reconciled
 - 4. Egalitarian Sects Are Now Part of the System Rather than Powerless
 - 5. Use of Computerized Mailing Lists to Generate Vicarious Participation
 - a. **Sectarianism without Sects:** Egalitarian's comparative advantage [Political correctness assumes some party will be offended and objects on its behalf]
 - 6. Getting Government to **Coerce Other Interests** without being Responsible for the Consequences
 - a. Environmental regulation
 - 1) Rules imposed on opponents

Review

Lionel Trilling
 hierarchical collectivism
 envy
 caseload
 what interest groups fail to do
 sectarians
 regulatory state
 C. Vann Woodward
 coercion of other interests

Irving Kristol
 competitive individualism
 primaries
 budgetary process
 egalitarian hypothesis
 egalitarian paradox
 localism disrupted
 causes of ungovernability

egalitarianism
 egalitarian collectivism
 public apathy
 disintegrative institutions
 Max Weber
 permissive society
 attitudes toward the courts
 sectarianism without sects