

The Dynamic Lattice

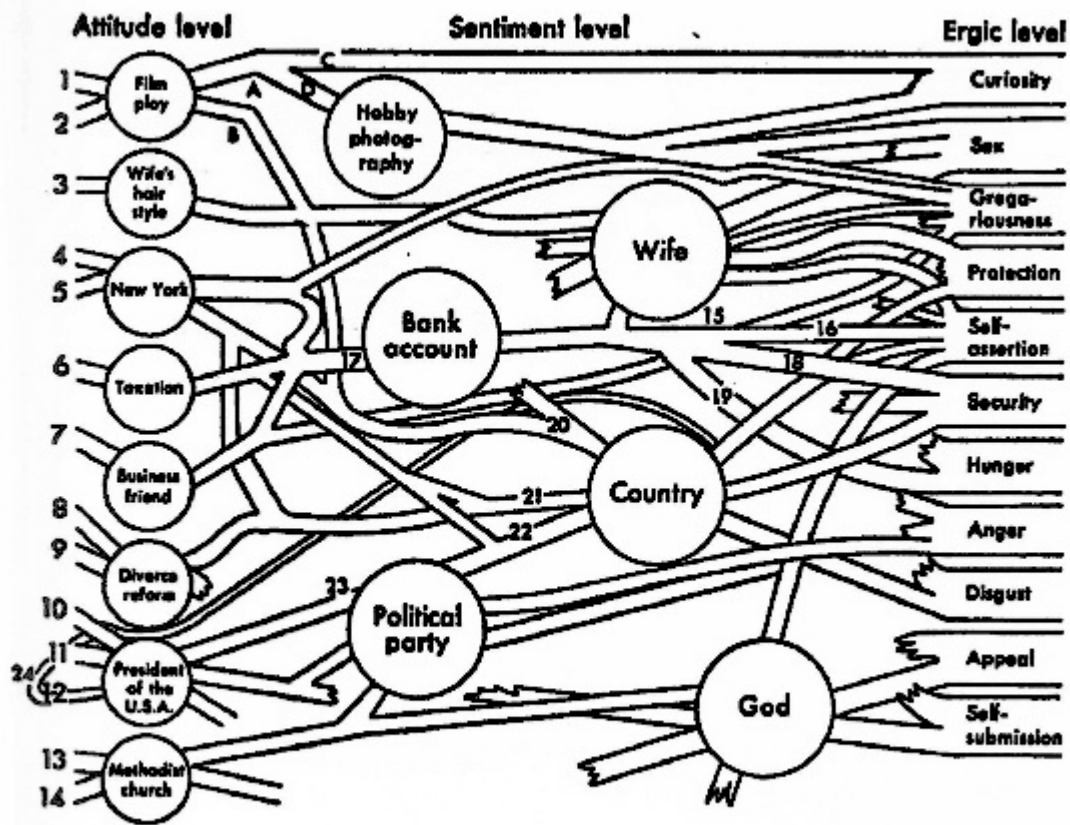


Figure 1. Portion of a dynamic lattice illustrating subsidiation. Reproduced from Cattell (1950), p. 156.

On the left of [the] Diagram are represented a set of interests and attitudes which might be those of a fairly typical citizen [of 1950]. One observes now that each habitual attitude or course of behavior (a) is normally served by more than one preceding, ancillary course of behavior and that (b) itself serves more than one succeeding purpose. Thus a child might have to employ several courses of action (habits, traits) in order to obtain, say, the purchase of a toy pistol, and having gained the pistol he can use it to satisfy several habitual purposes, e.g., to impress visitors, to frighten his brother, to give himself a sense of security in the dark.

As the attitudes (channels in the diagram) and the objects (circles in the diagram) show, an object normally has several attitudes converging upon it, i.e., there are several things one

wants to do with it, depending on circumstances, and each comes into its own at intervals. In other words, an object of interest usually stands in the stream of several dynamic traits, has several emotional meanings, and appeals to several interests. This amounts to saying that each of the attitudes ultimately subsidiates to several different sentiments or drive goals.

This convergence and divergence in a latticelike structure may be illustrated by the object “Bank Account.” Three attitudes converge upon this object: (a) I want to cultivate the acquaintance of the business friend because he can show me how to increase my bank account; (b) I want to see taxation reduced because it harms my bank account; (c) I must avoid New York because I spend too much there and damage my account. The intermediate objects (friends, taxation, New York) in these attitudes are shown in the first column of the lattice. Incidentally the bank account attitudes are not the only ones going through these objects.

The bank account, however, in turn subsidiates to other objects, in a set of *diverging channels*. For example it may subsidiates to the further attitude-object: (a) that I may get my wife things she needs—15 in diagram; (b) that I may satisfy a need for self-assertion by making my house more impressive—16 in the digram; (c) that I may increase security by more insurance—18 in the diagram; (d) that I may buy a better camera (sentiment to hobby, not shown in diagram), and so on.

A massive sentiment object—such as one’s country, one’s family, or one’s religion—to which many attitudes are thus tributary, will in turn subsidiates to the goals of the basic drives. For example, a sentiment to a wife may be built up on satisfactions accruing to the gregarious erg, the sex erg, the food-seeking erg, and so on. Any dynamic trait whatever is therefore like a busy crossroads, or at least a corridor, to something else. Its importance and strength depend upon the number of further satisfactions to which it can contribute. This is the essential point

that is brought out by representing the personality trait structure by a dynamic lattice. Reluctant though the student or the lover of mathematical simplicity may be to face such a complex mode of representation, the fact remains that this is how human dynamic traits are structured, and we shall get ahead most quickly by admitting it. To the clinician, who may spend a year tracing the dynamic entanglements of a neurotic patient, the truth of the lattice concept will be immediately evident, though he may object that the present diagram is an especially simplified one, since it contains practically none of the instances in which a subdivision chain doubles back upon and recrosses itself.

1. In all dynamic traits the object which acts as a stimulus to action is frequently also the goal of the response.. This happens more frequently in basic drives, e.g., food-seeking, sex, than in derived dynamic traits.

2. The construction of a dynamic lattice is possible only for a person in a reasonably fixed life situation. That is to say, it presupposes that daily impinging of the same sets of stimuli in the same family, social, and business environment. Thereby certain paths of discharge become habitual and we may appropriately speak of attitudes, sentiments, and the other dynamic "trait structures." . . . The dependence of the lattice paths upon the pattern of the environment will be more immediate for attitudes than for sentiments. A man with a strong sentiment to his family, who changes his business and his town of residence, will drop one set of attitudes to business associates and clubs and acquire a new set to new specific people, but these will subordinate still to a largely unchanged sentiment to his family. The basic outlines of personality are thus embedded in deeper sentiments, so that change in a peripheral attitudes of the lattice scarcely constitute change of personality.

Cattell 1950, pp 157-160