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Summaries

Liberalism and the self

by Huib Pellikaan

In the late seventies the right-based liberalism became the new faith in political philosophy. In the eighties liberalism has faced a communitarian challenge for the supremacy in political philosophy. The liberal politics of rights of Rawls, Nozick and Dworkin are confronted with the communitarian politics of common good of MacIntyre and Sandel. The essence of the debate is about whether or not political decisions must be independent of any particular conception of the good life. The contrast of the liberal vision and the communitarian critic is best illustrated by Sandel's critic of Rawls' theory of justice. Sandel rejects Rawls' vision of justice as the first virtue of society. He claims that Rawls' theory unjustly presupposes that the right is independent of the good and that the self is prior to its ends. According to Sandel the self is not prior to its ends. But according to Sandel, we cannot regard ourselves as independent to our goals. As members of a community we have enduring attachments and commitments which taken together party define the person we are (Sandel 1982). The communitarian view denies that individuals are ' (...) human beings who are capable of forming and acting on intelligent conceptions of how their lives should be lived' (Dworkin 1977).

New concerns for coalition theory: allocation of ministries and sectoral policy-making: A comparative analysis

by Ian Budge and Hans Keman

Recent research suggests that structural factors constrain coalition formation to such an extent that parties have less scope for the pre-coalition bargaining which has powered earlier theories about the allocation of ministries and policy-making. This shifts attention from initial formation to internal processes of allocation and negotiation within coalitions in which parties have little choice but to participate. In this paper we indicate how norms of proportionality and specialization may develop in a structurally determined coalition. This argument is checked against comparative evidence from coalitional democracies over the post-war period

(1946-1984). We follow this up by seeing how far control of relevant ministries allows a party to pursue its characteristic policies within specified sectors.

Review-essay of 'Crimes and obedience'

by M.A.P. Bovens and P. 't Hart

The publication of Kelman and Hamilton's study 'Crimes of Obedience' can be considered a milestone in the social-psychological elaboration of what constitutes an important issue for political theorists: the dilemma between the competing needs for compliance and conformity to legitimate authorities on the one hand, and the potentially fatal effects of blind obedience (and thus the need for a critical stance towards authority). This essay discusses the merits of Kelman and Hamilton's theoretical and empirical contributions. It is concluded that the book suffers from two main flaws. Firstly, there is an imbalance between their theory about when and why people obey and the empirical work which focuses on individuals' attitudes towards issues of obedience emerging from the My Lai massacre. Secondly, it becomes clear that the social-psychological framework of Kelman and Hamilton does not sufficiently take into account the broader organizational and political context of obedience. This impedes a balanced view on the functions and dysfunctions of obedience, and spurs them to formulate policy recommendations that do not reflect adequate understanding of organizational and political realities.