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Summaries in English

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ability of concepts. We have contestability in the actual world, but we do not have contestability in all possible worlds; for in some of them we can see which theory is true and which false ... A realist may well accept that there is no fixed point by which to judge all moralities, but does not accept that they cannot therefore be judged at all' (p. 171-172).

In my opinion, Dowding here misjudges the claims of 'essential contestability'. Concepts such as power and interests are essentially contested, or 'irreducibly evaluative' (Lukes) because every empirical application of them is based on an outsider's normative judgement. For example, collective action models assume that a certain group of persons has a common interest, which should serve as a normative guideline for its behaviour. Problems of contestability arise when we try to put such a model to an empirical test. The test may succeed or fail, but we will never know whether its success or failure is due to the research design (the researcher's decision to investigate this particular interest for that particular group) or to the quality of the model itself (the prediction that, given an interest in *a*, an actor will under specified circumstances take action *b*). Persons may have interests, or be subject to power relationships, *without themselves being aware of them*, which obstructs direct empirical research into these concepts. After the test, we are thus left with the researcher's normative assumptions, and some empirical knowledge which may or may not support these assumptions, but can never (verify or) refute them. In terms of Carnap's logic, we have a definiens (group interest, circumstances) and a consequent (collective action), and we know that our theoretical prediction about their interrelationship is false only when the definiens is true, and the consequent is false. But we have no way of finding out *whether* the definiens is true or false. Therefore, concepts like power and interests are by their nature contestable, and consequently cannot be judged decisively against empirical evidence.

My other point of criticism concerns 'systematic luck'. Dowding introduces systematic luck to describe the phenomenon that some social groups get what they want without trying, as a result of the structure of society. A society organized around free enterprise, will generally favour business organizations. Dowding is determined to show the usefulness of the concept of systematic luck, since according to him it clearly differs from more personal forms of luck (p. 64-65). However, I wonder whether there is any difference between systematic luck and influence through anticipation. What Dowding describes as systematic luck, conforms by and large to Friedrich's 'rule of anticipated reactions' (in *Man and His Government*). Power, not luck is involved here. The antithesis between power and luck has been known since the Renaissance, and systematic luck is in my opinion closer to *virtù* than to *fortuna*. By insisting on the term 'systematic luck', Dowding seems to immunize many power relations from the theoretical problems associated with tacit influence.

Notwithstanding these and other comments, Dowding's book is worth reading for those who are involved in power or collective action research. It does not answer all the questions one could ask, but it does offer an interesting perspective on some of the central problems of empirical political science.

C.W.A.M. Aarts

Summaries

The level of political knowledge of the Dutch citizen

Karin Wittebrood

Political scientists often point at differences in the level of political knowledge of citizens as an explanatory variable of political behaviour, as do theorists of mass belief systems. Nevertheless, they hardly pay attention to explaining this factor itself. In this article, a theoretical model has been constructed to explain differences in citizens' political knowledge. The model assumes that political interest is a motivating factor in obtaining political knowledge by use of the media. Interest refers to both advantage and profit, and curiosity. Furthermore, it is assumed that a higher level of political knowledge leads to a better perception of political advantage and profit, or that it increases political curiosity. Thus, there should be an interaction between knowledge and interest. The results of the research presented show, however, that this model does not hold. In the first place, political knowledge is obtained not only by use of the media, but also in other ways. In the second place, the perception of political advantage and profit can hardly explain the level of political knowledge. The results also show, however, that the way in which the concept 'political knowledge' is measured deserves more attention in political science.

Civil Society and the Revolutions of 1989. The Study of Eastern Europe in Search of a New Paradigm

Tom Casier

The article tries to provide a critical analysis of the civil society paradigm as a dominant model in the explanation of the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989. The civil society paradigm replaced former models (such as the totalitarian, group and corporatist approaches), which proved insufficient to explain these changes as they underestimated the seriousness of social developments. Con-

sensus on the concept is lacking. Definitions tend to stress analytical, prescriptive and tactical elements. The study of Eastern Europe adopted the civil society concept as it developed in dissident opposition strategies from the 1970s onward. It basically distinguishes three scenarios according to which civil society caused revolutionary changes: a confrontational model (Poland), a consensus model (Hungary) and a scenario in which the leadership itself tried to create a civil society (USSR). The civil society framework is criticized for its ideological connotations and the lack of empirical support. The civil society in postcommunist Eastern Europe appears to be much weaker than it generally is assumed to be. The recent wave of civil society analyses can be criticized for: the monocausality of their explanations, the application of an ill-defined, vague concept, and the confusion of oppositional and academic discourse on the subject.

PvdA, VVD and CDA: Ideological distinction or 'catch-all parties'?

A.M.B. Michels

The central problem of the article is whether the three major Dutch parties (PvdA, VVD and CDA) are 'catch-all parties', which can hardly be distinguished on the basis of their electoral programmes, or parties with clearly distinctive ideological profiles. In order to provide an answer, a scale has been developed with the catch-all party at one end and the ideologically distinct party at the other. A party will resemble the catch-all party when its programme exhibits little consistency over time and little internal cohesion. The analysis of Dutch election programmes of the 1977-1989 period shows that both the PvdA and the VVD have a rather distinct ideological profile. The 1981 and 1989 programmes of the VVD show some catch-all characteristics. The PvdA appeared to move in the direction of a catch-all party during the 1980s. The CDA has a less distinct ideological profile, but lost some of its catch-all character during the 1980s.

Mededelingen

Kerngroep Nationaal Kiezersonderzoek

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