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Boekbespreking van: The Augustinian imperative: A reflection on the politics of morality
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more interesting if more time and space would have been devoted to the theoretical notions behind the analyses, to the expected relations between the different parts of the opportunity structure, and, especially, to the theoretical implications of the results.

M. Nas

Paul Hainsworth (ed.), **The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA**, Pinter Publishers, Londen, 1992.

The emergence of anti-immigrant parties in Western Europe has induced a series of edited volumes in which this new family of parties are described and compared under the heading of 'extreme right'. These edited books tend to suffer from two weaknesses. First, although they describe and analyse a number of extreme right parties in different countries, they are not really comparative. This is due to the way in which these books are produced. Normally, a specialist in the field who is also a good networker asks a number of colleagues for a contribution on a particular country. Hence the books consist of a number of highly interesting monographic articles which describe and analyse the origin and strategy of the extreme right parties in a specific country. Secondly, and related to the first weakness, it is never quite clear on what ground the parties are selected. This is so because the term extreme right is nowhere defined, even though there seems to be no doubt in the minds of the contributors. Klaus von Beyme stated in a special issue of *West European Politics*, which subsequently has been published as a book: 'Though formal definitions or derivations based on the history of ideas largely failed to provide a convincing concept for 'right-wing extremism', research work on political parties of the right has not had serious problems in selecting appropriate cases.' (Von Beyme, 1988, p.3) This was perhaps true at the time of writing, but now it no longer holds. Not only does the *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* in Germany maintain that the *Republikaner* cannot be considered as an extreme right party even though many specialists in the field do not hesitate to call them so. There is even more doubt, even among specialists, whether or not the Italian Lega Lombarda or the Austrian FPÖ should be called extreme right. The fact that there is no consensus about the label which should be attached to the new political family (see Elbers and Fennema, *Racistische partijen in West-Europa*, 1993) reveals a theoretical flaw that also hampers a solid comparative approach. Each contributor has his or her own theoretical framework, which prevents an integrative approach.

Given these restrictions, *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* is a very good book. The articles on France (Paul Hainsworth), Belgium and the Netherlands (Christopher Husbands) are outstanding, while none of the others is weak. The chapter on Germany is very informative, but the author (Eva Kolinsky) treats the electorate of the *Republikaner* and the immigration policy of Germany in much more detail than the extreme right parties themselves. Francesco Sidoti, on the other hand,

excavates the historical roots of the extreme right in Italy, but he treats Italy too much as a 'special case', which makes any comparison with other countries very difficult. The chapter on Denmark analyses the successes and failures of a party (*Fremskridtspartiet*) which, according to the author (Jørgen Goul Anderson), is not extreme right (p.194). This party does not, even according to the very vague circumlocution of the editor, belong to the extreme right family, because it shows no sign of anti-parliamentarian attitudes and it gives higher priority to alleviating the burden of taxation than to immigration policy. In the contribution on Greece the party of the Greek colonels (EPEN) is regarded as extreme right, even though in their twelve point program migration is not even mentioned (p.265). According to that program, EPEN can be regarded as a traditional right wing party, but hardly as an extreme right one.

The attempt to give the book a broader scope by including chapters on the USA and Eastern Europe decreases the theoretical coherence of the book even further, and leads in the case of Eastern Germany to a certain overlap with the chapter on Germany. But again, these chapters in themselves are highly informative. The high quality of most chapters, combined with the lack of theoretical coherence, and the price of the book will invite illegal xeroxing. We still have to wait for a 'real' comparative study of racist parties in Europe.

M. Fennema

William E. Connolly, **The Augustinian Imperative: A Reflection on the Politics of Morality**, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, 1993.

The Augustinian Imperative is the first volume in the Series Modernity and Political Thought, edited by Morton Schoolman. The common task for the authors in the series is 'to inquire into the thought of figures in the history of political philosophy in light of their possible contributions to our understanding of modernity, the way in which it is constituted, the problems and promises that remain latent in it' (p. vii-viii). The series wants to make clear that the development of liberalism goes along with a process of creating identities to the extent that differences are converted into strangenesses, whereas established identities tend to be naturalised. In this way the politics of liberalism is deconstructed as a social mechanism of power. Corresponding to the intention of the series, *The Augustinian Imperative* seeks to illuminate the political meaning of 'the augustinian imperative', that is, the insistence that there is an intrinsic moral order susceptible to authoritative representation.

In the first chapter Connolly introduces the subject thematically by a discussion of Job and Herculeine Barbine. In the next three chapters he explores the writings of Augustine of Hippo. Focussing on central Augustinian notions such as confession, the divided will, the memory, heresy, biblical interpretation, Connolly argues that Augustine's preaching of an intrinsic moral order has discriminating implications which are far more radical than Augustine explicitly shows. The institution of belief

in an intrinsic moral order comes down to the constitution of a demarcation-line between those who share this belief and thus share their moral identity, and those who do not (not at all, or not unconditionally) share that belief and are therefore demoralized. In other words, the political implication of the Augustinian imperative is that every deviation from the moral order insisted upon, can be pointed out clearly and can be presented either as evil or as strangeness. Therefore, Connolly holds, the Augustinian imperative is a cultural mechanism of power.

To understand the argument Connolly develops, it is useful to turn to his deconstructive interpretation of Augustine's letter written in 423 to a somewhat disordered congregation of sisters. First, by specifying the rules the sisters should obey, Augustine seems not only to consolidate their religious and moral identities, but to *produce* sinful desires which are then *presented as reasons* for mutual surveillance among the sisters and as subjects for confession. It may be, for example, that the sisters were perfectly innocent about ways to draw a man's attentions, but Augustine's letter definitely informs the sisters how a man's attentions are solicited. According to Connolly 'the rules of self-scrutiny through which the illicit is disclosed also serve as the means by which it is produced' (p. 70). Second, the produced sinful desires are taken as reasons for institutionalization of mutual observation and confession. Here a system of graded authority is created: the sisters are obliged to obey the rules specified by Augustine since Augustine is authorized to delineate these rules because he himself is the servant of the lord. A commanding deity is confessed into being by Augustine, and this structure is authoritatively recapitulated and distributed by him (p. 71). Connolly concludes that for these reasons the letter is not to be seen simply as an admonition. Rather, the letter is the most elaborate expression of the Augustinian politics of identity, and, implicitly, this politics is a cultural mechanism of power, even of violence.

Connolly's interpretation of this letter makes clear what precisely he means by the Augustinian imperative. Eventually, it is the belief in a natural moral order that Connolly criticizes. Connolly points out that this belief has an implicit danger: the natural moral order is easily used as an absolute, universal criterion to delineate the cultural and moral identities of people. By appealing again and again, in all possible rhetorical ways, to such a criterion – as Augustine does – a person assumes authority to divide human beings into two groups of people: one group consisting of those who share the same convictions and are therefore 'the good fellows', and an other group of outsiders who are therefore 'strangers', or, worse, 'the bad guys'. The politically and morally unacceptable thing about such a practice, is that the *responsibility* for this fundamental moral judgment about all people is not taken up by the person who makes this judgment. Instead that person presents himself as the authorized spokesman of 'the naturally given, universal truth', making himself thereby immune to dissenting opinions. According to Connolly then, the belief in a natural moral order has the intrinsic danger to lead to disrespect towards human beings, because it leads to the refusal to argue rationally and thus to take differing moral, political, religious opinions seriously. Therefore, it is no wonder that Connolly pleads for deconstructing metaphysical foundations of moral claims. Once a moral claim that is presented as absolutely valid because founded in a natural order of things, is shown to be a subjective, personally or

socially formed, moral judgment, a political climate of respect towards all becomes possible. Throughout the book, but most explicitly in the last chapter, Connolly develops this perspective. Drawing on Nietzsche and Foucault, Connolly argues that, first, genealogy and, second, cultivation of a noble sensibility should be pursued. Genealogical critique exposes artifice in the metaphysical foundation of moral and political judgments, and thereby destabilizes prevailing codes of moral order. Noble sensibility is an attitude that can be developed once the belief in natural, metaphysical foundation of one's own judgements is given up. It is the attitude which makes it possible to take personal responsibility for one's opinions and to respect opponents seriously.

Connolly's study is very interesting, but his arguments are not always convincing. I find it rather unsubtle to say that Augustine's letter – which of course has the character of a moral exhortation and recommendation – is a manifestation of violence. I agree with Connolly that in some sense every judgment, even every articulation, is manipulative. I also agree with him that one should not try to escape one's moral and political responsibility by ascribing to nature what properly belongs to cultural and personal life. But I do not follow him when he identifies *power and violence* so easily. There are many, crucial, steps between 'words as weapons' and killing shots. There is an essential difference between calling a person a stranger and judging him or her as an evil person. Connolly's conception of power erases these essential differences. In my opinion, only unworldly academics can state so flatly that every articulation is in principle a manifestation of power and *therefore* intrinsically dangerous. So his study did not yet convince me that belief in a natural moral order *necessarily* leads to violent repression of antagonists. Moreover, it did not convince me that disbelief in an intrinsic moral order necessarily leads to respect for dissenting moral and political opinions.

E. Brugman

Hans Keman (red.), **Comparative politics: New directions in theory and method**, VU University Press, Amsterdam, 1993.

Kennelijk zijn er drie goede redenen om een boek te schrijven over vergelijkende politicologie. In de eerste plaats omdat er onduidelijkheid bestaat over het vakgebied zelf. In de tweede plaats omdat het tijd is voor een overzicht van de recente ontwikkelingen in de vergelijkende politicologie. In de derde plaats omdat er vele twijfels bestaan over het nut van de benadering en haar methodologie, ook bij de beoefenen van de vergelijkende politieke wetenschap zelf. Keman komt in het inleidende hoofdstuk op basis van het bovenstaande tot een tweeledige doelstelling van het boek. Enerzijds is het doel een inleiding te geven in de vergelijkende politicologie, anderzijds is het boek bedoeld de stand van zaken binnen de discipline op een rij te zetten en de recente ontwikkelingen in theorie en methode te bespreken.