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## Boekbespreking van: Contemporary Political Philosophy

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### Citation

Wissenburg, M. (1997). Boekbespreking van: Contemporary Political Philosophy. *Acta Politica*, 32: 1997(4), 443-446. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450507>

Version: Publisher's Version

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**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

We still have to digest another choice concept: public choice. "The concept of public choice has been applied to decision processes based on individual preferences in the public sector" (p.13). Given the definitions you might think the difference between political and public choice should be sought in the difference between public goods and public sector. Wrong! The difference is in the fact that public choice is merely concerned with the aggregative aspects of decision-making, whereas political choice is concerned with both the aggregative and the integrative aspects.

Keman c.s. came to the conclusion that the thus elaborated concept of political choice "seems adequate to express the endeavors of (*sic*) the articles in this volume which all deal with possible syntheses of concepts of rational choice, on the one hand, and the idea of institutional embeddedness, constraints and opportunities for policy-making processes, on the other" (p.14). Presumably nobody knows what could be meant by "endeavors of articles", but in any case this rather enigmatic formulation effectively conceals the fact that the concept in question does not play a major role in any of the subsequent articles (except, to some extent, those of Héritier and Keman himself). It is evident that all other contributions were finished ("updated") long before the Introduction was conceived. It saved the other authors the trouble of using some concepts that are rather vaguely defined, to say the least.

The same *post hoc* character applies, or at least so it seems, to the division of the remaining ten articles into three parts: Part One – Political Actors in Institutional Settings; Part Two – Institutions and Governance; Part Three – The Politics of Collective Action. Indeed, the titles of the three parts appear primarily to have been chosen to coincide with the subject and title of the articles by each of the three editors. In Part One there are articles, besides that of Adrienne Héritier, by Fritz Scharpf and Gerhard Lehbruch; in Part Two articles by Johan Olsen and Ole Resen in addition to that of Keman; in Part Three contributions by Wolfgang Streeck, Marc Schneiberg and Rogers Hollingsworth, Franz Lehner, and the third editor Roland Czada. Apparently, nothing would be lost if some articles were to change Parts, or Parts their names.

For most contributions the mere content makes reading a rather unpleasant job. It is difficult to maintain one's appetite when confronted with platitudes like: "Interesting suggestions are also offered by studies based on the theory of liberal corporatism which demonstrate that different institutional arrangements account for different patterns of interest intermediation" (in Franz Lehner's "The institutional control of organized interest intermediation: a political perspective", p.214). No wonder Lehner ends up with nothing, though he thinks there is at least the beginning of a new approach and ... hope: "The hope is that a further development of this approach will lead to a rather simple, but fruitful theory" (p.227).

In addition to this dryness of the contents there is also the consistently poor language and, in particular, the very poor editing. The help of no less than three persons is gratefully acknowledged in the Preface "for seeing the book through publication and for proof-reading". This has got to be a joke. I am certainly not joking though when I say that, for instance, on each and every page of the article by Adrienne Héritier at

least one word or a group of words is missing. Even the headings of sections have not been spared. For example on page 39 a heading reads: "Linking and Institutional Factors: Normative and Empirical Developments in Political Decision-making". The heading should probably read: "Linking *Individual Preferences* and Institutional ...". Another example, this time from Czada's contribution: "I will start from the assumption that a theory of order that is able to avoid falling into mere functionalism or metaphysical explanations has to take as its point of departure" (p.230). Has to take *what* as its point of departure? The next incomplete sentence is just two lines below this one! The combination of poor language and numerous vanished words makes reading a tantalizing puzzle. Sometimes you are lucky and the puzzle can be solved easily because it happens to be a quotation that has been maltreated. On page 127 in the article by Keman, for example, I came across a quotation from a publication by Douglass North: "Institutions affect the performance of the economy by the costs of exchange and transformation (North 1990: 6)". I couldn't make sense of these words until I checked the original source and learned that the quotation should read: "Institutions affect the performance of the economy by *their effect* on the costs of exchange and *production* (North 1990: 5)".

I could go on and on with other instances from any of the articles showing what a mess the different authors have made of it, but I will spare the reader the rest of the troubles I have been through and just finish with this cry from the heart: "Don't waste your time, money, and good temper, leave this book unopened!"

G.P. de Bruin

Robert E. Goodin and Philip Pettit (eds.), *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*. Blackwell, Oxford 1996, ISBN 1557868425, £ 16.99

In a previous life, I spent an hour every day in the Cologne museum of modern art on my way home from work. In the end I got tired of the Liechtensteins, the Warhols, even the Portable War Memorial – but I still return every few years, just to get a taste of heaven. I cannot compare Goodin and Pettit's *Anthology* to anything but this museum. It brings together some of the most precious works of contemporary political philosophy in one monumental volume – each of them masterpieces, together almost too much to appreciate.

Here are some facts. The *Anthology* is a collection of 38 classic texts grouped around seven themes covering the main areas of debate in present day political philosophy: state and civil society, democracy, justice, rights, liberty, equality and oppression. The book contains a superb index. It is, as one of the editors recently wrote, a companion to the Companion, i.e., the *Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy* (Blackwell 1993), a systematic introduction to the field. *Companion and Anthology* are in turn part of Blackwell's impressive series of philosophical anthologies,

covering all disciplines within philosophy. Among the demigods whose texts have been included in this *Anthology* are John Rawls (twice), Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, Ronald Dworkin, Gerry Cohen, Robert Nozick, Charles Taylor (twice), Carole Pateman, Isaiah Berlin, and so on and so forth. The *Anthology* adds another 648 to the *Companion's* 600-plus pages. In the better of all possible worlds, where trivialities like limited time and maximum student workload would not interfere, it would all be part of a minimum course in contemporary political philosophy. It is not just another anthology, it is *the* anthology. The editors have done a marvellous job.

Trying to criticize a book like this is like trying to criticize the composition of a great museum's collection. The range of objections is limited and predictable. All one can do is point to missing or overrated authors and texts, and to shortcomings in the way they are presented. Since the latter may explain the former, I will start there.

In their half page "long" introduction, the editors explain that they selected and arranged the texts "so as to show political philosophy as it truly is: as a set of ongoing conversations and disputations, arguments and debates" (p. ix). One might counter that political philosophers, in the course of their conversations and disputations, often also hope to contribute to the development of traditions and schools. The texts in the *Anthology*, however, are organized around themes only, not schools, and as a consequence one gets to read little about the latter. Anyone who is interested in a defence of the editors' perspective or in an introduction to traditions like libertarianism, communitarianism, conservatism or rational choice approaches is referred to the *Companion*. As a consumer, I find this slightly unfair. I really would like to buy and read both the *Companion* and the *Anthology*, but not because the editors trick me into it.

Even a longer introduction would probably be insufficient to justify the over-representation of authors rooted in the Anglo-Saxon world. The only "real" foreigners whose texts have been included are Offe, Habermas and Foucault. Is there really so little going on in continental political philosophy? I will be the last to deny that the Anglo-Saxon analytical tradition and its focus on the interface of political and moral philosophy fits in quite badly with the continental hermeneutical tradition and its orientation towards social philosophy, but if one wants to represent political philosophy as it really is, then the ongoing debates should dictate the choice of texts and not the other way around. Especially the section about oppression might have benefited from the inclusion of more (continental) texts on the thing politics is made of – power. Even though the authors live in Australia, I fear we have here a classic case of – as a British newspaper once wrote – "Fog over the Channel – Continent cut off". Again as a consumer, I may not like or even care for the delicacies of "those who make a cult of obscurity" (as Sidney Hook once described the continentals) but I would like to have the opportunity to skip such texts myself.

Goodin and Pettit have nevertheless done their best to represent the major schools within Anglo-Saxon political philosophy. Of course, some traditions are really more

equal than others and deserve more attention. In one case, however, the editors have, in my most humble opinion, overdone it. I suspect that it is the editors' – in itself commendable – attempt to do justice to feminism that has prevented them from including such topics as virtue ethics, republicanism, conservatism and anarchism, and from giving libertarianism the room it deserves. Since this is a touchy subject, let me be more precise in my objections.

Whereas none of the seven parts of the *Anthology* necessarily contain a contribution from a liberal, libertarian, socialist, rational choice, or whatever other perspective, they all contain at least one feminist contribution, as if it were obligatory. Whereas other texts are your typical, slightly dry and responsible everyday political philosophy, the tone of at least half of the feminist texts is political, at times even provocative, rather than philosophical. Whereas other texts are clearly related to one another as replies to other positions, the feminist contributions seem to be comments to which hardly anyone bothered to answer. Either the editors have not chosen the right texts to reflect political philosophy as an open and ongoing debate where all can speak freely and receive a decent response, or most mainstream (male) political philosophers have not taken the feminist critique seriously – for which the editors are no more responsible than any other colleague. The latter explanation is supported by the observation that all feminist texts were written by women, with only one partial exception, and all the others by men. It is probably the right explanation, and if it is, it reflects badly on the profession, but it also sheds doubt on the image of political philosophy as an ongoing debate *et cetera et cetera*. However, there is no need to demonstrate this point over and over again all through the book.

It seems then that these texts have been included for political reasons, as part of a campaign to enlighten current and future (male) students in the field and to emancipate feminist political philosophy. But if the editors' selection criteria are partly political, their introduction should have explained this – because I wonder, first of all, if an anthology is really the right place for positive action, and secondly, whether it really is conviction that drives the editors. They may also simply be yielding to power – the power of political correctness in universities and the power of sales figures in the USA. The fact that feminism has had a deeper and more lasting influence on the substance of mainstream philosophical debate in the USA than elsewhere is perhaps sufficient to justify the inclusion of most of these feminist texts separately, but it still does not explain their ubiquity.

In this context, it is interesting to note that whereas feminism is everywhere, there is another popular issue, not (yet) generally supported by university pressure groups and codes of conducts, totally absent from the book: environmentalism. Green political theory can be as critical of mainstream thought as feminism, it can be as radical if not more so in its perspectives on social and political change, it has quite interesting things to say about rights, justice, democracy and so on. Moreover, it is no longer the domain of New Age lunatics. There is ample respectable material available, written by people like Brian Barry, Andrew Dobson, Robyn Eckersley, Bryan Norton, Jan

Narveson, Garret Hardin and, but perhaps he was too modest, Robert Goodin himself.

While we are in the business of name-dropping, I might as well list the names of a few Anglo-Saxons whose texts deserved to be included. Their absence reflects in no way on the quality of the *Anthology*, but not mentioning them would mean that the *Anthology* and political philosophy in general were complete without them: Bruce Ackerman, Hannah Arendt, Richard Brandt, William Galston, Amy Gutmann, Carol Gilligan, Thomas Nagel, Martha Nussbaum, Onora O'Neill, Susan Moller Okin, Joseph Raz, Richard Rorty and Hillel Steiner. The editors obviously had to make a choice – it must have been a close finish.

This brings me to my final point: although most of the great names and texts in the field are there, we do not always get the central texts. The reader who wants to get acquainted with the intricacies of John Rawls' theory of justice will not find them in his own texts but in Robert Nozick's (admittedly brilliant) critique of Rawls. Brian Barry, Ronald Dworkin, Amartya Sen and others have written texts of at least equal importance and impact as the texts selected here. I particularly missed Sen's liberal paradox which, a quarter of a century ago, inspired a still ongoing debate on the (in)compatibility of freedom and welfare.

Yet all these comments are little more than remarks *in margine*. It will be a long time before anyone improves on the *Anthology*.

Marcel Wissenburg

## Books Received (March-October 1997)

Prices are for paperback editions, if available.

Due to space constraints, only a selection of the books received can be reviewed in this journal.

Axelrod, Robert, *The Complexity of Cooperation: Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1997, ISBN 0691015678, \$18.95

Berkouwer, J. & Hoogerwerf, A. (eds.), *Markt, ongelijkheid, solidariteit: op zoek naar een herkenbare pvda*. Barjesteh, Meeuwes & Co/Syntax Publishers Tilburg 1996, ISBN 9056130234. A collection of essays written by (partisan) experts, aiming for "a more equitable government policy and a more recognizable social-democratic course of the pvda" (from the Preface). The central theme of the essays is social inequality, and the contribution which the pvda could make towards its reduction.

Bornewasser, J.A., *(On)partijdig? Over partijgeschiedenis*. Edita KNAW, Amsterdam 1997, ISBN 9069841746. A historian's view on the development of political parties, paying special attention to the Dutch case and the role of general models and theories.

Boxhoorn, Bram & Jansen, Max, *De integratie van Europa: een historische balans*. Coutinho, Bussum 1997, ISBN 9062830552, Dfl.54.50

Castells, Manuel, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture, Volume II: The Power of Identity*. Blackwell, Oxford 1997, ISBN 1557868743, £ 16.99

Cliteur, P.B., *De filosofie van de mensenrechten*. Rechtstheorie deel I. Ars Aequi Cahiers, Nijmegen 1997, ISBN 9069162660, Dfl.19.50

Crawford, Beverly & Lijphart, Arend (eds.), *Liberalization and Leninist Legacies: Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Transitions. International and Area Studies*. University of California at Berkeley, Berkeley 1997, ISBN 0877251967, \$ 22.95