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## Boekbespreking van: **Geweld in Nederland**

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this kind of political decision-making. The actors in Kraan's book are simply too good to each other; they all are involved in a cooperative game. In reality actors are usually involved in a non-cooperative (zero-sum) game. This view of political scientists is relevant, because, according to Gordon Tullock, in his Foreword to this book, 'Public Choice should be a tool for improved management of the government'. Management seldom aims to reach the common good: most of the time management is about outsmarting the other, and if nothing else works: shake the tree and see who falls to the ground. In other words, compared to the political struggle over the budget, a catch-as-catch-can fight looks more like a very civilized tea party. Kraan shares the ideas of Buchanan and Tullock that public choice theory is a positive economic theory. However, since the real actors in actual decision-making do not resemble the assumptions underlying the public choice models, this approach is normative. It establishes normative criteria for priorities, rules of the game and methods of aggregating individual preferences. This study of budgetary decision-making gives a perspective on how the bureaucrats, citizens, and politicians should act to achieve a stable solution. This knowledge gives us a Platonic perspective on reality, which is useful in its own right, but I have doubts as to whether it will ever be a useful tool for the actual management of government.

Huib Pellikaan

A. Hoogerwerf, *Geweld in Nederland (Violence in The Netherlands)*. Van Gorcum, Assen 1996

Violence is a relatively neglected subject in political science. Political scientists live in an intellectual world where violence lacks the status of an independent category. In the mainstream of Western political thought, violence is viewed as an unfortunate but sometimes necessary means to secure political ends. Hoogerwerf's book on *Violence in The Netherlands* is situated in this mainstream. Although the author clearly recognizes the difference between instrumental violence, expressive violence and ritual violence (p.23), his theoretical approach is limited to the first type of violence in that it assumes violence to be the 'ultimum remedium' in human relations (p.28). It is assumed that not only the author himself, but every human being wants to avoid violence. Without this assumption the theory of Thomas Hobbes would have no basis. Why should men want to prevent the war of all against all unless violence was conceived as an excessively heavy expense in the human accounting system? Hobbesian man has a profound aversion towards violence and would much rather live in a permanent state of subjection than in a permanent state of war. Hence violence belongs to the pathology of politics, to borrow a book title of Carl Friedrich. In the short summary of considerations on violence in political thought (chapter 10)

this liberal view predominates. Of course, Hoogerwerf mentions Rudolf Steinmetz' *Philosophie des Krieges*, in which war is considered from a social-Darwinist perspective as a common good; he also mentions Georges Sorel's *Reflexions on Violence*; he even cites Joseph Goebbels' statement on total war. But all this remains very marginal and is not discussed seriously. In fact, a whole tradition in Western thought from Joseph de Maistre and Marquis de Sade, to Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Benito Mussolini is neglected.

Bearing in mind this restriction, Hoogerwerf's treatment of violence in *The Netherlands* is competent, erudite and inclusive. There is not an article that has been written on the subject that is not summarized in this book; not a single empirical data set is bypassed in Hoogerwerf's survey of literature. The reader gets a helicopter's view of what has been discussed and investigated in *The Netherlands*.

The book contains a general theory of violence by assuming that violence springs from extreme circumstances. When cultural differences between groups are great, when the distribution of wealth is unequal and when social disintegration increases, violence becomes more likely (p.31). The author discusses culture and violence; inequality and violence; social cohesion and violence (chapters 4 to 7). Subsequently the impact of political regimes on the outbreak of violence (chapter 8) and the consequences of violence for the victims, the perpetrators, and society as a whole (chapter 9) are discussed. In these chapters an impressive amount of empirical evidence is evaluated, in the course of which, however, it becomes clear that, even within the paradigm of the Enlightenment thought, the number of different and sometimes contradictory theoretical explanations is immense. For example, the increase of extreme right-wing violence is related to the (electoral) support of extreme right-wing parties (p.84). Yet the increase of extreme left-wing violence is explained by the very lack of support and the resulting isolation of the movement (p.88). At one point it is assumed that violence is related to the imbalance between increasing social equality and the increasing economic inequality (p.61); at another point it is maintained that violence tends to pop up when the power balance is felt to move in an unfavourable direction (p.35). I am not arguing here that the different theoretical models are necessarily incompatible. It does show, however, that the research on violence is still in its infancy and that even within the framework of liberalism it is far from easy to build a coherent 'overall theory'. It is here that I feel a little uneasy with the composition of the book. Even though the author clearly indicates that several quite different theoretical frameworks co-exist, the presentation of these different theories, and of the empirical data that have been collected on the basis of it, is such that the reader is easily led to the conclusion that a coherent body of scientific knowledge does exist and that only a few puzzles have yet to be solved. In other words, the book reads like a research proposal that lures the reader to believe that only time and money is needed to discover the sources of violence in contemporary society. This impression is reinforced by the last chapter which contains a series of suggestions for a government policy against violence. In the last chapter the liberal bias of the author is most clear. Being a liberal

myself, I fully sympathize with his policy suggestions: fight intolerance, combat inequality, increase democracy. From a professional point of view I could not agree more: we should have more money for research on the root causes of violence. And yet, I remain somewhat sceptical when I read that the government should combat sub- and countercultures of violence. How can a government fight cultures of violence if violence itself is defined as external to political philosophy, as a form of social and political pathology that should be 'cured' by a benevolent doctor? Is it not from this kind of political paternalism that many perpetrators of violence want to emancipate themselves? There is no other way of confronting (political) violence but to take it seriously and to study violence in all its instrumental, expressive and ritual forms. To do so we need a new political anthropology.

*Meindert Fennema*

Tineke A. Abma, *Responsief evalueren: Discoursen, controversen, en allianties in het postmoderne (Responsive evaluation: Discourses, controversies and alliances in post-modernism)*. Eburon: Delft 1996.

Schopenhauer writes the following about a number of his colleague philosophers:

'The public learned from Kant that the obscure is not always meaningless. Almost immediately, the meaningless hid behind the obscure discourse. Fichte was the first to begin with this, Schelling was at least his equal. The greatest brutality in bringing up utter nonsense, in the relating of meaningless, foolish accumulations of words, was manifested with Hegel.'

Analogue to these possibly exaggerated remarks by Schopenhauer, one can use words with a similar meaning for the work of many post-modern 'thinkers'. This does not apply to lucid philosophers such as Rorty, whose work is of eminent importance to twentieth-century philosophy and science, but it does apply to the writings of a number of his self-proclaimed disciples in the science of public administration and policy science. Unfortunately, Tineke Abma's thesis, in which the so-called responsive evaluation is prominent, falls into the last category.

Out of dissatisfaction with the more 'traditional' forms of policy evaluation, Abma asks herself the following main question: 'How can policy evaluation be enriched with notions from post-modern thinking and what implications does this have for practices in the social service sector?'

What is striking in this phrasing of the question is the term 'enriched'. Although this vague notion is not explained, it can be understood from the text that enrichment is conceived as the creation of an open conversation '... in which they who experience

the pain and the burdens of their exclusion get up to speak about their experiences' (see sub-question 3, p.24). With this, Abma resists the idea of the evaluator as an expert, who assesses a certain policy on the basis of certain criteria. Such an instrumental assessment would be the actual practice in most conventional policy evaluations. Because of this, some parties with interests (among others, patients in the social service sector) are shut out, as are their experiences, which are relevant to the actual practice of the policy. This exclusion is mostly deemed to be the result of the starting points of the system-analytic and the critical-theoretic policy evaluation, which can be traced back to the modernistic Enlightenment project, namely:

- man is a rational, coherent, and autonomous subject with a stable identity;
- science is the supplier of objective, reliable, and universally applicable knowledge;
- language is a transparent and neutral medium that presents reality, and that makes a sharp distinction between fact and fiction possible;
- scientific knowledge is an instrument for rationalizing systems and the emancipation of people.

Put mildly, Abma creates a caricature of conventional policy evaluation. The starting points that are accredited to the system-analytic and the critical-theoretical evaluation are a good example of this. Twenty to twenty-five years ago, at the time of the infamous 'Commissie voor de Ontwikkeling voor de Beleidsanalyse' (Committee for the Development of Policy Evaluation), it may have been the case that a number of these starting points indeed underlay evaluations in the Netherlands. Nowadays, however, these principles are thought about in a more subtle way.

The idea that man is a rational, coherent, and autonomous subject that possesses a stable identity has become more and more splintered since Freud's works. Perhaps Abma associates this starting point with the rational actor models in the social sciences, although her writing is not very clear on this point. If this is the case, then it is a serious misunderstanding on her part. Rational actor models are not to be considered as normative starting points or as essentialistic reflections of reality, but as a means to approach and better understand the world outside us.

The thought that (present) conventional policy evaluation presupposes that language is transparent and neutral and (completely) represents reality also seems like a creation on her part. Scientists have not readily taken such a stand since Wittgenstein and Carnap. It is hence not surprising that Abma does not tell the whole story, but by and large sticks a label on certain forms of policy evaluation. Furthermore, it can be noted that the relation between fact and fiction is problematic; but fact and fiction do indeed differ. The idea that fact and fiction cannot be distinguished and that 'the world' is only a social construction, which also seems to be Abma's assumption, once led a physicist to note that it is strange that such social-constructivists always travel by plane to scientific congresses. After all, if the world outside us is fiction and permits everything, they might as well arrive on a flying carpet. It is much cheaper that way.

To ensure no misunderstanding, social-constructivists such as Rorty do not think