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**Boekbespreking van: Political Parties, Growth and Equality: Conservative and Social Democratic Economic Strategies in the World Economy**

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discussion that can always be reconsidered. Bellamy's discussion of Hayek's view is an interesting introduction to the main ideas of a political philosopher who hesitates between being a rule-utilitarian and a conservative. Bellamy's answers to the conservative fear of democracy are well argued and convincing.

Second, Bellamy discusses Rawls's notion of political liberalism. In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls assumes that all individuals share the same conception of justice and fairness on the basis of a comprehensive philosophical doctrine. Modern societies, however, show pluralism of incompatibility of several comprehensive philosophical doctrines. In *Political Liberalism* Rawls defines a democratic regime that must deal with this incompatibility and that must guarantee the stability of a well-ordered society. Bellamy claims that "Rawls's political liberalism avoids the role of politics" (1999: 66). For example, he criticizes Rawls's view on the legitimacy of civil disobedience. According to Rawls, civil disobedience is acceptable only when fundamental matters are at stake. Civil disobedience is not suitable for disputes about tax politics. Bellamy argues that the campaign against the Poll Tax in the UK was not only about tax politics. The anti-Poll Tax campaign revealed the wider context of 'fundamental' issues (1999: 61). Bellamy claims that this example proves that Rawls's view on the subject and nature of politics is too narrow. However, Bellamy's answer to Rawls is not well argued and not convincing. Rawls does not exclude the empirical case that a specific campaign against tax politics could reveal a more fundamental problem. Moreover, if tax politics reveals a more fundamental problem, civil disobedience is no longer unacceptable. Rawls's point is simply that citizens in a democratic regime must – at some point – accept the outcome of a political decision-making process. If civil disobedience were accepted for each group of citizens who are dissatisfied with the political outcome, no democratic system – including the negotiation democracy – could work.

Third, in contrast to Hayek and Rawls, Walzer does not believe in universal and general principles of justice. Walzer's communitarianism combines pluralism with an egalitarian account of justice, i.e., Walzer wants to reconcile the diversity of pluralism with the uniformity of equality. However, the difference between the concepts of 'diversity' and 'uniformity' is insurmountable and Walzer's 'art of separation' in different spheres of justice is begging the question. Walzer has an optimistic view in which social solidarity is a shared value in the public culture of modern societies. This notion of solidarity is society's cement – it holds together the different spheres of justice. Bellamy does not share Walzer's faith in solidarity, which he labels the value of democratic socialism. One of the biggest problems of modern societies is the social division, i.e., the fragmentation of different spheres of the rich and the poor. According to Bellamy, "social solidarity cannot be assumed, as he [Walzer] believes, but needs to be politically constructed" (1999: 88). Bellamy rightly argues that arguments for social justice must transcend the different spheres within a country. Moreover, given the deplorable state of most countries in the Third World, social justice must apply across societies as well.

Bellamy's chief criticism of the theorists, Hayek, Rawls and Walzer, is that they

"restrict politics within a putative consensus on constitutional or communal values" (1999: p. 93). His solution is the negotiating democracy that creates agreement through political compromise. His description of the design and working of the negotiating democracy is very familiar to most Dutch citizens. The 'politics of compromise' is the essence of Dutch political practice for as long as anyone can remember (with the exception of a short period in the late sixties until the seventies when New Left expected polarization to bring them more political gain than the politics of accommodation). This form of constitutional democracy is a pragmatic and non-ideological way to manage the political struggle between groups, based upon class, religion, culture, language, gender, ethnicity, or any other identities one can distinguish. The negotiating democracy is a decision-making procedure in which politicians deal with situations of 'overlapping dissents'. In practice it means that groups are subsidized (paid off) and their leaders offered a seat at the negotiation table. This practice is fine as long as it works, i.e., as long as it guarantees political stability. The politics of compromise has nothing to do with political views on the dangers of democracy, nor with comprehensive ideas about a well-ordered society or social solidarity. The crux of the (Dutch) negotiating democracy is that the political elite subtracts politics out of the political sphere. As a result, Dutch politics is rarely a fascinating spectacle. Bellamy presents his notion of the negotiating democracy as a reconstruction or modernization of liberalism. Yet, it cannot be considered a reconstruction of liberalism. It is not even a *model* for constitutional democracy. The politics of compromise is an empirical rather than a political philosophical notion.

Finally, Bellamy's assumption, that nineteenth century liberalism performs well in a homogeneous community only, is arguable. In my view, liberalism is a political doctrine that does not assume any requirements of the identities of persons per se. Instead, it requires that all persons (no matter who or what they are) abide by the same rules of law. Liberalism is not just a specific form of democratic politics or politics of compromise. Liberalism is a political philosophy that has, no, *must* have, a coherent political view of well-ordered society. In this respect, Rawls's theory is still the Archimedean point of the reflective equilibrium in modern political philosophy. Put differently, his work is a hard act to follow.

Huib Pellikaan

Carles Boix, *Political Parties, Growth, and Equality: Conservative and Social Democratic Economic Strategies in the World Economy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, ISBN 0521585953, £ 12.95.

Let me be clear at the outset, this work is an absolute masterpiece of scholarly research in the best traditions of comparative politics, political economy and party politics. In fact, I can honestly say that few books have left such an impression on my own thinking

about political parties and political economy. For someone who is first and foremost a student of party politics, the work's ultimate strength undoubtedly lies in the gap it so elegantly bridges between electoral and party political research, on the one hand, and the study of political economy on the other. As such, it serves as a clear and persuasive reminder to those concerned with fleshing out the ebbs and flows of political parties that a cross-disciplinary approach offers the best, if not the only, way forward towards an advanced understanding of such phenomena as party strategies and party change. Political economy, organization theory, and party politics have indeed been, for obscure and unjustifiable reasons, divorced from one another for too long. Boix remedies this fallacy both eloquently and forcefully. Yet, the book's muscle does not end with this observation.

The author's argumentation is rooted in a conceptualization of partisan organizational manifestations as able and competent agents in the economic policy-making process. It therefore challenges contemporary academic and public wisdom that holds electoral politics and parties to be negligible and, at best, marginal forces in the design of macro-economic policies. Indeed, from the 1970s onwards several prominent scholars working on the demand-side tradition of political economy, have argued that institutional constraints and processes of growing economic inter-dependence render partisan forces and electoral politics irrelevant and force nation-states towards a convergence of national macro-economic policies. The dominant rule-of-thumb was and continues to be: agency counts, but only embedded in the institutional and international structure.

This understanding of macro-economic politics is, according to Boix, flawed and partial. To counter the pessimistic interpretation of Keynesian demand economists, he advances a supply-side or structural economic model, relatively unconditioned by increasing economic globalization and the domestic institutional set-up. In his framework, economic growth ultimately depends on the level and nature of the factors of production, i.e., fixed and human capital. This implies a move away from the unemployment-inflation trade-off on which the business-cycle model is built, towards an employment-equality trade-off. The author pinpoints this trade-off as follows: "Lowering taxes and decreasing social protection to boost profits, investment, and competitiveness may cause more inequality at home. Yet an excessive commitment to public transfers [...] may lead to a faltering economic performance" (p. 12).

It is in response to the employment-equality trade-off that a choice between distinctive supply-side economic strategies takes place. Here, Boix identifies two main alternatives: on the one hand, a strategy geared towards raising productivity of capital and labour through the public sector, and on the other, the construction of an adequate incentive structure to foster private investment without direct intervention. Which competitive strategy countries opt for is, as Boix maintains, primarily a function of the partisan preferences of the electoral forces in power. Thus, Conservative governments count on market mechanisms to further the goal of economic growth, whereas Social Democratic governments rely on state intervention to reach a certain level of growth,

with particular reference to the welfare of the socially and economically disadvantaged in society. Both partisan governments and political parties have an inherent interest in the design of active economic policies. Partisan executives devise economic strategies to respond to the demands of their core electoral constituencies, while parties elaborate economic policies to organize and sustain winning electoral coalitions.

In order to corroborate its central claims, the book draws on analytical as well as empirical evidence. Boix sets off to give credence to his central premise that the underlying economic structure of advanced countries is centered on a sharp employment-equality trade-off. Empirical evidence is utilized to support this assertion. In subsequent chapters the validity of the partisan model for supply-side economic strategies is confirmed through statistical data derived from all OECD countries with over one million inhabitants. The research design is longitudinal, spanning thirty years from the beginning of the 1960s until the present day. The statistical investigation is followed by two qualitative and historical case studies that prove very dissimilar in terms of partisanship and policy outcomes: the Spanish Social Democratic governments and the British Conservative governments in the 1980s. The case studies convincingly demonstrate the plausibility of the results gathered in the statistical chapters, i.e., the successful development of the supply-side economic strategy of each government. In addition, the explicit political strategy in which the process of economic management was rooted in both countries is explored in detail, paying ample attention to the political limits impinging upon each strategy. In the case of the Spanish PSOE, for instance, the strained relations with the unions are found to have played a key-role in the evolution of particular supply-side economic strategies and policies. In a last chapter, Boix leaves the British and Spanish mould to look at the exact relationship between electoral politics and partisan policies in other European countries, such as Germany and Sweden. Here, too, the author discovers the existence of a tight relationship between the governing partisan coalition and the selection of particular economic strategies. More particularly, economic policies are found to respond to the preferences of the core constituencies of the partisan forces. In addition, Boix takes note of the fact that economic policies are capable of shaping electors' preferences; the respective partisan governments attempt to craft particular economic policies that have the potential to expand their initial supporting coalition.

It is unthinkable that one could not be intellectually roused by Boix's theoretical and analytical sophistication as well as his authoritative and thorough empirical research. Indeed, I feel safe in saying that *Political Parties, Growth, and Equality* will prove to be a benchmark study against which other research in the fields of party politics and political economy will be gauged. In short, it is one of those books you wish you had written yourself.

Michael Wagemans