

Miedema, Siebren et al. (eds.) (1994) **The Politics of Human Science**. Brussels: VUBPress. 229 pp.

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This anthology addresses the political dimensions of human science, which, in my opinion, is a very important theme. It comprises 11 papers in addition to the introduction by Gert Biesta and Siebren Miedema from a selection of presentations at the 12th International Human Science Research Conference. Except for four contributions all the authors are Dutch, which to me was an added incentive to read the book, as the study of European writers is a nice break from all the American texts and books that I normally read. However, in my view, the book has both strengths and weaknesses.

It is both positive and negative that the anthology covers a wide range of topics. Harry Kunneman, for example, adopts a more "pure" methodological/ epistemological approach in his contribution: *From Objectivity to Interference: Transforming the "Project of Enlightenment"*. His arguments (as the title indicates) centre on the idea of replacing objectivity with interference. He is very cautious in keeping clear of the connotations of interference with the domain of natural science and manages to develop the notion in such a way that it may be applied within the human sciences.

Kunneman regards the person as "a junction of interference", and as I understand him, the reason is that the individual "meets" what he terms "order", e. g. the order of culture. When a (wo)man meets order it enables him/her to make interference in the process of meeting, and consequently to "individuate" (develop her/his individual uniqueness). Again, I am not sure that I fully understand Kunneman's work. However, from the perspective of the book's purpose Kunneman appears to equate the politicising of human sciences with some measure of individual "liberation", which can be reached in the human sciences by using a model based upon the term interference in stead of objectivity. In other words, to acknowledge that the individual gets "mixed up" with order, and not just to view order versus the individual as a process that has some sort of general objectivity attached to it. But again, I find it difficult to follow Kunneman, so perhaps his contribution is much more subtle than I have been able to detect.

Other topics covered by the anthology are pedagogy and politics, e. g. Max van Manens's paper: *Pedagogical Politics? Political Pedagogy?* He takes the readers through concrete cases that deal with the power relations between children and teachers, using story-telling to shed light on the emotional aspects of the relationship. van Manen argues that we do not further political progress by the mere force of theoretical or critical discourses. I fully agree with his view, and to quote van Manen: "That is why I am groping for a type of discourse that speaks to our emotional pedagogical sensibility - an animated thoughtfulness that I have elsewhere described as pedagogical tact" (: 71). One may say that where Kunneman argues in favor of individuation, van Manen makes a plea for making the private (i. e. the individual) public, and by doing so for moving the lives of individuals into the sphere of politics.

By now I hope I have shown why the broad scope of the anthology also presents a weakness. The book covers many other topics, such as multi-culturalism, sustainability, gender, healthcare, etc., but it lacks a summary chapter which could highlight the essence of the arguments presented in the

various papers. I do not mean to suggest that the Introduction by Biesta and Miedema is not a well written piece. It is indeed. I think it is an exemplary short and very concise presentation of why and how social science differs from the natural sciences. I. e. human subjectivity - which is (one of) the objects (or subjects) of social science - differs from natural science research objects by being reflexive, having a history and an ability to act.

In the introduction they also address the fundamental question: How to pursue the political consequences of human science researchers' moral stance as researchers? calling attention to the problem that we risk copying the political irreflexivity of the physical science approach by the "obsessiveness" with methodology. However, there is no introduction to the content of the book at all, and with 6 (six) editors it should have been easy to make such an outline, which is always a great help for readers of the book.