

## A Lecture Not Given

In a university lecture entitled *Onuitgesproken Redes (Lectures Not Given)*, Professor Dr. Marten Brouwer of the University of Amsterdam devoted substantial space (pp. 18-21) to a discussion of William Stephenson's work. A translation of Brouwer's comments follows.<sup>1</sup>

In my subjective opinion, and, simultaneously, according to what I regard as objective criteria, William Stephenson was one of the greatest social scientists of this century. A few years ago he died. His work is recognized by almost no one. He had, it is true, a unique view of the relationship between subject and object, which was influenced by his training: he was a psychologist as well as a physicist. In his view, quantum mechanics and psychology were closely related (Stephenson, 1981), an idea admittedly derived from Niels Bohr. If it is true that observations on the smallest possible scale in nuclear physics are not independent of the fact *that* they are being made, then this has far reaching implications in the philosophy of science. This way of thinking is, in my view, strikingly similar to that of Luitzen Brouwer, Kant, Barlaeus, Sextus Empiricus, and Zeno.

But Stephenson has yet another fundamental arrow in his quiver. According to him, the social sciences got off on the wrong track when they adopted the habit of collecting data on relatively large numbers of people (samples from populations), and using a relatively small and somewhat arbitrarily chosen series of questions. These are the opinion polls as they are generally conducted. According to Stephenson, one should instead regard each separate human subject as a kind of universe of communication. This may sound quite phenomenological, but it is important to add that Stephenson used his own method to obtain observations which he then analyzed with the statistical tool of factor analysis. And the mathematical structure of factor analysis is -- wonder of wonders -- the same as that of quantum mechanics.

Stephenson and his students (such as Steven Brown) have also applied these ideas to political psychology. Brown's book, *Political Sub-*

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<sup>1</sup>This translation was rendered by Professor Adriaan de Vries, Kent State University. Professor Brouwer's lecture, entitled "About Our People: The 'Roots' of Political Psychology and the Political Psychology of 'Roots'" (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1992), was his inaugural address as the first professor of political psychology in The Netherlands. The address was scheduled to be delivered January 28, but had to be called off due to a bomb threat -- a dramatic reminder of the changing roots of political psychology. (*Ed.*)

*jectivity* (1980), should provide us all with food for thought. Although it is devoted primarily to an explanation of Stephenson's methodology, called "Q methodology," his examples are taken from political science. Now in Q, one presents the individual with statements or other stimuli which the person ranks according to their applicability to him/herself. This means, therefore, that to a significant degree the concept of "own identity" applies; and a political factor such as national identification can play a role in that.

Let us look at recent political-psychological literature from this perspective. In the most recent issue of the new European magazine *Politics and the Individual*, for instance, Hagendoorn (1991) presents an interesting model for research on national stereotypes. It should be possible to make room for some Q research in this area; however, the self image would have to be given a more central place, and more attention should also be paid to content. And then it would be interesting to see if the same structure of national stereotypes also shows up in the Q analysis since Q is, in an entirely different way, also an approach to the search for structures.

Another example might be in Middendorp's (1991) thorough and just-published work on ideology in Dutch politics. The many data from that book provide a beautiful time series. It also contains work with a scale for internationalism: scale 14, with four items -- one of them, for example, concerning respect for national symbols such as flag and national anthem. An interesting question would be whether there would be any similarity between the results of this R-methodological study and of a similar Q investigation (in which, by definition, quite a few more terms would be included, and analysis would focus on each subject individually). It is quite possible that a study like this would parallel the "repeat" in Q of the classic book by Buchanan and Cantril (*How Nations See Each Other*) by Stephenson himself (1967).

A third example involves research by Sidanius et al. (1991), published in the most recent issue of the ISPP journal *Political Psychology*. With extensive survey material, which he also treats with factor analysis, Sidanius finds a remarkably high rate of "consensual racism"; when account is taken of the ethnic origin of interviewees and other factors, a large amount of "racism" variance remains. (99% of the true variance then turns out to be held in common.) I have the suspicion that at this point we are getting rather far from reality and from the content of the items. Do questions about Mexican immigrants, about a black president, and about foreigners not have simply a different meaning for the various people involved? This is typically a case in which it is better to approach concrete individuals with Q method, and then to look at the similarities and differences between their factor structures. Nevertheless, the relationship between racism and career plans found by Sidanius et al. remains worthy of further study.

*Litteratuur:*

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**Q Bibliographic Update (Continued)**

*Additional references appear in previous issues of this newsletter, and in "Bibliography on Q Technique and Its Methodology," Perceptual and Motor Skills, 1968, 26, 587-613 (available upon request).*

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