

SUMMARY

Why are good power holders worse than bad ones?

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The aim of this paper is to criticize contemporary political science from the perspective of literature. The narrow empiricist conceptions of knowledge and reality in the dominant academic tradition cannot understand and study aspects of possible and thinkable reality, even if they are central for politics. These aspects are, however, in some cases well studied in works of fiction. The concept of political science should, therefore, given a wider interpretation including all kinds of studies of politics, e.g. those in fiction. Also professional political scientists might be able to find a new object in the study of political studies in literature. One may think of writing theses in literary forms or of a political hermeneutics in »translating» literary analyses into the language of the academic discussion.

This paper is an example of political hermeneutics. Its object is a play of the famous contemporary Finnish author, *Paavo Haavikko*, »Harald Pitkääkäinen» (Harald the Long-lived). Harald is presented as a king of England. His position towards noblemen, rich merchants, and poor people is unstable: in order to prevent their coalition against himself he must legitimate his authority especially with a hegemony of language. An implicit »constitution» for participation in politics in his country is that lying is forbidden: the question remains who is most clever in truthspeaking.

In order to eliminate potential throne pretenders Harald declares his intention to abdicate — leaving his promise consciously vague. He gives to noblemen, Erik and Jarl, a task to listen the people in order to seek after a new king and to collect new taxes for Harald once more. They fail, of course, in their tasks. Neither the poor nor the rich admit that they have anything to pay. The promises of the noblemen also make the poor better to understand that a bad king — like Harald — is less worse than a good one would be. The noblemen manage, however, to confuse the affairs of the state in making both the poor and the rich turn directly to Harald in their troubles. Harald also blames the noblemen of raising hopes among the poor and of lying to himself as an excuse. In order to restore order and to eliminate potential rivals Harald lets hang Erik and Jarl and stay himself as king.

Anarchism and machiavellianism are two political traditions that reject all legitimation of authority, in their own way. »Harald Pitkääkäinen» lies in this tradition in its claim that an enlightened despotism »for the people» is the worst form of government. The play also hints to a possibility of combining the common strength of these traditions with avoiding their complementary weaknesses. Both the pure anarchist ideal of the abolishment of all (at least permanent) authority and the machiavellianist distrust on the people in favour of a competition of elites may be rejected. An alternative, »a machiavellianist anarchism», might be an active counterpower of the people in order to reject the legitimacy of any, especially existing authority and to overthrow existing power structures.