



Hooligans. Metabletisch Onderzoek naar de Betekenis van Centre Pompidou en Cristal Palace (Hooligans. Metabletic Research on the Meaning of Centre Pompidou and Crystal Palace) by Jan Hendrik van den Berg, Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1989

Reviewed by

Bas Levering

University of Utrecht

The works of the Dutch psychiatrist van den Berg have covered a variety of subjects in different fields of the human sciences. In the early '50s he was one of the prominent members of the Utrecht School, a group of phenomenologically oriented scholars in psychology, pedagogy, psychiatry, and social psychology. In 1953 he was co-editor of the important joint publication *Persoon en Wereld* (Person and World). His dissertation (1946) was on the meaning of phenomenological or existential anthropology in psychiatry. Many of his publications have been translated into various languages. Duquesne University Press has published most of the English translations. *The Psychology of the Sickbed* (1966), *Dubious Maternal Affection* (1972), and *A Different Existence: Principles of Phenomenological Psychopathology* (1974b) are some of his works.

His latest book, *Hooligans*, is of a different kind. It fits in a series of books that started with *Metabletica* in 1956 (in English *The Changing Nature of Man*, 1961). In this book he presented his theory of change, his historical psychology. Van den Berg is a highly original thinker. Long before Philippe Aries, for instance, he proposed the view that childhood is a cultural and historical construction. Metabletics as a method of historical research concentrates on the synchronical instead of the diachronical. Van den Berg as historian is controversial because of his highly provocative interpretive method. And indeed his work looks rather speculative. Although his work raises many methodological problems, the questions he raises are of great importance.

Van den Berg is an incorrigible cultural pessimist. In *Metabletica* he did not value the disappearance of the difference between children and adults. He described the historical chan-

ges as a process of infantilization of adults, whereas others welcomed it as the emancipation of children. His critique of educational change is consistent throughout his work. In *Hooligans* he reflects on the "student-eruption," as he calls it. Everywhere in the world since World War II the increase in the proportion of adolescents that study at universities is tremendous: in the Netherlands from 1.7% from 1945 to 8.3% in 1983, with the largest growth in the late '60s. This increase cannot be explained on the basis of population growth in general. As van den Berg puts it: The Netherlands will never have such a number of youngsters that will be able to graduate at a university level. In other words, the standard level of output of tertiary education must have been lowered to a remarkable degree during the last decades.

Through the eyes of van den Berg the future of the western world looks much darker nowadays than it looked 35 years ago. The changing nature of man described by van den Berg in *Metabletica* looks rather harmless compared with what he shows us in *Hooligans*. Hooliganism is a term commonly used to refer to the barbaric behavior of certain soccer fans in England. They fight the supporters of their team's opponents in and around the stadium. The Heysel-drama during the Eurocup Final in Brussels in 1985 saw 35 dead—mostly Italian supporters killed in a fight with Liverpool team supporters. Even now soccer hooliganism is a major problem in large European cities. During the World Cup tournament in 1990 the Italian supporters tried to take revenge.

The hooliganism van den Berg speaks about refers to the development of western culture as a whole. In the first chapter he concentrates on the year 1977. This particular year many significant criminal events occurred: the murder of the bank president Jurgen Ponto by the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (RAF), a group with roots in the student movement founded to carry out terrorist actions in order to change fundamentally the structure of society; the kidnapping and murder of Hanns Martin Schleyer, an important member of an employers' organization in West Germany by the same group; the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane and the liberation of the hostages by a special antiterrorist group of the German army at Mogadishu Airport in Somalia. On the same day Baader Raspe and Ensslin, members of the RAF, were found killed in their cells in the special prison, Stammheim, in Stuttgart. Van den Berg does not doubt that it was suicide. Others are convinced that it was a case of murder by the government. Political developments in The Netherlands that same year are also mentioned: the defeat of the so-called major-

ity strategy of the Social Democratic Party after the big gain in the elections for members of Parliament (they failed to form a government in spite of that gain); the kidnapping of the Dutch industrialist Caranse; the hijacking of a train by a group of young South Molukkans in an attempt to remind the Dutch government of the promise made to their parents (that they should be enabled to go back to their archipelago lost in the Dutch-Indonesian war of the late '40s); the inauguration of Jimmy Carter as the 39th president of the United States, who afterwards arranged the Camp David accord of Egyptian Sadat and Israeli Begin but was not able to neutralize the effects of traumas such as hippies, Watergate, the resignation of Nixon, and the war in Vietnam. Four years later Carter was to be defeated by Ronald Reagan who began to reduce all budgets except that of the Ministry of Defense. And there was the inauguration of the Centre Pompidou in Paris that was meant to be a place of culture but that looked like a skeleton. Pointing at the moving staircases taking people in and out, *Paris Match* wrote: "A maneater that makes you laugh." And van den Berg cites a shopkeeper on the corner of the street saying: "They seek disorder." It was the year 1971.

The hooligans van den Berg speaks about are not the common rascals and bandits of all times. Van den Berg is talking about rascals by invitation. His book is about the artificial rascals created, wanted, and protected by society. Hooliganism is a nasty product of our society, and we do not know how to get rid of it.

It is not possible here to tell the whole of van den Berg's story. This may be a characteristic of reviews in general, but in the case of van den Berg's historical writings it is especially true. Van den Berg is convincing in his choice of different but comparable events. And indeed the synchronicity is striking, above all thanks to the variety. To show the reader something of it I have summed up the events he mentions in the first chapter, but one needs to understand that one has to read the whole book.

I will concentrate on van den Berg's analysis of the two architectural objects that appear in the title of his book. About the Centre Pompidou he raises the following questions.

1. The Centre tests its visitors. The Centre is elitist, and at the same time it is making an appeal to the people. Why?
2. Why was the design of Piano and Rogers chosen? (The transparency and flexibility are hardly to be found in the real building.)

3. Why does the building try to be more than it is? The walls are too thick and the pipes that are normally built inside the walls of buildings are on the outside and too numerous. Why?
4. The pipes are painted in screaming colors. Why?
5. The entrance to the Centre is so small that visitors have difficulty finding it. Why was it designed this way?
6. Seventy percent of the visitors do not go into the building at all. They take the staircase up to enjoy the view of the City of Light. Why do so few go inside?
7. Most of the bricks of the place around the Centre are grouped together. Was this done to make it impossible to build a barricade?

The Crystal Palace was built for the first great international exhibition held in 1851 in London. The first national exhibition was held in 1789 during the French Revolution in Paris. Henry Cole, chairman of the Society of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce, convinced Prince Albert that Hyde Park was the best spot. The world seemed new. There was wealth and prosperity as never before because of industrial elan, but not for everyone. Those who lacked talent or preferred to be lazy instead of tired, or who simply were unlucky, failed and had to live in the slums. When only 10 months remained and after a discussion in the press, Joseph Paxton's design was chosen. "He's just a gardener's boy," Queen Victoria is supposed to have muttered, and she dreamt about what we now call the American dream. Paxton offered a revolutionary building system taken from nature, modeled on the large floating leaves named *Victoria Regia*, strong enough to carry adults. Frames of light pipes turned out to be so strong that they could carry an endless vault. The Crystal Palace is the first real example of system building with prefabricated elements. The building was 1,851 feet long, with reference to the year it was built. The surface was the size of nine soccer fields, bigger than the Centre Pompidou.

In his opening speech Prince Albert declared: "We are at a period of most wonderful transition which tends rapidly to accomplish that great end: the realization of the unity of mankind." But the societal system was built on competition and capital. The Chinese mandarin who spontaneously approached the queen and bowed in front of her seemed to emphasize that unity of mankind, but later it appeared that he was a sailor in disguise. Europe was safer in those days. The whole world was safer. During the five and a half months of the exhibition, Wallington kept 10,000 soldiers at hand, but there were only 23 arrests. In our time there are more arrests in Amsterdam each day.

As a piece of architecture the Crystal Palace was a demonstration of uniformity and equality. But as a manifestation of the unity of mankind it was a contradiction in itself. It was the realization of the spirit of rivalry. The Crystal Palace was a lie. There was no unity of the people. Two years after the Great Exhibition the Crimean War broke out.

Van den Berg establishes that there are no international exhibitions any more. They are impossible in our days. They should show shameful differences instead of the unity and equality throughout the world.

This is not the place to take the reader along other synchronic events: the so-called 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and the anarchy of the year 1851. There is no room to discuss van den Berg's analysis of the horizontal line in architecture. But I should say something about the conclusions of the book.

In his epilogue van den Berg cites some lines from a partially lost poem by Forster referring to the quarrel between agnostics and religious members of King's College in Cambridge in 1903. The discussion was about the question of whether King's College, like all colleges, not only in Cambridge, should practice something like "inward mission" for the poor people of London. Forster wrote the following lines:

Till children, sniggering back from Sunday school,
Know twenty ways of proving you a fool,
Till Hooligans have Hegel for their teacher
And every navvy owns his pocket Nietzsche.

Of course this strophe is important for van den Berg mainly because of the appearance of the word hooligans, but there is more. It marks again the process of secularization in western civilization. Hegel, as the first real political philosopher, was to be interpreted in contradictory ways. Even the anarchist Bakounin founded his ideas on Hegel's legacy. And the name of Nietzsche is connected with the credo "God is dead," which means "We only have to cope with people." The execution of Louis Capet in 1793 was different from all the earlier executions of kings. He was executed just because he had reigned.

Van den Berg's book is again a book on the postmodern condition. *Metabletica* in 1956 was, and so was *Divided Existence and Complex Society* in 1963 (van den Berg, 1974a). The problem of identity, as it became prominent in pedagogical literature in the '80s as an answer to the challenge of the postmodernists, was already explored in considerable depth by van den Berg more than a quarter of a century ago.

Van den Berg is an out-and-out conservative, and this means his work can make us aware not to choose our values too easily. He even uses some interpretive methods that the human sciences in general abandoned long ago. The way he infers knowledge from the inside from outside characteristics brings us back to the dark days of Lombroso. He describes Jimmy Carter as "the ever laughing Carter, with his weird bottomless voice, has to be reckoned among the weakest presidents of the United States." And typical "hooligan faces" he finds not only among the members of the RAF, but he points to Marat and to Soviet leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev. In the Netherlands van den Berg was severely criticized for his relations with South African scholars (Kruger, 1984), yet he is still a tremendously erudite essayist, and he feels it is an important task to challenge his readers. He himself is not at all sure that all the relationships he reveals make sense.

The practical solutions van den Berg offers for the state of hooliganism we live in today are rather vague, as he admits. His assertion that all political principles of meaning nowadays are of 18th- or 19th-century origin is striking and important. And of course he is correct that the so-called new ecological trend is not new at all. The French Revolution was the end of the class state but made way for hooliganism at the same time. The struggle against the ideology of the French Revolution was lost in the victory over the Third Reich that ended World War II. Van den Berg takes a position in the so-called struggle of historians that was fought among German academics some years ago. This is a daring but dangerous position in the eyes of many, because it tends to relativize the evils of fascism.

As stated earlier, one of the reasons for the attractiveness of van den Berg's writings is the fact that his originality is always controversial. About 15 years ago a scientific delegation of the People's Republic of China visited The Netherlands. Back home they reported only two things of interest: next to a project of Dutch physicists was the historical phenomenology of Jan Hendrik van den Berg.

Van den Berg celebrated his 75th birthday last year. His Dutch publisher considered the possibility of publishing his collected works, but the market for Dutch language publications is small and the economic risk was estimated as too high. Yet his *Metabletica* and several other works are still being reprinted; *Metabletica* has already been printed more than 20 times. Which North American publisher will offer the English reader access to *Hooligans*?

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