

The Dead End of a New Road: the Failure of a Cultural Welfare State Policy in the Netherlands, 1945-1946

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Een doodlopende nieuwe weg: de mislukte actieve cultuurpolitiek, 1945-1946.

Toen op 25 juni 1945 koningin Wilhelmina het nationale kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees installeerde, waren de verwachtingen hooggespannen. Dit kabinet zou niet alleen de wederopbouw van Nederland ter hand nemen, maar zou ook een aanzet geven tot doorbraak en vernieuwing van de vooroorlogse verzuilde politieke structuren en verhoudingen. Nationale eenheid en geestelijke vernieuwing waren kernbegrippen van de doorbraakpogingen. Een actieve cultuurpolitiek zou in de tot stand bringing van de geestelijke vernieuwing een belangrijke rol spelen en tegelijkertijd tegenwicht kunnen bieden aan de toenemende standaardisering, vulgarisering en oppervlakkigheid van massacultuurproducten. Sinds de jaren dertig was dit verval van de Westerse beschaving ook onder Nederlandse intellectuelen een groeiende bron van bezorgdheid. De Groningse hoogleraar in de theologie Gerardus van der Leeuw was een van hen, en het was dan ook geen toeval dat hij in het kabinet Schermerhorn-Drees minister van Onderwijs, Kunsten en Wetenschappen werd, om vanuit die functie de 'geestelijke wederopbouw' ter hand te nemen.

Van der Leeuw behoorde tot de personalistische stroming binnen de sociaal-democratische beweging. In het personalistische gedachtegoed staat het individu als persoonlijkheid in samenhang met de gemeenschap centraal en worden geestelijk leven en persoonlijke verantwoordelijkheid sterk benadrukt. Vanuit een diepe, morele bezorgdheid over de richting die de moderne samenleving dreigde in te slaan, pleitte Van der Leeuw voor een nationale volksopvoeding van overheidswege door middel van jeugdorganisaties, wijkcentra, en natuurbeschermingsorganisaties en een grotere toegankelijkheid tot kunst en cultuur voor iedereen. Een nationale radio-omroep en kwalitatief hoogstaande films zouden in deze geestelijke wederopbouw een belangrijke rol spelen, terwijl de vooroorlogse verzuilde cultuurorganisaties steeds meer op de achtergrond zouden raken omdat hun taken door overheidsinstellingen overgenomen werden.

Deze voorgenomen devaluatie van de talloze verzuilde instellingen en organisaties vond geen warm onthaal in rooms-katholieke, confessionele en zelfs deels sociaal-democratische politieke kringen. Ook de liberalen keerden zich traditiegetrouw tegen sterke staatsinmenging in culturele zaken. De oprichting van de OKW afdeling 'Vorming buiten schoolverband' wekte dan ook veel verzet, terwijl ook het plan voor een Nederlandse Kunststichting met vergaande bevoegdheden niet in goede aarde viel en door Van der Leeuws collega's in het kabinet van tafel geveegd werd.

Van der Leeuws ministerschap was niet helemaal een mislukking. Hij verhoogde het budget voor OKW fors, ondersteunde de oprichting van de Federatie van Kunstenaars, de eerste professionele organisatie voor deze beroepsgroep, verbeterde de financiële situatie van musici en toneelspelers voor een deel aanzienlijk en hij gaf de aanzet tot het herstel van de Nederlandse film. Pogingen om tot een nationale radio-omroep te komen, mislukten echter jammerlijk.

Van der Leeuws gretigheid om zijn plannen te verwezenlijken kan beschouwd worden als een belangrijke reden voor zijn grotendeels mislukte beleid – daardoor leek hij niet te beseffen hoeveel weerstand zijn beleid opwekte bij de traditionele verzuilde politieke machten.

Door de uitslag van de eerste naoorlogse Tweede Kamerverkiezingen in mei 1946 kon hij niet langer gehandhaafd blijven als minister van OKW en hij werd vervangen door de rooms-katholiek Jos Gielen – een fervent voorstander van particulier initiatief in culturele zaken en iemand die de O van zijn departement veel belangrijker vond dan de K en de W. Eerst in de jaren zestig, toen de economische wederopbouw en de sociale verzorgingsstaat zo goed als voltooid waren, keerde de belangstelling voor grotere overheidsverantwoordelijkheid op het terrein van kunst en cultuur en buitenschoolse vorming terug. Vooral in de jaren zeventig leidde dit tot een snelle groei van een culturele verzorgingsstaat. Weliswaar was deze voor een deel geïnspireerd door Van der Leeuws actieve cultuurpolitiek, maar de tijdgebonden aspecten van zijn opvattingen, zoals geestelijke heropvoeding en nadruk op nationale eenheid hadden plaatsgemaakt voor minder betutteling en meer respect voor de levensbeschouwelijke diversiteit van de Nederlandse samenleving.

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Three weeks after the liberation of the Netherlands from the German occupation, Queen Wilhelmina asked the two major progressive politicians, Schermerhorn and Drees, to constitute a new national cabinet. A month later, on June 25, 1945, she installed this Schermerhorn-Drees cabinet, consisting of Social-Democrats, Roman-Catholics, Christian-Democrats and non-partisan experts. The goals of this first Dutch post-war cabinet were economic reconstruction and a renewal or ‘breakthrough’ of the pre-war traditional political structures and policies which were dominated by the system of “pillarization”¹.

Five years of German occupation had offered ample time for the intellectual elites of the Social-Democrats and the Christian parties to reflect on the shortcomings of the Dutch political system in relation to the problems Dutch society would have to face after the war. Post-war economic reconstruction would require a strong guiding and planning hand of the government. At the same time, this economic reconstruction was to be connected to a spiritual renewal, aimed at reinforcing Dutch national identity and unity by means of education and arts. In the place of the countless pillarized private organizations dealing with the arts, media and cultural education, now public cultural organizations, supported and financed by the government, were to take care of the spiritual uplifting of the Dutch people. This goal could be reached by an ‘active cultural policy’ (including cultural planning) which was also considered as a new tool to counteract the general tendency towards standardization, vulgarity and shallowness of recent, pre-war (mass) cultural phenomena.

Professor Gerardus van der Leeuw was the main theoretician of this concept of a cultural welfare state, and he became the first post-war Secretary of Education, Arts and Sciences (EAS) to implement it. However, his new active cultural policy failed whereas the old structures in the cultural fields re-emerged. In 1946, the results of the first post-war parlia-

mentary elections showed that traditions proved to be stronger than the urge for change. At that time, a cultural welfare policy was too long a leap.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

The idea that Dutch society needed a spiritual renewal, aimed at reinforcing Dutch national identity and unity was not an unexpected issue in 1945. From the 1930s on intellectuals like the historian Johan Huizinga had focussed on the threatening effects of mass society on Western European and Dutch life. In his *In de schaduw van morgen* [In the Shadows of Tomorrow] (1935) and *Geschonden wereld* [Harmed World] (1945) Huizinga focussed on the great dangers of mass society: people were no longer critical, morals had declined, and militarism, supra-nationalism and abuse of the democratic ideal had strengthened this loss of culture and civilization and had barbarised European society. In his view, this crisis of Western civilization was a consequence of a deep loathing for the values of the past. No longer did the man of the masses live according to Christian values; he had declined into vulgarity and normlessness.

Other Dutch intellectuals agreed with Huizinga: religious and moral principles were overruled by the power of reason, by rationalism (like technocratisation and mechanisation). Notions of responsibility and the idea of community had drowned in individualism, and old community ties were lost, resulting in a lack of unity in contemporary culture. In the past, unity was also created by traditions and the common belief in progress, but a decline of traditions, together with the rise of totalitarian regimes, had stimulated individualism, and therefore at the same time loneliness, insecurity, alienation, conformity and loss of Christian values. Mass culture had intensified these tendencies.

One of these concerned intellectuals was Professor Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950). He was a theologian, who at the early age of 28 had become professor at the University of Groningen. Six years later he became the Vice-Chancellor of the university. During the 1930s his cultural criticism had been growing – as he saw it, modern society increasingly lacked community, order and faith and therefore modern man should reflect on his roots in order to create a spiritual rebuilding.

Van der Leeuw belonged to the so-called 'personalist-socialist' movement within the Social-Democratic party. Personalism was a reaction on the recent processes of modernization, and originated with the French-Swiss philosopher Denis de Rougemont during the 1930s. According to personalists, capitalism and liberalism had uprooted themselves and had become too individualistic, while in totalitarian ideologies the individual had no voice left. In personalism, the individual as a personality was central, participating in a free community which emphasized spiritual life.

'PLANNING FOR FREEDOM'

During World War II the notion that Western civilization was in crisis had continued among the Dutch intellectual elite – more and more intellectuals considered the war as an extra stimulating force in the loss of values and civilization. At the same time they recognized their own time as a time of transition, marked by a process of fast transformation

with, as yet, no new rules and standards to replace the old ones. This vacuum between 'old' and 'new' left room for innovative initiatives to counter the cultural crisis of Western civilization. 'Planning', they thought, was going to play a central role in these counter attacks.

Intellectuals and policy makers based their trust in planning on the theories and ideas of Karl Mannheim, the famous German sociologist, then living in Great Britain. Mannheim was admired by almost all socialist and social-democratic intellectuals in the Netherlands. His status derived from his book, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*, published in German in 1940. In this book Mannheim stated that the problems of capitalist society could be solved by social planning and cultural education. According to his analysis, the former leading cultural elites should no longer determine social order – because of processes of rationalization and organization they had lost the full overview of society and thereby lost their ability to guide it. Besides, the idea of social values had been weakened and had made room for possible wild and uncontrolled mass movements. Planning alone could preserve democratic freedoms and create order at the same time. Only with 'Planning for freedom' could mass democracy be maintained without falling into chaos or dictatorship. This planning should be guided by professional social scientists: the new elite, who – after analysing the dissolution powers of threatening the modern world – would re-educate the people in order to maintain social order.

From 1935 on, after the publication and adoption of their Workplan or "Labour Plan", Dutch socialist politicians and economists had pleaded in favour of central planning of the economy. When the Social-Democratic party (Partij van de Arbeid/Labour Party) became part of the first post-war cabinet, a "national cabinet of recovery and renewal" ², central planning (somewhat moderated) was one of the core strategies for the economic reconstruction of the Netherlands. For the moral and cultural reconstruction of the Dutch people the cabinet adopted an 'active cultural policy', as proposed and drafted by the new Secretary of Education, Arts and Sciences, professor Van der Leeuw.

A MORAL RENEWAL

Van der Leeuw had explained his ideas on a deliberate and planned cultural policy in his *Balans van Nederland* [Balance of the Netherlands], which was written in 1944 and published in 1945. "The old road has tired itself out. A new road has opened," he announced (p. 3). For him the war was a turning-point in history, an ending and beginning at the same time. The war had taken the shine out of Dutch society, had uprooted it fundamentally and had strengthened de-humanization and de-Christianisation. This war had 'devalued' the Dutch nation more than all previous wars together, causing a tremendous loss of sense of community – a lack of responsibility for the well-being of one's fellow-man. And without a common line of action based on the Gospel and a personal sense of responsibility, national community was impossible.

Van der Leeuw's starting point was moral – he was worried about the decline of standards and values as shown in sports, movies, press and radio, and he worried about the lawlessness of young people and the general lack of ideals. His solution for these problems was an active cultural policy: the establishment of youth organizations, of community centres in urban neighbourhoods, and of organizations for the conservation of nature. He proposed a

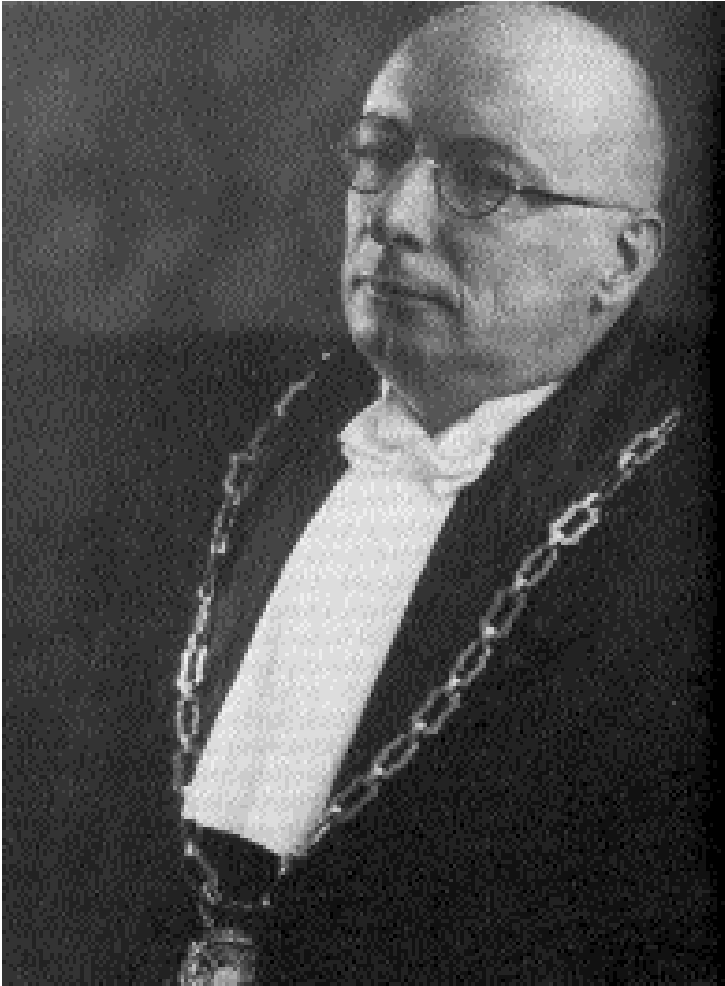


Fig.1
Professor Gerardus van der Leeuw in 1934, as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Groningen
From: *Kunst en beleid in Nederland*, Amsterdam 1985.

national cultural education through quality films and non-vulgar radio programs, and demanded access to art for everyone.

The production and distribution of culture, in particular in backward regions where it was needed, should be the responsibility of the state, he said. Since the state itself was an element of culture, there was no reason to fear that the state would dominate culture. The intellectual elite should take the lead in this process while the role of the pillarized traditional cultural organizations had to be subordinated to national organizations. For example: Protestant-Christian and Roman-Catholic broadcasting organizations were to operate within the context of a national broadcasting organization, just as the religion based youth movements were to be welded into a national youth movement on a Christian basis. In other words, the pillarization of Dutch cultural life had to be torn down.

Van der Leeuw was even more radical in his proposals to re-educate young people: they would be forced to participate in educational camps during the evenings and Saturdays,

combined with a compulsory labour service. Both were aimed at a re-education in general Dutch and Christian values. He also tried to make his Department of Education, Arts and Sciences the centre of national (re)education. He reorganized and expanded the Department into a policy making ministry instead of the former bureaucratic executive institution; he appointed many political friends as civil servants in favour of his ideas, and he established new sub-departments for film and radio. One of his most revolutionary initiatives was the creation of a new departmental agency: *Vorming buiten Schoolverband* [Education outside the Classroom], which was meant to develop and support programs for the moral re-education of the Dutch, especially the 'wild' mass youth. This agency and its policy in particular created much resistance in the denominational political parties and institutions which had always tried to limit the state's influence on cultural youth education.

ARTS POLICY

Towards the end of the war, progressive Dutch artists had made plans to organize themselves into a Federation of Artists (*Federatie van Kunstenaars*), plans which were realized on January 5, 1946, during a founding ceremony in the Municipal Museum in Amsterdam. Like many politicians and intellectuals, these artists aimed at reforms: in their founding manifesto they proclaimed everyone's right to art: works of art should be made available to all. They considered art an indispensable and equalising element of the spiritual life of a nation, so its production and distribution should be organized in a democratic way and artists should have a healthy social-economic position.

Initially the Federation of Artists was meant to operate as a somewhat corporatist union, adopting rules and standards for the separate branches of arts, and developing criteria for

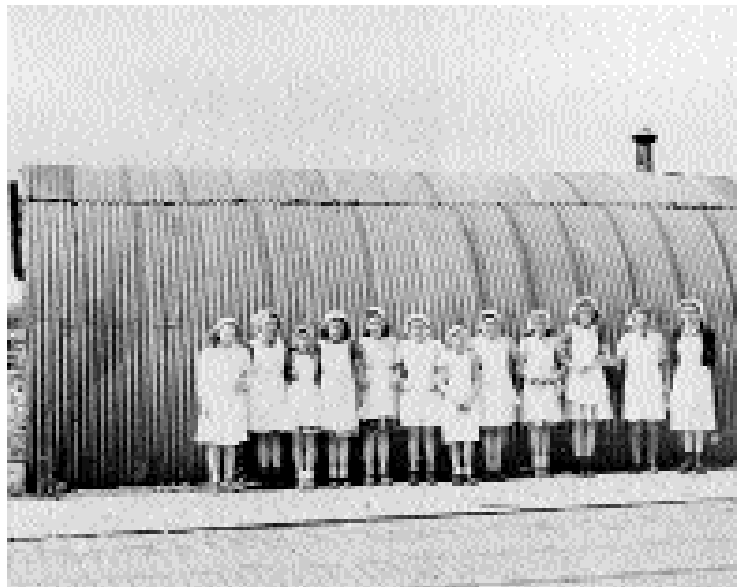


Fig. 2

A temporary school during the reconstruction time, 1946.

From: Het gouden prentenboek van O. en W. 25 september 1918-25 september 1968.

Flitsen uit 50 jaar onderwijshistorie, The Hague, 1968.

skills and professional ethics for its members. In particular the Federation was to fight for new social security provisions, like medical assurance and pension funds for artists.

Van der Leeuw showed himself pleased with the Federation – he agreed with its aims and its plans for regulation of the arts sector, although, as he stated in his speech at the founding session, ‘artists should always stay *bohémien*’. At that time (January 1946), the Federation promised to become successful: five of the eight planned professional organizations had already been established. However, very soon it became clear that these organizations considered themselves primarily as pressure groups to negotiate better wages and social security arrangements.

Not surprisingly, the other regulating goals of the Federation created a lot of scepticism among artists: the patronizing and lecturing tone of its founding manifesto, the strong emphasis on unity and imposed standards was in sharp contrast with the ideas on individualism, expressionism and *l’art pour l’art* spirit of many artists. The traditional freedom of artists seemed restricted by the intended compulsory membership. As a result of these resentments, the artists’ support for professional organizations was not overwhelming. The plans for the Federation were delayed even more by the issue of the post-war purges – what to do with artists who collaborated with the Germans during the war and had been members of the so-called *Kulturkammer*?

And, in spite of Van der Leeuw’s support, the civil servants of the Department of EAS did not consider the Federation of Artists as a serious negotiating partner and neglected the Federation in their policy making. For example, one of the Federation’s plans for democratisation of the arts was the establishment of a Council of Arts, largely consisting of artists from all disciplines. This Council was to be responsible for the distribution of public art subsidies. Instead, the Director-General of the Arts division of the Department, H.J. Reinink, proposed the establishment of a Dutch Arts Foundation (*Nederlandse Kunststichting*), modelled after the British Arts Council. This Arts Foundation would be mainly composed of ‘art-loving citizens’ (and *not* artists, which disappointed the Federation) and receive regulatory powers. It would stimulate the arts in art centres and play a central, coordinating role in the national cultural life. In the end Van der Leeuw failed to convince his colleagues in the cabinet: partly because they thought that implementing the measures would be too expensive (they included the construction and operation of art centres all over the country), and partly for reasons of principle: art was a concern of (semi)private organizations, not of the state. In this rejection we see a fundamental difference in opinion between Van der Leeuw and most of his colleagues: they considered state involvement with culture as a threat to freedom and democracy, while Van der Leeuw regarded the state itself as an element of culture, so in his opinion there was no reason to fear that the state would dominate culture.

Next to the very limited success of the Federation of Artists, the policy of Van der Leeuw himself to create better conditions for separate disciplines of art was more successful. The situation of musicians improved considerably compared to their earlier precarious position. The eight large professional orchestras were subsidized on a national and local level, and the musicians of these orchestras were paid according to uniform salary scales, with regular periodical increases. Smaller, regional orchestras received incidental subsidies.

In the theatrical arts a similar development took place: professional theatre groups received public funding, while amateur groups had to provide for themselves, even though Van der Leeuw acknowledged the value of amateur productions for the 'moral and aesthetic uplifting of the common man'.

Painters and sculptors were less well off – except sculptors who filled the large need for war memorials. Plastic artists in financial need had to apply for social benefits which were meant for other professions, due to a lack of a national social security program for artists. It would take till 1949 before a Program of Social Assistance of Plastic Artists was adopted, which enabled artists to acquire a more or less guaranteed regular income based on their art production.

Van der Leeuw had divided the sub-department of Arts into five sections: a section for Old Art and Conservation of Nature, a Radio section, a Music, Theatre and Letters section, a section for Plastic Arts and Architecture (Hammacher, later director of the Kröller-Müller Museum, headed it), and a Film section. This last section was meant to reconstruct and expand the pre-war Dutch national film industry, which had suffered tremendously during the war. Besides, Van der Leeuw was convinced of the educational value of film: for example, he believed that films should be used to show the disastrous effects of the war; film making should be subservient to society and the reconstruction of the country. For him, the time of art for art's sake was over. Most of all, he believed that if the audience had a choice between well made educational films with artistic qualities and sentimental and romantic movies from Hollywood and other movie industries, it would choose for the first category. This naive idealism was very characteristic of Van der Leeuw – he had no adequate understanding of the need of the Dutch people for those sentimental Hollywood pictures after the hardships of five years of German occupation.

THE RADIO CONFLICT

Nowhere did the debate over whether there should be greater or lesser state involvement in Dutch cultural life rage so fiercely as in the radio conflict. During the war the German occupiers had dissolved the traditional broadcasting organizations which were non-commercial, pillarized associations based on membership, with strong ties to the political parties, each with their own programs and radio-guides. Political innovators did not want these traditional organizations to return (but they did anyway), and a national broadcasting organization, *Radio Herrijzend Nederland* [Radio Rising Netherlands] was installed as soon as the southern provinces of the Netherlands were liberated in the fall of 1944. This was the start of a two-year struggle between traditional and progressive forces in the Dutch broadcasting and political world. The progressives were in favour of one national broadcasting organization, the traditionalists wanted to restore the pre-war pillarized situation, in which each broadcasting organization received broadcasting time according to the number of its members. Both had considerable groups of supporters.

In July 1945, almost two months after the liberation, no decision on the radio situation had been made yet. Radio Rising Netherlands was temporarily replaced by another national organization with the name *Radio Nederland in Overgangstijd* [Transitional Radio Netherlands], which started broadcasting in January 1946. A peculiarity of this situation

was a separation between the actual broadcasting, which was done by Transitional Radio Netherlands itself, and the preparation and production of the programs, which was done by the traditional broadcasting organizations. Not surprisingly, very soon the latter succeeded in taking over control and restored the pre-war situation.

Van der Leeuw was unhappy about this turn of events, even though he himself was to blame for letting it happen. In April 1946 he wrote: “As a Minister I say: this solution was inevitable, because we didn’t want to operate dictatorially”. But also: “Only a broadcasting organization which is really national, meaning representing the unity of our nation by combining all spiritual currents into one stream, can be really satisfying. From this perspective, the current compromise is a caricature ...”³. Caricature or not, the situation was more realistic than Van der Leeuw’s ideal of one national broadcasting organization – in May 1946 the results of the first post-war parliamentary elections provided room for a radio policy in which the pillarized broadcasting societies played the main roles. The experiment of a national radio broadcasting organization had failed, the pre-war situation was restored, and the ‘radio-issue’ was settled in January 1947 with the establishment of the *Nederlandse Radio Unie* [Dutch Radio Union] in which the material resources of the broadcasting organizations were pooled for efficiency reasons.

VAN DER LEEUW’S LEGACY

The failure to develop a real national broadcasting organization is characteristic of the more general failure of Van der Leeuw’s active cultural policy. For the post-war reformers a national radio system was essential in order to put their ideas in effect – national radio was to become a major instrument to inform and educate the audience in a ‘responsible’ way; national radio would have been a major step in the presentation of the Dutch nation as a unity. In 1945, unity instead of pillarized division was considered the main condition for a



Fig.3

Van der Leeuw speaking in 1949 to the Artists Conference. The motto of the conference was: 'Role and responsibility of the artist in Dutch society'. From: Joost Smiers, *Cultuur in Nederland 1945-1955. Meningen en beleid*, Nijmegen 1977.



Fig. 4

Gerardus van der Leeuw's successor, Jos Gielen.
From: *Het gouden prentenboek van O. en W. 25 september 1918-25 september 1968. Flitsen uit 50 jaar onderwijshistorie*, The Hague, 1968.

'new' Dutch society, and only as through national unity would the nation be able to turn the tide of declining civilization and create spiritual renewal. A year later, these idealistic aims were adapted to the reality and power of deeply rooted traditions and forces in Dutch society in combination with the huge task of post-war economic reconstruction. In this process a social welfare state was created, based on the consensus that the state has a responsibility for the material well-being of its subjects in case of disability and illness, unemployment, and retirement. However, the spiritual and cultural well-being of the Dutch was to stay in the hands of the traditional (semi-)private organizations, which were related to the pillarized structure of Dutch society.

Van der Leeuw's policy was an expression of the short lived post-war reform movement that tried to break this structure, but most of his attempts to give the state a firmer grip on cultural affairs failed. In part, this failure was caused by his eagerness to realize his plans which made him blind to the power of the traditional forces and made him neglect parliament; in part it was due to the fact that he did not get the chance to continue his policy in a second cabinet. After the parliamentary elections in May 1946 he was replaced by the Roman Catholic Jos Gielen, who had explicit positive opinions on the value of private organizations for the cultural education of the Dutch and who had been a critical observer of Van der Leeuw's active cultural policy. In spite of fierce protests Gielen reorganized the Department immediately, dismissed quite a few of Van der Leeuw's supporters and used the extra money for a salary raise for teachers. He also ended the cooperation with the Federation of Artists after accusing it of being a communist front. He returned the responsibility for the cultural education of young people to traditional, mostly denominational, organizations and checked educational reforms. His emphasis within the Department was on elementary and secondary education, with very little attention to the arts and sciences.

Within months it was clear that Gielen was much more in line with the prevailing opinions on education and arts. Besides, the memory of Van der Leeuw's radicalism and naive idealism increased support for Gielen's moderate and realistic policy. In a way, Van der Leeuw had prepared the road for the general consensus around Gielen's policy.



HET KIND EN HET BADWATER

Fig. 5

In 1946 the new Secretary of Education, Arts and Sciences throws out Van der Leeuw's cultural policy.

From: D. Bogaerts, *Parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland na 1945. II: De periode van het kabinet-Beel 3 juli 1946-7 augustus 1948*, The Hague, 1989, band C.

Much later, from the early 1960s on, when the economic reconstruction of the Netherlands was more or less completed, some of Van der Leeuw's plans (national cultural education, youth care and access to art for everyone as responsibilities of the state), were put into effect. A concept of a national cultural policy was developed – increasingly culture was approached as a public cause instead as the responsibility of pillarized, (semi) private institutions. During the 1960s and 1970s the social welfare state expanded rapidly due to the rise of the national income. Expansion of the cultural welfare state was self-evident, resulting in an increase of state funded cultural institutions and activities, and a subsequent rise of the number of cultural civic workers, organizations, meetings, advisory councils and so forth. This consensus on the legitimacy of the state's caring for cultural affairs included the acceptance of the plurality and diversity of Dutch society, and an agreement that the state would respect this diversity and be objective about it.

NOTES

- ¹ From the 1870s Dutch politics and society have been characterized by a system of 'pillarization': pluriformity based on ideological and religious grounds (Liberalism, Socialism, Roman-Catholicism, Protestantism) and represented in political parties, labour unions, cultural institutions, etc. Together, the elites of these 'pillars' usually reached a general consensus on main political issues, while their rank and file was obedient and passive. In this way political stability was maintained. With the process of secularization starting in the late 1950s this pillarized system gradually disappeared.
- ² Parliament was only partly re-installed as a Temporary States-General, which became the Provisional States-General in November 1945. As a consequence the cabinet could operate rather independently, which created even more resentment and resistance with its opponents. Parliamentary elections were postponed till May 1946.
- ³ "Als Minister zeg ik: de oplossing welke thans gevonden is, was onvermijdelijk wanneer wij niet dictatoriaal wilden optreden ... [...] Slechts een radio-omroep die waarlijk nationaal is, in die zin dat hij de eenheid van ons volk doet uitkomen door de vereniging van alle geestelijke stromingen in één verband, kan ons waarlijk bevredigen. In dit licht gezien, is het huidige compromis een caricatuur [...]". As cited in: J. Smiers, *Cultuur in Nederland 1945-1955*, Nijmegen 1977, p. 127.



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Cultuurpolitiek

Is cultuur gemeenschapszaak, dan is zij ook staatszaak. Want met den staat is het juist als met den godsdienst: enerzijds is de staat een van de oudste en belangrijkste "voortbrengselen der beschaving", anderzijds oefent hij van zijn kant invloed uit op de cultuur.

Want de staat is een ordening van de samenleving; in den staat wordt de horde tot maatschappij, de kudde tot een geordend en geleed geheel. In de cultuur neemt dan ook, naast godsdienst, wetenschap, kunst, de politiek een allerbelangrijkste plaats in. Het gewone spraakgebruik is hier geheel mis, wanneer het de cultuur beperkt tot kunst en wetenschap. En ook deze misvatting is van actuele betekenis. Want het isolement van kunst en wetenschap is door niets gerechtvaardigd. Kunst en wetenschap zijn zeer hoge cultuurgoederen, maar ze zijn in wezen niets anders dan landbouw, handel en nijverheid. Symphonie en vliegtuig, schilderij en margarine, betekenen even zo vele pogingen van den mens om de hem gegeven wereld om te zetten in zijn eigen wereld, voorzien van zijn eigen stempel, in het grote proces van oorbaarmaking der natuur. [...] En het kunstmatig isolement van kunst en wetenschap heeft dit fatale en helaas actuele gevolg, dat men deze beide met een diepe neiging van eerbied apart zet om ze daar te laten staan en met een kleine subsidie af te doen.

Zo gezien, spreekt het vanzelf, dat de cultuur staatszaak is. Want geen ordening van het mensenleven is mogelijk, die de cultuur buiten spel laat. [...] De staat is de ordening van het leven van cultuurmensen, d.w.z. van wezens, die in handel en landbouw, muziek en dans, wetenschap en religie, hun leven trachten te vermenselijken en steeds verder van het dierlijke te verwijderen. Het spreekt dan ook voor ons vanzelf, dat de staat zich bemoeit met den handel en de industrie. Maar het spreekt evenzeer vanzelf, dat hij zich inlaat met de wetenschap en de kunst. Laat ons dit goed begrijpen: de staat is zelf een stuk cultuur, en daarom kan hij nooit ofte nimmer cultuur scheppen. Het is belangrijk dit vast te leggen. Er kan niet alleen geen staatsymphonie zijn, maar ook geen staatslandbouw of staatshandel. De culturele krachten moeten uit een diepere laag van het leven komen, onnaspeurbaar en onberekenbaar, onafdwingbaar. De impuls tot het cultuurwerk, of dit nu een uitvinding, een kunstwerk of een filosofie is, komt uit die sfeer, die de primitieve mens de sacrale noemde. Daarom kan de staat, zelf een cultuurgoed, de cultuur niet beheersen, evenmin als de godsdienst dit kan. En wanneer hij dit toch probeert, dan is het in wezen hetzelfde of hij het op het ene dan wel op het andere gebied doet; staatskunst of staatsfilosofie is niet gekker en niet wijzer dan staatshandel of staatslandbouw. Alle staats-socialisme is cultureel gezien uit den boze, omdat het onder het voorgeven bronnen te doen ontspringen, bronnen verstopt. Het Derde Rijk heeft dit overvloedig getoond.

Maar kan de staat geen bronnen doen ontspringen, hij kan wel bronnen openen. Is het staatssocialisme cultureel gezien de vijand, het socialisme is de vriend van de cultuur. De cultuur is immers zaak van de geordende gemeenschap. Deze kan haar niet scheppen, maar zij moet haar begrijpen in haar ordening, en nu, omgekeerd, niet alleen handel en nijverheid, maar even goed kunst en wetenschap.

G. van der Leeuw, *National Responsibility in Culture*, The Hague, 1947, pp. 9-12.

Cultural Policy

If culture is a cause for society, then it is also a cause for the state. Because the state is like religion: on the one side the state is one of the oldest and most important "products of civilization", on the other side it influences culture. Because the state is a regulation of society: in the state, mass becomes society. this is the reason why in culture politics is most important, next to religion, science and art. Culture should not be restricted to art and science. That is a current misunderstanding. Because the isolation of art and science is not justified by anything. Art and science are very sophisticated products of culture, but basically the same as agriculture, trade and industry. Symphonies and airplanes, paintings and margarine, they all can be considered as aspects of the same efforts of human beings to transform the given world into their own world. [...] Alas, the artificial isolation of art and science has the fatal effect at present that both are being very respectfully set aside with a small subsidy.

From this perspective, it goes without saying that culture is a cause of the state. Because there is no regulation of human life possible, without culture. [...] The state is the regulation of the life of cultural people, in other words of beings who try to humanize their life in trade and agriculture, music and dance, science and religion in order to remove themselves even more from the animal world. For us it goes without saying that the state involves itself with trade and industry. But at the same time it goes without saying that it involves itself with science and art.

Let us understand this very clearly: the state itself is also a product of culture, and therefore it can never create culture. This is important to record. A state symphony does not exist, but neither does state agriculture or state trade. Cultural forces originate from a deeper level of life, inscrutable and unpre-

dictable, un-coercible. The impulse to create culture, be it an invention, a work of art or a philosophy, comes from this sphere which was called sacral by primitive man.

That is the reason why the state, being a product of culture itself, cannot dominate culture, just as religion cannot do that either. And when it tries, it is basically the same for all domains: state art or state philosophy is not crazier or wiser than state trade or state agriculture. From a cultural perspective all state socialism is wrong, because it pretends to create sources, while actually it blocks sources. The Third Reich has shown this extensively.

However, the state is able to open sources. From a cultural perspective state socialism is the enemy, but socialism itself is the friend of culture. In fact, culture is part of a planned society, which cannot create culture itself, but should understand that art and science are as valuable as trade and industry.

