



Book Reviews

Bender, Thomas. *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993. 179p. alk. paper \$31.95 (ISBN 0-8018-4433-9).

"This is the history of human institutions: first the forests, after that the huts, then the village, next the cities, and finally, the academies." So Vico wrote; Thomas Bender here gathers eight essays (four previously unpublished) that extend the story to the modern research university, providing a valuable background to the current debate on the usefulness (or harmfulness) of academic inquiry to public life.

Though written over more than a decade for a wide variety of audiences, the essays constitute a coherent project with two aims: First, to revise what Bender calls the "triumphalist" history of the rise of the research university and its associated professional disciplines. Second, by examining the careers of a number of twentieth-century scholars who challenged both the hegemony of the disciplines and their isolation from the broader culture, to suggest that, indeed, the figure of the public intellectual is due for a revival.

The book's first part, "Nineteenth Century of Origins of Academic Culture," treats a broad range of figures from a number of perspectives. From the eighteenth century until around 1840, American intellectual life was dominated by urban elites whose primary orientation and loyalty were to place and class. In museums, lyceums, societies of useful knowledge, and a whole range of institutions not academic in the modern sense, this life was dominated by the principles of mutual instruction, pleasure, and civic improvement. Though elite, it

was inclusive: members of the learned professions, men of affairs public and private, and even tradesmen participated. Franklin and the many institutions with which he was associated may be taken as paradigms, and the pattern was repeated in smaller centers away from the Atlantic seaboard.

By 1840, under a host of pressures, among them the enormous growth and increasing diversity of the urban population and the spread of Jacksonian notions of democracy, this system began to break down. Its amateurish standards did not provide adequate validation to the work of those who saw themselves as intellectuals, nor was it successful in finding a broader audience. Attempts to re-center public culture were diverse: figures like Henry Ward Beecher, Walt Whitman, and for that matter, P. T. Barnum, sought to create a community of discourse where force of personality, not of argument, created authority. H. P. Tappan proposed the creation of a new kind of urban university that would provide intellectual certification and leadership to a wide variety of more popular institutions. None of these attempts resulted in a stable forum for the conduct of social inquiry.

It was only with the formation of professional societies such as the American Historical Association and the American Economic Association, "communities without location," as Bender styles them, within the new graduate schools of the 1880s that the situation stabilized. The new academics' loyalties were to the disciplinary communities that validated their work, not to the places where they performed it. Discourse was ordered, professional status secured, at the costs of intellectual overspecialization and of alienation from the life of the communi-

ties in which the new academics worked. Bender cites the founding president of Johns Hopkins, Daniel Coit Gilman, describing the university as a place to withdraw from urban life into "the repose necessary for scholarship."

The Kuhnian overtones of this largely convincing account, with its stresses on discontinuities, paradigm shifting, and validation are evident. Two points deserve emphasis: Bender's model is not evolutionary; Hopkins did not descend from Harvard. The earlier university was enmeshed in a completely different system of cultural production. And Bender stresses that there was nothing inevitable about the eventual outcome. Research universities seem natural to those of us who teach and work in them, but other alternatives were equally possible, and, to Bender, in many respects preferable.

Part II, "Twentieth Century Patterns," details some of the difficulties of the professionalization of intellect. The focus is on New York, and on social scientists: E.R.A. Seligman, a member of the first generation of professional social scientists and eventually editor of the monumental *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*; educationist and philosopher John Dewey; and Charles Beard, constitutional historian, municipal activist, and academic rebel. Because of his exemplary status as public intellectual, critic Lionel Trilling comes in for extensive and melancholy treatment. Less well-integrated into the themes of the book is a thinnish sketch of the Greenwich Village intellectuals associated with, among others, the magazine *Seven Arts*. Readers will be better served consulting Bender's recent *New York Intellect* for a picture of them.

If Seligman was the consummate academic professional (not high praise in Bender's terms), Beard and Dewey ultimately rebelled against the sterile standards of neutral expertise, quantifiable research topics, and the pretense of political independence that, for Seligman, embodied the virtues of the new social sciences. Bender makes a good case that these were simply the tools by

which social scientists were able to establish their claim to be consulted by those in power.

In the third, concluding, section, Bender acknowledges the nostalgic republicanism of his account of the growth of the academy. In fact, at the founding moment of American graduate education, the social sciences were conceived of as the means to rationalize civic life. It was only with the spread of higher education that, instead of training public leaders like Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, academics began simply to clone themselves. But even at that early moment, the ideal of civic life was based, ultimately, on Florentine civic humanism, that is, on an historical model that could not, and cannot, simply be re-created.

For Bender, the work of John Dewey represents a possible resolution of the split (an issue raised by Hannah Arendt) between academic and political truth. The former is transcendental and unchanging, while the latter is necessarily of lesser order, contingent and mutable. Dewey essentially abandoned the Kantian epistemological project and, in the historical process, sought publicly to make ever better, more secure, and more broadly shared truths. It is to this fundamentally democratic process that Bender urges academics to contribute.

Although Bender, along with Richard Rorty and others, severely censures the academy for its hermetic self-absorption, there are signs that the situation may already be changing. Not only freakish figures like Camille Paglia (now writing a sex advice column for the glossy satirical magazine *Spy*) are involved. Writers like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., appear in *The New Yorker*, where Bender's New York University (NYU) colleague Louis Menand is on leave as a consulting editor; and the recent anthology *Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages from the American Universities* (Penguin, 1993) shows that more academics are responding to the wake-up call sounded here.

This is a rich and engaging book. Perhaps its most serious weakness is that

Bender nowhere systematically analyzes what he means by the *public* and the *public sphere*. Recent controversies over multiculturalism together with contemporary advances in the technologies of communication and persuasion make this a vexed matter indeed. Fortunately, the present work serves as a sort of paragon to Bender's more extensive examination of this question, shortly to be published under the title *History and Public Culture*.—David S. Sullivan, *Stanford University, Stanford, California*.

Sieber, Joan E., ed. *Sharing Social Science Data: Advantages and Challenges*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1991. 168p. \$46 (ISBN 0-8039-4082-3).

This concise and straightforward collection of essays, written by leading authorities who create, document, disseminate, and use social science data, builds on the earlier, seminal report of the Committee on National Statistics of the National Research Council, *Sharing Research Data* (National Academy Press, 1985). Subsequent conferences focusing on social science data sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1988 and 1989 inspired much of the work in this volume.

Major archives that organize and disseminate social science research data have existed since the 1940s, gaining in strength during the 1960s when the Interuniversity Consortium of Political and Social Research (ICPSR) was founded at the University of Michigan. However, promotion of data sharing has intensified since the mid-1980s, by which time most funding agencies, including the NSF, systematically required investigators to deposit their primary data at a public archive within one year of project completion. The NSF requirement now even extends to data gathered by graduate students on NSF-funded fellowships. New policies intended to advance open scientific research coincided with more widespread access to computers, facilitating data collection, analysis, and distribution. The convergence of these trends has brought social science

data increasingly into the mainstream of scholarly research. Readers familiar with the Research Libraries Group's 1989 assessment of information needs in the social sciences will find that *Sharing Social Science Data* reinforces and illuminates many of its findings.

Editor Joan E. Sieber, who is professor of psychology at the University of California, Hayward, has assembled a coherent and compelling case for data sharing, concentrating on the need for archived data for current research interests. The first part of *Sharing Social Science Data* uses three carefully selected case studies to illustrate how different disciplinary trends and methodological perspectives influence scholarly research, drawing on investigations in demography, anthropology, and criminal justice. These examples document the complex issues in contemporary social science research and are worthy of close consideration.

V. Jeffery Evans describes a number of innovative hybrid projects that blend demographic constructs with various behavioral and social science methods of data collection, resulting in multilevel research designs that answer multidisciplinary questions. The strengths and weaknesses of data sharing in anthropology are ably presented by Douglas R. White. White writes:

Data sharing occurs in anthropology when there are shared theoretical, methodological, and data collection paradigms such as in archaeology and physical anthropology, and in areas of sociocultural or development anthropology. . .

He demonstrates how comparative data sets from diverse disciplines like environmental science, historical demography, and development studies permit anthropologists to test hypotheses about human populations in new ways. From his perspective further progress hinges on standardizing documentation, fully implementing a computer workstation concept that "combines advanced methodologies with ease and reliability in data management," and maintaining mechanisms for cost-effective, international dissemination of information.