EDUCATION AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

Intellectual Mobilization

by

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Reinhard Bendix. Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. xii, 692 pp. $20.00.

Eugen Weber. Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976. xv, 615 pp. $20.00.

Elizabeth L. Eisenstein. The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979. xxi, 794 pp. $?.

Hidden away in Frankfurt am Main is an architectural symbol of the human experience that makes social thought significant for education. The whole city of Frankfurt, to be sure, like all others, displays the relation. Bombed near to obliteration in World War II, Frankfurt is close to a wholly new city, lacking charm and distinction, displaying its past only through scattered surviving monuments--the Goethehaus, the Dom, the Palmengarten, across the river quaint Saschenhausen, now encompassed and incorporated by sprawling factories and apartment complexes.

These oft-seen survivals are not the symbol we seek, though, for they exist rather self-consciously set apart as reminders that past and present are not the same. The symbol we seek is one that tourists will rarely find: it is not far from the Main, down river a bit from the city center, hidden among blocks of post-war apartments, non-descript buildings erected hurriedly, six-stories high, repeating one another with their drab, stucco-covered forms in an anonymous section, neither slum nor chic. By day a passerby will see a cellar door abutting one of the buildings, folding covers, slanted to shed the rain, over a stairwell that descends into the building. A few graffiti distinguish this door from other cellar doors along the block.

By night, the doors open and are marked by a bare light, parking becomes scarce in the vicinity, young people mill about. Going in, down huge, rough-hewn stone stairs into an atmosphere of acrid smoke and pulsating sound, one enters Das Kellar, the cellar, at first seeming to be nothing but a dense pack of people standing six deep around a long bar, sitting body squeezed to body wherever there is space, all conversation silenced by the possessing noise of rock. Only the eyes are left to muse, and after they tire of faces and forms in the crowd, they turn to the space itself and realize that indeed Das Kellar is a cellar, a very ancient cellar, one that predates by many centuries

the drab, mechanical superstructures built upon it, a cellar constructed according to principles very different from those by which the buildings above were made. Here, below street-level, historic Frankfurt has survived, massive stone columns, many meters thick, an irregular warren of rooms, the over-built foundations of medieval wharehouses, spreading one can no longer tell how far, indestructable, still serving to hold up a modern structure of mass housing while harboring a modern manifestation of mass culture.

Life goes on, driving, throbbing, relentless, like the incessant beat of the rock. It goes on as a kaleidoscopic mix of stability and change like the medieval alcove in Das Kellar where late, late the disco records play and the random bursts of strob light illuminate writhing dancers in apparent fixity. There in the intersticies between sounds, the music silenced and talk resumed, one will on occasion hear a young local ranting in an incomprehensible Frankfurter dialect, passed on from father to son since medieval times, and at the same time, from other corners, one will hear English, Arabic, Hindi, Thai, who knows what, as international students mingle and mix, quarrel or seduce, or, most often, merely pass one another by like infants playing, together but not.

There, in one fleeting instant in a very particular place, one sees the nexus of complexities that all must, well or badly, construe operationally in attempting to live with intent. One sees there in Das Kellar an extensive repertory of determinisms at work: the rich historical textures of traditions in the walls that live on differently in the lives of each; the psychological charge of demanding libido that pervades the atmosphere; the sociological scene of both the bizarre, hidden interiors and the drab, repetitive exteriors, symbolized in the structures around, embodied in the people there; the technological sophistication of the electronics that make the silent, black space errupt in wonders of sight and sound; the economic web that brings local Apfelwine to the bar, world-girdling jeans to every buttock, and the latest hit of commerical rock to the microphone; the political conflicts, from the local to the world-wide, internalized from diverse propagandas, that surface, sometimes stormily, when faces in in the superficially plasmic crowd start to communicate. At most, a very few are aware of all that implicitly determines their presence there.

All these people, crowded into the hidden medieval space, seeking release, symbolize the ever-so-complex relation of education and social thought. Most there, knowlingly or not, are engaged full-time in the work of education, their own education. And the main task in the education of each is to establish, while inextricably caught up in it, a working relation to the social world, to the

lives and works of other people. This human environment exerts manifold, implacable pressures on each--diverse, complicated, powerful pressures that each cannot evade. No one is exempt from these pressures. To the passive person, they will be conditioning forces, sufficient, external determinants of behavior. But to the conscious, aware person they are potential occasions for action, intentional action in the face of conditions. Thus sound understanding (which need not necessarily be sophisticated understanding) creates a tenuous potentiality for human autonomy. For all of us, both those in Das Kellar and those anywhere else, the conditioning power of the environment can be resisted only insofar as we learn to understand how it works, to perceive and anticipate the forces working on us, and hence to act upon them with pre-emptive initiative. To increase our tenuous autonomy, social thought at its best is essential to education.

Can we educate? Can we empower ourselves and others to construe intelligently day by day the the social flux. Construe it, each must, well or badly, and social thought comes into being as people seek to share with one another their diverse, more systemmatic efforts to do that. We seek to share our efforts at social thought in part to test them, to see whether others find our efforts sound; and we seek to share our efforts further in the hope that doing so will prove helpful to others, helpful in their efforts to make sense of their human circumstances. Here then, is the rationale of these reviews on "Education and Social Thought." Through them, I will seek to assess efforts being made to understand the forces shaping the human environment, the forces people need to understand through the course of their life-long educations in order to act intentionally in the human world, to create their autonomy in the face of conditioning pressures.

To construe the human environment in a way conducive to intentional action in it, people need, among many things, to comprehend the character of public power. By public power most generally we mean power that arises from the organized, concerted actions of persons, and it takes many forms, economic, political, social. In endless ways manifestations of public power are continually impinging on us all, and in most of our actions, we pursue our intents by seeking to utilize public power to whatever degree we can. It is important for acting to understand each manifestation of public power in its particularity; but to study particulars alone is inefficient and hence people devote considerable effort through social thought to elucidating the generic characteristics of power, to comprehending how public power in all its forms comes to be present in human experience, to understanding the legitimating rationales that tend to stabilize forms of public power, and to analyzing the

processes of change that continually alter the forms of public power.

Let us look briefly at these three matters in turn, looking first for the source in human experience of public power itself. How is it that power acquires a somewhat impersonal existence so that, for instance, through the rotation of office, different persons with very different capacities, can interchangably exercise certain powers? At some long-lost stage of history, power may have been a function solely of the personal capacities of each, equivalent to what each could do by and for himself. Such a state of complete dissociation is hypothetical, but useful to point up that as a division of labor became increasingly significant as an element in the conditions of life, power became increasingly dissociated from personal capacities. As distinct from personal ability, public power is a function of the way activity, through the division of labor, is organized. By organizing their activity, people amplify their purely personal capacities, creating public powers that are greater, considerably greater, than the sum of their personal abilities. These public powers do not exist, however, as amorphous, diffuse powers, equally at the employ of each; rather for any particular group, they are integral to the particular organization of activity the members have attained. Public power therefore becomes available to amplify the personal capacities of those particular persons who are able to mobilize various organized capacities of the people in the collectivity.

Those who possess power do so to begin with purely as a matter of might, as a result of their ability to mobilize for some purpose the organized capacities of others. Insofar as the distribution of power is solely a matter of might, however, the distribution will be unstable, for all those able to mobilize some organized effort will compete unchecked to increase their share of power and through this competition, a considerable portion of the public power will be expended in competition for its control. This competition for the control of public power can thus induce disorganization in the organization of activity; the division of labor then becomes divisive labor. When power thus dissipates, it is in the interest neither of those who weild power nor, much of the time, of those who partake in power. This latter group includes all those, no matter how lowly, whose organized activity is mobilized by others. Since there is this dual interest to avoid the dissipation of power wherever a distribution of power exists, a strong impetus to legitimate that distribution normally arises. To the degree that a distribution of power is legitimated, those who possess it can rest secure with it and the power working for the whole group is subject to minimal dissipation through internal conflict.

Distributions of power, no matter how well legitimated, are nevertheless still subject to change, and through these processes of change, the underlying conditions for historic disjunctions emerge. Through incremental innovations, new patterns of organizing activity develop, and even more, new means for mobilizing organized activity are on occasion introduced, at first through obscure innovations. Over time, however, such small changes can wax to create defacto shifts in the real distribution of power. New, more productive divisions of labor develop and control of these rests with new elites; established legitimations are clung to by old elites, but those they are accustomed to mobilize begin to doubt, first the efficacy of the power structure sanctioned by these old legitimations, and then the suasive force of the legitimations themselves; more and more people find themselves partaking in the new system of power and more and more of them shift allegiance to the new elites; thus before long whether violently or incrementally, a whole new pattern of power and its legitimation displaces the old.

Power, then, as it appears in historic expereince, always comes into being as an aspect of a particular division of labor, of a definite organization of activity. For any people, living in a definite time and place, the first question to ask is who has the ability to mobilize organized activity and what qualities give rise to that ability. This is the question that helps one understand the defacto distribution of power, and since, given any distribution, there will be an effort to legitimate it, the second question to ask is how are the qualities that give rise to an ability to mobilize organized activity imbued with an aura of authority, sanction, propriety. Finally, when a significant change in the distribution of power seems to come about, when the ability to mobilize organized activity shifts, and the qualities that give rise to that ability change, what is causing the shift, and what alterations in the character of the concomitant legitimations result. These are the questions implicit in Reinhard Bendix's study, Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule.

Kings and People is a large, comparative study of historical sociology, with closest attention paid to England, France, Germany, Japan, and Russia. In time, Bendix ranges from the early middle ages up to the recent past, and his purpose in it all is to understand how the currently omnipresent mandate to rule in the name of the people has become so dominant. Bendix's schema is very simple: he works with two ideal types of authority, the authority of kings and authority in the name of the people and he suggests that the most significant feature in the course of modern history is the shift from the former to the latter. He recognizes that the authority of kings, in its various historic incarnations, encompassed great diversity, as has authority in the name of

the people. Despite the diversities, however, Bendix holds that the ideal types effectively imbue the web of historic particularities with conceptual coherence and help us to comprehend important features of the modernization presently effecting the entire world.

At the outset of our discussion, it is important to recognize that Kings and People is a muddled work. Bendix attempts too much and too little: he goes into great detail about those national experiences he chooses to cover while completely ignoring other experiences, particularly those of classical and medieval city-republics, which seem to stand as glaring exceptions to his characterization of pre-modern authority. He has not, one might object, gone deep enough. He has not fully realized his thesis, working out the problems that would allow it to stand in the face of unsympathetic skepticism. Yet, although unrealized, Kings and People is a book that merits thoughtful attention, for it presents certain ideas that are important and fruitful, worthy really of better treatment that Bendix gives them.

Preeminent among such worthy ideas is Bendix's concept of intellectual mobilization. This concept is the real subject of the book and the major explanation that Bendix offers for why the mandate to rule shifted from kings to the people. Intellectual mobilization emerged as a major form of mobilizing organized effort, that is, as a major form of power, in the early modern period, particularly in England.

> Facilitated by the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, old learned occupations turned secular, new professions based on learning developed, governments became bureaucratic, and secular education rose to social esteem and functional importance. Furthermore, the Reformation gave impetus to literacy among the middle and lower strata of the population, and later writing became an independent, secualr profession. In the course of these transformations, many people became consumers of secular culture, whereas formerly they had been confined to religious observances and popular amusements. This emergence of a culture-consuming public is the background for the intellectual leadership of an active minoirity, composed of lawyers, teachers, ministers, writers, and many others.... I propose to treat intellectual mobilization--the growth of a reading public and of an educated secular elite dependent on learned occupations--as an independent cause of social change. (pp. 264-6)

One can grant with Bendix that it is worthwhile looking at intellectual mobilization as an independent cause of social

change and nevertheless find the way he depicts that cause to have been operating rather mystifying. To Bendix, intellectual mobilization is what literate elites promote, wittingly or not, when they perceive their society to be under challenge by other societies that appear more advanced or powerful. The intellectual mobilizers argue that the challenging country is formidable but morally corrupt; those challenged need to change, to reaffirm the best in their heritage, to tap the potential of the people, to reorganize authority in the name of the people to meet the external challenge. By such a process of intellectual mobilization, a succession of countries, starting with England in the sixteenth century, have led themselves along the path of modernization.

External "reference societies" play such an important role in Bendix's concept of intellectual mobilization because he wants to separate his theory of historical change from that of Marx. Bendix admits that certain socio-economic preconditions have to be met for educated elites to be present at all. But, he contends, once such elites are present, their activities, formed with reference to their idea of an external challenging country, will begin to function as an independent cause of historical change, one that cannot be fully understood by reference to their material interests. Such intellectual causalities need to be taken into account, along with the material ones, in order to make sense of various mass movements, "such as the Reformation, nationalism, agitation for ethnic and religious autonomy and for freedom and equality, which do not have a simple basis in the division of labor or class interest." (p. 266, emphasis in the original)

In seeking to articulate his concept of intellectual mobilization in an explicitly non-Marxist manner, however, Bendix misses the opportunity to do justice to the phenomenon. The presence of reference societies in the thought of powerful elites is nothing new historically: Islam more than adequately played that role for medieval Europe in a way that sufficed to mobilize tremendous effort within Christendom but not to alter significantly the established mandate to rule. Let us agree with Bendix that intellectual mobilization is integral to the development of a popular mandate to rule, but to comprehend why intellectual mobilization is so important, it is not sufficient to attend to how intellectual elites respond to reference societies. From time immemorial intellectuals have been using reference societies to mobilize effort on behalf of diverse forms of rule. To comprehend why their doing so in the modern era has conduced to popular rule, one needs to look closely at changes in the division of labor, in the way people can mobilize organized activity, public power.

Throughout Kings and People the analysis is by and large balanced between two poles. The book is divided into two parts, "The Authority of Kings" and "Toward a Mandate of the People." Intellectual mobilization is closely associated for Bendix with the popular mandate to rule, and one would expect a similar concept, one defining some other form of mobilization pecularly characteristic of monarchic authority. There is in the work, however, no such balancing concept to go with intellectual mobilization. This absence is a major dificiency in the analytical structure, one that leads in the end to a mystification of intellectual mobilization itself. Let us try to right the balance, doing so by examining the historic character of the division of labor, precisely the topic that Bendix wants to avoid looking for it in order to dissociate his theory from that of Marx.

Intellectual mobilization became a significant cause of historic change, not because there were reference societies that somehow moved intellectuals to agitate for change, but simply because, owing to changes in the division of labor, intellect, rationality, had become a particularly significant means of mobilizing organized effort. What characteristic of the division of labor made intellectual mobilization effective? The answer is fairly simple, the division of labor had become abstract. Intellectual mobilization became significant as the organization of activity became rationalized....