

Another loose claim from the Preface is that his study of Lippe reveals the Holy Roman Empire as providing not only an effective but also a "mature system of government for early modern Germany that was attuned both to its own needs and to the wider needs of early modern Europe" (p. xi). The reader is left in the dark as to what "the wider needs of early modern Europe" are. It also is not clear what is meant by a "mature" system of government. Is he referring to its longevity? Or is he alluding to the point he makes in the chapter on "Rulers' Finances and Estates' Taxation" and reiterates in the Conclusion, that "the Holy Roman Empire worked at small territorial level, guaranteeing a larger number of liberties to a greater number of persons than possible any other system in early modern Europe" (p. 225)? Perhaps.

But my main criticism of the book is that the author lacks a sense of the proper relation between argument and evidence. Too often the text dissolves into a welter of unassimilable particulars. This is especially true of his chapters on the six ecclesiastical and the seven lay territories in north-west Germany, but it also occurs in the chapters on Lippe. The main themes get lost in a procession of detail the mind cannot absorb. In Preface and Conclusion, Benecke argues that because of the lack of a comprehensive central archives for the Holy Roman Empire in the early modern period what is needed for an understanding of the German empire then is "a piecemeal" examination "of each and every German state in turn" (p. 374). According to a survey Benecke cites, the Empire comprised a total of 2,303 territories and jurisdictions. Surely 2,302 more studies such as Benecke's are neither necessary nor desirable. Selection and synthesis are essential to the historians' craft. Had Benecke practiced them more, the contribution his book makes to an understanding of German federalism in the early modern period would have been both more forceful and more accessible.

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STEPHAN THERNSTROM. — *The other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973.

JOSEF BARTON. — *Peasants and Strangers: Italians, Rumanians and Slovaks in an American City, 1890-1950*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975.

These two books exemplify the best of the new urban and ethnic history. By focusing on Boston and Cleveland, and studying their immigrant peoples, Thernstrom and Barton have at long last given us a glimpse of life at the bottom of the economic pyramid in cities that have for too long been neglected by American social historians.

Thernstrom's work, which is based on random samples of the careers of 7,965 males who inhabited Boston between 1880 and 1970, presents us with a fascinating look at the life of a city over the last century. Complaining that too many historians in the past have studied the careers of only the privileged few, Thernstrom traces the lives of the "other Bostonians" — the middle and lower classes and their adaptation to the modern world. He finds that Boston, like other American cities, had a tremendous population turnover in the last hundred years, with generally half the people of the city leaving it in each decade, only to be replaced by hordes of newcomers at the same time. Since these population fluctuations preceded even the Civil War, Thernstrom casts doubt upon Robert Wiebe's celebrated theory, presented in his *Search for Order* (1967), that in the 1870's America

consisted of hundreds of island-like communities that had not yet coalesced into a nation. Only the upper class was stable enough to form such communities, Thernstrom finds, and they hardly typified the American experience.

While in his previous *Poverty and Progress* (1964), which focused on social mobility in Newburyport, Mass., Thernstrom found very little evidence of upward movement by the lower classes of the nineteenth-century, in his latest work he discovered enough to change his mind. Overall there was forty per cent upward movement from blue to white-collar occupations and twenty per cent downward movement from white to blue-collar jobs in the last century. This, he concludes, reveals the existence of an open society, one based on equality of opportunity, although blacks, by virtue of their race, were excluded from equal opportunities until recent decades.

Not only have blacks lagged behind in the last century but other ethnic groups have also climbed at different rates. Anglo-Americans and Jews of Boston have had the highest rates of social mobility while Italians and Irish have had the lowest. The latter point contradicts Andrew Greeley's findings in *Ethnicity: A Preliminary Analysis* (1974) and should lead to some spirited discussion in the future. So should Thernstrom's speculation that ethnicity, not class, and culture (specifically religion), play a major role in determining rates of social mobility. Andrew Greeley, in *Religion and Career* (1963) thought that he had laid to rest Max Weber's theory of the "Protestant Ethic." Thernstrom has resurrected it.

Curiously enough, after presenting such an optimistic assessment of mobility in American society, Thernstrom ends on a note of pessimism. He questions whether the "open society" can continue indefinitely, especially since the population is no longer growing and fertility rates among rich and poor seem to be equalizing. Growth and opportunity in the past fed off an expanding and largely foreign-born population. What will happen as the economy slows, as class lines become more rigid and people find themselves left out of the American dream? Competition may well be replaced by "a richer and more humane conception of the just society." Or, perhaps, by social conflict?

While Thernstrom charted the social mobility of Boston as a whole, Josef Barton focused on three ethnic groups in Cleveland to discover what specifically promoted their social mobility. He first looked at their Old World backgrounds and found a good deal of internal migration in their countries of origin before the movement to America began, thus refuting Oscar Handlin's theory of peasant immobility as presented in *The Uprooted* (1951). Barton also found that Rumanians in Transylvania had secularized their society to a much greater degree than either the Italians or the Slovaks and this affected their rates of social mobility in America.

In Cleveland Barton collected a sample of 250 families (765 persons) from church and lodge records and traced the lives of the first two generations over the period 1890-1950. He found that whereas the Rumanians, Italians and Slovaks started out in roughly the same social class, the Rumanians in the second generation, climbed from blue to white-collar jobs in more than fifty percent of all cases! Italians and Slovaks, on the other hand, had upward social mobility rates of only twenty to thirty percent.

In order to explain this wide discrepancy between Rumanian mobility on the one hand and that of Italians and Slovaks on the other, Barton looked at three variables — the father's mobility, the level of education of the three ethnic groups and the size of their families. He found that individually these variables did not either promote or retard social mobility but when combined they did. Only the

Rumanians had fathers who were consistently mobile, who stressed extended public education for their children and who limited the size of their families. Thus, Barton concluded, social mobility was a cumulative process. It depended very much upon the father being socially mobile, on the children having a good deal of education and on the family being small.

What Barton failed to explain, although he hinted at it as did Stephan Thernstrom, was why the Rumanians followed one pattern of behavior while Italians and Slovaks followed another. The latter typically had large families, they did not press formal education for their children and their fathers were seldom mobile. Why? Barton had earlier discovered that in the Old Country the Rumanians had been more secularized than either the Italians or the Slovaks. Could this be the key? Is there a relation between mobility and culture and religion as Max Weber would have us believe? The Slovaks, as I have discovered in my research, would seem to fit the pattern — their leaders were priests, their parents sent their children to parochial schools and for only a short time, they had large, extended, families, and they stressed not success in this life but preparing for the afterlife. Are such actions and attitudes not inimical to the American pattern of social mobility? Indeed, one could argue that the Slovaks had a different approach to social mobility — they stressed moving from unskilled to skilled blue-collar positions and they found security in property and family life in their own ethnic neighborhoods. They did not necessarily dream of “making it” into white-collar jobs and seemed to be satisfied where they were. Perhaps this is a viable alternative to what has been called the American “rat-race.”

Thernstrom's and Barton's books thus raise some very important questions. Hopefully future scholars will take the story through three or four generations, carefully analyzing the culture of the ethnic groups involved and paying particular attention to the “world view” that a people professes, and especially to the role of their religion in shaping this view. It may be that religion has played a greater role in modern society than scholars in the past would admit.

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