

## BOOK REVIEWS

Brecher, B, Fleischmann, O, & Halliday, J. (Eds). (1996). *The university in a liberal state*. Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 152 pp. (Hardcover).

Education as a commodity is a powerful image. It permeates privatization policies. It lies underneath the push for increased use of telecommunication technologies and vocationalism. It is the thing that is marketed under free market managerial ideologies and has been the image that has driven the shopkeeper mentality that has undergirded the practice and theory of educational administration since the turn of the century. This image fits in neatly in the powerful fiction of the university as a bastion of truth where faculty scholars work at uncovering knowledge untainted by political concerns and transmitting that knowledge to students while insulated from the concerns of the world. The power drives our expectations of what we might find when we become part of a university and we discover its fiction when we find our expectations unmatched by the daily life of academe.

This powerful fiction is the target of much of the writing in this volume and yet the irony is that some of that writing contributes to the maintenance of that fiction. Martin Davies's paper identifies the fatal strategy of university managerial practices that emphasize marketing in the face of the threat to the commodity monopoly that the university has traditionally enjoyed. In addition, his argument for an intellectual culture for the university, that is designed to create communities interacting across interdisciplinary boundaries, recognizes the importance of Richard Rorty's voice on late 20th century thinking. Yet it is not the disciplinary boundaries within the university that are the problem and the irony here would be that interdisciplinarity would most probably destroy any distinctiveness the university has left after education as a commodity permeates the internet.

Laurinda Stryker reminds us of the dangers in Cardinal Newman's separation of the intellectual from the moral by pointing to the holocaust. The commanders of the Nazi Einsatzgruppen had educational credentials among the top three percent of the German population thus demonstrating that a college degree can be carried into any line of work. A vocationalism that I have heard promoted by members of our English department. Stryker makes a case for the university intellectual [presumably the faculty] to adopt a role

of detached engagement, detached from the fashionable and engaged in the moral. Her call for educating students in this attitude seems a difficulty when one considers who it is that would actually be working in the fashionable.

Pat Fitzgerald's paper on feminism recognizes the poverty of the essentialist argument that women's knowledge is a thing unavailable to men and calls for the enlightened view that one is not born a woman, but becomes one; that is, one's individuality is not crafted by the receiving of things but by the experience of living under particular conditions. Yet Ann Bousfield trots out the essentialist argument in asserting that traditional liberal learning on the Oxford model is the palliative for the rampant vocationalism that she ascribes to either stupidity or conspiracy. Her vision is the university promoting a kind of genteel conversation that would ameliorate political conflict.

Henry Steck's paper on social policy and the university is an argument for a return to the social democratic principles the United States basked in just after World War II. Higher education considered as an entitlement has two problems. First, it flies in the face of the current political climate; witness, for example the worlds' largest community college structure in California. That structure was founded on principles of universal access and very low costs for students, and is now offering neither. Second, the notion of entitlement perpetuates the image that a university education is a thing that can be given to someone, or bought, or in some other way considered transportable. This objectification makes the arguments for marketing, consumer packaging, 'delivery systems' and so on that much stronger.

There is another image of university education that can be fashioned. The metaphor of education as development suggests a very different story of the university. It suggests a story of the university as a place where people live and work together and the constructing of particular environments with particular people is the *business* of the university. Michael Luntley's admonition that the vitality of liberal culture is predicated on a diversity of incommensurable values coming from different social forms and he suggests that the university should be a place where the protection of nascent ideas and the encouragement of different social forms takes place. O'Neill and Solomon make an interesting case for the reclaiming of the associationalist principles undergirding the apprenticeship movement in order to create an environment for the learning of the preferences and skills of the various disciplines. This suggestion gives honor to the postmodern notions that the disciplines are historically situated and socially constructed yet avoids the destroying of disciplinary boundaries that would end the university as a distinctive place.

Three of the last four papers in the book give examples of ominous university practices in Europe and Canada. The lessons that the students learn at the Central European University as reported by Irina Khmelko fit in well with the gloss of western capitalism and it seems that most of the graduates of that university will find a profit making niche. Claire Polster's paper presents an ominous metaphor of the parasite slowly killing its host when reporting on the efforts of research centers established on university campuses by partnership efforts between Ottawa and the business community. Fleischmann and Kolinská's description of changes in Czech university practices after Vaclav Klaus certainly suggest that faculty will not be able to act without the heavy hand of the state imposing some sort of restraint.

This collection of 12 papers is a useful compendium of distinctions between the classical liberalism of J.S. Mill and the neo-liberalism as practiced today in university policy making rooms. Yet the most potent part of the book was the poignant preface written by a student, Jan Mlcák. That piece should be a forceful reminder to all of us as faculty that our students are hopeful, though confused; at once despairing and energetic. They are human beings on the way to becoming like us. Their university experience will not give them a credit card for societal pleasures, but it may provide them with the means to make their way through a world full of confusion, contradiction, and paradox.

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Haricombe, L.J. & Lancaster, F.S. (1995). *Out in the cold: Academic boycotts and the isolation of South Africa*. Arlington, VA: Information Resources Press, 158 pp. (Hardcover).

The book is essentially a documentary work on the academic boycotts and isolation of South Africa during the period of approximately 30 years, starting at about the middle of the 1960s.

This study of the academic isolation of South Africa is conducted in a systematic way. In the first chapter the terms boycott and sanctions are clarified and the general effects of boycotts and sanctions on the target