

action, as it were, without falling into mires of endless theoretical preamble or anxiously dissolve its fundamental category.

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Wasser, Henry. *Higher Education in America and the United States: A Diverse Collection of Essays*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2007. xv+128 pp. ISBN 0-7618-3779-5. \$24.95.

Henry Wasser is somewhat of a senior statesman of higher education, based in New York at City University, where he was chair of the Faculty Senate before assuming his current emeritus position as Research Scholar of Comparative Higher Education. He is among those American social scientists who have paid considerable attention to Scandinavia. Wasser's *pays de préférence* is Norway, where he served as Fulbright professor 1962-64, but he has lectured in Sweden as well and has a broad understanding of Nordic university affairs.

In this volume Wasser has collected a range of papers dating from the last twenty odd years, many of them presented at international academic congresses. They span several classical and topical issues in higher education: management, leadership, funding, commercialization, regional colleges, most subjects covered in a comparative spirit, with examples largely from the Anglo-American world and northern Europe, less so from southern Europe and from the rest of the world hardly any. Some of the essays are distinctly local. One, very interesting, deals with the "role of the public university trustee" with his own CUNY as case in point. Another, equally informative (for the specialist, that is) is "Economic Impact of Staten Island Community College," complete with surprisingly huge (considering the very local circumstances) loads of statistics and tables.

There is an element of spleen and reminiscing nostalgia in these essays. Wasser moves in a classical landscape of Ivy League universities and colleges and in this garden of paradise several new and threatening species are since some time making their dangerous inroads. We know them by now. Managerialism and heavy-handed leadership infringe on the sovereignty of faculty and the professoriate. In combination with increasing commercialization and privatization these trends are reshaping, to the worse, says Wasser, an institution that once stood for independent judgment and the free

spirit of searching for, yes, truth. Now we have gotten the “entrepreneurial university”, a creature that Wasser regards with a mixture of awe, serious concern, and utter distaste. Yet, his essays are not just lamentations. They do give, earnestly, the pros and cons. They also provide the national varieties; Wasser probes different national forms of development or decline. Sweden comes out quite favorably. The 1977 reform is repeatedly praised as a pragmatic way of breaking the barrier between theoretical and vocational training without at the same time jeopardizing the quality of research which is achieved by keeping the binary boundary between universities and colleges.

This is of course, as we know, no longer the case in a country which has seen dramatic changes in the higher education sector for almost precisely the time that has lapsed since Wasser wrote some of his earlier texts; in a few others some of the changes are occasionally observed by Wasser. This is not altogether a disadvantage. The long gestation period of these papers will in fact alert the reader to the considerable turmoil that has been going on, and one should not take at face value as we enter the second decade of the 21st century that what is stated in these essays is necessarily true. Rather, they should be read as evidence of the time when they were first written, both in fact and sentiment (and precisely for this reason it would have been useful to get a bit more information on their where, when and why; editorially this is not the most ambitious volume which could be said of the copy editing as well).

Less dated are a couple of longer chapters devoted to major personalities which circle the periphery of higher education. Henry Adams was of course a professor of medieval history at Harvard, where he experimented with new methods and classes in history (as we know he was an early user of the history seminar in the US), and he reasoned at length about the nature and future of education and learning, for example in his masterpiece *The Education of Henry Adams* (1910), but he is treated here as the broader public intellectual which he also was and most cited are his famous letters. Equally fascinating is an impressionistic cross-reading of Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Thorstein Veblen’s *Absentee Ownership* (1923), both authors “Westerners” from Minnesota. In our troubled times of economic crisis it is particularly interesting, and slightly shocking, to revisit these classical texts that tell of the self-rationalizations of the extremely rich and explain in sociological terms their conspicuous consumption. When will they (we?) ever learn? The reader may note, in passing, that as much

as to John Maynard Keynes, who is now once again in fashion thanks to the meltdown, we should pay attention also to Veblen, whose work opened our eyes to the fact that economic man does not exist and that human mores are far less dignified and rational, something that teaching in business schools has chosen to ignore for empty calculations.

Making this last reflection, and many others, possible is perhaps evidence of the rich and lasting legacy of Wasser's diverse essays. They do not attempt to work systematically with their subject matter, and they put real demands on the reader to be able to contextualize and fill in the voids of the kind of background trivia that Wasser is too erudite to bother us with. But the reader who navigates around the diverse obstacles and omissions will find a landscape of stylized remnants of a yesteryear of higher education and learned Western culture that may still provoke both ideas, insights and a bittersweet sense of longing for a world of values and qualities that we may like or dislike but which, that we know, will only fade ever farther away into oblivion unless we are reminded about it, as professor Wasser does.

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Dregni, Eric. *In Cod We Trust: Living the Norwegian Dream*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008; 195 pp. ISBN 978-0-8166-5623-3. \$22.95 hardcover.

Many Americans have a special and complex relationship with the country—or countries—of their immigrant forebears. Their homeland is certainly and unequivocally the United States and yet there may be some lingering sense of kinship with distant lands such as Korea, Lithuania or Italy—a sense that is often too vague to be labeled ethnicity. To some extent identification with another country may be a matter of choice between two or more lands of origin; an American may be Irish or Swedish or both. In the Midwest there are many who know next to nothing of Norway who claim to be Norwegian. Most of them do not write books about it.

Eric Dregni, who teaches writing at Concordia University in St. Paul, decided to write a book, and applied to the Fulbright program for a grant to spend a year in Trondheim. The result is *In Cod We Trust*, a low-keyed both entertaining and enlightening book about living in a strange land, at times a