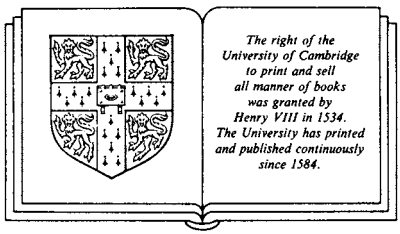
Grace, Talent, and Merit

Poor students, clerical careers, and professional ideology in eighteenth-century Germany

ANTHONY J. LA VOPA



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge

New York New Rochelle Melbourne Sydney

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011–4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

http://www.cambridge.org

© Cambridge University Press 1988

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1988
First paperback edition 2002

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
La Vopa, Anthony J.
Grace, talent, and merit: poor students, clerical careers, and professional ideology in eighteenth-century Germany / Anthony J. La Vopa.
p. cm.
Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0 521 35041 7
1. Educational sociology – Germany – History – 18th century.
2. Church and education – Germany – History – 18th century.
3. Occupational mobility – Germany – History – 18th century. 4. Social mobility – Germany – History – 18th century. 5. Professions – Germany – History – 18th century. I. Title.
LC191.8.G3L3 1988
370.19'0943–dc19 88-1905 CIP

ISBN 0 521 35041 7 hardback
ISBN 0 521 52514 4 paperback

Contents

Acknowledgments *page* vii

Introduction 1

PART I. POOR STUDENTS

1. Realities and stereotypes 19
   The Protestant legacy 19
   Social profiles 28
   Refractions 46
2. Initiations 58
   Patrimonies 61
   Paths of entry 70
3. The patronage chain: structure and ideology 83
   Fatherly patrons 85
   Anton Reiser: the witness of a victim 97
4. The *Hofmeister* 111
   Scholars and courtiers 112
   Patrons and markets 124

PART II. CALLING, VOCATION, AND SERVICE

5. The calling: August Hermann Francke and Halle Pietism 137
   The *selectum ingeniorum* 140
   Poverty, patrons, and grace 145
   Legacies 155
6. Vocation: the natural self and the ethic of reason 165
   Nature, society, and art 169
   The sacred and the secular 178
   Duty in a new key 185
7. Meritocracy: language and ideology 197
   The logic of neocorporatism 197
   Language, talent, and maturity 207
8. The egalitarian alternative: theory and practice 216
   The new breed 216
   Friedrich Gedike: profile of a schoolman 232

PART III. NEW DEPARTURES

9. Orthodoxies and new idioms 249
Merit versus genius 250
The appeal of self-cultivation 264
The constraints of sponsorship 278

10. Professional ideologies: the making of a teaching corps 287
The teachers' cause 291
Pedagogy and philology 307

11. The clerical identity 326
Vocations, careers, and offices 326
The culture bearers 341

12. Radical visions: Johann Gottlieb Fichte 351
Freedom, necessity, and duty 360
Elite and mass 370
Educating the nation 377

Epilogue 386

Bibliographical note 399

Index 407

Introduction

I

The eighteenth century lures some with its modern face, still fresh and innocent but reassuringly familiar. I backpedaled into the century, in pursuit of the less familiar. Stimulated but unsettled by an exchange of ideas with students of other national histories, I had become intent on following my own hunches – every German historian has at least one – about the peculiarities of the Germans. But the exchange had also made me aware of the insularity and stagnation of eighteenth-century German studies. If we are eventually to reach firmer historical ground for explaining what was and what was not peculiar about a national experience, it will be from new angles of vision on the German route from tradition to modernity, unobstructed by shopworn models and their present-minded criteria for modernization. Above all we need a more nuanced, densely contextualized understanding of the social meaning of German religious and secular cultures and the variations on their interplay over the course of the eighteenth century.

It was in pursuit of this agenda that I made "poor students" (*arme Studenten*) my point of departure and my recurrent object of reference. Poor students were a more or less substantial minority at Protestant universities, and one that attested to the tenacious traditions of a religious culture. Nonetheless they provoked censure and alarm in old-regime society. With their ambivalent presence as its focal point, the study developed in concentric circles, raying out from a specific social experience to the cultural norms and ideas that gave it meaning and in turn bore its imprint.

In the eighteenth century, the term "poor student" referred to a distinct species of young men. Students of theology, they went on to careers in the clergy, including its teaching branch. They owed their earlier education to charity in various forms, all products of the reform impulse that had sustained Lutheranism from its earliest days. Many had arrived at the universities on foot, like vagabonds, after days or weeks on the roads, trusting in God or the next benefactor for tomorrow's meal. They were distinguished from their more affluent *Kommilitonen* by the fact that they took their meals

at "free tables" in refectories and local inns, by their need to earn extra cash as tutors in private homes, by their threadbare coats and soiled shirts. On closer inspection the species breaks down into outsiders and insiders. For the outsiders, academic education was a dramatic but risky leap into an alien world. Raised in the "lower" spheres of farming and the manual trades, they could expect to be relegated to the cellar of the learned estate – as pastors in villages and small towns and as teachers in the Latin schools. But among the exceptions were some of the stellar figures in eighteenth-century intellectual life; from the plebeian depths came Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Christian Gottlob Heyne, two of the giants in the renaissance of classical studies, and the three men – Christian Wolff, Immanuel Kant, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte – who largely account for Germany's eighteenth-century renown in academic philosophy.

As a practical definition, "poor student" also referred to sons of obscure clergymen following in their fathers' footsteps. These were often every bit as poor as outsiders, and no less dependent on charity. What made them insiders was the fact that they had been introduced to academic culture, at least in a minimal way, at home. Gellert, Lessing, Herder, and Jean Paul are perhaps the best examples of their contribution to German letters – a contribution that has long been recognized but still lacks the socially informed explanation it merits. Sons of clergymen who lacked propertied wealth, and who could not count on high-placed connections, also faced limited career prospects, though they were less disadvantaged than outsiders. But again the success stories were dramatic; one thinks of Johann Salomo Semler, the leading rationalist theologian of his generation, and Friedrich Gedike, the school director in Berlin who was appointed to the Prussian Superior School Board at age thirty-two.

Hence – to introduce a bit more sociological precision – only some poor students experienced *intergenerational* mobility, and whether and in what sense that mobility was "upward" (or "vertical") is a troublesome issue. I use the term "academic mobility" in an admittedly loose sense, to evoke the entire phenomenon. Academic mobility may strike some readers as providing an oddly constricted angle of vision onto the larger themes of the study; but in fact it is of strategic significance for conceiving the shape and structure of eighteenth-century German society and understanding the pertinent social referents and sources of tension for ideological divisions on issues of social order, individual freedom, and justice.

That significance has been obscured until recently by the very framing of questions and definition of terms. Eighteenth-century studies have been permeated with the same assumptions about a German "divergent path" (*Sonderweg*) that are now being contested in the more crowded ranks of nineteenth-century historiography.[1] What allowed England and France to

[1] Particularly important in provoking a reexamination of the *Sonderweg* model for the nine-

achieve the "maturity" of a liberal polity (the one by an evolutionary process, the other by revolution) – so the standard version goes – was a bourgeoisie with a capitalist center of gravity in a modern class society. Lacking such a center, and hence impotent in the face of a "feudal" aristocracy retaining its social hegemony and its monopoly of political power, German intellectuals orchestrated a bourgeois retreat into apolitical "inwardness" (*Innerlichkeit*).

French historians have been busy demolishing the conventional image of 1789 as a bourgeois "advent." In the search for a distinctly "bourgeois" mentality in eighteenth-century Germany, the choice between a liberal (or at least protoliberal) political consciousness and apolitical resignation (or escapism) has come to seem artificially constricting.[2] But the model of bourgeois modernization has proved remarkably durable, and not just in orthodox Marxist circles. In the 1920s and 1930s Karl Mannheim and his associates, despite their aversion to the economic reductionism of Marxism, gave the model a new lease on life in their historical "sociology of knowledge." The dichotomy between a feudal aristocracy and a progressive bourgeoisie has become inherent in secular visions of history as an inevitable (if sometimes retarded) march of progress and in the coupling of political progress to economic modernization. In our own era, as in the interwar years, the notion of an "apolitical" German *Sonderweg* has broad appeal among academics and intellectuals, preoccupied as they are with the crippling legacy of an authoritarian past.[3]

teenth century is David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History. Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York, 1984).

[2] On the historiography of the French Revolution, see especially François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (New York, 1981); Keith Michael Baker, "Enlightenment and Revolution in France. Old Problems, Renewed Approaches," *Journal of Modern History* 53:1 (Mar. 1981): 281–303; Colin Lucas, "Nobles, Bourgeois, and the Origins of the French Revolution," *Past and Present* 60 (1973), reprinted in Douglas Johnson, ed., *French Society and the Revolution* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 88–131, which denies central importance to an aristocratic-bourgeois conflict in eighteenth-century France and argues that in this regard the Estates General elections in 1788 occasioned an abrupt turn to polarization. For examples of the changing image of the eighteenth-century German "bourgeoisie," see Rudolf Vierhaus, ed., *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung, vol. 7 (Heidelberg, 1981). See also Franklin Kopitzsch, ed., *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland. Zwolf Aufsätze*, Nymphenburger Texte zur Wissenschaft, vol. 24 (Munich, 1976); idem, "Aufgaben einer Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Intelligenz zwischen Aufklärung und Kaiserreich," *Sozialwissenschaftliche Information für Unterricht und Studium* 5 (1976): 83–89.

[3] Norbert Elias, a student of Mannheim at Frankfurt, provides a classic application of the model in *The History of Manners*, The Civilizing Process, vol. 1, trans. Edmund Jephcott (1939: New York, 1978), pp. 8–29. A more eclectic but still characteristic product of the new "sociology of knowledge" is Hans Weill, *Die Entstehung des deutschen Bildungsprinzips* (Bonn, 1930). A more recent (and imaginative) analysis of the unpolitical *Bürger* is Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholie und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), esp. pp. 76–114. In Hans J. Haferkorn's relatively complex Marxist framework, authors and their new "public" enter a problematic relationship as the literary market is drawn into the market economy of modern capitalism. But at the same time an emerging "free" literary intelligentsia, reflecting "the conflict

The two most important essays on the eighteenth-century intelligentsia – Hans Gerth's *Bürgerliche Intelligenz* and Wilhelm Roessler's *Die Entstehung des modernen Erziehungswesens* – represent positive variations on the same model. Gerth was a student of Mannheim, but one need only compare his dissertation with his mentor's more famous essay on conservative thought to appreciate its imaginative grasp of historical detail. Written as the collapse of the Weimar Republic was making the weaknesses of German liberalism painfully evident, *Bürgerliche Intelligenz* is remarkably detached from its era. Gerth found liberalism where others lamented its absence; he traced the origins of the imposing liberal movement of the mid-nineteenth century to a surrogate vanguard of university-educated officials born around 1770. Educational and professional experience, he argued, made this group precociously receptive to Western liberal ideas, and the "points of coincidence" between its bureaucratic "habitus" and the market orientation of capitalists eventually made for the fusion of these two bourgeois wings into a single liberal movement.[4] Roessler does not mention liberalism, but its conceptions of emancipation and enlightened progress hover over every page. What concerned him was the genesis of a modern ethos of personal autonomy and self-determination – a sense of "personal station," essential to the exercise of individual freedom and responsibility in the liberal sense. Again it was important to posit a convergence of *Bildung* and *Besitz*; by the early nineteenth century the new ethos had found a solid bourgeois (my word) foundation in the "new middle estate," which included university scholars, the broad ranks of officialdom, manufacturers, and members of the "newly emerging industrial and public professions."[5]

Much of the subtlety of both studies lies in explaining how changes in eighteenth-century aristocratic culture contributed to and were assimilated into a distinctly modern social consciousness. Likewise both scholars were too familiar with the variety of student life-styles at eighteenth-century universities to gloss over the distance between poor students and scions of upper bourgeois families. But for all the flexibility they introduced into the

between *Bürgertum* and *Aristokratie*," takes a "resigned path" into an "inwardness alienated from its literary-political possibilities." Hans J. Haferkorn, "Zur Entstehung der bürgerlich-literarischen Intelligenz und des Schriftstellers in Deutschland zwischen 1750 und 1800," *Literaturwissenschaft und Sozialwissenschaften*, vol. 3 (Deutsches Bürgertum und literarische Intelligenz 1750–1800) (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 14, 128–29.

[4] Hans H. Gerth, *Bürgerliche Intelligenz um 1800. Zur Soziologie des deutschen Frühliberalismus*, ed. Ulrich Herrmann, Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol. 19 (Göttingen, 1976). This is a reprint of the thesis, with an informative introduction by Ulrich Herrmann on Gerth and the intellectual context. It can now be supplemented with Gerth's own retrospective view, in Joseph Bensman, Arthur J. Vidich, and Nobuko Gerth, eds., *Politics, Character, and Culture. Perspectives from Hans Gerth* (Westport, Conn., 1982), pp. 14–71.

[5] Wilhelm Roessler, *Die Entstehung des modernen Erziehungswesens in Deutschland* (Stuttgart, 1961). For another positive variation on the model, see Fritz Brüggemann, "Der Kampf um die bürgerliche Welt- und Lebensanschauung in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (1925): 94–127.

overarching model, they upturned its verdict without questioning its basic categories and cleavages. The aristocracy is no longer a monolithic obstacle; but its "feudal" privileges, often linked awkwardly with "absolutism," remain the primary reference for understanding "bourgeois" resentment. Since both scholars are sensitive to distinctions within the university-educated *Bürgertum*, as well as between its milieu and that of commerce and industry, it is all the more striking that they devote so little attention to the social resentments occasioned by inequalities *among* commoners. The essential problem remains; within a *political* definition of a social category, various kinds of mobility into the intelligentsia and through its ranks tend to be collapsed into a single bourgeois "ascent," in turn marking a single species of emancipatory consciousness.

As useful as it may still be in some respects, the aristocratic-bourgeois fissure oversimplifies the structure of access to academic education and public employment. In the course of the eighteenth century, as the corporate identity of the "learned estate" (*Gelehrtenstand*) acceded to the professional jurisdictions of a modern "educated bourgeoisie" (*Bildungbürgertum*), that structure developed two fault lines, both registering strains. In the civil and judicial bureaucracies of some German states, a preference for pedigrees (or at least titles) in the higher echelons clearly provoked resentment among bourgeois law graduates. But this was a rivalry within a consolidation. As Gerth suggested, the law faculties of the late eighteenth century perpetuated both a service aristocracy, acquiring at least minimal academic qualifications to maintain its preeminence at the highest levels of government employment, and an entrenched *Bildungsbürgertum*, transmitting academic learning as a kind of family patrimony.

The German Enlightenment did pit the claims of individual talent and merit against the collective privileges of "birth"; but one need only sample its vast literature on educational reform to realize that much of the tension was being generated at the second, lower fault line – the one running *through* the *Bürgertum* and its clerical branch. It was this line that separated the outsiders among poor students – those inheriting neither *Bildung* nor *Besitz* – from the hybrid service elite. Straddling it – and registering its tensions – were the clergymen's sons who had inherited a measure of *Bildung* but nonetheless, in view of their fathers' paltry pastoral and teaching incomes, were genuinely poor.[6]

[6] On the bourgeois-aristocratic conflict, see esp. Johanna Schultze, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Adel und Bürgertum in den deutschen Zeitschriften der letzten drei Jahrzehnte des 18. Jahrhunderts (1773–1806)* (1925: Vaduz, 1965). An important restatement of the case for such a conflict in the Prussian bureaucracy is Hans-Eberhard Mueller, *Bureaucracy, Education, and Monopoly. Civil Service Reforms in Prussia and England* (Berkeley, Calif., 1984); it should be compared with Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy and Autocracy. The Prussian Experience 1660–1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958). Particularly important for understanding the aristocratic wing of an emerging service elite is Charles E. McClelland, "The Aristocracy and

In the conventional models poor students are included in a sprawling *Bürgertum*; or in their plebeian profile, they become sons of a "proletariat"; or as products of a *Kleinbürgertum*, they represent a kind of bourgeoisie manqué. None of these approaches does justice to the fact that, in the corporate order of the old regime, certain disadvantages and rites of passage into the learned estate formed outsiders and insiders, for all the differences between them, into a distinct group. And yet the conventional alternatives also blur the duality that makes the category so intriguing. While all poor students lacked the advantages of propertied wealth, only some had to cross the widening chasm between the uneducated mass and the educated elite. One of the critical lines of demarcation in eighteenth-century society bounded the entire group; another cut straight through it.

Within this more variegated social topography, salient divisions on the familiar issue of "careers open to talent" come into relief; the eighteenth-century ideal of meritocracy can be seen patterning into neocorporate and egalitarian alternatives, both in need of detailed explanation.

II

Ralph H. Turner's contrast of the English and American school systems has been pivotal in widening the comparative approach to mobility from measurements of rates to a broader understanding of their social and cultural significance. In the "sponsored mobility" that prevails in England, Turner argues, a coherent elite and its agents control the induction of new recruits into its ranks by selecting them at an early age and requiring them to meet its standards.[7] With suitable adjustments for a very different time and place, this "ideal type" offers a useful handle on eighteenth-century academic mobility. The controlled induction of poor boys into the learned estate was not the centralized, standardized selection by examination that prevails

University Reform in Eighteenth-Century Germany," in Lawrence Stone, ed., *Schooling and Society. Studies in the History of Education* (Baltimore, 1976), pp. 146–73. The lower fault line has emerged clearly in recent contributions to the history of education; see Karl-Ernst Jeismann, *Das preussische Gymnasium in Staat und Gesellschaft. Die Entstehung des Gymnasiums als Schule des Staates und der Gebildeten, 1787–1817*, Industrielle Welt. Schriftenreihe des Arbeitskreises für moderne Sozialgeschichte, vol. 15 (Stuttgart, 1974); Detlef K. Müller, *Sozialstruktur und Schulsystem: Aspekte zum Strukturwandel des Schulwesens im 19. Jahrhundert*, Studien zum Wandel von Gesellschaft und Bildung im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert, vol. 7 (Göttingen, 1977); Fritz K. Ringer, *Education and Society in Modern Europe* (Bloomington, Ind., 1978), esp. pp. 81–91.

[7] Ralph H. Turner, "Sponsored and Contest Mobility and the School System," *American Sociological Review* 25 (1960): 855–67. An important attempt to elaborate and refine Turner's distinctions, particularly as they relate to specific educational systems, is Earl Hopper, "Educational Systems and Selected Consequences of Patterns of Mobility and Non-Mobility in Industrial Societies: A Theoretical Discussion," in Richard Brown, ed., *Knowledge, Education, and Cultural Change. Papers in the Sociology of Education* (London, 1973), pp. 17–69. See also idem, ed., *Readings in the Theory of Educational Systems* (London, 1971).

today; sponsorship was in the hands of the individuals – from the local teacher or pastor to the noble Maecenas – who distributed various forms of public and private charity and dispensed appointments. And yet as individualized as this patronage was and as esoteric as the initiation into old-style learning may seem from this distance, academic mobility had a discernible structure and cultural density. Much of Part I is devoted to reassembling the structure, to explaining the process of selection within it, and to defining the prescriptive terms of class inequality for patrons and clients.

This approach to the relationship between social structure and ideology is somewhat different from the one to which the new "social" history of education has been largely devoted. The field has been preoccupied with gauging the degree to which access to academic education has been "open," primarily by assigning pupils and students to the categories of a larger class structure, and with matching reform agendas to various social interests.[8] As handicapped as it has been by the fragmentary eighteenth-century data on students' social origins, quantitative research has confirmed that, within an overall pattern of elitism, there was limited but significant scope for academic mobility. What the field lacks – and this is ironic in view of its commitment to interdisciplinary research – is precisely the concern with social *process* and cultural *experience* that has entered the sociological literature on mobility in the past few decades. Turner was intrigued by the possibility that the actual structure of mobility in a particular national context reflected an "organizing folk norm" central to the culture. More recent studies have added complications to his essential distinction between "sponsored" and "contest" models; but they have also pursued his basic insight that perceptions of mobility are shaped not only by its measurable reality, but also by the cultural grids of norms and values within which it is idealized (or at least legitimated), or censured, or given an ambiguous value. Likewise sociologists have become increasingly aware that upward mobility via education is a kind of molting process. Whether the result is painful alienation or comfortable assimilation – whether there is a neat fit or an awkward disjuncture between the "inner" personality and its newly acquired social and cultural shell – the process cannot be simply extrapolated from "objective" data. Nor can it be deduced from our current ideological precon-

[8] On recent research in the field, see Konrad H. Jarausch, "The Old 'New History of Education': A German Reconsideration," *History of Education Quarterly* 26:2 (1986): 225–41. A useful synthesis is Peter Lundgreen, *Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Schule im Ueberblick*, Teil 1: *1770–1918* (Göttingen, 1980). On the universities, see esp. Charles E. McClelland, *State, Society, and University in Germany 1700–1914* (Cambridge, 1980), which synthesizes recent research and offers new perspectives. The most relevant analyses of structure and ideology in the above sense have been Müller, *Sozialstruktur und Schulsystem*; Ringer, *Education and Society*; Hans Georg Herrlitz, *Studium als Standesprivileg: Die Entstehung des Maturitätsproblems im 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), which focuses on the issues raised by "poor students." See also Peter Lundgreen, "Bildung und Besitz – Einheit oder Inkongruenz in der europäischen Sozialgeschichte?" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 7 (1981): 262–75.

ceptions. It becomes critical to conceive of class as a series of relations rather than a static structure and to understand how cultural norms as well as structural conditions have constituted the historical experience of mobility.[9]

I have tried to excavate several layers of cultural ideology in this sense, with an eye to explaining both how they were shaped to a specific social milieu and how they came to bear its imprint. If the sociological literature on mobility convinced me of the need for such an excavation, it did not offer reliable signposts to the findings. The context of most mobility studies is the kind of modern "industrial" society that had hardly begun to emerge at the end of the eighteenth century. Until very recently one of the guiding assumptions was that the openness of modern classes -the fluidity of movement between them – signifies an egalitarian blurring of class distinctions.[10] At the rarefied altitudes of theory, unencumbered by historical empiricism, it has been easy enough to underline that assumption by contrasting the present with the rigidity of corporate hierarchies in a "preindustrial" past. In its broad outlines the contrast probably holds. Nineteenth-century industrialization, it still seems judicious to claim, brought an increase in mobility of all kinds, though the opportunities for dramatic social ascent over two generations may have remained quite restricted. Likewise a marked tendency toward closure – a tendency well illustrated by the large number of sons following in their fathers' footsteps in the eighteenth-century German clergy – can still fairly be considered an attribute of corporatism.

But sociologists are no longer so quick to assume that high mobility rates reduce either actual inequalities or perceived distances between classes. At the "preindustrial" end of the spectrum, Sylvia Thrupp observed more than a quarter-century ago that the legal demarcations in corporate hierarchies should not be mistaken for "effective barriers to mobility." Thrupp may have missed the mark in blaming the confusion on "a certain mechanical way of using the concept of class"; it was probably due more to a rigid conceptual polarity between corporate closure and class "openness." But

[9] The other seminal work was Seymour Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (Berkeley, Calif., 1959). The most relevant recent contributions for my purposes were Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Les héritiers: Les étudiants et la culture* (Paris, 1964); idem, *La réproduction: Eléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Paris, 1970); John H. Goldthorpe, *Social Mobility and Class Structure in Modern Britain* (New York, 1980); Keith Hope, *As Others See Us. Schooling and Social Mobility in Scotland and the United States* (Cambridge, 1984); Karl Ulrich Mayer, *Ungleichheit und Mobilität im sozialen Bewusstsein. Untersuchungen zur Definition der Mobilitätssituation* (Opladen, 1975); Cornelius J. Van Zeyl, *Ambition and Social Structure. Educational Structure and Mobility Orientation in the Netherlands and the United States* (Lexington, Mass., 1974).

[10] See esp. the syntheses of recent research in Hartmut Kaelble, *Historische Mobilitätsforschung. Westeuropa und die USA im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1978), which takes a notably cautious posture toward prevailing assumptions about a traditional-industrial dichotomy; idem, *Soziale Mobilität und Chancengleichheit im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1983).

her basic point has been vindicated; while the preindustrial past remains a theoretical foil in mobility studies, historians have been busy demonstrating the extent of movement, vertical as well as horizontal, across permeable corporate boundaries.[11]

To read modern perceptions and norms back into a preindustrial context is to indulge in the present-mindedness we are all committed to avoiding. But if the historian assumes that the mobility in question, though tolerated de facto, had no legitimate place in the culture, he ignores deep-rooted cultural sanctions that developed *within* preindustrial societies and were inherent in their corporate values. This is not to deny a tenacious preference for "birth" in corporate ideology. That preference often found expression in moral censure of poor students and in alarmism about the threat their swelling number, their ambitions, and their apparent lack of "honor" posed to the integrity of the corporate order. And yet however limited and conditional the approval of poor students' presence was, it existed and requires a historical explanation in terms of cultural traditions. The traditional Latinity of the schools was vital to the permeability as well as the closure of the clerical order. Paternalism – the ideology that underpinned authority at all levels of the corporate hierarchy – gave patrons a moral right to deferential gratitude from the poor boys they sponsored; but it also set limits on the kinds of deference they had a right to expect and hence gave clients a moral basis for preserving a measure of personal integrity even as they acknowledged their dependence. It has become a truism that, in the orthodox Lutheran conception of "duty" and "office" (*Amt*), the entire emphasis was on accepting subordination in a "station"; much less attention has been devoted to the fact that the sponsorship of poor boys for clerical careers was a hallowed tradition in the Lutheran church, and we have only begun to appreciate how the Pietist revival of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries revitalized that tradition.

To a degree the German sociological concept of an "intelligentsia" has bypassed the conventional dichotomy between industrial and preindustrial societies. Gerth and others have sought to give national and temporal specificity to Mannheim's broad-stroked historical sketches of "socially unattached" intelligentsias, particularly by examining the kinds of mobility to which recognizably modern forms of education and bureaucratic employment gave rise *before* modern industrialization got under way.[12] But again a

[11] Sylvia Thrupp, "Hierarchy, Illusion and Social Mobility," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2:1 (1959): 126–28. For examples of historical assessments of the extent and significance of intergenerational upward mobility, see also Stephan Thernstrom, "Notes on the Historical Study of Social Mobility," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10:2 (1968): 162–72; Lawrence Stone, "Social Mobility in England, 1500–1700," *Past and Present* 33 (1966): 16–55; Allan Sharlin, "From the Study of Social Mobility to the Study of Society," *American Journal of Sociology* 85:2 (1979): 338–60.

[12] For Mannheim's definition of the intelligentsia, see esp. *Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York, 1936), pp. 136–46.

certain present-minded oversimplification is striking from this distance. More or less aware of their ideological preferences, historical sociologists and historians have equated bourgeois "emancipation" from the collective constraints of old-regime corporatism with the rise of modern individualism.[13] The issue dividing liberals and Marxists is not whether individualism appeared, but whether it made the modern *Bürger* a truly progressive figure (the liberal version) or camouflaged his class consciousness behind an illusory commitment to universal rights and freedoms (the Marxist alternative).

Again the two major studies fall on the positive side of the spectrum – and again they see the academic and official intelligentsia as the vanguard in a larger process of bourgeois emancipation. To Gerth the original vision of a *Rechtstaat* – the one that paved the way for a distinctly political liberalism in the pre-March era – promised a rational legal framework for competitive achievement, posed against the constraints of "estates of birth." To Roessler the new individualism – the "personal station" – lay less in a commitment to individual achievement than in an ethos of personal autonomy and self-determination, defined in cultural terms but clearly inspired by a political ideal of individual freedom and responsibility. A flexible rationality with ever expanding horizons emancipated the new breed – appearing first in the intelligentsia and later in the commercial and industrial bourgeoisie – from both the patriarchal authority of the traditional household and the constricting solidarity of corporate membership.

Whether the emphasis is on the exercise of political freedom in a public realm, or on the private pursuit of self-interest in a competitive market, or on vaguer notions of self-fulfillment in an "achievement society," the concept of individualism radiates nineteenth- and twentieth-century values. Contemporary resonances, in fact, make the concept all the more treacherous. The classical liberalism of the nineteenth century is all too easily read back into the consciousness of previous generations, but at least can be said to have provided fairly clear-cut political and economic criteria for individualism. In our century this legacy has been absorbed into the elusive congeries of cultural values that is now being dubbed "expressive individualism." My point is not to deny that the eighteenth century gave rise to distinctly modern forms of consciousness; the study is in fact centrally con-

[13] On the many varieties of "individualism," see esp. Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (New York, 1973). Recent critiques are Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellbery, *Reconstructing Individualism. Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought* (Stanford, Calif., 1986), and Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York, 1986). Bellah and his associates provide a nuanced analysis of both "utilitarian" and "expressive" individualism in contemporary American culture and of their various conflations. It will become apparent that the "utilitarian" ethic they have in mind – i.e., one that sanctions and indeed requires the competitive pursuit of self-interest in a free market – is very different from what I shall call the utilitarian ethic of eighteenth-century German rationalism.

cerned with their emergence and their significance. But caution is required precisely because the century seems to offer so many breakthroughs to (or at least anticipations of) modern culture, because it introduced the vocabulary – the language of freedom, talent, and merit – that has become the lingua franca of private self-searching as well as public discourse, because the simultaneous persistence of old-regime traditions seems to throw the appearance of the modern into bold relief. All this makes it especially tempting to observe the eighteenth century through a lens of subsequent ideology, at once political and more vaguely cultural, that distorts and obscures.

Removing the lens is in part a matter of avoiding a simplistic *moral* dichotomy, equating modern forms of mobility with individual freedom at one end, traditional corporate membership with a complete lack of personal autonomy at the other. Set within this contrast, the traditional ascent of poor students into the learned estate is seen to require complete absorption into a corporate solidarity or, in a more cynical view, relentless opportunism (or "servility") in conforming to its standards. One needs to penetrate behind the edgy pieties of eighteenth-century stereotypes, to the moral dilemmas they caricatured. Then it becomes apparent that the concept of corporate "honor," as it found expression in traditional social norms and religious ideals, cut both ways. If it required assimilation within a corporate standard and deference to its guardians, it also demanded a core of personal autonomy and integrity.

III

The "new" history of education is committed to providing a dense social grounding for the study of pedagogical theory and educational reform thought, and this book is a case in point. But in the preoccupation with structure (narrowly defined), intellectual history tends to be allotted a token presence. That is another reason why the field is in danger of settling into a new insularity – and why I became resolved to widen the angle of vision. To approach mobility as a cultural phenomenon is also to recognize the formative role of ideas. An examination of a dense configuration of ideas – familiar eighteenth-century concepts of talent and merit, of calling in the religious sense, of vocation and profession – seemed essential to understanding how poor students were perceived and how they made sense of their lives. One form the ideas took *was* to explain the experience of academic mobility; that helps account for their vital meaning to individuals – a meaning that will be demonstrated again and again – and for their ascendancy in the larger culture. From that direction as well, a restricted vision opens out onto broader dimensions of the relationship between society and culture.