

have been forgiven for falling into indolence, yet another frontier celebrity, but Audubon soon grew impatient with the company of fellow hunters like Sir Walter Scott and returned to America, noting to himself, "I must put myself in a train of doing . . . and thereby keep the machine in motion." For the rest of his days—he lived to the age of 68—John James Audubon worked to revise *Birds of America* and complete its companion, *Ornithological Biography*. By applying himself so vigorously to this and other work, Audubon was able for the first time to earn a decent livelihood.

In *Audubon: Life and Art in the American Wilderness*, Shirley Streshinsky does not shy away from contemporary criticisms of Audubon, notably his having slaughtered thousands of birds to serve as subjects for his palette. She also reminds her readers, however, that it does us little good to judge past actions solely by contemporary morality and that Audubon himself understood the error of his ways when the birds became fewer and fewer. For all his faults, John James Audubon looms large on the American frontier. His brilliance as an artist and naturalist merits him a permanent place in the na-

tional memory, and Streshinsky's book, for all its shortcomings, is a worthy testament to it.

*Gregory McNamee is the author of Gila: The Life and Death of an American River, soon to be published by Crown.*

## Recomposing Sociology

by Paul Gottfried

**The Decomposition of Sociology**  
by Irving Louis Horowitz  
New York: Oxford University Press;  
282 pp., \$35.00



*The Decomposition of Sociology*, an anthology of essays, testifies to the breadth of its author's interests and reading. While the book has a central theme—which is the problems, some self-inflicted, that modern sociologists face in making their discipline rigorous

and nonideological—within the confines of that theme, Horowitz ranges freely and confidently among many topics, some brought in to illustrate his arguments. Some of the best analytical stretches in the book deal only parenthetically with Horowitz's main theme, e.g., the penetrating sociological critique of, one, Emil Fackenheim's propositions concerning the uniqueness of the holocaust and, two, successive generations of American Jewish sociologists trying—without being too obvious—to understand their Jewishness through the medium of their research. Though only loosely organized, the book is consistently provocative, resembling personal conversations with its author, who can be vexing but who is also never boring and always prodigiously informative.

I, for one, am surprised to see how favorably Horowitz treats the sociologist Werner Sombart and the intellectual historian Ernst Nolte, both of whom have been routinely accused (Nolte both retroactively and anachronistically) of harboring Nazi sympathies. Horowitz properly relies on Sombart's views (without adopting Sombart's values) on Jewish economic attitudes to explain the

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success of all Jewish subcultures in free market (or even quasi-capitalist) societies. He applies the Noltean model to the interwar period with more enthusiasm than I myself was able to muster for an essay on the same thinker for Horowitz's magazine *Society*. Horowitz takes seriously Nolte's view of interwar Europe as divided by a great ideological struggle, between self-conscious revolutionary and equally self-conscious counterrevolutionary forces. Part of the appeal of Nazism, he suggests, following Nolte's interpretation, is its genealogy with morally legitimate, older forms of anti-revolutionary conservatism. Nazis could play effectively to those who feared or despised Marxist revolution and hoped to return in some form to a traditional *Gemeinschaft*. No less effectively could Marxist-Leninists appeal in the context of interwar Europe to a revolutionary tradition going back to the Jacobins and forward to the Bolsheviks.

The last section of Horowitz's book, which is the most tightly argued, presents a compelling overview of the major dilemmas facing the social sciences and their varied practitioners in the United States. Horowitz looks at the growing radicalization of academic sociologists during his own career and notes the chasm between the ideal of scientific research expounded by Max Weber and the ideological obsessions shaping today's sociology. Unlike Weber, who tried to create an iron wall of separation between scholarship and political engagement, contemporary social scientists present their work as revolutionary acts, intended to promote feminist, gay, or black nationalist agendas. Horowitz points to other bizarre features of the social-scientific landscape, such as Jewish sociologists making anti-Semitic statements to please black, radical colleagues and assemblies of psychologists reversing their judgments on homosexuality as a form of deviance in response to ideological pressures.

Horowitz also notes the "war against the canon" in his own profession: the escalating charges that "the academic world and the ideas it promulgates are some kind of hustle to keep privilege intact and the disenfranchised out of the system." Behind these charges he rightly sees the emphatic denial that canons have something to do with a quest for wisdom as opposed to "ascribed status" and "configurations of power." He also observes the reduction "of the world of

knowledge to a vicious nihilism," in which power is allowed to trump all intellectual considerations. Those who rule are *supposed* to impose their vision of truth and reality.

Horowitz makes these charges without pontificating in any way. He is more than willing to concede that the paradigms and research methods used in his field should be periodically reassessed, and he recognizes that researchers are susceptible to ethnic and other parochialisms. What he strongly opposes is the demand now heard in universities, and even on faculties, that traditional authorities be dropped from reading lists not because they have nothing more to teach but because they are white, male, German Jews, French Catholics, and so forth. Though he does exaggerate the Weberian virtues of an earlier generation of sociologists (who in fact also diverted scholarship into ideology during the civil rights movement and produced dangerously false studies on black self-esteem), he is correct about the current academic dishonesty, particularly in the social sciences.

The most useful part of this book, for me at least, is the last section, which discusses the possibility of reconstructing the social sciences by means of technological advances in the publishing business. While Horowitz may be accused here of advancing his own interests, as a distinguished sociologist who has created a publishing empire, his arguments are nonetheless on the mark. Sociological debate takes place less and less within academic departments, and much of the periodical literature churned out by academics is either rigidly ideological or too dense to be read by anyone but a masochist. It is therefore academic publishers committed to the discussion of social issues who can provide the best forums for scholarly debate and who make sure that learned positions are put into generally accessible prose.

As a publisher bringing to bear upon his vocation his own scholarly expertise, Horowitz has done exactly that. Nonetheless, he may be mistaken in regarding his own creative use of technology predominantly as a form of progress for disseminating research: in the present circumstances it is a stark necessity, since universities are no longer able to perform their traditional function in many disciplines. Some of the scholars (associated with elite universities) whom Horowitz publishes are already on the

margin of the academic world, eagerly awaiting retirement. Others have long been geriatric but continue to stand athwart the current academic confusion. Horowitz, nevertheless, correctly emphasizes the proliferation of scholarly presses in North America and Europe specializing in the social sciences. Many of them, like Westview, Ballinger, Sage, Elsevier, Pergamon, and Kluwer, are still not familiar names to most educated Americans. They do keep open, however, the research questions that politically correct universities are working to push down the memory hole. It may be argued that Horowitz in his newest book does the same, by reminding his fellow social scientists what they should be about.

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## A Well-Spent Youth

by J.O. Tate

**Willie's Game: An Autobiography**  
by Willie Mosconi & Stanley Cohen  
New York: Macmillan;  
256 pp., \$20.00



Early last October, there was an item in the national news that stirred some pity and some memories. "Minnesota Fats" (Rudolph Wanderone) had been taken into custody in Nashville after being found wandering the streets in a state of disorientation. A legend in his own mind, "Minnesota Fats" took his sobriquet from the fictional character in the movie *The Hustler* (1961), made from Walter Tevis's novel of the same name. Before that he had been known as "New York Fats" and "Broadway Fats." Old Fats had quite a gift of gab, even better than his pool game. But when Fats claimed that he had beaten the great Willie Mosconi, he got sued for \$450,000 and challenged to a game for \$20,000 in private cash. Fats didn't respond. Then Mosconi challenged Fats to play for a hundred thousand, and waited in vain for a response to a registered letter. Six years later (February 14, 1978), Mosconi got his satisfaction in a tele-