

Johan Östling, Erling Sandmo, David Larsson Heidenblad, Anna Nilsson Hammar & Kari H. Nordberg (red.), *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press 2018). 256 s.

As the editors of this anthology explain in the introduction to the book, the history of knowledge is a relatively recent research program in historiography, having emerged in the last two decades as an agenda in its own right. What distinguishes it from the intellectual history, conceptual history, social history, cultural history, educational history or the history of science, the argument runs, is that the object of study is not, say, the institutions of science or higher learning, but knowledge itself. This perspective is said to widen the scope of investigation, and bring new methods and concepts, such as mediation and materiality, to bear on it. The main terms of the project ("knowledge", "ideas", "belief") remain relatively undefined because the point of this kind of historiography is that they are best understood by exemplification in specific contexts. Thus the history of knowledge can refer to the means by which knowledgeable people circulate what they know, the processes by which institutions constitute and disseminate expertise, or the local or material settings in which certain kinds of understandings are formulated, communicated and re-appropriated, and so on. Ideas are handled as social and political phenomena, leaving conceptual issues (their meaning or content) aside.

From a philosophical point of view, there is something contradictory in a program that rejects the relevance of epistemological concerns in its embrace of a purportedly neutral position (p. 16) while it establishes a set of normative requirements for historical explanation: the program is to "employ the concept of circulation as an imperative – historians of science ought to analyze how knowledge really moves, or fails to move, in and between

specific historical contexts” (p. 21). Accordingly, the focus of this volume is on circulation and movement as central to the research agenda of history of knowledge. The novelty and fruitfulness of this approach can only be evaluated by turning to instances of what the perspective enables in terms of new insights or approaches. While the introductory essay is helpful in laying out the background and trajectory of the conceptual framework, in the end, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

In a number of essays, the work of the theoretical apparatus is primarily to position the paper as a specimen of research in the history of knowledge. The recurrent reference to the “circulation” theme often does little more work than simply emphasize a particular dimension, at times at the expense of another (the conflation of belief, knowledge and thought into a nebulous notion of “private knowledge”, for instance). The historical descriptions of how a hypothesis, category or idea came to be debated, negotiated and accepted, or the role of commerce and popular culture in the evolution of expertise can in many cases stand on its own, without being propped up by the theoretic scaffolding of an ostensible epistemic innovation.

This is not to say that there aren't compelling suggestions. In the first section, David Larsson Heidenblad's essay makes the case that a shift of analytical focus from content to empirically examining and demonstrating, rather than assuming, the wider importance of certain well-known publications, opens for significant contributions to our understanding of how knowledge becomes knowledge (p. 71). While the questions of how, when and why influential books are cited and discussed in public discourse are not new, in practice such questions have been occluded by a focus on content and production. Heidenblad's effort here to show what is to be gained by giving the questions their fair due would be more convincing if he had provided a more detailed historical analysis of the environmentalism debate in Sweden that he adduces to illustrate his thesis. The article's rather general description is not quite enough of a basis to determine whether the theoretical structure adds something that could not have been achieved without it.

The most substantive support for the claims of the history of knowledge in this section is Erik Bodensten's "Political knowledge in public circulation". His attempt is methodological rather than broadly theoretical, an integral part of the effort to identify the historical processes through which public access to, and communication of, a particular body of knowledge increased significantly. Bodensten's fascinating and detailed account of his case in point, political knowledge of the Franco-Swedish subsidy alliance, effectively demonstrates how the use of quotes both itself changed character and altered the character of argumentation with respect to knowledge dissemination, how format and reformatting of pamphlet texts effected the

knowledge mediated and how the political context delimited the form of knowledge circulated. All this together sheds light on the complex generative character of the public supply of knowledge, as much more than simply a matter of consumption or impact, calling attention to aspects of historical development that might otherwise likely be overlooked.

In the second section, the article that provides the strongest historical case for the value of the circulation approach is Isak Hammar's striking account of the uncontested ideal of education as rigorous intellectual training in nineteenth-century Swedish public debates. Hammar demonstrates that the conflict between classicists and reformists was not about the aims of education at all, but about how best to achieve them. The model of formal education, modern at the time, justified continued emphasis on learning Latin. As long as classical languages were seen as the best tool for developing the mental faculties, no arguments from utility were sufficient to undermine their position. As reformists agreed with traditionalists on the basic tenets of formal education, there was little room for an overhaul of the educational system as such. Thus all the polemics, pamphlets, articles and reports produced at the time, however much they seemed to take the form of conflict, actually maintained a consensus with regard to a particular idea of formal education, and indeed, by circulating the idea widely, developed it in different directions. As Hammar neatly concludes, conflict "put consensus into circulation" (p. 156).

The third section concerns objects and sites of knowledge. One cannot help but be captivated by Erling Sandmo's study of the sea-pig and the walrus as objects of sixteenth century natural history. Like the other contributors, Sandmo emphasizes materiality, mediation and remediation in the establishment of a certain body of knowledge. The elaboration of how continued circulation of texts on and illustrations of the walrus was a precondition for its permanence as an epistemic object insofar as it made possible future re-mediation is convincing. Less persuasive is the argument that this perspective offers significantly new answers to such general questions as "How are objects of knowledge produced? How do they move between different epistemologies?" and so forth (p. 176). In this respect, it was a wise decision of the editors to conclude the book with the contribution that most concretely demonstrates the procedural advantage of the history of knowledge as a perspective, Helge Jordheim's perspicuous presentation of what it means for something to be a "work" in terms of editions, revisions, translations, etc. Jordheim's example, Fontenelle's seventeenth-century bestseller, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, is exemplary for his purposes, one of which is to show that it is anachronistic, to say the least, to approach the science and scholarship of that time as if our present-day ideas of "pure science" versus

"popular science", or "natural science" versus "humanities", are germane. A more apposite distinction, he proposes, would be that between the dialogue and the system, exemplified here by Fontenelle's *Entretiens* and Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, respectively. Jordheim shows how the genre of the text effects what rhetorical possibilities can be exploited in the wording of translations, prefaces, new editions and other vital elements in the circulation of knowledge. In so doing, he makes explicit the analytical and methodological shift involved in the conception of the "work" and knowledge that is said to circulate, apart from ideas of authorial intention, originality and coherence.

On the whole, the book is well-written and well-organized, and the articles are informative and engaging. The claims for the radical re-orienting of historical writing may be somewhat exaggerated; a number of the contributions seem to use the theoretical apparatus of the history of knowledge as a way of packaging their study rather than as an indispensable instrument of analysis. That said, the volume provides the reader with a relatively broad and illustrative selection of problems and subjects. If the thesis of knowledge circulation is correct, the novelty or usefulness of the framework as such can only be judged by its effects, which means that we will just have to wait and see.

Uppsala universitet

SHARON RIDER

Tobias Hübinette & Andréaz Wasniowski (red.), *Studier om rasism: Tvärvetenskapliga perspektiv på ras, vithet och diskriminering* (Malmö: Arx förlag 2018). 306 s.

Den strukturella rasismen i dagens Sverige är utgångspunkten i den aktuella antologin *Studier om rasism*. Det centrala argumentet är att den strukturella rasismen är en form av förtryck som inte erkänns, en följd av det som brukar kallas den färgblinda antirasismens logik.

Enligt denna logik, inbegripen i svensk myndighetsutövning, existerar inte ras när det gäller människor och därför ska ordet inte användas alls. Det som åsyftas i detta sammanhang är nästan alltid ras i biologisk mening och inte hur begreppet används för att beskriva en social konstruktion och allmän kategorisering som tenderar att ha reella och skadliga samhällliga konsekvenser.

Rasifiering, det vill säga tendensen att tillskriva skilda gruppstillhörigheter utgående från yttre egenskaper såsom hudfärg och namn, är ett centralt