

*The Vices of Learning: Morality and Knowledge at Early Modern Universities.*  
Sari Kivistö.

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This is a study of criticism of scholars for their alleged academic vices by other scholars. Most of the evidence comes from about one hundred academic treatises, the majority twenty- to sixty-page Latin dissertations written by German academics between 1670 and 1730. The definition of *dissertation* is broad; they were largely polemical treatises. Most came from German Protestant scholars, many with links to the University of Leipzig, and some of pietistic leaning. None of the authors of these works is much remembered by posterity. While the dissertations had some satirical elements, they were primarily treatises in moral theology, because they cataloged and described the vices of scholars. The polemical dissertations took this form because intellectuals of those years were addicted to literary moralizing. The author, an Academy of Finland Research Fellow, treats them seriously.

In the view of the German scholars, academic vices were the by-products of the seven deadly sins of traditional Christian moral theology. The author clusters the academic vices under four general headings: self-love and pride, the desire for fame and vainglory, logomachy (warring over words), and futile curiosity. Kivistö devotes a chapter to each. Of course, none of these vices has ever been limited to academics. But according to the dissertations studied, they produced unique manifestations among scholars. For example, self-love led academics to overestimate themselves and to vilify others. Another form of self-love was the pursuit of novelty. Logomachy led to futile quarreling over words of little meaning. The desire for fame led to acceptable glory if one displayed academic merit through good publications. But it also produced the itch to

write, which led to many useless tomes, book collecting by men who could not read the books they gathered, and libraries full of useless books.

Somewhat surprisingly, there was relatively little mention of atheism as an academic vice. When the accusation of atheism appeared, it was seen as the consequence of the vice of idle curiosity. Another surprise is the prominence in the dissertations of the works of Juan Luis Vives (1492–1540), especially his *De Vita et Moribus Eruditi* (1531), which was often cited. Vives questioned the value of worldly glory, because he saw it as the source of evil. Following his lead, German authors saw it as leading to a sinful pride in learning. The German critics of academic vices also cited Erasmus, Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, and Italian humanists.

Kivistö pays most attention to the works of Michael Lilienthal (1685–1750), a Lutheran divine, librarian, professor of literary studies, and book collector of Königsberg. Lilienthal published a dissertation entitled *De Machiavellismo Literario* (1713). Literary Machiavellians were men who offered a deceitful display of learning or were insincere scholars who profited from the credulity of others. Another figure who called out academics was Johann Burkhard Mencken (1674–1732) at the University of Leipzig. He invented the term *charlatan* in his *De Charlataneria Eruditorum* of 1715. One wonders if he was an ancestor of the famous American critic and satirist H. L. Mencken (1880–1956).

Kivistö has produced an interesting and carefully organized monograph that includes appendixes. The author does not link the attacks on academic vices to contemporary events or situations, except to note that this was the beginning of the Enlightenment era in which criticism of universities for not teaching practical learning was growing. The book lacks examples of funny satires, because the critics took their task seriously, as does Kivistö. And the academic vices that German scholars excoriated in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have not disappeared from the academy.

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