

Political Reason and the Language of Change. Reform and Improvement in Early Modern Europe. Hrsg. von Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Ere Nokkala, Marten Seppel und Keith Tribe. (Political Economies of Capitalism, 1600–1850, Bd. 2.) Routledge. London – New York 2023. 284 S. ISBN 978-1-032-07389-7. (€ 130,–.)

This fine volume makes available twelve freshly published studies in two sections that each provide updates on different ongoing projects from a wide range of scholarship encompassing such varied areas as the intellectual history of political and economic ideas, conceptual history, and Enlightenment studies. The aim of this collection of essays is to review the key implications of the Enlightenment as an age of reform as they have been discussed by eminent scholars including Reinhart Koselleck, Franco Venturi, Daniel Roche, Jonathan Israel, John Robertson, and Ritchie Robertson. Considering the rich but ambiguous findings of scholarship that speaks of early modern improvement in rather general terms, this volume provides a critical account of its subject in two ways. First, despite the widespread use of the analogy of an “age of reform” in literature, it reassesses conceptual concerns about the semantic gap between early modern and modern views of improvement, emphasizing that the forward-looking progressive perspective outstripped the interest of contemporaries and subsequently focused on “revolution,” the “counter-concept of reform.” Second, the volume posits semantic complexity and questions the background of the very idea of improvement, suggesting that it emerged in the age of Enlightenment through interactions and confluences between ideas and concepts but did not constitute a comprehensive language that was necessarily amenable to scrutiny within a rigorous analytical framework. As for Koselleck’s grand thesis on temporalization and politicization, as the volume’s title indicates, it was politicized and rested on a conceptual foundation that limited the contribution of Enlightenment consciousness of improvement to the anticipation of the modern age. From the point of view of political economy and the history of cameralism, this polyphonic language of change was, in most cases, inextricably at odds with developments in the nineteenth century.

Most of the essays in the volume confirm this suggestion that continuity between the language of repair and reform (the latter often functioning as a rhetorical strategy) was not necessarily a given. In this sense, the contributions of Keith Tribe and Martin Seppel from the first section provide more insights into the cultural embeddedness of reform and betterment in Anglo-French and German perspectives, suggesting that the rise of “improvements” in both cases could be understood more as a link in the intercultural exchange. Reform as a rhetorically ambivalent program of correction and improvement is also the central problem of the essays by Alexandre Mendes Cunha, Sergey Poliskoy, and Adriana Luna-Fabritius. Providing a complement to the IBERICOS conceptual history project, Mendes Cunha studies the case of eighteenth-century Portugal and highlights the moment when the conservative meaning of reform gained a paradoxical extension in Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho’s texts, first as a change for preservation and then as a change for advancement. In the context of the Russian Enlightenment, Poliskoy’s essay explores the shift in the intellectual foundations of the language of change between Peter I and Catherine II, from orthodox theological mysticism (recreation) to Enlightenment reformism (correction). Similarly, Luna-Fabritius’s essay revisits the canonical enlightened thinker, and shows in detail why Francesco Genovesi’s thoughts on reform do not fit the model described in Venturi’s study of reform and utopia in the Enlightenment.

In contrast to the conceptual history section, the studies in the second part focus on the contextual analyses. Ere Nokkala’s essay returns to the discussion on Venturi’s Enlightenment, and shows, through the texts of key cameralists (Georg Heinrich Zincke, Johann Heinrich Gottlob Justi, Johann Friedrich Pfeiffer), the shift in perception of the personified improver agent (projector/project-maker). Addressing these “reforms” and “projects” from an East Central European perspective, Ivo Cerman’s essay is of particular interest, as it provides an overview based on archival sources of Joseph Sonnenfels’ contribution to the codification process of the Habsburg Monarchy’s imperfect flagship project “Politischer

Kodex." Alexandra Ortolja-Baird's essay discusses the dissemination of key cameralist texts (by Sonnenfels and Johann Peter Frank) through translations (by figures including ex-Jesuit Ludwig Mitterpacher, who was of Hungarian descent) in Habsburg-Lombardy as primary initiatives supporting the adoption of the concepts of *Polizey* and *medizinische Polizey* in the Milanese Enlightenment. Moving away from Central European cameralism, the other studies focus on southern and northern perspectives on the language of change. While Edward Jones Corredera's essay investigates the memoirs of Melchor Rafael Macanaz and asks about the extent to which the writings of high diplomacy could have shaped Enlightened reform aimed at reorganizing the Spanish empire, related studies by Måns Jansson and Göran Rydén and by Lars Magnusson seek to explore cameralist roots behind the conventional Smithian interpretation of the history of Swedish political economy.

The volume concludes with an epilogue by Kari Saastamoinen, in which he discusses Samuel Pufendorf's contribution to the eighteenth-century discourse on improvement with special regard to the main aims of the volume. With regard to the latter, it should be stressed that, by providing conceptual reflections, this volume represents a notable contribution to bringing together three subjects rarely encountered in the same context (conceptual history, Enlightenment, improvement-reform) and provides a revised picture of the conceptual synergies involved in early modern improvement, which are often confused with the modernist (and anachronistic) idea of progress. Given the volume's focus on cameralism and economic discourse, however, this interest highlights the confluence of a synchronic and a diachronic perspective, both of which would have merited broader explanation either in the introduction or in the essays.

First, beyond the seemingly obvious argument according to which the modern discussion on improvement was predominantly shaped by economic thought, this volume does not explicate how this was the case with eighteenth-century cameralism. Looking at cameralist discourse which evolved alongside other influences (philosophy, theology, politics, geography, economy) from the early modern period onwards and developed its concept of improvement through knowledge exchanges can provide only a selective picture of the eighteenth-century language of change in its reduced form of economic thought. As for the second point, given that the issue constantly arises in quotations used in the essays (pp. 27–28, 92, 103, 179, 223, 225, 231, 260), one may wonder whether the omission of "perfection" or *Vollkommenheit* from the analysis, as a central and related concept of improvement and betterment in German-speaking Central Europe, is not a missed opportunity for scholarship.

All in all, *Political Reason and the Language of Change* covers an academic topic of significant interest for specialists and non-experts across a wide range of scholarship. The volume's greatest merit is that it problematizes the diverse conceptual background of the language of change and dares to open Pandora's box. Rather than an ambitious conceptual clarification, however, the essays in this volume are able to capture only fragments and diverse perspectives, which hopefully will form the basis of a more comprehensive account of the conceptual history of the improvement in the eighteenth century.

Budapest

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Kirche und Kulturtransfer. Ungarn und Zentraleuropa in der Frühen Neuzeit. Hrsg. von Maria-Elisabeth Brunert, András Forgó und Arno Strohmeier. (Schriftenreihe zur Neueren Geschichte, Bd. 40, Neue Folge 3.) Aschendorff. Münster 2019. VI, 258 S., Ill., Kt. ISBN 978-3-402-14770-2. (€ 43,-)

Der vorliegende Band enthält die Beiträge des internationalen Kolloquiums „Kirche als Kulturträger“, das vom 10. bis 12. Mai 2012 an der Katholischen Péter-Pázmány-Universität in Piliscaba stattfand. In 15 Fallstudien gehen die Autorinnen und Autoren einer Reihe verschiedener Fragestellungen nach, die sich mit der Rolle und Funktion der verschiede-