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** The surnames are listed in alphabetical order.*

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BOOK REVIEW

Joel Mokyr (ed.)

A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018, ISBN: 978-0-691-18096-0, 417 pp., \$22.95)

This book's primary aim is to discover the reasons why early modern Europe, as it was at that period, became very receptive to novel ideas, theories and concepts that were springing up in the era of Columbus and Newton (1500-1700). It goes further to explain why this growth trend did not happen in other places in the world. This book is an acknowledgement that culture has become a very vital concept when discussions of economic growth are raised. By so doing, this book has achieved quite a milestone. Mokyr also makes his points clear in the book. Culture, which is the sum total of people's ideas, customs and social behaviour, was a determining attribute to the changes witnessed in society. This he does by leaning on views from Economics, Science & Technology and cultural development. Unlike his predecessors, Mokyr is careful of stirring the hornet's nest with his arguments, so he draws a rather thin line in relating culture and Institutions.

The book is categorised into five distinct subthemes: Evolution, Culture and Economic History; Cultural Entrepreneurs and Economic Change, 1500-1700; Innovation, Competition and Pluralism in Europe, 1500-1700; Prelude to the Enlightenment; and Cultural Change in the East and West. The sections spin around different subjects and fields such as Economics, Cultural Studies, History and Science.

Mokyr begins his argument with a startling revelation of our sparse knowledge of institutions that spurred the Industrial Revolution. While we may know about how these institutions came to be, through various battles fought and won, power struggles and alliances amongst Europe's powerful dynasties, there is little we know about how useful knowledge played its part in the

evolution of the Industrial Revolution. Knowledge in this regard appears in both its formal and informal structure.

He goes ahead to explore the relationship between these journeys of discovery and the initial stages of experimental science, whereby there was a growing need to ascertain certain grey areas in the knowledge gap. Mokyr moves on further to draw inspiration from the notion of culture as outlined by noted anthropologists like Lynn White, to grapple with those "beliefs, values and preferences capable of affecting behaviour... and that are shared by some subset of society" (p.8). He claims that culture serves not only as of the foundation of a society's institutions but also gives credence to these institutions. Many scholars have posited on how the Enlightenment was a key factor to Europe's rise. This, he totally agrees with, claiming that it further rises to continual incitements in the pursuit of useful knowledge. However, he has come to view the rise of the Enlightenment in the late period of the 17th century, as being more of a protracted and cumulative change that took place in the thought process of Europe's literary elites.

Europe, as it were, was neither better structured nor more progressive than various Asian societies. Europe's major breakthrough came only in the middle 1600s when it basically adopted originaive means of acquiring and validating useful knowledge. The republic of letters served as this originaive means, and it describes a community of scholars, whether in Philosophy or in the literary world, who had such a socially cosmopolitan spread and were also disseminated geographically. These scholars often lit out debatable ideas, which were really not

revolutionary in the sense of the word, while adopting a collaborative stance with each other.

This republic of letters fundamentally created two interconnected markets. One was a market for ideas. In this case, Mathematics and Experimentation were given prominent places in the scheme of things. The other market was for ambitious scholars who sought fame, fortune and clout across Europe. In this sense, a scientist such as Galileo, who had achieved a considerable amount of influence, would tower over any two obscure scientists of that period.

That is to say, in essence, a system was adopted to diffuse useful knowledge. This occurred over a period of time spanning generations and was not just a one-off achievement. Consequently, for Mokyr, science and technology in Europe did not grow the way it did as a result of previous cultures, but as a renunciation of these cultures. At the centre of this renunciation was the republic of letters, which in doing away with the clammed up traditional approach to knowledge circulation prevalent in Europe at that time, allowed knowledge to be shared, criticised and corrected. Its system of feedback mechanism, Mokyr says, allowed the republic of letters to contribute majorly to the spread of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, in turn, gave rise to the economic growth that occurred around Europe.

This means that over a span of several centuries, two paradigm shifts occurred in the ideology of the average European. First, the pursuit of knowledge, especially in the area of getting to know deeply about nature, came to be viewed as an instrument for improving mankind's lot. Secondly, the adoption of novel ideas and new ways of doing things was no longer seen as the exclusive preserve of the elite, beneficial only to them. Instead, advance in technology and organisational change became increasingly accepted as being an indispensable tool in taking the populace out of poverty.

The critical institutional differences between Europe and China in the periods leading up to the 19th century is well laid out by Mokyr. Coming to most distinct economic factors such as transport networks, protection of intellectual property rights and a free hand for the market to run, these differences were either conspicuous or insignificant within Europe when compared between Europe and China.

Seen purely from a political economy point of view, the China of Qing's dynasty was quite

different from early modern Europe. To this end, a ***Culture Of Growth*** is an important body of work. It contains ideas, propositions, historical facts, biographies of influential scholars, writers and scientists, and it is a confirmation of the author's expertise of a broad range of topics in the economics of culture and comparative economic history of an emerging Europe and China.

Hopefully, this book should rouse future well-researched body of work, taking from the plethora of ideas and insights it contains in, which are in need of further development by expert economic historians. It lays the framework on how scholars should theories the different interactions among institutions, cultures, politics and modernisation, by both pushing aside focus on the Industrial Revolution to the backburner while laying more emphasis on the earlier centuries, and by conducting comparative studies of scientific advancements, institutions and modernisation.

Dr Meltem INCE-YENILMEZ

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Economics at Yasar University*

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**“America in Afghanistan:
Foreign Policy and Decision Making
From Bush to Obama to Trump”**
by Dr. Sharifullah Dorani