

Aufklärung habsburgisch: Staatsbildung, Wissenskultur und
Geschichtspolitik in Zentraleuropa 1750–1850. By Franz Leander
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The name of Franz Leander Fillafer, a prolific young Austrian historian, has a familiar ring among historians of Central European Enlightened thought thanks to his numerous thought-provoking studies on the topic. These works include his state-of-the-art overviews of current research problems concerning Habsburg Central Europe. These studies, which transcend both the German-oriented, Vienna-centered Austrian historiography and the national historiographies of the region, take the complexity of the so-called Enlightened thought into consideration. One might think, for instance, of his seminal 2013 article “Die Aufklärung in der Habsburgermonarchie und ihr Erbe: Ein Forschungsüberblick” or “Whose Enlightenment?” published four years later (and was originally written as a commentary to the special issue of the *Austrian History Yearbook, The Enlightenment in Central Europe: Structures, Spaces, Translations*). If one considers his works from a Hungarian viewpoint, however, Fillafer’s profound and resourceful contributions to the field are scarcely known in Hungary, perhaps only by a narrower circle of historians with an international outlook, even though he often uses recent Hungarian secondary literature to support his wider Habsburg Central European and even global perspective of history-writing.

Fillafer has been working as a research fellow at the Institute for Cultural Studies and History of Theater of the Austrian Academy of Sciences since 2018. Though *Aufklärung habsburgisch* is his first monograph, he edited several volumes in German and English on modern historiography, Josephinism, and the global history of positivism. Fillafer is currently working on a project dedicated to the history of the peculiar (plural and polycentric) culture of knowledge of the Habsburg Monarchy as a space of thought and praxis between 1760 and 1860. The present book is partly based on his unpublished doctoral thesis (*Escaping the Enlightenment: Liberal Thought and the Legacies of the Eighteenth Century, 1780–1848*), which he defended at the University of Konstanz in 2012.

The book refutes the established and popular historical image of the Habsburg Monarchy as a bastion against the Enlightenment and revolution and treats the Enlightenment in the Habsburg Monarchy as a long-term historical event and source of creative power. In order to do this, the volume’s

focus is clearly detached from the accepted Western European patterns of interpretation, particularly from the narrative of a radical, secular, and democratic Enlightenment. In each chapter, Fillafer challenges some established historical narratives, breaking down the entrenched and stubbornly lasting old patterns of history writing in the field, and by refuting them, Fillafer manages to show the complexity of Enlightened thought. As he claims, during the period of the Enlightenment, the Habsburg Monarchy was not a bulwark of the old regime (as has so often been argued in the secondary literature), and the Enlightenment did not culminate in revolution. Rather, the book explores how the production and use of knowledge, and the state-building process were connected to each other in the unusually long period between 1750 and 1850 in the Habsburg Monarchy. By doing so, Fillafer reinterprets not only the meaning of the Enlightenment in the region, but also the inner constitution of the Monarchy, and he clearly shows that the Enlightenment could be successful without any radical ideas and that it proved more vivid in its Habsburg variants than has been supposed.

The book is divided into nine main chapters, with an additional introductory chapter and a conclusion which gives an overall summary of the topic. Seven chapters are dedicated to various fields related the Enlightenment: patriotism, the relationship between Roman Catholicism and the Enlightenment, the relationships between Church and state, knowledge and scholarship, the economy, jurisprudence and legal praxis, and, finally, the influence of the Enlightenment and reactions to the revolution. The last chapter, based on the analytical parts, tries to answer the question, “What was the Enlightenment?”

The first chapter, entitled “From the love of the country to the springtime of the peoples 1770–1848,” deals with the history of the various offers of collective identity patterns for the multiethnic empire. Fillafer emphasizes the shift of patriotic loyalty from *regnum* to *patria*, during which process the patriotic ideas of Enlightened thinkers entered the attempts of collective identity-building next to the old references, e.g., the love of the country, dynastic loyalty, Catholicism, and the territorial and linguistic-based variants of patriotism. Fillafer points out that state and language-based patriotism did not interfere with the older patterns. Rather, they enriched them. This story is told through the efforts of two main figures, the jurist Joseph von Sonnenfels and the Tirolese-born historian, Joseph von Hormayr, whose names are watermarking epochs in the development of imperial collective identity patterns. Sonnenfels elaborated an Enlightened program of common patriotism for the Monarchy which, however, led, after it was transferred to the provinces, to the strengthening of collective identities

of the provincial elites against the central government. During the era of the Napoleonic Wars, Hormayr developed a definition of the nation that included a mixture of ethnolinguistically based definitions and also loyalty to the Habsburg dynasty. The “provincial” or “country patriotism” (*Landespatritismus*) and the “imperial loyalty” (*gesamtstaatlichen Loyalität*) coexisted harmonically for a long time. Nevertheless, during the Pre-March Period, this relationship began to be looser, and common history disintegrated into national histories by constituting the idea of a normative past based on the “ancient liberty” (*Urfreiheit*) of a particular nation. In the Post-Napoleonic era, the liberals of certain provinces fought under the aegis of the common idea of the “friend of the peoples” (*Völkerfreundschaft*) against the absolutistic government. This situation changed with the revolutions of 1848, when the image of the enemy turned into the inner enemies of the nation and the neighboring nations.

The subsequent chapters deal with the phenomenon of the “Catholic Enlightenment” and its transition. This term rings a familiar bell in the Hungarian academic discourse, as inquiries have been made in this direction recently. The second chapter discusses the relationship between the “Baroque” and the Enlightenment, reflecting on the narratives through which the representatives of the Enlightenment detached themselves from the earlier period. The book emphasizes that this transition took place differently from the narratives that interpreted the process as a dialectic of the repressive counterreformation and the triumph of the Enlightenment. Fillafer also challenges the long-prevailing narratives on Josephinism when he focuses on the era of Maria Theresa and emphasizes the differences between the Theresian and the Josephinist manners of reform. As for the relationship between the Catholic Church and the state, he shows that this alliance was rather an ideal than reality. During the years of the French Revolution, the Church conceived the ideal image of the Theresian era, in the center of which stood the virtues of piety and dynastic loyalty, while neglecting the efforts by which Maria Theresa subordinated the Church to the state. Fillafer also calls attention to Joseph’s reform efforts that did not represent a new model of Church policy. Rather, they could be interpreted as the successor to a preceding political paradigm that was directed towards the attempts at regaining the historic provincial princely rights. Fillafer points out that, after the revolutionary period, Catholicism self-provincialized itself, meaning that the Catholic Church accepted negative heterostereotypes of provincialism as positive autostereotypes. Fillafer convincingly demonstrates that during the

period of restoration, the Enlightenment remained vivid both in practice and intellectually.

The fourth chapter, titled “Knowledge-cultures of Vormärz,” reappraises the anti-idealist, anti-speculative, and objectivist Austrian ways of scientific and philosophical thinking in the first half of the nineteenth century, which were developed in the spirit of the conservative Enlightenment. In doing so, it challenges the established narratives by showing the many even controversial ways in which the philosophical legacy of the Enlightenment remained vivid in erudite circles. It shows, on the one hand, the variants of neglected Austrian idealism, that is, the reception of Kant, including its Catholic version, and, on the other hand, the reception of the work of Bernard Bolzano, a Bohemian Catholic priest, mathematician, philosopher, and representative of philosophical realism who continued the earlier scholastic tradition of Leibniz and Wolff. This chapter also sheds light on the process during which the legacy of Bolzano was appropriated and reinterpreted by the advocates of Johann Friedrich Herbart. Another tendency of the Austrian philosophical anti-idealism was marked by the prevalence of “positive knowledge” in general, an attitude demonstrated by the historical-critical Bible-hermeneutics and the liberal nature of research in the era. From this viewpoint, positive knowledge served anti-revolutionary ends and proved useful to the state because it strengthened the status quo, though it also became a predecessor to liberal positivism in the long run.

The fifth chapter (“From mercantile regime to internal market: The Monarchy as economic space”) deals with economic issues and analyzes the socio-economic transformation parallel to the change of political economy. It zooms in on the transformation of the legacy of Sonnenfels’s mercantilism during the Pre-March Period. During this process, the doctrines of Sonnenfels were filtered, selected, reinterpreted, and turned into tools for the liberalization of the Monarchy’s economy. Due to the efforts of liberalization, the old agrarian property system had changed, though it remained limited to the hereditary lands in the period, which economically integrated the Austrian and the Bohemian provinces. However, on the peripheries of the empire, the power of the landlords was restored after the Josephinist experiments. For a Hungarian historian, one of the most interesting parts of the book is a subchapter found in this chapter which deals with the economic and constitutional politics of the Kingdom of Hungary from Joseph II to 1848. In the Pre-March Period, Hungary, with its separate economy and agrarian system, appeared as a conservative model and a counterpart to the Austrian and Bohemian tendencies.

The sixth chapter (The praxis of natural law and the genesis of the empire: Codification, rule of law, history of science) deals with constitutional and legal issues and stresses the significance of natural law, which was taught at universities and academies in both public and private law in the pre-March period. As Fillafer points out, references to natural law formed a political language rather than a strict doctrine, which could be used for different purposes. In the Habsburg Monarchy, which obviously was a heterogeneous composite state, from the mid-eighteenth century, the language of natural law served as a superior norm, which enabled the binding of provincial private law. It also made them mutually translatable. Furthermore, in the field of public law, based on the tenets of Karl Anton Martini, natural law provided a founding narrative for the state rooted in the idea of the social contract. As for the provincial estates, they also related to and used the idea of the contract in different ways during the period. While the noble estates before and around 1790 argued about the idea of political representation in a contractualist manner, later, they derived their corporative rights from their landed property. Parallel to this, regional patriotic historical narratives were also developed which proved the existence of a provincial social contract instead of an abstract one, supporting the existence of the Monarchy as a whole. As Fillafer emphasizes, natural law made it possible to extend rights from below and promote the transformation of the Monarchy into a parliamentary system.

The last chapter “The heritage of Enlightenment and the preclusion of revolution (*Revolutionsabwehr*): Images of the self and the enemy of the restoration” demonstrates the self-image of the restoration, which manifested itself in the struggle to prevent the revolution during the 1790s. The advocates of Joseph II tried to defend the Enlightenment, treating it as the best tool to guarantee the security of the state and of religion. Nevertheless, after 1800, during the Napoleonic Wars, a new group of intellectuals emerged, the so-called Romantics. Tension grew between these two groups, and this tension eventually proved decisive in the debates over the character of the restoration. After 1848, while the Austro-German liberals declared continuity with the era of Joseph II and saw the Pre-March Period as a period of repression, conservatives, similarly to Bohemian and Hungarian liberals, saw continuity between Josephinism and the pre-March period. They shared a common view of history and opposed neo-absolutism.

From a general methodological viewpoint, two main characteristics of Fillafer’s approach to history writing could be distinguished. First, his interest

in the history of knowledge is directed towards the horizons of the history of philosophy and historiography. Second, his works are marked by a very high level of methodological and epistemological reflection (even by German academic standards). These features of Fillafer's approach are perhaps challenging for scholars who have been trained in and work in less reflective, less theory-oriented academic milieus. The length of his book (627 pages in total), Fillafer's high expectations concerning his reader's knowledge of the field, and the unconventional structure and narrative style of the book make it even more difficult at times to follow the narrative.

The complexity of the topic (a complexity the roots of which lie mostly in the multiethnic, composite character of the Habsburg Monarchy) demands rigorous use of a wide array of sources, and Fillafer has done impressive work from this perspective. He draws on a vast body of secondary literature and primary literature of various genres, and he does not limit himself to sources in German and Latin. On the contrary, he also uses works written in Croatian, Czech, and Hungarian. Fillafer also conducted research in various archives in the region, including the Austrian and Czech state and provincial archives and even Hungarian collections, if to a lesser extent. These efforts make his work exceptional in the field, and he boldly and persuasively challenges the German- and Austrian-centered narratives on individual topics. The focus of this book, however, is bound to be limited, and thus the depth of the narratives is at times uneven, as Fillafer's main interest still lies with the Czech-Austrian core region, which in some cases developed in ways which differed strikingly from the processes underway on the peripheries, including the Kingdom of Hungary (see the fifth chapter). All things considered, this impressive and myth-busting project sheds new light not only on the more or less apparent and hidden currents of the legacy of the Enlightenment in the Habsburg Lands, but in accordance with the changing and even contested production and use of this knowledge, it also presents a convincing, overarching, and complex narrative on the state-building process over the course of a hundred-year period.

Ágoston Nagy
University of Public Service, Budapest
nagy.agoston@uni-nke.hu