Review Essay

Christian Olaf Christiansen. *Progressive Business: An Intellectual History of the Role of Business in American Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 275 pp. ISBN-9780198701033, $96.00 (cloth).

Progressive Business is an ambitious work of intellectual history that seeks to identify a body of thought Christian Olaf Christiansen argues has been largely overlooked by scholars. In particular, Christiansen argues that an ideological "market reformist" (also referred to as "progressive business") movement developed after the Civil War dedicated to balancing the values of profit and social protection. This market reformism, Christiansen suggests, has helped business interests weather crises of confidence since the late nineteenth century that otherwise may have prompted America to turn away from capitalism. *Progressive Business* relies primarily on published sources and draws much of its strength from Christiansen's ability to parse ideas into categories—the book incorporates charts—that help illustrate the ideological tenets of market reformism from the 1870s to the 2000s.

Christiansen breaks his study into five chronological parts. The first examines literature from 1870 to 1900, including the likes of Washington Gladden, Richard T. Ely, and William Graham Sumner, in which Christiansen argues that the threat of organized labor prompted the development of paternalistic capitalism. The second covers from the 1930s to the 1960s, a period wherein business sought to counter the expanded influence of both labor and the government, and includes names such as Chester Barnard, Elton Mayo, and Peter Drucker. The third examines works from 1945 through the 1960s, including that of William Whyte, John Galbraith, and Milton Friedman, in an analysis that pits these thinkers against critics from both the left and right of the political spectrum. The fourth part covers from the 1970s through the 2000s, a period of "entrepreneurial capitalism" informed by thinkers such as Thomas Friedman, Thomas Frank, and Stephen Covey. The book ends with a study of the post-Cold War market reformism rooted in analysis by Francis Fukuyama, in which Christiansen argues that multinational issues such as globalization, human rights, and ecology have supplanted the domestic issues that once drove the development of market reformism.

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When it comes to historiography, Christiansen argues that the market reformism he outlines speaks to earlier scholarly concepts such as *corporate liberalism* popular in the 1960s and 1970s. More specifically, Christiansen positions *Progressive Business* alongside work done by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello since 2000 and, more conceptually, to Karl Polanyi's work exploring the dialectic between marketization and social protection. In a larger sense, *Progressive Business* also follows in the footsteps of James Kloppenberg's *Uncertain Victory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), which sought to map the intellectual "via media" between capitalism and socialism.

Progressive Business makes an important contribution to the history of ideas by linking together business thinkers on a structural level. This may be most evident in the charts that Christiansen includes at the end of chapters that break a particular period's market reformism into seven areas of analysis: key reform ideas, social justification, economic justification, what was being rejected, who had responsibility, responsibility toward whom or what, and ideal types. This sort of structural understanding of ideas helps resolve tensions between synchronic and diachronic analysis that often arise in studies of intellectual and cultural history. Essentially, Christiansen approaches a particular period by taking an ideological snapshot and breaking it down into core concepts. The book's wider analytical approach is to chronologically line up the snapshots, step back, and identify the patterns that illustrate market reformism.

While Christiansen's structural analysis allows for both synchronic and diachronic analysis, it also places market reformist ideas in rarefied air seemingly detached from actual events. The book could have benefitted from archival research to link market reformist ideas directly to changing business practices and the softening of the American public's attitudes toward capitalism during times of crisis. The crises themselves, such as the Populist movement and the Great Depression, are treated as incidental backdrops rather than opportunities to document attitudes toward capitalism within the American business community and public at large. Also, Christiansen's study inextricably skips over the years from 1900 to 1930, a period of heady business development that witnessed the rise of corporate liberalism as well as associationalism. Another rarefied aspect of Christiansen's study is its sharp focus on white, male thinkers who more-or-less represent America's mainstream. One is left wondering where touchstone figures such as feminist economist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935) and advocates of black capitalism such as Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) fit into the development of market reformism.

Despite these limits, *Progressive Business* is a useful book, especially for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars

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already familiar with the larger political, economic, social, and cultural developments happening in the United States since the Civil War. The body of ideas to which Christiansen gives shape may prove invaluable to those looking to anchor their own research and to those looking for a primer for preliminary exams.

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