

Thomas Leinkauf and Karin Hartbecke, eds. *Der Naturbegriff in der Frühen Neuzeit: Semantische Perspektiven zwischen 1500 und 1700*.

Frühe Neuzeit 110. Studien und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur und Kultur im europäischen Kontext. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2005. vi + 336 pp. index. illus. tpls. €84. ISBN: 3-484-36610-9.

The idea of nature in early modern Europe has attracted quite a bit of attention among both historians of science and philosophy in recent years. Most of the predominantly excellent publications this interest has generated share the rejection of a historical narrative that directly links the idea of nature of the Scientific Revolution to the present, thus suggesting, as Lorraine Daston puts it, that “all of modernity [could] be found tiny and preformed in the early modern” (“The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe,” *Configurations* 6 [1998], 171). This volume has to be counted among them. The authors of its twelve essays, eleven of which are written in German, one in Italian, carefully avoid such figures of thought and analyze their respective subject matter in its own right.

As Thomas Leinkauf puts it, the different aspects of the early modern concept of nature constitute a “complex syndrome that escapes every one-dimensional semantic approach” (13). His introductory essay, in large part a broad overview of the intellectual history of the idea or ideas of nature, from ancient Greece up to the early modern period, starts with the reminder that in the latter period no clear dividing line had yet been drawn between the natural sciences and the humanities. Correspondingly, the term *nature* in the seventeenth century still encompassed the

two sets of problems that we today delegate to these two groups of disciplines: both matters of the material and the spiritual.

Hence, it is only consequential that the volume includes essays on the meanings of nature not only in the more obvious areas of the history of science and philosophy, but also in religious-theological, magical-alchemical, and literary contexts, and in the context of music theory. They approach such diverse topics as Pietro Pomponazzi's reading of Aristotle's *De anima* (Enno Rudolph, "Die Seele innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Natur"), the relationship between the concept of nature and the methodology of the baroque universal science (Martin Mulsow, "*Arcana naturae*: Verborgene Ursachen und universelle Methode von Fernel bis Gemma und Bodin"), the empractical approach to nature of sixteenth-century Paracelsianism (Wilhelm Kühlmann, "Anmerkungen zum Verhältnis von Natur und Kunst im Theoriezusammenhang des paracelsistischen Hermetismus"), Robert Fludd's kabbalistic cosmology (Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, "Kosmos und Kabbala: Robert Fludds Naturkonzeption"), and the physiological roots of Francis Glisson's conception of energetic nature (Karin Hartbecke, "Natur und Selbstbewegung: Die Umdeutung des galenistischen Naturbegriffs durch den Anatomen Francis Glisson").

Other essays address Giordano Bruno's concept of nature vis-à-vis the Aristotelian tradition (Wolfgang Neuser, "Der Naturbegriff bei Giordano Bruno"), Jacob Böhme's concept of nature (Massimo Luigi Bianchi, "*Ewige e zeitliche Natur* in Jacob Böhme"), a crucial shift in the notion of nature in the late René Descartes (Gábor Boros, "*Dieu ou la nature*: Die Umkehrung des cartesischen Naturbegriffs im Spätwerk Descartes"), and Isaac Newton's solution — or, rather, lack of a solution — to the *deus sive natura* problem (Michaela Boenke, "Gott und seine Mitregenten: Theologische, stoische und platonische Elemente in der Naturtheorie Newtons"). Moreover, two contributors deal with music and poetry, respectively: Michael Zywiez analyzes the influence of Aristotelian natural philosophy on the eminent sixteenth-century composer Adrian Willaert ("'Perfectio igitur delectationis musicae consistit in eius perfecta cognitione': Adrian Willaerts Motette *Victimae paschali laudes* und die Aristoteles-Rezeption in Venedig"), and Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer sketches the fortunes of the natural philosophical didactic poem ("Poetische Darstellungen des Kosmos in der Nachfolge des Lukrez: Bruno – Kepler – Goethe").

Most of the essays display a high degree of specialization, provide valuable insights, and will be of great interest to scholars working in the respective fields. The broad scope of the volume is especially laudable. Some readers, however, might be critical of the lack of contextualization and attention to actual practices in most of the contributions. They concentrate largely on the internal analysis of published and unpublished texts written by the respective historical figure or figures in question. Furthermore, no attempt was made at synthesizing the individual findings. While this may be due to the overall aim of avoiding reductionism, the total lack of cross-referencing among the individual contributions remains astonishing. Still more astonishing is the fact that although the reader is told in a

footnote that the volume is based on a conference, it remains silent about which conference it was.

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