

A TRAIN READING MARATHON. RETROSPECTIVE REMARKS ON GESCHICHTLICHE GRUNDBEGRIFFE

Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland. Studienausgabe. 2004. Edited by **Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck**. 7 volumes + a double register volume, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Kari Palonen

In Jean-Paul Sartre's *La nausée* (1938), the hero, Antoine Rocquetin, calls a fellow reader at the Bouville library *l'Autodidacte* after having noticed that he is reading all of the works housed in the library in alphabetical order. I have transformed myself into such an autodidactic reader of the soft cover edition of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (below: **GG**). The *opus magnum* of the German *Begriffsgeschichte* was republished in 2004 as an offprint of the original edition from 1972 to 1997, with the addition of a short preface by Reinhart Koselleck and a separate list of corrections. It took me approximately 10 months to read through the volumes, which I did mainly during my train travels, my favourite place to read. Below are some of my experiences surrounding this reading marathon.

Why read like the Autodidact?

There are good reasons for following the practice of the *Autodidact* if one plans to endeavour to read an opus like **GG**. The more selective

reader will inevitably find it virtually impossible to plough through all 9,000 pages. The point is not to read the entire work with equal intensity but to attempt to get a detailed overview on the complete lexicon. My main impetus to attempt this kind of *Autodidactesque* reading was to avoid relying solely on the programmatic declarations of the editors and to acquire my own personal view on the varying practices and procedures of this lexical style of conceptual history, as realised in the articles of the **GG**.

Another reason for reading like an Autodidact lies in the goal of attaining a certain degree of substantial mastery of the thoughts and interpretations included in the **GG**. Prior to this lecture I had, of course, read a number of the **GG** articles, although I only had a vague impression of the detailed content of the volumes as a whole. I have since gained an extensive overview both of the main topics included in the **GG** articles and the extent to which they serve as both a valuable handbook and a substantial piece of scholarship in the genre of conceptual history. And this has better equipped me to be able to recommend the **GG** articles to my students and colleagues as well as to warn them about the work's more disappointing articles.

On many occasions, I was delighted to find interesting themes and original forms of conceptual history in articles which I normally would not have read. My reading marathon allowed me simultaneously to gain a much improved understanding of the German politics and history of the *Sattelzeit* period from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. The same holds true for several concepts of legal, philosophical, sociological and economic theorising, which I would previously never have concerned myself with.

Finally, the autodidactical method also helped me to realise how the world changed over the course of the editing process of the **GG**. Contrary to Koselleck's and Werner Conze's original plan, the process of writing and publishing the entire lexicon, from the programmatic plan to its final realisation in the register volumes, took some 35 years. During this period, both the principles of writing conceptual history and the world around the concepts dealt with in the volumes changed considerably. As such, the ideal of the production of a lexicon that could offer a simultaneous view of all the concepts could not be upheld. Most conspicuously, the *Ausblicks* of the final two volumes already refer to the German unification of 1989-1990, whereas in the other volumes the DDR still existed and was referred to as such. It is almost as if politics and conceptual history have permeated the **GG** volumes themselves.

In the review, I will focus most of my attention on a) the choice of concepts and their internal relationships in the **GG**, b) the realisation of the programmatic new lexicon concept in the resulting **GG** articles, c) the problems of the lexical form of writing conceptual histories in general and the specificity of the German situation in this respect in particular, and d) the relationship of the **GG** articles to the different styles of writing conceptual history. Finally, I will indicate an alternative paradigm of sources through the discussion of the sources of the lexicon, thus simultaneously presenting the possibility of a different type of conceptual history.

The choice of concepts

The **GG** has, of course, been criticised for its choice of concepts to be discussed. This concerns not only which concepts have been included, but also how they have been selected and how they relate to one another. As Koselleck has later emphasised, the selection of articles was originally based on the suggestions of an expert panel. However, we do not know anything more about the panel, the procedures of dealing with the conceptual candidates or the selection criteria applied by the panellists. The crucial criteria of the **GG**, such as the concentration on the *Sattelzeit* period and the link to the "hypotheses" of *Demokratisierung*, *Verzeitlichung*, *Politisierung*, *Ideologisierung* to the *Grundbegriffe*, have also obviously served as important criteria for selection.

One particular criticism was voiced by Rolf Reichardt and the circle surrounding volumes of the *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820* (published since 1985) against choosing single concepts instead of broader "semantic fields". This argument is unfair insofar as many of the **GG** articles also refer to interrelated concepts, for example *Volk*, *Nation*, *Nationalismus*, *Masse* or *Zivilisation*, *Kultur*. Jörg Fisch's piece on the both historically and contextually varying relationships between *Zivilisation* and *Kultur* offers one of the most brilliant and in many respects surprising original pieces of the entire work.

In the mentality historical programme of the *Handbuch*, the semantic fields appear to be much more 'objectively' tied to the subject matter, whereas in the **GG** there is a gap between both concepts and other layers of reality and the indicator and factor role of the concepts.

The choice of the concepts is recognised as inherently contingent, allowing for numerous perceptions and appreciations of this gap. Not only do the relationships between the concepts change over time and vary according to context, but the conceptual profiles of different authors also vary, as do certain aspects of both their personal rhetoric and the actual controversies in which they themselves are involved. In this sense, the **GG** authors are wise not to commit themselves to any one quasi-objectivistic view of semantic fields.

One point to keep in mind is that the construction of the **GG** and even the completion of the last substantial volume in 1992 took place prior to the invention of the Internet and the possibility of a rapid reading of extensive electronic corpora. The selection of the concepts is carried out according to the craftsmanship model, in which the role of previous scholarship, the intuition and personal judgment of the editors and authors is acknowledged. The availability of the massive and ever-increasing amount of electronic corpora would certainly have facilitated the research practices, but no word counts or mechanics of the distribution of semantic fields could really be of much help in distinguishing a *Grundbegriff*.

Any kind of polemic against the choices of *Grundbegriffe* in a lexicon à la the **GG** is obviously a matter of taste and intellectual interests. For example, I find it difficult to comprehend why *Bedürfnis* or *Pädagogik* are included. In general, the intra-disciplinary histories seem to be misplaced in the **GG**. For example the article *Kapital, Kapitalismus* is mainly oriented toward the technical debates between academic economists, whereas the politically interesting question of the uses of capitalism as a political slogan, particularly the tendency to denounce it and the rarity of an open defence of capitalism in the German context, has received much less attention.

In long-term projects it is often the case that authors who have agreed to contribute articles either lose interest, become preoccupied with other things or are unable to complete their work. In his *Vorwort* to the final volume Koselleck briefly refers to a number of articles which were either never completed or should, in retrospective judgment, have been included to the **GG** (7, vii). The register volumes provide us with a glimpse into those items which were not elevated to key concepts but dealt with in various articles. In other cases, the editors made more or less vain attempts to encourage the authors to include some aspect that would connect the article with the programmatic principles of the lexicon.

In certain cases, the editors' discontent with various contributions is so obvious that additions by other authors close to the **GG** editorial team have been included. The article on *Vertrag* by Wolfgang Kersting is a typical contribution to the history of the contractarian political and legal philosophy, which, however, is better suited to the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* than to the **GG**. Jörg Fisch's closing chapter *Terminologiegeschichte und rechtlich-politischer Sprachgebrauch* is a nine-page addendum referring to both the lexical sources and the more concrete legal and political debates which would have been at the core of the article had the author followed the **GG** problematics.

In this day and age, the omission of certain key concepts strikes us as strange. Planning such a conceptual lexicon would today be impossible without including an article on *Feminismus, Frauenbewegung*, for example. These concepts do not appear in the register volumes either, an omission that cannot be explained away by the relative marginality of German feminism prior to 1848. Due to the increased insight into the role of rhetoric in the European tradition, the fact that there are no articles on *Rhetorik* – or perhaps *Rede, Rhetorik, Beredsamkeit* – seems curious. A *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* is currently under edition, but an entry in the **GG** would have emphasised the decisive part played by rhetoric or eloquence as a political *Grundbegriff*. As the breakdown of the order of the estates appears as the main politico-legal movement in the context of the German *Sattelzeit*, it also seems astonishing that neither *Individuum* nor *Person* were given an entry of their own in the **GG**. The ample documentation of the conceptual clusters surrounding both concepts in the register volume renders this omission even more astonishing. *Wahl* is another political *Grundbegriff* that while well represented in the register, would have deserved an article of its own in the **GG**.

The programme versus the practice

The programmatic promise of the **GG** lies in the thesis of a radical break with the widespread lexical ideology in two crucial respects. The aim was not to offer a story of progress, but rather to concentrate on the uses of various concepts in a definite thematic politico-intellectual context, namely the *Sattelzeit*. The very point of the **GG** lies not in its producing a proposal regarding the appropriate meaning(s) of a given concept with the intention of replacing the previous meanings, but in leaving the controversy open and reminding the readers

of the past meanings and uses of both the concepts and signs of by-gone controversies in the midst of present-day vocabularies and the conceptual quarrels surrounding them.

This programme is reflected in the paradigmatic structure of the articles in the **GG**, particularly the triadic division between *Vorspann*, *Hauptteil* and *Ausblick*, as Koselleck puts it in the *Einleitung* (I, xvi). According to the programme, the main interest lies in the *Sattelzeit* period as a time of radical conceptual change, whereas the initial and final stages should be dealt with only briefly. This triadic structure has not always been followed, however, in part because of the specific history of the concept itself and also due to the specialties of the authors commissioned to write the articles. In many cases, the practical freedom given to the authors ends up being an advantage. The articles dealing with venerable concepts with long and complex histories dating back farther than the *Sattelzeit* help us to understand the debates of that period. An excellent example is Koselleck's *Bund*, *Bündnis*, *Federalismus*, *Bundesstaat*, of which 50 out of its 90 pages deal almost exclusively with the period prior to the *Sattelzeit*.

The lexicon includes a few concepts that were coined after the *Sattelzeit*. For example, there are no semantic precedents or functional equivalents to *Faschismus* prior to 1871. This is also due to the fact that the **GG's** programme offers very few tools for dealing with the distinct post-*Sattelzeit* conceptual changes. One has to wonder why Ernst Nolte's article was even included in the **GG**; it deals more with Italy than with Germany. In addition, no complementary article on *Nazismus* or *Nationalsozialismus* is included in the entire lexicon.

The Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte* aims at doing justice to both the "semasiological" changes in the meaning and use of the concepts and the "onomasiological" changes in the vocabulary. The alphabetic lexicon gives priority to the semasiological changes, whereas the discussion of parallel or alternative expressions forms the onomasiological complement to it. Perhaps the most interesting article following the dual strategy is Jörg Fisch's contribution *Zivilisation*, *Kultur*, in which both expressions are considered as part of the same concept and closely related to other *Bewegungsbegriffe*, such as *Geschichte* and *Fortschritt*. His point is that in the broader perspective of conceptual history, the fierce opposition between the German *Kultur* and the French *civilisation* is limited to the brief moments around World War I. Its projection onto history as a whole is a product of this moment and is was not sustained in the conceptual trends after World War II,

when the concept of culture also became fashionable in the English and French sources.

Despite the insistence on the occurrence of a radical break during the *Sattelzeit* and the existence of the "hypotheses" on crucial conceptual changes, the lexical form tends to delude readers into believing that the concepts as such "existed" from the ancient times to the present. This is emphatically not the case with certain crucial concepts, such *Geschichte* and *Politik*, as Koselleck maintains in the *Geschichte, Historie* article. Nonetheless, he only subsequently (in his 1983 contribution to *Der Staat-Sonderheft*) clearly formulated the insight that the new concept of *die Geschichte* was formed from 1760 onwards in the German literature. Volker Sellin's article on *Politik* includes only a fragmentary insight into the analogical "horizon shift" from the discipline-concept to the sphere- and activity-concepts. Similarly, in the article on *Demokratie*, the realisation that the extension of the concept to elected representative parliaments actually led to the creation of an entirely new concept goes more or less unnoticed. Here, the reader should consult Adalbert Podlech's article on *Repräsentation*.

The **GG** concentrates mainly on the use of the concepts in the German language. One of the work's most valuable points is the accentuation of how late the introduction of politically central concepts in the German academic and literary languages was as compared to French and English. Although extensive comparison of the concepts would be required in order to establish their historical and political relevance, this has not always been done. For this reason, Hans Boldt's article on *Parlament* remains one of the clear disappointments in the **GG**. Contrarily, Jörg Fisch, in the *Zivilisation, Kultur* article, has systematically compared the German conceptual controversies with French, English and even Italian conceptual sources and debates.

The radical promise of subverting the genre of lexica has already been partially mitigated in the programme. In his 1967 article in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* and to some extent still in the *Einleitung* to **GG**, Reinhart Koselleck expresses his understanding of the end of the *Sattelzeit* as a limit situation requiring translation, whereas no such translation is needed for the period after the *Sattelzeit*. The *Ausblick* chapters should merely "register" secondary conceptual changes, which are not directly related to the qualitative shift of the four hypotheses. In this sense, the concepts appearing after the *Sattelzeit* tend to be "unmittelbar verständlich" (I, xv). In the penultimate paragraph of the *Einleitung*, Koselleck admits that a different approach is needed for the rapidly changing contemporary language (*ibid.*, xxvii).

Several articles take a contemporary lexical "definition" as their point of departure. The role of *Begriffsgeschichte* thus becomes to illustrate that historically different meanings and vocabularies have been used to render the genealogy of the lexical definition intelligible. Such articles do not question the empirical existence of an established and widely shared 'present' meaning or attribute, as Koselleck later does, of contestability and controversiality as a crucial aspect of the character of *Grundbegriffe*.

Werner Conze opens the article *Beruf* as follows: "'Beruf' wird heute definiert...," quoting the 1967 edition of the *Brockhaus* lexicon (1, 490). Conze's conclusion is, however that the functionalistic and statistical sense of *Beruf* has not completely eliminated other conceptual layers, which consequently leaves room for the opposition between the objective and the subjective side of *Beruf* (1, 506-507). Wolfgang Jäger, too, begins the *Mehrheit* article by quoting a contemporary lexical definition (3, 1021), although he does not claim that the history of the concept has reached its end. His problem lies mainly in the range of reference and evaluation of the concept, and Jäger's final discussion clearly refers to a more Skinnerian type of conceptual history, which concentrates more on the normative tones in the uses of the concepts than most articles in the *GG*. Others openly recognise the lack of contemporary consensus. For example, Dieter Schwab writes in the final paragraph of the *Eigentum* article: "Von einem einheitlichen Eigentumsbegriff kann heute nicht die Rede sein" (2, 114).

One general tendency in the later volumes of the *GG* is that the original dating of the *Sattelzeit* has become relativised and the discussions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – in some cases even very recent events and theories – have frequently been incorporated into the main bulk of the article. This trend of relinquishing the notion of an end the *Sattelzeit* can also be seen in Reinhart Koselleck's own changing views on conceptual history (see the discussion in my *Entzauberung der Begriffe*, 2004, 228-264). The *Sattelzeit* appears then as a momentum that slowly fades away as opposed to a period with a definite end.

The programmatic point of the *GG* lies in the application of certain hypotheses of conceptual change at least to those concepts for which the *Sattelzeit* period has indicated a decisive break. Nonetheless, few of the authors actually incorporate this programme into their own work. Indeed, the crucial significance of *Demokratisierung*, *Verzeitlichung*, *Ideologisierung* and *Politisierung* is also lost in the register volumes, as, for example, *Verzeitlichung* is only recorded once,

although at least Koselleck refers to it on a number of occasions. As such, I was obliged to go through the first and last volumes myself in order to establish the prevalence of the use of the hypotheses.

In the first volume, with the exception of Koselleck's programmatic *Einleitung*, his article on *Bund* and his interlude in the article *Demokratie* on the opening up of the concept toward the philosophy of history (I, 848-855), only two other articles actually refer to the hypotheses, namely Peter Christian Ludz's *Anarchie* and Horst Stuke's *Aufklärung*. It is remarkable that even Conze fails to even mention the hypotheses in any of the contributions to the first volume (*Adel, Arbeit, Arbeiter, Bauer, Beruf, Cäsarismus, Demokratie*). And a similar situation occurs in the last volume. Koselleck applies the concepts in both the *Verwaltung* and the *Volk* articles, as, to a certain degree, do his co-authors Bernd Wunder in *Verwaltung* and Bernd Schönemann in *Volk*. Jörg Fisch's article *Zivilisation, Kultur* is written quite analogously to Koselleck's own *Geschichte* and *Fortschritt* and focuses particularly on the *Verzeitlichung* of the concepts. There is no indication of the explicit presence of the hypotheses in any of the other articles of the seventh volume either. Most readers would certainly have at least expected the authors to attempt to legitimate their decision to refrain from referring to the hypotheses in their articles..

Perhaps temporal concentration on the *Sattelzeit* could also have been legitimised in terms more closely related to crucial historical events rather than to processes of change. The dissolution of the so-called Holy Roman Empire of German Nation in 1806 seems to have played a decisive role as a decisive political momentum, which, however, marked the beginning of a period of failures in terms of the constitutionalisation and parliamentarisation of politics, including the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848. If we can speak of the existence of a political agenda as concerns the **GG**, the momentum is most clearly reflected in those articles – *Bund, Reich, Staat* and *Verfassung* – which are directly related to this context. Unlike what we might assume on the basis of the lively controversies after the fall of the *Reich*, the presence of conceptual conflicts in the daily political debates surrounding both constitutions and the electoral and parliamentary practices inside and outside the existing *Landtage* remain underrepresented in the **GG** articles. Here, the addition of the Skinnerian insight that “political life itself sets the main problems for the political theorists” could have significantly improved the discussion.

The distance between conceptual change and daily politics is perhaps due to a view shared by Koselleck and social historians, namely

the relative devaluation of events in favour of future-oriented processes, such as *Fortschritt* or *Reform* as well as the *-ism*-concepts. This is also reflected in the understanding of *Verzeitlichung* as opening the concepts toward the future, which in turn tends to lead them to become *Vorgriffe* and *Bewegungsbegriffe*. This implies a certain subordination of "mere" politics to the philosophy of history (a tendency masterfully criticised by Koselleck in his dissertation *Kritik und Krise*). The closer connection of conceptual changes to political events and struggles would suggest a different type of *Verzeitlichung*, that of the rupture with the past as a temporally limited chance leaving the future to be decided in political struggles. In this respect, the anti-parliamentary tone of German political thinking has unwittingly been projected onto the GG.

Styles of conceptual history

As one of the conditions of editing, the GG relies partly on certain existing traditions or practices of writing *Begriffsgeschichte*. There already existed a number of monographic works on the individual concepts, and many of the articles contain references to doctoral theses or other studies on single concepts. Moreover, a number of famous works, such as Carl Schmitt's *Die Diktatur* from 1921, Otto Brunner's highly contested *Land und Herrschaft* (1939), Karl Griewank's *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff* (1959) and Koselleck's own *Kritik und Krise* from 1959 (1954 as dissertation), served, to a certain degree, as models for the GG articles.

At first glance, updating the existing studies on the concepts and putting them into a concise and comparable form would perhaps appear to be the ideal means to compile a lexicon of conceptual history. However, this is seldom realisable and hardly ideal. Nonetheless, the existence of recent monographs that are at least to some extent commensurable with the programme of the lexicon surely offers solid ground for writing a fine lexicon article with a slightly revised emphasis. The level of the substantive competence of those articles which were based on major studies by the same authors, is clearly marked, as is the case with Otto Dann's *Gleichheit*, Thomas Würtenberger's *Legitimität, Legalität*, Lucian Hölscher's *Öffentlichkeit*, Karl Holl's *Pazifismus*, Hella Mandt's *Tyrannis, Despotie* or Wolfgang Hardtwig's *Verein*. With the exception of Hölscher, none of the authors were members of the editorial team of the GG and it is worth

asking whether the so-called single-concept specialists were always the best choice when it came to writing on their 'own' concept.

In addition to including articles by single-concept specialists, articles written by specialists in conceptual history evidently play a decisive role in the lexicon. Perhaps the most professional and programme-directed articles of the **GG** are those written by authors working in the intellectual proximity of Koselleck and Conze. Some of them were established professors of history, such as Christian Meier (who was responsible for the sections on antiquity in a number of articles), Rudolf Vierhaus, Horst Stuke, Dieter Hilger and Wolfgang Schieder. Other contributors include students or co-operation partners of the editors, who gained their academic merits partially through their contributions to the **GG**, in particular Jörg Fisch, Lucian Hölscher, Helga Reinhart, Christof Dipper and Rudolf Walter. In my view, the articles written by these two groups of contributors tend to be the best in the entire **GG**, despite not always using, as I mentioned, the programmatic vocabulary of the lexicon.

More philosophically oriented specialists, who are actually closer to the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* than to the **GG**, such as Manfred Riedel, Horst Günther, Karl-Heinz Ilting, Panayotis Kondylis and Kurt Röttgers, have also written articles which are crucial to the **GG**. Philosophers operating as conceptual historians never seem to come close enough to politics. The *Gipfelwanderung* around the allegedly epochal work of major thinkers – Kant, Hegel and Marx in particular – has introduced a certain bias to many of the articles. In certain cases, their articles contain disturbing normative commitments. Among the worst is Riedel's neo-Aristotelian critique of Max Weber's nominalistic dissolution of the very figure of *die Gesellschaft* in his two separate *Gesellschaft* articles. He laments Weber's "Verzicht auf die Erkenntnis überindividueller, gesellschaftlich-geschichtlicher Zusammenhänge," (2, 858, see also 799), which should instead be regarded as one of Weber's main intellectual merits. This neglect of the distinctive significance of "the Weberian moment" in the post-*Sattelzeit* political thought also holds true for other concepts, such as politics, parliament, suffrage and democracy.

A fourth group of writers can be referred to as generalists who happen to write on the concepts dealt with in the **GG**. Most of them are historians, but some are also professors in law, philosophy, political science, sociology, theology and literary studies. The quality of these studies is highly variable. In many cases, we must even contemplate whether or not the author has even understood the point of

Begriffsgeschichte at all, whereas other contributions are brilliant, for example the medievalist Klaus Schreiner's long article on *Toleranz*, which also deals with the aspects of the politicisation and temporalisation of the concept.

The more recent variants of writing conceptual history or historical semantics hardly play a role in the GG. However, Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, the author of the article *Modern*, belongs to the school of cultural historians close to the *Handbuch*, and he includes a sketch of his own version of *Begriffsgeschichte* in the article. The linguistic orientation, as presented for example in the volume *Kontroverse Begriffe* edited by Georg Stötzel and Martin Wengeler (1995), could not yet leave any distinctive mark on the GG articles.

There is a striking absence in the GG of any indications of the main alternative to the Koselleckian style of *Begriffsgeschichte*, namely the work of Anglophone "revisionists" in the study of political thought. I was able to identify one passing mention of Skinner's *Foundations* in a footnote to Mager's *Republik* article from 1984 (5, 561n66), whereas, for example, Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* is not mentioned at all. Viewed from the present-day debates on conceptual history, the difference between the approaches is relative, although many of the GG articles would at least have appeared different had the orientation toward "linguistic action" (Skinner), that is toward more debate-oriented sources and their rhetorical analysis as well as the understanding of concepts as argumentative moves, been taken into consideration.

In Koselleck's programme, the concepts serve both as indicators of and factors in history. To a certain extent, today, it already seems possible to also regard the GG volumes as indicative expressions of German academic culture in the fields of the humanities and social sciences from the 1960s to the 1980s. Here, in both the relative dominance of sociologists and social historians and certain neo-Aristotelian tendencies in "practical philosophy," lies an obvious limitation to the understanding the specific point and singularity of the Koselleckian *Begriffsgeschichte*, even among the contributors to the GG. The traditional a-political self-identity of many German academics is also curiously combined with the tacit assumption of politics as a mere "superstructure" among economists, sociologists and even the philosophers close to the Frankfurt school.

The lexical ideal of simultaneity of the work as an entirety is lost as a result of both the extension of the GG beyond its original in-

tensions and the prolongation of the writing process. The follow-up projects in the Netherlands, Spain, Finland and elsewhere all have different lexical ideals and deal with a more limited time and scope. The main significance of the **GG** thus seems not to lie in its substantial content but in the inspiration and challenge to write new studies in conceptual history, either in lexical, monographic or other forms.

Lexical vs. parliamentary paradigms of conceptual history

The characteristic sources in the **GG** are the lexica, a specifically German genre of *Konversationslexika* which played a major cultural role as early as the eighteenth century, especially for the new *Bildungsbürgertum*. There are two main reasons why this genre of sources is particularly well-suited to the German conceptual history of the *Sattelzeit* period. One is the recurrent and repetitive character of the lexica, such as *Meyer* or *Brockhaus*, which have been revised at more or less regular intervals, allowing scholars to discern the changes both in the choice of the items dealt with and the content of the articles dedicated to them. The other is the claim that the lexica – as well as handbooks and other works in the broader genre – actually create fixed “definitions” of concepts, as if they were the ‘last word’ in scholarship. The point of the entire **GG** is to historicise and relativise this very claim and, accordingly, to analyse precisely those changes, controversies and internal ambiguities which have occurred around such quasi-neutrally presented “definitions”.

As lexical and ‘classical’ academic literature plays the primary role in the **GG**, it is at least conceivable that a certain tacit history of winners is already built into the analysis, and its removal requires a keen historical and critical sense of this implicit bias in the sources. In other words, the conceptualisations that enter into the lexica already tend to possess a high degree of conventionality, whereas many contributions in the broader debate tend to remain curious idiosyncracies tend to be neglected by historians concentrating mainly on the lexical uses. In this sense, there is a certain bias in the **GG** in favour of the typical as opposed to atypical or individualised uses of concepts. It is here that the opposition to the “linguistic action” orientation à la Skinner is most obvious.

The original work of conceptualisation was still in the process of being carried out by the lexical authors during the *Sattelzeit* period,

especially by authors such as Wilhelm Traugott Krug, who more or less single-handedly compiled the articles into a multi-volume lexicon. Perhaps some of the justifications for the references in the early programmes of the **GG** to the end of the *Sattelzeit* can be found in the more impersonal styles of lexica produced after the *Sattelzeit*. The creative acts of conceptualisation moved on to new and uncharted conceptual territory. The early twentieth century handbooks and other lexical sources are, for example, completely irrelevant to the conceptualisation of the activity of *Politik* in relation to the lively re-thinking of the concept in academic, pamphletary, journalistic and literary sources (see my *The Struggle with Time*, 2006).

Emphasising the criterion of the contestability of concepts would shift the focus from “defining” type of sources to those referring to open controversies. Literary, journalistic and parliamentary sources would enjoy an obvious priority over other sources. In the German-speaking countries, of course, the parliamentary sources remained marginal before 1848, but played a crucial role in Britain, France and Sweden. It is here that we can identify perhaps the best explanation for why speech, debate, rhetoric, eloquence and deliberation have no concepts of their own and why the rhetorical styles of analysing conceptual changes have not been programmatically discussed in the **GG**. This has also led to the practice of a certain de-contextualisation of the concepts analysed.

At least two famous parliamentary assemblies, *der Vereinigte Landtag* of 1847 and the *Frankfurter Parlament* or *Nationalversammlung* of 1848, could have served as interesting sources for the **GG** hypotheses, particularly as the former was chosen by the existing *Lantage*, which were elected on the census- or estate-based principles and the latter by a principle close to manhood suffrage. According the indexes, neither of these assemblies seems to have played a crucial role in the **GG**, not even in the articles on *Parlament* and *Repräsentation*.

Had priority been given to the parliamentary and parliament-analogical sources of open controversy, both a closer link between conceptual innovation and political agency in the struggles with the adversaries and the more spontaneous interventions which led to conceptual revisions in the course of debate could have been established. Conceptual changes are, indeed, one of the main rhetorical tools of parliamentary debate which William Gerard Hamilton takes up in his classical maxims from the late eighteenth-century British parliament (*Parliamentary Logic*, published posthumously 1808, see

the edition of Courtney S. Kenny from 1927). In closing, I would like to argue in favour of writing conceptual histories based on the systematic analysis of the regular and recurrent character of the parliamentary sources, their relative comparability across times, countries and languages, as well as the different variations of parliamentary or semi-parliamentary regimes.

Parliaments are *loci* of politics for which the entire *raison d'être* lies in speaking on any subject matter *in utramque partem*, as the slogan of classical rhetoric went. The entire parliamentary procedure is based on the discussion of the items on the agenda from opposite perspectives, as is also reflected in the key procedural principles, such as the rotation of speeches *pro et contra*, the neutrality of the speaker and the denial of the imperative mandate.

The parliamentary records present the scholars of conceptual history with extensive collections of officially published sources which closely follow the daily political agenda in parliamentary regimes. The annual rhythm of opening and closing rituals and annual budget debates combined with the more irregularly appearing yet typical situations, such as votes of no confidence for the government, render the parliamentary sources highly comparative. The comparisons can be made across both the time within the parliamentary regimes and the spaces and languages between different parliamentary regimes. The old tradition of the official systematic stenographic recording of parliamentary debates and documents also enables us to examine the interesting nuances in vocabulary and rhetoric between them, the 'life' recording and in the unofficial newspaper reports. All this renders parliamentary sources superior in several respects. They can be used as documents of the established political language of the time, as representative sources for conceptualising the scope of political conflicts and the range of the items that were included in and excluded from the parliamentary agenda. Finally, parliamentary debates function as *loci* in which spontaneous conceptual innovations and inversions within an improvised debate can be detected.

In addition, the relationships of parliamentary speaking to both the formation and dismissal of governments and to electoral campaigns create a possibility of comparison. From an historical perspective, the debates surrounding both the enfranchisement reforms and the parliamentarisation of government, as well as other constitutional reforms, create a comparable momentum for cross-national analysis. The debates on the fate of the parliamentary government against mo-

narchic or presidential and bureaucratic rule and plebiscitarian tendencies can be analysed as recurrent *topoi* which, although arising at irregular intervals, offer parallel situations for both the trans-national and inter-temporal analysis of conceptual changes that are definitely worth studying in detail.

In closing, it is my thesis that broad European comparisons of in the genre of conceptual history should utilise parliamentary as opposed to lexical sources. Such studies would, however, require a different momentum than the *Sattelzeit*, as they would acknowledge the decisiveness of the challenges posed by the political macro-events of democratisation and parliamentarisation for conceptual rethinking. This momentum would also require a different type of temporalisation of the concepts: As opposed to the future-orientation, the break with the past and the limited time of chances to use it as a decisive momentum would serve as the main concern of the conceptual history of political times.