

Part 2: After the Big Bang

The Fusing of New Approaches

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ABSTRACT

In part one, I followed the debates and the scholars involved in the big bang of international *Begriffsgeschichte*. Part 2 takes us from the first encounters between the German and the Anglophone tradition within intellectual history to the more formalized efforts of establishing conceptual history on the international, academic scene. With more scholars joining the debate, the understanding of concepts in language and in context were both broadened and deepened. Case studies from a wider range of European languages added a stronger comparative and transnational perspectives to conceptual history, which would prepare the ground for a conceptual history beyond Europe.

KEYWORDS

cluster, comparison, discourse, ideology, language use, periphery, theoretical concepts

The main result of the London meeting in June 1998 was to establish an international association with the long name, *The History of Political and Social Concepts Group*, which gave the unhandy abbreviation HPSCG. The Dutch members took on the responsibility of publishing a newsletter that later was turned into the journal, *Contributions to the History of Concepts* not least due to the efforts of Professor João Feres Júnior from Rio de Janeiro. The French members took it upon themselves to organize the follow-up conference in Saint Cloud outside Paris the year later. Annual conferences were to follow on three continents.

In part 2, I will look at the fusion that took place around *Begriffsgeschichte* (BG) following the meeting. New researchers and new generations joined the association and infused new ideas and new interpretations into conceptual history. After the meeting, it became clear that conceptual history was moving beyond the energy of the debate between titans. The association has existed for almost twenty-three years. In the following, I draw a map of the situation in the years immediately after the London meeting.



Concepts in Ideological Practice

Of the British intellectual historians who attended the meeting, Michael Freeden was probably the one closest to BG. He considers himself a “conceptologist” who investigates political thinking in practice through the concepts being shuffled around;¹ and he is interested in the historical changes within this thinking. As he says, he always seemed to place himself between chairs, being too historical to the universalistic political philosophers in search of truth and too formalist to the historians. Freeden’s big contribution to the new fusion was his theory of ideology as clusters and his method of extracting ideology out of these clusters or patterns of interrelating concepts. Both the theory and the method were developed in his book *Ideologies and Political Theories* finished in 1994 and published in 1996.² The year after, he published an article in his newly founded *Journal of Political Ideologies* where he related his own work to that of BG.³

Freeden agreed with BG in the relevance of making concepts the entry point to the study of language in political thinking. They should be viewed as the building blocks that constitute the ideological patterns forming political thinking and political practice. Like Koselleck, he drew inspiration from structural semantics, but instead of referring to semantic fields he chose to speak of the morphology—a term chosen to avoid speaking about structure—of an ideology to denote the conceptual building blocks. He also agreed with BG about the ambiguity of concepts, even though he saw this feature as a very elementary aspect of all language use and not something reserved for particularly important and inescapable concepts. He was thus skeptical of a theory of basic concepts for two reasons. First, it tended to leave the impression that concepts are fixed once they become basic, and second, it downplayed the fact that “concepts clash into each other” and therefore cannot be studied in isolation.⁴ Instead of focusing on basic concepts that become more abstract and thus contested, Freeden sees conceptual change as a history of concepts being constantly remodeled within the specific clusters that make up ideology. In his view, basic concepts are rather “coathangers” that hold together an assemblage of concepts with different weights, different ranking and overlapping features within a cluster.⁵ They function as perimeters—one of his several spatial metaphors—to demarcate

1. Michael Freeden, interview by the author, 5 November 2020.

2. Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

3. Michael Freeden, “Ideologies and Conceptual History,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 2, no. 1: 3–11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569319708420747>.

4. Michael Freeden, interview.

5. Freeden, “Ideologies and Conceptual History,” 4.

the borders of a particular ideology in the grander ideological landscape. Sometimes he chooses to speak of concepts and conceptions—just as Kari Palonen does—where the latter signifies more specific investments of meaning (e.g., specific forms of equality). Freeden does not refer to the method developed by Rolf Reichardt, but his morphology at some instances comes quite close to Reichardt’s analysis of semantic nets with their lead concepts. His arrival on the international scene of BG can therefore be seen as a strengthening of methodology.

In principle, Freeden is also a strong contextualist. He frequently refers to the constraints on language set by specific cultural contexts, but he prefers to work with a micro perspective and not with the transformations set by large contexts such as the *Sattelzeit* or the institutional fields chosen by the Handbuch project. In his extraction of the ideological building blocks, he opts for a close reading strategy of how concepts behave in the hands of specific authors, when they try to capture a political problem. Freeden makes it clear that he is decoding ideological responses to political problems. Ideology is action-oriented and a necessary element in politics, meaning that its goal is to turn indeterminacy into determinacy to prepare decisions. This is secured by decontestation, which is the general function of ideology. The ideologization that Koselleck saw as one of the main conceptual features of the *Sattelzeit* is for Freeden the crucial dimension of politics.

Freeden is not only a conceptologist, he is also a “practologist.” He closely follows historical actors in the choices they make in assembling ideologies or changing building blocks in order to respond to political problems. Their use of language is mainly analyzed as semantic operations and not as speech acts or other theories used to describe pragmatic aspects of language. As other representatives of Anglophone intellectual history, he focuses on the intentions behind the choices, but contrary to Quentin Skinner and others he certainly also has an eye on the unintentional or unconscious side whether it manifests itself as absences, silences, or misunderstandings. The ideologies that he reconstructs are not explained (away) with reference to a context as for instance in the Marxist understanding of ideology, they are products of that which was said, that which was left out, that which was re- or misinterpreted, and that which entered unreflectively. Freeden not only supported a stronger semantic methodology, he also added both the ideological practice of decontestation and the less than conscious aspects within practice to conceptual history.⁶

6. Within Koselleck’s version of BG, a difference is made between intentional language use (actors doing things with concepts) and the sedimented layers of language that feed the repetitive structures or norms of society. Freeden studies the unintentional directly in the practices.

A French School

With their attendance at the London meeting, Raymonde Monnier and Jacques Guilhaumou were designated the representatives of a French school.⁷ This school did not exactly enter through the front door opened by Melvin Richter and Kari Palonen, but Guilhaumou had been engaged in discussions with BG and the Handbuch project in the 1980s. As both a linguist and a historian, he was anchored in the tradition of discourse analysis formed by Michel Pêcheux and Michel Foucault. Monnier was a specialist on the history of the French revolution with a particular focus on the emergence of new mediators in the new, public sphere. They worked together in the laboratory of lexicometry and political texts at the *École Normale Supérieure* and were engaged in publishing a French dictionary of political and social concepts from 1770 to 1815.⁸

They brought with them to the meeting an approach to conceptual history that differed both from BG and from the Anglophone approach to intellectual history. Koselleck had once accused Guilhaumou of being a kind of pantextualist who replaced referentiality and context with a universe made up of texts.⁹ The accusation was unfair and mainly demonstrated the condescending attitude toward poststructuralist theory among historians.¹⁰ Like others, Guilhaumou departed from the larger linguistic context of discourse, although as a discourse analyst with a far more theoretical armature than was used, for instance, by J. G. A. Pocock. In the 1980s, Monnier and Guilhaumou were enrolled in the project at the laboratory in Saint Cloud of creating a French dictionary on the linguistic history of concepts in use in the period around the French revolution (1770–1815 with the title *dictionnaire des usages socio-politique*.¹¹ The linguistic history included both an analysis of the

7. For a more detailed presentation of Guilhaumou and the French school, see Jan Ifversen, “Jacques Guilhaumou and the French School,” *Redescriptions: Yearbook of Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory* 12 (2009): 244–261.

8. Raymonde Monnier, personal mail to the author, 14 February 2021.

9. Reinhart Koselleck and Rolf Reichardt, eds., *Die Französische Revolution als Bruch des Gesellschaftlichen Bewußtseins* [The French Revolution as a break in social consciousness] (Munich: Oldenburg, 1988), 664–666.

10. I base this short presentation on a signature text on why the French approach belongs to the family of conceptual history, first published in Jacques Guilhaumou, “De l’histoire des concepts à l’histoire linguistique des usages conceptual” [From the history of concepts to the linguistic history of conceptual uses], *Genèses* 38 (2000): 105–118 and then reprinted in a book edited by Hans Erich Bödeker, who included him into the family, Hans Erich Bödeker ed., *Begriffsgeschichte, Diskursgeschichte, Metapherngeschichte* [Conceptual history, discourse history, metaphor history] (Göttingen: Wahlstein Verlag, 2002).

11. Raymonde Monnier, personal mail.

discursive configurations in which concepts were embedded and a first generation computer-generated text mining based on digital text from the database *Frantext*. The latter, termed *lexicométrie*, allowed for a deepening of the semantic method. Around the time of the London meeting, *lexicométrie* was seen mostly as a curiosity that hardly supported solidly manual historical semantics. It would take fifteen years before the digital revolution seriously hit BG.

The dictionary project highlighted the third dimension in the French approach: discourses and concepts would have to be studied in their actual use. They are—to use the French expression—*mise en act* (activated). This activation includes both a linguistic focus on speech acts in a broad sense (pragmatics) and a focus on contextuality (linguistically as referentiality and more broadly as the selection of a particular context). The study of historical concepts in action led to an examination of the concepts that actors use to name themselves and others (*désignants*) in the dictionary as well as concepts termed *notions-concepts* with a function similar to basic concepts in the sense that they served to structure the entire political landscape (and would also be used retrospectively by historians to write the history of the events) such as republic, liberty, terror, virtue. These basic concepts were investigated as theoretical concepts in the discourses of the enlightenment not least by Raymonde Monnier, who over the years published studies of such concepts as republic, democracy, citizenship, *patrie*, and civilization often first presented at the conferences of HCG.¹² Such concepts were, however, also studied as practical concepts (*notions pratique*), which would mean that the dictionary investigates the specific uses in political situations. The practical concepts thus interpret both the larger organizing concepts—similar to the conceptions of concepts in Freedén’s morphology—and the theoretical concepts in the scientific discourses that serve as an important discursive context. Guilhaumou views the practical use of concepts as a linguistic event. Language use is certainly always a singular realization of language. Guilhaumou, however, also interprets event as a direct linguistic intervention that creates new conditions for politics. The intervention often takes form as an innovation as was the case with the concept of *assemblée nationale* invented by Abbé Sieyès and used to conceptualize something new, namely democratic, political representation.

A final element in the French approach is worth mentioning in this short presentation. Like Skinner, the French conceptual historians also included the linguistic reflexivity of the historical actors. This element—the only one really appreciated by Melvin Richter in his brief mentioning of Guilhaumou—both included historical reflections on the art of speaking and

12. Ibid.

how the scientific reflections about language in historical dictionaries and in historical language theories itself formed conceptual innovations. This final element would become the topic of the follow-up conference in Saint Cloud in 1999 organized by Monnier and Guilhaumou. Here we discussed the historical debate among eighteenth-century thinkers about the misuse of language. The French approach presented an important supplement to the existing atoms brought to the fusion process even if its novelty was not always duly recognized.

The Spanish Connection

The leading Spanish intellectual historian Javier Fernández Sebastián did not participate in the London meeting, but he was soon to become an important figure in international BG. Together with his younger colleague Gonzalo Capellán de Miguel, he attended the 2002 conference of the association in Amsterdam. Fernández Sebastián had been based at the University of the Basque country since the early 1980s. He began his academic career as a historian of Basque and Navarro, political thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His dissertation published in 1991 dealt with eighteenth-century ideas of Basque autonomy. Through a profound study of public opinion in the period, he refuted existing anachronisms of an early Basque nationalism. His critique of anachronism within the history of political thought was inspired by Quentin Skinner's approach.

In the 1990s, he was, however, primarily oriented toward French intellectual history as it was conducted in more traditional forms within the *Association française des historiens des idées politiques*. His first publications in a foreign language were in the publication series of the association. Within a Spanish context, he drew inspiration from older intellectual historians such as José Antonio Maravell and Luiz Díez del Corral, both of whom he wrote about in the French series.¹³ Although he has used Koselleck's early writings on public opinion in *Kritik und Krise*, his encounter really took shape in the mid-1990s when he began contemplating a Spanish dictionary on political and social concepts together with his longtime fellow traveler Juan Francisco Fuentes.¹⁴ During a stay as visiting professor at EHESS (École des

13. Javier Fernández Sebastián, "L'Europe vue de l'Espagne; le monde vue de l'Europe: La pensée européanisante de José Antonio Maravall et Luis Díez del Corral" [Europe seen from Spain; the world seen from Europe; the Europeanizing thinking of José Antonio Maravall and Luis Díez del Corral], in *L'Europe entre deux tempéraments politiques: idéal d'unité et particularismes régionaux*, ed. Michel Ganzin (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 1994): 312–337.

14. Javier Fernández Sebastián, interview by the author, 9 January 2021.

Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales) in Paris in 1993, he attended a lecture by Reinhart Koselleck. The same year, Koselleck's book *Vergangene Zukunft* was translated into Spanish.

His acquaintance with Koselleck brought him into the bridging project. To his earlier interest in Skinner's work, he brought a new fascination with the BG's diachronic historical semantics and particularly its temporal dimension. Contrary to many other bridge builders, he also added French input both from the more linguistically oriented conceptual history developed by Monnier and Guilhaumou and from more philosophically oriented intellectual historians like Lucien Jaume. In a series of articles written in the early 2000s, he prepared the theoretical and methodological ground for the dictionary project based on bridging all three approaches—the Anglophone, the BG, and the French. The dictionary is structured around basic concepts that function both as vectors or indicators of social reality and as factors activated within texts that intervene in politics. As he states, the concepts serve as links between language and reality.¹⁵ They can be analyzed within a historical semantics where concepts become nuclei in which political actions are concentrated. Actors are conducting ideological struggles around the same basic concepts often without a very precise idea of their meaning. One of the aspects where Fernández Sebastián distances himself from Skinner's approach is on the question of reconstructing intentionality. He stresses that political concepts are made to intervene, and interventions are carried out through rhetoric. But he also highlights the role of context, and whether it is discursive or social. He agrees with the core premise in BG that the objects that are addressed when using concepts point to an extralinguistic reality. As he says, "extralinguistic circumstances and factors penetrate" the concepts.¹⁶

Fernández Sebastián brings two other elements of BG into his conceptual history. Throughout his work, he is constantly pointing to the hermeneutic gap that exists between the concepts used by the historical actors and the historians reconstructing the past. More than most other conceptual historians, he is keenly aware of the problems arising between historical concepts used in the past and analytical concepts used by historians such as *enlightenment*, *state*, *politics*, and more. Second, he is particularly interested in the temporality that concepts contain because they are future-oriented or because they contain layers from different periods. Here he agrees with Palonen that politics is about time, and therefore political concepts are time-ridden. Before leaving Fernández Sebastián, we also need to acknowledge his crucial role in extending BG to include questions of

15. Javier Fernández Sebastián, "¿Qué es un diccionario histórico de conceptos políticos?" [What is a dictionary of historical and political concepts?], *Anales* no. 7–8 (2004): 223–240, here 233.

16. *Ibid.*, 234.

transnationality and transfer. Not only did he organize two huge volumes on Spanish concepts together with Fuentes, he also launched the huge project on Ibero-American concepts, which resulted in a monumental study over more than 3,500 pages of twenty political concepts in twelve countries in the Ibero-American world from 1750 to 1870.¹⁷

Henrik Stenius: The Asterix of International Conceptual History

Henrik Stenius has compared his work within the scholarly movement of conceptual history to that of the cartoon figure Asterix.¹⁸ The comparison is appropriate, I think. Stenius being from Finland represented the European periphery, he has been a main driving force in organizing the international adventure of conceptual history, and he often used his magic potion to make things move. He entered conceptual history through studies of social movements in Finland, including both the labor movement and civil society associations. His dissertation from 1987 was on the emergence of voluntary associations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Finland. His way into conceptual history was both spurred by an interest in mentality or consciousness inspired by E. P. Thompson's work on the English working class and by an interest in language questions related to the role of language politics in early Finnish nationalism.¹⁹

As Stenius stated in a manifesto-like text from 2007, his conversion to a conceptual historian was directed against essentialist and realist understandings of concepts, where concepts would either live through universal definitions or be completely reduced to reflexes of social structures.²⁰ In his

17. Javier Fernández Sebastián and Juan. F. Fuentes, eds., *Diccionario político y social del siglo XIX español* [Nineteenth-century political and social dictionary, Spanish] (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2002). Javier Fernández Sebastián and Juan. F. Fuentes, eds., *Diccionario político y social del siglo XX español* [Twentieth-century political and social dictionary, Spanish] (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2008). Javier Fernández Sebastián, ed., *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano: Conceptos políticos fundamentales, 1770–1870* [Political and social dictionary of the Ibero-American world: Fundamental political concepts, 1770–1870] vol. 1 and 2 (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 2009 and 2014).

18. Henrik Stenius, interview by the author, 18 January, 2021. For those that do not know Asterix, it can be mentioned that he is the hero in the cartoon of the same name made by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. Asterix is the diligent, entrepreneurial and fearless Gaul who with the help of his fellow traveller, Obélix and a magic potion successfully combats the Romans at the time of Caesar.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Henrik Stenius, "Begreppshistoriska temperament" [Conceptual temperament], *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, 1 (2007): 1–9.

view, conceptual history must be nominalist and voluntarist by which terms he wants to emphasize the freedom to navigate with concepts (compare Palonen's *spielraum*). The conceptual historian can choose to focus on the limits set by the concepts and the continuities or—as a radical nominalist—search for alternatives and innovations in decisive moments.

Stenius played a leading role in introducing BG in Finland and in developing a national Finnish project. He co-organized Koselleck's visits to Sweden and Finland together with Palonen and Bo Stråth, he collaborated closely with the latter in creating a Nordic network of conceptual history, and he co-edited and contributed to the first international publication on comparative research on the concept of liberalism in the Nordic and Baltic countries.²¹ Stenius had a specific interest in studying those concepts that were crucial in forming the modern, Finnish nation. He contributed to the important work on the history of Finnish concepts in motion with an examination of the concept of citizen.²² With his interest in the concept of citizenship, he could integrate his prior research on social movements and civil society with an investigation of the Finnish *Sattelzeit*, where political key concepts were being formed often in an engagement with Swedish language and political culture.²³

Apart from being an important entrepreneur of international conceptual history with a dominant role in extending the organization to include PhD summer schools and newsletters, Stenius was also one of the first conceptual historians to take up the baton of comparative studies left by Koselleck. As a Finn who had studied the political and linguistic clashes with a Swedish hegemonic culture, it was obvious that he would develop an interest in relations between centers and peripheries. While not the only one that was interested in extending the comparative perspective to conceptual transfers across political and cultural borders,²⁴ he became a first mover in studies of

21. Ilkka K. Lakaniemi, Anna Rotkirch, Henrik Stenius, eds., *“Liberalism”: Seminars on Historical and Political Keywords in Northern Europe* (Helsinki: Renvall Institute, 1995).

22. Stenius's analysis on citizenship was one of ten studies of important political concepts published in the key work on Finnish conceptual history, Matti Hyvärinen, Jussi Kurunmäki, Kari Palonen, Tuija Pulkkinen and Henrik Stenius, eds., *Käsitteet liikkeessä: Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin käsitehistoria* [Concepts in motion: Conceptual history of Finnish political culture] (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2003). For an overview of early Finnish, conceptual history, see Jani Marjanen, “Begrëppshistoria i Finland” [Conceptual history in Finland], *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 1 (2007): 130–142.

23. Henrik Stenius, interview.

24. Already in 1997, Hans-Jürgen Reichardt and Rolf Lüsebrink published the results of a large research project on conceptual transfers between France and Germany around the time of the French Revolution, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt eds., *Kulturtransfer im Epochenbruch: Frankreich-Deutschland 1770 bis 1815* [Cultural transfer in the break of epochs: France-Germany 1770 to 1815] vol. 1–2 (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag 1997).

intellectual geopolitics in Europe and launched the daring hypothesis that innovation was more often to be found in the peripheries because of the need to engage with and reformulate conceptual imports from the center.²⁵ He was indeed the Asterix of conceptual history challenging the traditional empires of concepts.

The Young German

Melvin Richter (born in 1921) and Koselleck (born in 1923) were of the same generation. Most of the other figures I have discussed here were born shortly after World War II. Of the younger scholars who engaged themselves in the internationalization of BG, Willibald Steinmetz (born 1957) had a particular trajectory. On one hand, he was a born Koselleckian; on the other hand, he, from a very early time, broadened the linguistic outlook of BG. In 1978, as a young history student in Münster, Steinmetz approached Koselleck in Bielefeld and was allowed to join his weekly seminars.²⁶ In 1982, he moved to Bielefeld to study with Koselleck. He became part of the now legendary, semi-private colloquiums taking place in Koselleck's home. In 1985, he was invited by Koselleck to join the collaborative research center (abbreviated SSB in German) on social history and the modern "Bürgertum" as a PhD student. He was thus involved both in writing his dissertation and in contributing to the research on Bürgertum.

In the mid-1980s, Steinmetz began his own dissertation project on BG, which was handed in 1989 and published in 1993.²⁷ In this work, he developed his own approach to BG inspired by Skinner, Pocock, and Gareth Stedman Jones. This approach first broadened historical semantics to include a perspective on political action within communication. The communication aspect involved speech acts, but now seen in a dialogical perspective with an equal focus on reception. Second, it highlighted the linguistic fact that semantics take shape in language use. Political action is not only performed in language, but also made with language. Politics is both dependent on the semantics and the rules that are constantly confirmed through speech acts and on the interventions that push boundaries and make innovations possible. In his investigation of parliamentary debates on electoral reforms in nineteenth-century Britain, the topic of his book, Steinmetz was searching

25. This idea has also been launched forcefully within postcolonial studies, see among many works, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge 1994).

26. Willibald Steinmetz, interview by the author, 4 January 2021.

27. Willibald Steinmetz, *Das Magbare und das Sagbare: Zum Wandel politischer Handlungsspielräume—England 1789–1867* [The doable and the sayable: On the change in political scope of action—England 1789–1867] (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993).

for stability as well as innovation. To do this, he added a micro-diachronic method to explore the speech acts operating in the machine room of parliamentary politics. The focus on the language of political action was similar to the enterprise of Palonen, whom Steinmetz only knew vaguely at the time. Finally, he departed from a theory of politics that included the intentions and strategies of political actors as they were expressed in political language (the sayable) and the effects of their actions (the doable). The theory pointed to the gap between the political modalities, the will to obtain something, and the possibilities (the *Spielraum*) set by the context, be that the immediate communicative situation or a larger context of rules or norms. Steinmetz did not refer to ideology as the programmatic framing of political action—as did Michael Freeden around the same time. He preferred to interpret political speech action as framed in a more Koselleckian polarity between the experiences and the expectations, where the latter pointed toward the not yet, which Freeden had captured with his concept of ideology.

In the book, Steinmetz opted for a close reading of sources at the expense of a large diachronic conceptual overview and an engagement with an unfolded, social history. He committed himself to reconstruct contexts as they were drawn into the political scene through the speech acts of the political actors. His contextualism is here not enforced by larger claims about *Sattelzeit*, but through the ways that limitations are turned into rhetoric. Akin to Palonen's approach, he chose to focus on the ways that phenomena appeared as problems—as “disturbances”—in need of articulation.²⁸ To operationalize his micro-diachronic method of studying political communication, he selected a number of typical strategies employed by the political actors to explain and justify their actions. These strategies would be articulated in the ways political actors constructed risks, frames, temporalities, precedents, causes, responsibilities, and necessities to get their message through and convince others. As he said, his conceptual history specifically looked at “the verbs of political action.”²⁹ The strategies selected served as tools to mine all the parliamentary texts in order to detect breakthroughs in the debates around parliamentarism and democracy in Britain. Such breakthroughs would not least become visible in situations where language itself as well as rules and norms would be questioned. Like Monnier and Guilhaoum, Steinmetz contributed to make historical discussions of language—“meta-debates”—an important aspect of BG.³⁰

Steinmetz not only contributed to the bridging of BG with language pragmatics and communication as part of Koselleck's project on *Bürgerum*,

28. Steinmetz, *Das Magbare*, 28.

29. *Ibid.*, 39.

30. *Ibid.*, 41.

he also got involved very early on in discussions of how to make conceptual history comparative and transnational. He contributed to one of the first publications of the SSB led by Koselleck, a study of concepts of middle class, bourgeoisie, and citizen in the modernization processes in nineteenth-century Germany, Britain, and France.³¹ The purpose of the study was to examine similarities and differences in political modernization with its democratization and politization of concepts. In its design, it was classic BG: the study of how the large diachronic changes theorized through social history (the *Sattelzeit*) were conceptualized. Steinmetz and Ulrike Spree contributed smaller case studies to the investigation of the three worlds of bourgeois and citizens, while Koselleck sketched out the theoretical frame of combining socio-historical changes with conceptual temporalities (the older layers of meaning and the pressures from the socio-historical changes).³² The study revealed that there were interesting differences at several levels: in the distribution of meaning around corporate status, around class and around national belonging, and in temporalities with a more backward-looking conceptualization in Germany and a more future-oriented and universal conceptualization in France. Spree examined the comparative approach through the efforts of translating the basic concepts from one language to the other in dictionaries. Steinmetz compared the conceptualizations at play in debates over electoral reforms in the three countries. He specifically focused on the way political actors conceptualized the collective entities—the collective singulars—referred to in the various claims for sovereignty and participation. Like Stenius, Monnier, and Guilhaumou, he saw the importance of examining the different forms and positions of enunciation in political language. In the modernization process, the democratic citizen and the sovereign people would come under pressure from the corporate bureaucrats, the bourgeois, and the middle class, all different conceptualizations of the *Bürgertum*. Looking back at forty years of BG in 2008, Steinmetz still highlighted the two steps I have described here, the communicative add-on to semantics and the transnational approach as crucial for the development of conceptual history.³³ He also insisted on retaining the difference between a

31. Hans-Jürgen Puhle, ed. *Bürger in der Gesellschaft der Neuzeit: Wirtschaft, Politik, Kultur* [Citizens in modern society: Economy, politics, culture] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991).

32. Reinhart Koselleck, Ulrike Spree, Willibald Steinmetz, “Drei bürgerliche Welten? Zur vergleichenden Semantik der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft in Deutschland, England und Frankreich” [Three bourgeois worlds? On the comparative semantics of civil society in Germany, England, and France], in Puhle, *Bürger*, 14–59.

33. Willibald Steinmetz, “Vierzig Jahre Begriffsgeschichte: The State of the Art” in *Sprache, Kognition, Kultur: Sprache zwischen mentaler Struktur und kultureller Prägung* [Language, cognition, culture: Language between mental structure and cultural im-

conceptual history approach, which stressed both subjective intentions and “the extra-linguistic constellations,” and a Foucauldian discourse analysis, which, according to him, never leaves the perspective of “intralinguistic,” “anonymous,” and “contingent” shifts.³⁴ Despite his continuous interest in reading Foucault, no doors were opened to discourse analysis.³⁵

Epilogue: To Be Continued

I could have included many more scholars and friends in this history of beginnings. Some like Patricia Springborg, who attended the first meeting in London and continued to attend HPG conferences for several years, was solidly anchored in the Anglophone approach and continuously reminded us of its importance. Her expertise in classical Greek thinking and her daring studies of how orientalism and particularly the Oriental despot was a necessary element in constructing a Western civilization free of evil, introduced *avant la lettre* a critique of Eurocentrism into conceptual history. The Brazilian political theorist, João Feres Júnior, student of Melvin Richter, our first member from South America and the organizer of the first conference outside Europe as well as co-founder and first editor of our journal *Contributions*, reminded us how European concepts were traveling and re-appropriated in regions colonized by European powers. Jörn Leonhard, who further theorized comparative BG based on his studies of liberalism; Jussi Kurunmäki, a leader of the next generation of Finnish conceptual historians and a specialist in concepts of democracy and democratization; and not least Sandro Chignola, who introduced a sophisticated interpretation of the link between concepts, the temporalization of experience, and the making of history in Koselleck’s *historik*. All participated in adding new dimensions to the continuous adventure of BG. Many more scholars would join the discussions of BG in the following years.

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print], ed. Heidrun Kämper and Ludwig M. Eichinger (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008): 174–197, here 184.

34. Ibid.

35. Steinmetz, interview.

