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**Title:** The Joint Practice of Conceptual History and the Study of Political Thought : Kari Palonen in Conversation with Rosario López and José María Rosales

**Year:** 2024

**Version:** Published version

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**Please cite the original version:**

Palonen, K., López, R., & Rosales, J. M. (2024). The Joint Practice of Conceptual History and the Study of Political Thought : Kari Palonen in Conversation with Rosario López and José María Rosales. *Scienza & Politica*, 36(70), 181-197. <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-9618/19953>

# SCIENZA & POLITICA

per una storia delle dottrine



## The Joint Practice of Conceptual History and the Study of Political Thought: Kari Palonen in Conversation with Rosario López and José María Rosales

La pratica congiunta della storia concettuale  
e della storia del pensiero politico:  
Kari Palonen in conversazione con Rosario López and José María Rosales

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### ABSTRACT

Kari Palonen's work has remained an inspiration for conceptual and intellectual historians as well as for political theorists over the years. His career and contributions make him an ideal interlocutor for a conversation on the joint practice of conceptual history and the study of political thought. This interview, conducted by Rosario López and José María Rosales, took place as one of the sessions of the online seminar *On the Joint Practice of Conceptual History and the Study of Political Thought*, organized by Concepta: Research Seminars in Conceptual History and Political Thought on 8 and 9 January 2024.

KEYWORDS: Conceptual History; Political Theory; History of Political Thought; Politics; Parliamentary Studies; Kari Palonen.

Il lavoro di Kari Palonen è rimasto negli anni una fonte di ispirazione per gli storici concettuali e intellettuali e per i teorici politici. La sua carriera e i suoi contributi lo rendono un interlocutore ideale per una conversazione sulla pratica congiunta della storia concettuale e dello studio del pensiero politico. Questa intervista, condotta da Rosario López e José María Rosales, si è svolta come una delle sessioni del seminario online *On the Joint Practice of Conceptual History and the Study of Political Thought*, organizzato da Concepta: Research Seminars in Conceptual History and Political Thought l'8 e il 9 gennaio 2024.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Storia concettuale; Teoria politica; Storia del pensiero politico; Politica; Studi parlamentari; Kari Palonen.

SCIENZA & POLITICA, vol. XXXVI, no. 70, 2024, pp. 181-197

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-9618/19953>

ISSN: 1825-9618



This interview took place as one of the sessions of the online seminar *On the Joint Practice of Conceptual History and the Study of Political Thought*, organized by Concepta: Research Seminars in Conceptual History and Political Thought<sup>1</sup> on 8 and 9 January 2024 and convened by José María Rosales and Rosario López (University of Málaga). We would like to warmly thank Professor Kari Palonen for accepting our invitation and the participants in the debate following the interview.

Kari Palonen is Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. He has published extensively, most frequently in English and German, on four interconnected research topics: first, the concept of politics and its history; second, parliamentary studies, especially its conceptual, procedural and rhetorical aspects; third, the political thought and methodology of Max Weber; and lastly, the principles and practices of conceptual history. His works stand out not only as historical and empirical studies around the notion of politics, but also as contributions to political theory. As of 2024, he has published more than 40 monographs and edited volumes, around 80 academic journal articles and more than 90 book chapters in edited volumes<sup>2</sup>.

Such impressive record is best understood by looking at his other involvements in scholarly projects. Kari Palonen was the co-founder with Melvin Richter of the History of Political and Social Concepts Group in 1998, opening up an expanding melting pot of methodologies and research programs across disciplines and scholarly traditions that keeps contributing to the revamping of conceptual research. He was also the co-founder in 1997 of the *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, forerunner of the current journal *Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory*. From 2006 to 2011, between his two terms as Academy of Finland Professor (1998–2003 and 2008–2012) he has led the Finnish Centre of Excellence in Political Thought and Conceptual Change at the University of Jyväskylä.

Kari Palonen's publications attest to his intellectual engagements that show his strong commitment to the training of researchers. They have remained influential for conceptual and intellectual historians as well as for political theorists over the years. The breadth and depth of his contributions make him an ideal interlocutor for a conversation on the joint practice of conceptual history and the study of political thought.

We have divided this interview into five sections: Disciplines, Politics and Politicians, Max Weber's Legacy, the Approaches of John Pocock and Quentin Skinner, and Closing Reflections.

## 1. Disciplines

José María Rosales (JMR): The study of politics has guided your research paths from political theory to conceptual history, parliamentary and rhetoric studies, methodological practices and, more recently, a combination of parliamentary with

<sup>1</sup> Concepta: Research Seminars in Conceptual History and Political Thought: [www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/geschichtswissenschaft/forschung/history-of-concepts/CONCEPTA-network/#](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/geschichtswissenschaft/forschung/history-of-concepts/CONCEPTA-network/#) (accessed 20 June 2024).

<sup>2</sup> He has just finished a book manuscript, *At the Origins of Parliamentary Europe: Supranational Parliamentary Government in Debates of the Ad Hoc Assembly for European Political Community in 1952–1953*, forthcoming in Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2024. For an updated bibliography, see his academic profile at <https://www.jyu.fi/fi/henkilot/kari-palonen> (accessed 14 June 2024).



European studies. Any new exploration you have made has enriched, and modified, your own practice of political theory. And reversely, your involvements have produced interdisciplinary results in the debates of all those disciplines, meaning innovative outcomes challenging consolidated practices and mainstream knowledge.

Tell us why a political scientist by trade became interested in the history and methodology of political thought as a necessary background to the practice of political theory?

**Kari Palonen (KP):** We have to understand that in the old days the academia was both a small and less tightly organized place. Perhaps we need some words on my early academic career, that was before I got acquainted with you, José, in 1993, at the conference of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) Research Committee Political Philosophy in Budapest<sup>3</sup>.

As an amateur scholar I defended my dissertation at the age of twenty-eight at the University of Helsinki in 1975, during my service as a “conscientious objector,” and having published before a book in Finnish on Popper’s critical rationalism. My plans for the future were diffuse and funding was irregular, but somehow I decided that I should concentrate on political science. In 1976, I was lucky to enter academia, first for three terms as associate professor of “social science” at the University of Oulu, and later from January 1978 onwards on a similar position in political science at the University of Jyväskylä. In 1983, I got a tenured associate professorship at the University of Jyväskylä and a full professorship ten years later at this institution.

After the dissertation I began to study the disciplinary history of political science in Finland and beyond, with a critical view on the “mainstream” of “behavioralist” studies on elections and tried to rehabilitate the old *Allgemeine Staatslehre* (general theory of the state). Another move was that I began to educate myself by lecturing on the classics of political thought, soon finding that the textbook portrayals were systematically misleading, and from there it was not a long way to find Quentin Skinner’s writings. I first heard of Skinner at the 1979 IPSA conference in Moscow and became quite curious about his writings.

I also realized that what was said about the concept of politics by academics working in political science was rather provincial and I moved from disciplinary history to conceptual history. This move first materialized as a self-made version, but I found Koselleck and the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* during a sabbatical period in Berlin in 1981. For my *Politik als Handlungsbegriff*, dealing with the German-language debate from late nineteenth century to 1933, I collected a huge amount of sources of different kinds. It was partly an amateurish work, although German colleagues have used it extensively. At that time my academic contacts were mainly in Germany – Karl Rohe from Essen, Ernst Vollrath from Cologne, slightly

<sup>3</sup> Kari Palonen mentions the conference *Citizenship in a Multi-Cultural Society* hosted by Ferenc Lendvai at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in May 1993. Some years afterwards, professor Lendvai would be dismissed from his position at the Academy; his critical Marxism and cosmopolitan vision were deemed incompatible with the Establishment. Besides, some biographical details from that meeting can be found at J.M. ROSALES, *Kari Palonen: An Unfinished Portrait*, in C. WIESNER – E. ROSCHIN – M.-C. BOILARD (eds), *In Debate with Kari Palonen*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2015, pp. 297–301.

<sup>4</sup> K. PALONEN, *Politik als Handlungsbegriff. Horizontwandel des Politikbegriffs in Deutschland, 1890–1933*, Helsinki, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1985.

later Reinhart Koselleck from Bielefeld and Wolf-Dieter Narr from Berlin, all of them dead now.

Anyhow, since the early 1980s I began to identify myself as a political scientist. Earlier we had a small group of dissidents with different profiles, but as the main representative of political science in Jyväskylä I had to cooperate with the relatively few established colleagues at Finnish universities. Although they hardly had anything to do with political theory or history of political thought, the cooperation went probably better than I had expected.

Rosario López (RL): The journal *Scienza & Politica* has recently published a forum section on the question «Where is the History of Political Thought Going?»<sup>5</sup>. This issue publishes Davide Cadeddu's take on this question and gathers papers by several scholars reflecting on Cadeddu's views. Cadeddu argues that the relationship between the history of political thought and political theory is «complex and problematic», yet «constitutively porous». In short, Cadeddu maintains that «political theory needs the history of political thought»<sup>6</sup>, namely a historical angle from which to approach politics, but equally, the history of political thought needs political theory. As a response to Cadeddu, Adrian Blau comments on this view. He argues that even historians only concerned with historical questions must sometimes think «theoretically/philosophically». Blau controversially states that «many historians see themselves as historians and nothing else», while political theorists are more «flexible» and open to engage with a variety of historical sources<sup>7</sup>.

You have defined yourself as «a historically and rhetorically oriented political theorist rather than an intellectual or conceptual historian»<sup>8</sup>. Do you agree with Blau that the history of political thought also needs political theory and therefore the benefits run, so to speak, in both directions?

KP: Thanks, Rosario, for the reference. Yes, I think Blau has a point in his demand for both directions. In my cooperation with historians, I am sometimes worried about how shy they are in speculating beyond what they find in the sources. Skinner's old point, quoted by Blau, «we must learn to do our own thinking for ourselves»<sup>9</sup>, still has its strength.

For my part, I have tried to sketch my own way to conceptualize politics as an action-concept, using ideal types in Weberian terms, for instance in «Four Times of Politics»<sup>10</sup>. The ideal types are no inventions *ex nihilo* but refer to existing

<sup>5</sup> D. CADEDU, *Trusting the Process: Current Fashions in History of Political Thought*, «Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine», 35, 68/2023, pp. 239–250 and *Where is the History of Political Thought Going?*, «Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine», 35, 68/2023, pp. 251–301.

<sup>6</sup> D. CADEDU, *Trusting the Process*, pp. 249–250.

<sup>7</sup> A. BLAU, *Why Do So Many Scholars Try and Fail to Draw Contemporary Insights from the History of Political Thought?*, «Scienza & Politica. Per una storia delle dottrine», XXXV, 68/2023, p. 268.

<sup>8</sup> K. PALONEN, *Interview with Kari Palonen*, in M. HAUGAARD JEPPESEN – F. STJERNFELT – M. THORUP (eds), *Intellectual History: Five Questions*, Copenhagen, Automatic Press/VIP, 2013, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> A. BLAU, *Why Do So Many Scholars Try and Fail to Draw Contemporary Insights from the History of Political Thought?*, p. 278; Q. SKINNER, *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*, «History and Theory», 8, 1/1969, p. 52; *Quentin Skinner on Meaning and Method (interview with Teresa Bejan)*, in *The Art of Theory: Conversations in Political Philosophy*, 2011, available at [www.academia.edu/1073948/Quentin\\_Skinner\\_on\\_Meaning\\_and\\_Method](http://www.academia.edu/1073948/Quentin_Skinner_on_Meaning_and_Method) (accessed 30 March 2024).

<sup>10</sup> K. PALONEN, *Four Times of Politics: Policy, Polity, Politicking, and Politicization*, «Alternatives: Global, Local, Political», 28, 2/2003, pp. 171–186; reprinted in K. PALONEN, *Re-thinking Politics: Essays from a Quarter-century*, a cura di K. Lindroos, Jyväskylä, The Finnish Political Science Association, 2007, pp. 55–70.



practices or vocabularies that are abstracted from them with one-side accentuation («*einseitige Steigerung*» for Weber). “Pure” types are as such not to be found in the sources but help scholars to point out to something in the sources which is only indicated by the sources. Of course, the proposals for ideal types are always speculative and hypothetic, and could of course be sometimes revised due to what they make visible in the sources or, on the contrary, not revised to illustrate that something could be expected in the sources, but cannot be found there – at least for the moment.

I was first cautious to apply ideal types to conceptual history, for instance in *The Struggle with Time* (2006), using a repertoire of *topoi* as the main analytical and narrative medium<sup>11</sup>. In my book on politics in the Bundestag debates, *Politik als parlamentarischer Begriff* (2021), I applied the typology from 2003 and the tools of the 2006 book together with an object-specified rhetoric of *topoi*<sup>12</sup>. Recently, in an article published in *Redescriptions* (2022), I sketched a complement to the typology for identifying ideal-typical criteria for distinguishing acting politically<sup>13</sup>, which might help spelling out which criteria are used when someone uses the politics-vocabulary, in debates at least.

**JMR:** It seems that over the past forty years in your intellectual journeys you have been always escaping from mainstream scholasticism towards debates held on the periphery of disciplines. What do you consider in them more attractive than the certainty of working within recognizable boundaries? (The intellectual challenges they raise? The intellectual enjoyment of questioning clichés? The expectation of performing a more rewarding activity? The chances of producing innovative results? The search for new interlocutors?)

**KP:** I never worried about the mainstream or academic fashions, in some cases opposing them – finding Perelman’s rhetoric in the 1980s was a move against structuralism<sup>14</sup>, discourse analysis etc., and defending politics as action. Koselleck’s idea on the *Einleitung* of the GG (1972) that conceptual history requires a *Verfremdungseffekt* (distancing effect) is attractive in the sense that focusing on the margins of phenomena – such as concepts or rhetoric – might allow a detached view on phenomena such as politics<sup>15</sup>.

I am a monograph writer, and my life can be divided into the books that I have written. Articles and collections are by-products of books. The usual case is that one book has inspired me finding and choosing the next one, frequently being intrigued by an idea about why nobody has studied that topic and, if this is so, why

<sup>11</sup> K. PALONEN, *The Struggle with Time: A Conceptual History of “Politics” as an Activity*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> K. PALONEN, *Politik als parlamentarischer Begriff. Perspektiven aus den Plenardebatten des Deutschen Bundestags*, Opladen-Berlin-Toronto, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> K. PALONEN, *Paradigms for Political Action: A Draft for a Repertoire*, «Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory», 25, 2/2022, pp. 97-112.

<sup>14</sup> The *opus magnum* of that tradition is C. PERELMAN – L. OLBRECHTS-TYTECA, *Traité de l’argumentation. La nouvelle rhétorique*, Brussels, Éditions de l’Université de Bruxelles, 1958 (*The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. J. Wilkinson – P. Weaver, Notre Dame, IN, The University of Notre Dame Press, 1969).

<sup>15</sup> R. KOSELLECK, *Einleitung*, in O. BRUNNER – W. CONZE – R. KOSELLECK (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol. 1, Stuttgart, Klett-Cotta, 1972, pp. XIII-XXVII.

not do that myself. That was the case with my book on Sartre and the idea of politics as *déjouer*, derailing or outplaying (1992), with the confronting of *fortuna* and *Chance* as two concepts of contingency in *Das "Webersche Moment"* (1998), or the idea of making the Skinner-Koselleck comparison in *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe* (2004)<sup>16</sup>.

Perhaps the clearest case was *"Objektivität" als faires Spiel* (2010), which might be my favorite book to date<sup>17</sup>. I had no intention to write a third book on Weber, but at some point I began to wonder why he speaks on *"Objektivität"* (in quotation marks) when he does mean by it something entirely different than others. Then I began to check where and how he used the term, what was the point of his doing so, and whether I could identify his concept from these occurrences. From there I arrived at my idea that Weber's «objectivity» referred to a fair play as a regulative idea for debate procedures, for which the Westminster parliament was the closest approximation. This led then to several years of studying parliamentary procedures and rhetoric in the British sources<sup>18</sup>.

The Skinner book (2003) was requested by the publishers, also several of the dictionary or handbook articles<sup>19</sup>. The slow turn to EU studies was a result of cooperation with first Claudia Wiesner and then Niilo Kauppi and Taru Haapala<sup>20</sup>. The Bundestag book was a result of combining parliamentary studies with conceptual history of politics<sup>21</sup>.

JMR: Hannah Arendt vindicated her profession as political theorist giving eloquent reasons to keep it far from the philosophical tradition in which she was educated in Germany<sup>22</sup>. Not being an Arendtian scholar, but being knowledgeable about her entire production, to what extent is your case similar to hers when distancing yourself from mainstream political science?

KP: When arriving at West Berlin for an academic sabbatical period in summer 1981, I found the new edition of Arendt's *Vita activa* (German version of *The Human Condition*) and it was also a turning point in my thinking<sup>23</sup>. After Arendt's criticism, I have dispensed with the figure of *society* - *die Gesellschaft* - even joking when I say that I belong to the "anti-societal forces". I probably was the first in

<sup>16</sup> K. PALONEN, *Politik als Vereitelung. Die Politikkonzeption in Jean-Paul Sartres "Critique de la raison dialectique"*, Münster, Verlag Westfälisches Dampfboot, 1992; K. PALONEN, *Das "Webersche Moment". Zur Kontingenz des Politischen*, Wiesbaden, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998; K. PALONEN, *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe. Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> K. PALONEN, *"Objektivität" als faires Spiel. Wissenschaft als Politik bei Max Weber*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> K. PALONEN, *The Politics of Parliamentary Procedure: The Formation of the Westminster Procedure as a Parliamentary Ideal Type*, Opladen-Berlin-Toronto, Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2014; K. PALONEN, *From Oratory to Debate: Parliamentarisation of Deliberative Rhetoric in Westminster*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2016, and K. PALONEN, *Parliamentary Thinking: Procedure, Rhetoric and Time*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> K. PALONEN, *Quentin Skinner: History, Politics, Rhetoric*, Cambridge, Polity, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> See N. KAUPPI - K. PALONEN (eds), *Rhetoric and Bricolage in the European Union and Beyond*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, and C. WIESNER - T. HAAPALA - K. PALONEN, *Debates, Rhetoric and Political Action: Practices of Textual Interpretation and Analysis*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> K. PALONEN, *Politik als parlamentarischer Begriff*.

<sup>22</sup> H. ARENDT, *Hannah Arendt im Gespräch mit Günter Gaus*, in *Zur Person*, 19 October 1964, <https://youtu.be/J9SyTEUi6Kw> (accessed 30 March 2024).

<sup>23</sup> H. ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1958; German edition, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, Munich, Piper, 1960.



Finland to write an overview on Arendt in late 1980s for a book on modern classics of political theory<sup>24</sup>. It was obvious that I was never part of the political science mainstream. Already in the 1980s, we decided to widen the repertoire of texts for the course literature in Jyväskylä, for example by inviting the students to read classics such as Machiavelli instead of overviews on political thought. This was a decision that gave an entirely different profile to the discipline and marked a contrast with the other Finnish political science departments.

## 2. Politics and Politicians

RL: One of the core assumptions of conceptual historians is to argue that concepts have no fixed, stable meaning over time, that concepts cannot be defined, to use Nietzsche's formula. It's how historical agents make use of these concepts which tells us something about their shifting meanings. So, we might conclude that all conceptual change is rooted in controversies and debates, that speakers may rhetorically re-use concepts even when not arguing about politics. We might say that there's an inherent speaking *pro et contra*, a political aspect, applicable to conceptual change. All conceptual change would be in this sense "political" and therefore politics would be *the* standpoint from where to analyze conceptual change in general, even for concepts that are not necessarily related to politics but are fundamentally "political" in the sense above.

Could you comment on the view above, especially as regards a potential criticism, namely, that assuming a political character in all historical conceptual controversies does not sufficiently capture nuances proper to other fields of thinking?

KP: That's a very common question. The first point, which I developed already in the late 1970s, was understanding politics as an activity and not as a field, sphere, sector, or any other spatial metaphor. In other words, any phenomena might have a political aspect, which must be *read* as such. In my academic life and otherwise I have been interested in this political aspect, which does not prevent any phenomena from having also other aspects, but I am not interested in naming them.

With Mira Söderman, who defended her PhD thesis on Matteo Renzi's football rhetoric last spring, I have disagreed with almost everyone regarding the politics of football being in the game itself, in the rules, tactics, styles of players and so on<sup>25</sup>. This does not mean that when I look at a football match I would always be doing a political analysis, but quite frequently in the commentaries of reporters, players, coaches or football officials there is something which provokes a political reading.

Accordingly, the problem is not whether, but in which respects and how the political aspects can be read out of, for example, conceptual change. Here my typology from 2003 (politicization - polity - politicking - policy) can be helpful in identifying what is contingent or controversial<sup>26</sup>. In the Bundestag book I restricted

<sup>24</sup> K. PALONEN, *Hannah Arendt*, in J. KANERVA (ed), *Politiikan teorian moderneja klassikoita* [Modern classics of political theory], Helsinki, Gaudeamus, 1989, pp. 16-42.

<sup>25</sup> M. SÖDERMAN, «*Calcisticamente Parlando*»: *Football Language in Matteo Renzi's Political Rhetoric*, PhD Dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, 2023, available at [https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/86314/978-951-39-9525-6\\_vaitos21042023.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/86314/978-951-39-9525-6_vaitos21042023.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y) (accessed 30 March 2024); K. PALONEN - M. SÖDERMAN, Review of *The Palgrave International Handbook of Football and Politics*, «Parliaments, Estates and Representation», 40, 1/2020, pp. 131-133.

<sup>26</sup> K. PALONEN, *Four Times of Politics*.



my study to the explicit politics-vocabulary<sup>27</sup>, but I have gone beyond the language of the sources and used my political imagination and conceptual framework in analyzing football, street names, or the politics of travelling<sup>28</sup>.

RL: As part of your life-long interest in the concept of politics, you have published quite a few contributions on the figure of the politician, tracing the historical significance of this central political figure. In what ways the exploration of how the figure of the politician came about in different contexts could be helpful in revising our current widespread discontent with politicians? Do you think that an analysis of its historical nature can be read normatively and help correcting stereotyped pejorative perceptions of politicians nowadays, especially in view of the ascendancy of populism?

KP: This is, of course, again connected to understanding politics as an activity, as opposed to politics as an application of some theories, which Skinner also mentions in the Preface of *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978)<sup>29</sup>. In *Politik als Beruf* (1919), Weber indeed analyses what politicians are doing as a perspective for conceptualizing the activity of politics<sup>30</sup>.

Regarding politicians, there is a strange alliance between populists looking at politicians from below – “we ordinary people vs. those far away in Brussels” or elsewhere – and the academic arrogance – being convinced of “knowing better” than “mere politicians.” Neither of them is interested in knowing how complex, difficult and indispensable it is to face open questions in the realm of politicians operating in parliaments and elsewhere. Populists do not read our studies, but our former students working perhaps in journalism, think-tanks, parties and other political and politically affiliated positions could have a better touch on popular opinions.

RL: Your scholarly production is proof that parliamentary debates are unique historical sources for the study of conceptual change. First, could you tell us how you developed an interest in parliamentary debates? Why did you find them so interesting and continue to do so until today?

And second, how do you see future developments in the study of parliamentary sources? Would you agree that the digitization of parliamentary records has still potential to inspire research agendas in comparative and transnational studies? That the move from the writing of national histories to comparative studies is the most fruitful path for future research?

<sup>27</sup> K. PALONEN, *Politik als parlamentarischer Begriff*.

<sup>28</sup> K. PALONEN – M. SÖDERMAN, Review of *The Palgrave International Handbook of Football and Politics*, K. PALONEN, *Reading Street Names Politically: A Second Reading*, in R.R. REDWOOD – D. ALDERMAN – M. AZARYAHU (eds), *The Political Life of Urban Streetscapes: Naming, Politics, and Place*, London, Routledge, 2017, pp. 25–40; K. PALONEN, *Politicisation of Travelling: Interrail and Freedom*, «Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies», 4, 1/2020, pp. 64–81.

<sup>29</sup> Q. SKINNER, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. I: *The Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. ix–xv.

<sup>30</sup> M. WEBER, *Politik als Beruf*, orig. ed., 1919, in W.J. MOMMSEN – W. SCHLUCHTER – B. MORGENBROD (eds), *Studienausgabe der Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I/17, Tübingen, Mohr, 1994, pp. 35–88; M. WEBER, *The Profession and Vocation of Politics*, trans. R. Speirs, in P. LASSMAN – R. SPEIRS (eds), *Weber: Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994.



KP: I got more interested in parliaments in the 1980s when the Greens in West Germany, Finland and elsewhere got elected in national parliaments and tried to act differently from traditional parties; indeed, they used the distinct parliamentary resources in ingenious ways. My closer academic interest in parliament was due to the usual suspects: Max Weber with his parliamentary control of officials and its underlying concept of “objectivity” as a fair debate<sup>31</sup>, Quentin Skinner’s turn to Renaissance rhetoric as arguing *in utramque partem*<sup>32</sup>, and Reinhart Koselleck’s politics of time<sup>33</sup>, although Koselleck was never interested in parliamentary time.

But it was only around 2004–2005 that I discovered a wealth of online materials on older parliamentary rhetoric. Later I found the procedural tracts, but only slowly dared myself to analyze the debates themselves more than fragmentarily<sup>34</sup>. The plenary debates are a rare source for studying politics in *quasi*-“life” debates from long periods and across parliaments and countries, which may be complemented with other sources, but can never be replaced by anything else, and the digitalization has enormously facilitated research.

I still use what might be called a pedestrian method in analyzing the parliamentary debates and have reservations towards the use of “digital humanities”, as you know also in the version of Pasi Ihalainen and his team in the Academy of Finland Professorship’s Project<sup>35</sup>. My main doubt concerns that what was politically interesting for the actors, or what we today would find politically interesting, could easily be lost. I have always been more interested in the untypical rather than typical uses of political speech, although they cannot be separated by any formal criteria known in advance. When linguists create digital reading software, especially the procedural and time-playing aspects of parliamentary debates tend to disappear.

As a consequence, researchers would not gain insight into how to use the entire parliamentary repertoire for analyzing debates, for example, distinguishing between plenum and committees, the procedure for the agenda-setting, the different types of items on the agenda (legislation, budget, vote of no confidence, questions of members, etc.), the rounds of reading, the speech acts interrupting the debate (amendments, adjournments, questions of order), and modes of regulating

<sup>31</sup> M. WEBER, *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland*, orig. ed., 1918, in W.J. MOMMSEN – G. HÜBINGER (eds), *Studienausgabe der Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe*, vol. I/15, Tübingen, Mohr, 1988, pp. 202–302 (also available at <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb11125529?page=4,5>); M. WEBER, *Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order*, trans. R. Speirs, in P. LASSMAN – R. SPEIRS (eds), *Weber: Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 130–271; M. WEBER, *Die “Objektivität” sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis*, orig. ed., 1904, in M. WEBER, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. J. Winkelmann, Tübingen, Mohr, 1973, pp. 146–214; original version in «Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik», 19, 1/1904, pp. 22–87, available at <https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/50770> (accessed 15 June 2024); M. WEBER, *The “Objectivity” of Knowledge in Social Science and Social Policy*, trans. K. Tribe, in S. WHIMSTER (ed), *The Essential Weber: A Reader*, London, Routledge, 2004, pp. 358–404.

<sup>32</sup> Q. SKINNER, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>33</sup> R. KOSELLECK, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Theorie geschichtlicher Zeiten*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1979; R. KOSELLECK, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. K. Tribe, revised ed., New York, Columbia University Press, 2004; R. KOSELLECK, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> For example, K. PALONEN, *Fair Play and Scarce Time: Aspects of the 1882 Procedure Reform Debates in the British Parliament*, in K. PALONEN – J.M. ROSALES – T. TURKKA (eds), *The Politics of Dissensus: Parliament in Debate*, Santander, University of Cantabria Press and Madrid, McGraw Hill, 2014, pp. 327–348.

<sup>35</sup> See a short presentation of Pasi Ihalainen’s Academy of Finland Professorship project, available at [https://converis.jyu.fi/converis/portal/detail/Project/47682961?lang=en\\_GB](https://converis.jyu.fi/converis/portal/detail/Project/47682961?lang=en_GB) (accessed 30 March 2024).

parliamentary time (sitting months, days and hours as well as moves for *cloture* to terminate the debate and *guillotine* for a time reserved to debate).

In other words, the use of the parliamentary vocabulary should be read in the contexts of the speech acts in the debate. All this presupposes a parliamentary literacy, in the sense of both the knowledge of the shifting political constellations and the history of parliamentary procedure and rhetorical practices. It took me several years to gain such a parliamentary literacy: the digital methods developed by linguists have the risk of overlooking the fact that a thorough historical and conceptual knowledge of parliamentary practices is a prerequisite for understanding the parliamentary style of acting politically.

### 3. Max Weber's Legacy

JMR: Up until the 1990s, in the Anglophone debates Weber was mainly considered a sociologist with a subsidiary political production. It was very rare, among political philosophers and theorists, to judge his political writings as worthy of reading and study. Available translations were not much help. Why did Weber become your guide after reconsidering your early steps in the study of politics?

KP: I think in German-speaking countries Weber was well on the agenda already in the 1950s. Hubertus Buchstein in his dissertation *Politikwissenschaft und Demokratie* (1992) analyzed the several political scientists at the Freie Universität Berlin, such as Ossip K. Flechtheim, Franz Neumann, Ernst Fraenkel, Otto Suhr and Otto Stammer – all of them referred to Weber<sup>36</sup>. In the plenum of the Bundestag and Austrian Nationalrat Weber was regularly quoted, *Politik als Beruf* above all, across the political spectrum and with varied interpretations<sup>37</sup>.

A more historical reading of Weber began in the 1980s, with the publication of the *Max-Weber-Gesamtausgabe*, collecting also some less-known writings, later letters and lectures, which emphasized that Weber spoke of *verstehende Soziologie* (comprehensive sociology) quite late and with qualifications. A turning point in Weber scholarship was Wilhelm Hennis's *Max Webers Fragestellung* (1987)<sup>38</sup>. Hennis was a political science professor in Freiburg, polemizing against the canonized interpretation of Wolfgang J. Mommsen on Weber as a nationalist. I continued this criticism with a conceptual historical approach in the paper I presented at the Málaga IPSA Research Committee Political Philosophy conference, organized by José Rosales in June 1999<sup>39</sup>.

After having published my book on Sartre in 1992, I was already on my way to re-reading Weber, spending a sabbatical year in Frankfurt in 1992–1993. I got tired of Sartre's Hegelian features and wanted to study someone who was more interested in daily politics than Sartre, and Weber was definitely a life-long *homo politicus*. It took me some time, but I first published *Das "Webersche Moment"* (1998) and

<sup>36</sup> H. BUCHSTEIN, *Politikwissenschaft und Demokratie. Wissenschaftskonzeption und Demokratietheorie sozialdemokratischer Nachkriegspolitologen in Berlin*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> K. PALONEN, *Parlamentarisches Bretterbohren. "Max Weber" in Plenardebatten*, in K. PALONEN, *Max Webers Begriffspolitik. Aufsätze aus zwei Jahrzehnten*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2019, pp. 233–265.

<sup>38</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Webers Fragestellung. Studien zur Biographie des Werks*, Tübingen, Mohr, 1987; W. HENNIS, *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*, trans. K. Tribe, London, Allen & Unwin, 1988.

<sup>39</sup> Later published as K. PALONEN, *Was Max Weber a "Nationalist"? A Study in the Rhetoric of Conceptual Change*, «Max Weber Studies», 1, 2/2001, pp. 195–213.



then *Eine Lobrede für Politiker*, a detailed commentary on *Politik als Beruf* (2002)<sup>40</sup>.

JMR: In many ways your interpretation of Max Weber's thought, in particular of his political writings, goes against the current, challenging a century-long scholarship. Still, in spite of the thorough rediscovery of his political thought, a great deal of the scholarly production reproduces to varying degrees that old pattern. That happens not just in Anglophone debates but also elsewhere, which indirectly speaks of the intellectual laziness of revising established interpretations. How do you value your own intellectual crusade upholding his legacy?

KP: There is still a huge gap between the textbook-Weber of sociologists, administration scholars, etc., and the historical-Weber of Weber scholars. Of course, there is a lot of Weber scholarship which does not interest me. Nonetheless, I get queries quite frequently to referee Weber pieces, some of them completely dilettantish. I have contributed myself to both Oxford and Routledge Weber handbooks recently and wrote a speculation on *Weber and the EU* for a German volume<sup>41</sup>.

To give one clear example of elementary careless reading of Weber. He is still frequently interpreted as a narrow-minded adherent of «power politics», without noticing that his concepts of *Macht*, *Herrschaft* and *Staat* are interpreted by Weber himself as *Chance* concepts. Despite his explicit denial that the state would be an «acting collective subject», this view is commonly repeated<sup>42</sup>.

JMR: A few years ago, I gave a talk about interdisciplinary research in a master's course of Prof. Simona Forti, then at the University of Eastern Piedmont, Vercelli. Looking for examples to illustrate my argument, Simona Forti said that Weber was an eminent case of interdisciplinary scholar. To what extent do you consider yourself a walker used to crossing disciplinary boundaries, to use Albert Hirschman's words<sup>43</sup>? If so, do you have in mind what Weber said about *dilettanti* in his lecture on *Wissenschaft als Beruf*?

KP: Yes, I have called Weber a decathlonist of the human sciences. Some studies have made him also a classic of journalism studies, for example. Since being an established scholar and even more as emeritus professor, I have no need to worry about disciplines. I have cooperated with historians and tried to do my best so that they are not able to blame me for dilettantism in Weber's sense. Even if I have evaluated history professorships a couple of times, they surely don't count me as one of them. The History of Concepts Group (HCG) is today dominated by historians, and Claudia Wiesner and I founded the ECPR Standing Group Political

<sup>40</sup> K. PALONEN, *Das "Webersche Moment"*; K. PALONEN, *Eine Lobrede für Politiker. Ein Kommentar zu Max Webers "Politik als Beruf"*, Opladen, Leske + Budrich, 2002.

<sup>41</sup> K. PALONEN, *The Supranational Dimension in Max Weber's Vision of Politics*, in E. HANKE - L.A. SCAFF - S. WHIMSTER (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Max Weber*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, pp. 259-275; K. PALONEN, *Max Weber on Parliamentarism and Democracy*, in A. SICA (ed), *The Routledge International Handbook of Max Weber*, London, Routledge, 2022, pp. 432-445; K. PALONEN, *Max Weber zur Europäischen Union. Ein Gedankenexperiment*, in T. SCHWINN - U. BACHMANN (eds), *Max Weber revisited. Zur Aktualität eines Klassikers*, Weinheim, Beltz, 2022, pp. 115-134.

<sup>42</sup> See K. PALONEN, *The State as a "Chance" Concept: Max Weber's Desubstantialization and Neutralization of a Concept*, «Max Weber Studies», 11, 1/2011, pp. 99-117.

<sup>43</sup> A.O. HIRSCHMAN, *Crossing Boundaries: Selected Writings*, New York, Zone Books, 1998.

Concepts as a complement to the HCG<sup>44</sup>. The institutions of rhetoric scholars tend to be dominated by linguistic school rhetoricians and I have not attended their meetings for some years. Even if I used to be in good terms with our department philosophers, you, José and Rosario, are probably the only academic philosophers I currently have contacts with.

#### 4. The Approaches of John Pocock and Quentin Skinner

RL: As you may know, John Pocock has recently passed away, sadly only a few months short of his hundredth birthday. Would you like to briefly reflect on how you think his work has influenced your views? We specifically have two questions. The first one is about the notion of «historical *momentum*». In his *Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock says that «a moment has a history which can be written»<sup>45</sup>. Your notion of «historical *momentum*» while mostly in agreement with Pocock, emphasizes the formation process of such «moment» and the discontinuities with previous historical antecedents (rather than the continuities and transformations that seem to matter more to Pocock). Could you explain your intellectual debt to Pocock in this regard and how your «historical *momentum*» differs from Pocock's «moment»?

KP: I did not know of Pocock's death, thanks for informing – I looked at some obituaries. My debt to Pocock was mainly restricted to *The Machiavellian Moment*. A favorite quote from him is the view of politics as «dealing with contingent event»<sup>46</sup>, which I have used to make the point that I was not the only person interpreting politics in terms of contingency.

The second point was my book title *Das "Webersche Moment"* (1998) – the publisher wanted the quotation marks. With my language corrector, Klaus Sondermann, I discussed the use of articles and we agreed that *Das* was better than *Der*, which would have marked a singular instance, contrary to Pocock's point. My point with the book title was to contrast two concepts of contingency, the classical *fortuna* of Pocock and the *Chance* of Max Weber, to be understood as possibility, occasion, opportunity or option. With the Anglophone publishers I frequently have problems with Weber's *Chance*, which I prefer to quote as a German noun not to be mixed with the English *chance* which rather refers to *hazard* or similar *fortuna*-like figures.

The narrative of my book follows Pocock in so far as the moment is to be taken as an opening of something new which could be reactivated in later contexts, including other authors following Weber in the emphasis on contingency. Later, I adopted the sport reporters' term *momentum* as counter-concept to the instance<sup>47</sup>. In our forthcoming collective volume on the politician – edited by Pasi Ihalainen, Henk te Velde, Rosario López and myself – my problematic is different. I want to bind the chapters together by identifying for each of them the initial politicizing

<sup>44</sup> History or Concepts Group (HCG) <https://www.uni-bielefeld.de/fakultaeten/geschichtswissenschaft/forschung/history-of-concepts/>; ECPR Standing Group Political Concepts, <https://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/politicalconcepts> (both accessed 20 June 2024).

<sup>45</sup> J.G.A. POCOCK, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1975, p. 84.

<sup>46</sup> J.G.A. POCOCK, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p. 156.

<sup>47</sup> K. PALONEN, *Rhetorik des Unbeliebten. Lobreden auf Politiker im Zeitalter der Demokratie*, Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2012.



*momentum*, which was no longer so obvious in the different chapters presenting types of politicians<sup>48</sup>.

RL: A second question is about Pocock's notion of language, largely shared by Quentin Skinner, which seems to be key for how you conceive of language in your work. You share an understanding of language not as a prison, but as a scene for political action, which opens up the analysis to contingency and politicization<sup>49</sup>. This is one crucial aspect when thinking about language. Yet there's another important insight that we would like you to comment on, if possible, namely, that academic disciplines may also be called "languages." Pocock would use this, for instance, as a criticism against political philosophers' tendency to overgeneralize, decontextualize ideas, offer "impressionistic" accounts, and move away from historical explanations.

You have also argued that conceptual history could function as a critique of academic languages. This could help in breaking with the language of sociology, for instance, or «de-sociologise» conceptual history<sup>50</sup>. You have criticized the omnipresence of «the social», against the idea that concepts are subordinated to society. In this regard, you have argued that conceptual history should go beyond a «realistic ontology» and question the ontological primacy of society. Would you agree with these remarks? Do you think that conceptual history could still play this role nowadays or there's no need for this warning anymore?

KP: The criticism refers to Koselleck's project to connect *Begriffsgeschichte* with *Sozialgeschichte*. In the early nineties I probably did not know that this also marked a polemic against the dominant current of social history around his Bielefeld colleague Hans-Ulrich Wehler. I think Pocock's idea of speaking of politics in different languages still has a point, but it must not be restricted to academic disciplines. Mira Söderman refers to Pocock when she speaks on «football language»<sup>51</sup>.

In addition to what I said above on Arendt, and how I identify myself among "anti-societal forces" (not anti-social), I think that it is still common to speak of "society" as if was a "real entity" and not a concept which you could choose to use or not to use. I have used Occam's razor when dispensing with "society" for decades – it is not so difficult. I remember a debate in 2003 at the History of Ideas Department in Stockholm University, where some local colleagues found it impossible to understand my Weberian nominalistic point. In Swedish, more so than in other languages, society (*samhället*) is understood as an acting collective subject that does and demands something – for me a totalitarian idea.

RL: In your article published in the *European Journal of Political Theory* in 2005, you argued that a «cryptic» sentence from Quentin Skinner's preface offers a key to Skinner's book, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*: «Political

<sup>48</sup> P. IHALAINEN – R. LÓPEZ – K. PALONEN – H. TE VELDE (eds), *The Figure of the Politician in Modern and Contemporary Europe*, forthcoming.

<sup>49</sup> See Q. SKINNER, *Visions of Politics*, vol. I: *Regarding Method*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 6–7.

<sup>50</sup> K. PALONEN, *Politics, Rhetoric and Conceptual History: Studies in Modern Languages of Political Theory*, Jyväskylä, University of Jyväskylä, 1994; J. IFVERSEN, *The Birth of International Conceptual History*, «Contributions to the History of Concepts», 16, 1/2021, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> M. SÖDERMAN, «*Calcisticamente Parlando*»: *Football Language in Matteo Renzi's Political Rhetoric*.

life itself sets the main problems for the political theorist»<sup>52</sup>. As you noted in your article, up until that moment Skinner had never returned to this sentence, and it had also been largely neglected by commentators of his work. You have, however, reflected on this topic and argued that «we should not only read theorists as politicians», as Skinner implies with his maxim, but also «read politicians as theorists»<sup>53</sup>. Therefore, we should not only read Hobbes' *Leviathan* as «a speech in Parliament», as Skinner has suggested<sup>54</sup>, but also think of parliamentarians as being as potentially significant as Hobbes. This would include outstanding, modest, and mediocre politicians.

How would you respond to those who resist the implications that this claim would have, namely, their refusal to equate mediocre politicians with the level of abstraction and elaboration found in Hobbes' works?

KP: Quentin, indeed, referred to my interpretation and article in his reply in *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*<sup>55</sup>. I don't of course claim that rank-and-file politicians could be compared with master theorists. The point would rather be that I have strong doubts against the system-building style of theorizing *à la* Hobbes, Hegel, Heidegger or Habermas and their political implications.

My praise for politicians does not concern their personal qualities but how they are - especially in parliament but also in diplomacy or inner-party disputes - obliged to deal with situations that are unfamiliar and frequently uncomfortable for them. Their deep-rooted prejudices are contested, such as the nation-state as a quasi-natural unit, when accepting supranational powers in the EU. Even their criteria for judgement, which have until then worked successfully, may be disputed and so on. A condition of political literacy is a willingness to regularly face such situations in parliamentary practice, listen to opposite views and at the next stage of debate look at the issue again from a new angle. This willingness might include also leading to break with close political allies or with a party that one has endorsed for decades.

Weber's picture of politics as meaning «*ein starkes langsames Bohren von harten Brettern mit Leidenschaft und Augenmaß zugleich*» (a «strong, slow drilling through hard boards, with passion and a sense of detached judgement») in the last page of *Politik als Beruf* refers to something like this<sup>56</sup>. It was, by the way, given very different and also imaginative interpretations when used in the Bundestag and the Austrian Nationalrat. In other words, in the everyday practice of politicians, reflections and practical theorizing arise, which should be known better and which we, as occasional politicians (Weber's *Gelegenheitspolitiker*) could also learn and use.

<sup>52</sup> K. PALONEN, *Political Theorizing as a Dimension of Political Life*, «European Journal of Political Theory», 4, 4/2005, p. 351; Q. SKINNER, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. I, p. xi.

<sup>53</sup> K. PALONEN, *Political Theorizing as a Dimension of Political Life*, p. 359.

<sup>54</sup> Q. SKINNER, *Quentin Skinner interviewed by Alan Macfarlane*, 10 January 2008, available at [www.repository.cam.ac.uk/items/d7472460-a4de-4e07-9325-3b71420d8f0f](http://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/items/d7472460-a4de-4e07-9325-3b71420d8f0f) (accessed 30 March 2024).

<sup>55</sup> Q. SKINNER, *Surveying the Foundations: A Retrospect and Reassessment*, in A. BRETT - J. TULLY (eds), *Rethinking the Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 42.

<sup>56</sup> M. WEBER, *Politik als Beruf*, p. 88; *Weber: Political Writings*, p. 369. In this case, «detached» was added by K. PALONEN to R. SPEIRS' translation of *Augenmaß* as «sense of judgement», connecting it to WEBER's formula, in the same book, of «*Distanz zu den Dingen und Menschen*», p. 64 («*distance* from things and people», p. 353).



## 5. Closing Reflections

**JMR:** You've been instrumental to the lives of many scholars. What would you recommend a student asking your advice to pursue a research career at the university? And what would you recommend a recent postdoctoral scholar asking your advice to conduct interdisciplinary research on politics?

**KP:** Of course, the problem is whether there will be such classical careers. I think we should not despise working in think-tanks, journalism or in the EU and UN, or even party politics, both as indirect training grounds for academic career and conversely using our conceptual, historical and rhetorical competences when acting in such professions.

In general, perhaps I can give an old-fashioned advice: go abroad and learn as many languages as possible in order to distinguish yourself from the mainstream Anglophone provincialism.

I would rather speak of discipline-independent than interdisciplinary research. In a sense, conceptual history or rhetoric are not disciplinary titles but approaches or perspectives that are inherent parts of numerous disciplinary complexes around history, political science, philosophy, jurisprudence, literary studies, linguistic studies, and so on. The rhetoric of academic applications must be adapted to the position of understanding that people who think outside the box could sometimes be well appreciated.

## 6. Questions from the Audience

**Jussi Kurumäki (University of Jyväskylä):** Thank you, this was very nice to hear, it brought a lot of memories. I started as a student in 1984 at the University of Jyväskylä, so I've known Kari Palonen since then. I would like to ask some more names, we have Popper, Arendt, Sartre, Weber, and obviously Koselleck, Skinner, Pocock – but are we missing something? I have a couple of names on my list and I cannot spell them out. Bakunin was one of your favorites and I wrote my MA Thesis about Bakunin visiting Sweden. Then I would like to ask about Nietzsche or Machiavelli, but I cannot find any historians (if we exclude these conceptual historians). Do you have any favorite historians?

**KP:** Being a kind of bourgeois student-politician in the first half of the 1970s, I went to some anarchist or anti-authoritarian thinkers and among them I found Sartre, who perhaps still remains “my philosopher”. In my 2011 article on Weber, I wrote that Weber's concept of state is so formal that it cannot be used for either legitimating or abolishing the state. I remember having argued that historical analysis ended after the Spanish Civil War in 1939<sup>57</sup> – maybe you can dispute that. Nietzsche was hardly interested in daily politics, and I am no specialist on Machiavelli's time.

I could also mention other names. For example, Frank Ankersmith is a historian whom I have quoted extensively; Pierre Rosanvallon and Nadia Urbinati are rather

<sup>57</sup> K. PALONEN, *Mihail Bakunin*, in J. KANERVA (ed), *Politiikan teorian klassikkoja* [Classics of political theory], Helsinki, Gaudeamus, 1984; 2nd edition, *Platonista Bakuniniin* [From Plato to Bakunin], 1995.



historically-oriented political theorists; Henk te Velde is a Dutch historian connected with a current book project on politicians. If I may now *ex post* add a “non-conceptual” historian whom I like to read, it could be Karl Schlögel, a German specialist on Russia and Ukraine<sup>58</sup>.

Rieke Trimçev (University of Erlangen-Nuremberg): Kari, you told us what you would counsel young scholars to do. I would like to ask you what you would wish them to do. What are your suggestions? You said earlier in this interview that the history of concepts as a field is now dominated by historians, and that they don't dare to speculate. If we want to reinforce that connection between political thought and political theory, and you could have up to three wishes, where would you like our speculation to move? What are the fields, sources or topics from which a renewal of the relationship of conceptual history and political thought could start from?

KP: What I've done during the last year is analyzing lots of parliamentary alternative *topoi* of European integration, in particular of the so-called *ad-hoc* assembly of 1952-1953 for what was then the European political community. That was a combination of parliamentarism and supranationalism. It seems that nobody has done in equally radical sense in the EU. I think in EU studies this connection of parliamentarism and supranationalism could be something which should be done in the future, including questioning the very legitimacy of nation-states and national interests, to which all candidates in the Finnish presidential elections unfortunately still adhered. It would be quite anachronistic in these days as postcolonial studies are quite fashionable. I acknowledge parts of their critique, but I remain a European scholar.

Arthur Ghins (King's College London): Thanks very much; it was fascinating. I liked what you said about Anglo-American provincialism. I come from Belgium and my first language is French. It always struck me when I spent time in the UK and US that Anglo-American scholars don't realize that there is a whole world out there. I have a question about your relationship with Koselleck. You have mentioned Quentin Skinner and others, but I wanted to hear more from you about how you drew inspiration from Koselleck's work. What aspects of his work did you criticize? Does it make any sense to talk about a synthesis of Koselleck's and Skinner's approaches or should we side with one or the other?

KP: Nowadays there are quite a few studies on Koselleck that have nothing to do with Quentin Skinner. My big dispute with Koselleck was distinguishing between historical and political times. He never got the point that there would be something like a political time. During a meeting in Florence in 2001 for example I tried to ask him about it. When I began to speculate with parliamentary time, I noticed that Koselleck had a long-term view on time, and this didn't interest me: I have always been interested in the “next elections” and never worried about the “future generations,” to invert a well-known proverb. I frequently read books on Koselleck, I have published a book review on Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann's recent study on

<sup>58</sup> See for example K. SCHLÖGEL's cultural historical study *Das sowjetische Jahrhundert. Archäologie einer untergegangenen Welt*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 2017.



Koselleck, which is an excellent work<sup>59</sup>. Hoffmann noticed that Koselleck, especially in his late work on the Second World War, was much closer to Hannah Arendt than to Carl Schmitt and Heidegger, to whom he is always being related. There might be interesting ideas to be developed in that direction.

<sup>59</sup> K. PALONEN, Book Review: *Der Riss in der Zeit. Reinhart Kosellecks ungeschriebene Historik*, by S.L. Hoffmann, «Redescriptions: Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory», 26, 2/2023, pp. 180-184.