

Hans Erich Bödeker (Hg.), 2002. *Begriffsgeschichte, Diskursgeschichte, Metapherngeschichte*. Mit Beiträgen von Mark Bevir, Hans Erich Bödeker, Lutz Danneberg, Jaques Guilhaumou, Reinhart Koselleck, Ulrich Ricken und Rüdiger Zill. Göttingen: Wallstein, 421 S.

Ralph Müller (Ralph.Mueller@unifr.ch)

This important book illuminates some theoretical issues of the analysis of language use in social contexts from a historical perspective. The main focus is put on the presentation of various schools of conceptual history, (“Begriffsgeschichte” or “Historische Semantik” in Germany, “socio-histoire des concepts” in France, and the history of ideas in the vein of the “Cambridge School”) which all share a common interest in the analysis of the development of fundamental concepts or terms such as “liberty”, “democracy” or “progress”. However, the structure of the book displays a strong emphasis on the German tradition of the history of concepts, (“Begriffsgeschichte”) which is complemented by chapters in French and English. These contributions stem from various disciplines such as linguistics (Ulrich Ricken), political philosophy (Mark Bevir), analytical philosophy (Rüdiger Zill) and literature (Lutz Danneberg). This diversity holds great potential for a rare interdisciplinary and, in particular, international discussion. However, it seems that this book only marks a possible beginning of an interdisciplinary discussion about the relationship between discourse and historical reality, and the explanatory function of concepts and metaphors for history. In this respect, the title *Begriffsgeschichte, Diskursgeschichte, Metapherngeschichte* (‘History of concepts, history of discourse, history of metaphor’) promises more than the book actually delivers. It is rarely the case that the mutual relationship of discourse, concepts and metaphors is discussed: historical discourse analysis is virtually absent in this volume.¹ Just Jacques Guilhaumou’s chapter offers some insight into the role of discourse analysis in historical research, mentioning explicitly Michel Foucault.

¹ Linguistic research on historical semantics and history of discourse (e.g. Busse, Hermanns, Teubert (eds.): *Begriffsgeschichte und Diskursgeschichte*) appears only in a footnote on page 15.

Metaphor in conceptual history

Unfortunately, articles with a focus on conceptual history touch the issue of metaphor sporadically, and only the articles by Rüdiger Zill and Lutz Danneberg (which, however, cover roughly one half of the book) treat the historical analysis of metaphor in more depth. This is unfortunate, as conceptual history became sensitive to the role of metaphor at a very early stage. For instance, the lexicon *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (“Fundamental Concepts in History”, 9 volumes, 1972-1997), edited by Werner Conze, Otto Brunner and Reinhart Koselleck, included many conventional metaphors. Koselleck (1979:351), who is represented with a general article about conceptual history in this volume, outlined in his article about the concept “Fortschritt”, (a conventional metaphor for ‘progress’) that historical terminology is mostly borrowed from various domains of knowledge and experience such as theology, science, economy and so on. Consequently, Koselleck did also consider the physical experience of “Schreiten” (‘to step, to stride’) when discussing the history of the metaphor “Fort-Schritt”.

It would have been interesting to read more about how conceptual history deals with metaphor today. Unfortunately, conceptual historians do not say a lot about metaphor in this volume. As a result, it is difficult to identify common ground concerning the relationship between conceptual history, the history of metaphor and discourse analysis. Hence, I will briefly discuss the position of analysing metaphor in history, as far as it can be reconstructed from this volume, before giving a short account of the chapters in the book.

Many statements in this book put stress on the difference between fundamental concepts, (respectively terms,) and metaphors. Hans Erich Bödeker, in his introductory article, points out that the history of metaphor is complementary to conceptual history, as metaphorical descriptions cover what is not yet, or maybe will never be, addressed on a terminological level (25). This differentiation between metaphor and fundamental concepts is explained by the fact that metaphors carry an abundance of imagery which is incompatible with terminology (24). Bödeker’s short comment creates the impression that the historical study of metaphor could be treated independently from the history of concepts (this is, however, in contrast to the fact that metaphors have also been included in the lexicon *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (23)). Moreover, Rüdiger Zill finds differences in the methodological approach to metaphors and fundamental concepts: the analysis of metaphors seems to require a reconstruction of cultural implications (e.g. knowledge about fairy tales to understand a wolf-metaphor) to understand the dynamics of meaning construction, whereas the history of

concepts requires the reconstruction of complex networks of concepts (218). However, it is noteworthy that the analysis of concepts and metaphors seem to share some similarities: methodologically, it is striking that, throughout the book, both metaphorists and conceptual historians emphasise the importance of analysing the occurrences in their contexts. Moreover, both metaphorists and conceptual historians are interested in relating discourse to an extra-textual, social-historical context. These similarities suggest that the history of concepts and metaphors share at least some common methodological interests.

In the light of these common methodological interests, it could be possible to describe a more inclusive relation between the history of concepts and the history of metaphors. For instance, Rüdiger Zill, who discusses Hans Blumenberg's (1920-1996) historical programme of a "Metaphorologie", proposes (with the help of Blumenberg and Kant) a symbiotic relationship between metaphor and concepts, since metaphors may provide in many cases the intuition ("Anschauung") to highly complex and almost inconceivable concepts (e.g. "world"; 229). However, the history of metaphor is mostly treated as a project that is more or less independent from the history of concepts. Conceptual historians do not propose particular methodologies for dealing with metaphors, and the metaphorists do not integrate the history of metaphor in conceptual history.

As a result, we have to content ourselves with sketchy comments on what a combination of history and metaphor analysis may look like. Zill suggests a reformulation of Blumenberg's metaphorology in terms of a cultural history that investigates the everyday experience upon which metaphors rest (252). This potential is exemplified by Blumenberg's studies on "truth metaphors", in particular with the paradigmatic shift during the Renaissance, when truth was no longer perceived as a self-imposing force, but something that has to be acquired by hard work. Zill points out that Blumenberg made very little social-historical observations to explain such shifts, and he sees a future direction of research in the combination of metaphorology and a history of experience (254-258).

Danneberg, an erudite practitioner of the historical analysis of metaphors, seems to be less prone to propose a particular programme of historical metaphor research. He spots problems in the identification of metaphors and the analysis of single occurrences in terms of metaphorical systems and their hierarchy (405-413). Moreover, his (careful) considerations about the mutual relationship between social systems and metaphors (413-418) take him to the conclusion that a history of metaphor cannot be self-sufficient (421).

In summary, this volume provides a lot of insight into theoretical and methodological issues in the historical analysis of fundamental concepts and metaphors. However, the contributions

remain rather sketchy when it comes to combining metaphor research with historical analysis or relating the historical development of metaphors to social-historical developments. Zill admits that we are still far away from combining e.g. history of metaphor with a history of media (e.g. to explain the development of the metaphor of the ‘readability of the world’ (257)). Danneberg discusses the possible change of interpretation of metaphors such as “the King is the sun” (413) and acknowledges that he can only deliver a partial explanation of corresponding changes in the social system: “leider kann ich hier nur mit kleiner Münze zahlen” (414). In this respect, this volume rather shows future potential of a history of metaphor.

Hans Erich Bödeker: Ausprägungen der historischen Semantik in den historischen Kulturwissenschaften (7-27)

The introductory article by Bödeker (7-27) gives an historical account of the development of the history of concepts – or the historical semantics – in the cultural sciences. A central theme of the chapter is the lack of international cooperation between different branches of conceptual history: Bödeker detects a German, a French and an English tradition which share an interest in usage, in the contextualisation of language in its historical time and the fact that they introduced new methodological standards at the same time. These overlapping interests and improvements, however, could not be merged, due to little or no exchange between these schools. The history of discourse and the history of metaphor are not discussed in depth – discourse analysis only appears in footnotes – and the history of metaphors is restricted to less than four pages containing several bromide statements.

Reinhart Koselleck: Hinweise auf die temporalen Strukturen begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels (29-47)

Reinhart Koselleck, who unfortunately died in 2006, has been a leading character in German conceptual history for a long time, in particular as co-editor of the lexicon *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. Unsurprisingly, his contribution to this volume is concerned with showing why conceptual history works from a practitioner’s point of view. Koselleck states clearly that the methodology that guided the edition of the lexicon of fundamental historical concepts had developed into a ‘methodological straitjacket’ (31). Yet, he defends the project of writing the history of single terms, as concepts undeniably undergo a development in which they acquire and lose meanings (37). A history of conceptual development cannot examine the entire context of each occurrence of the term due to practical reasons (32f.): doing research is like

‘looking through the lens of a camera’, says Koselleck, and emphasises that it is necessary to reduce the context in order to cope with the amount of data. At the same time, conceptual history has to be aware of the fact that this development is rather in connection with the change of use of concepts. Thus, Cicero’s term “res publica” should be understood in its particular social and political context, and it has not changed as such, whereas the reception of this concept, its subsequent use, and its translation into various languages can be described in terms of a conceptual history.

Ulrich Ricken: Zum Verhältnis vergleichender Begriffsgeschichte und vergleichender Lexikologie (49-72)

Ricken’s contribution – the only linguistic chapter in this volume – is rather a presentation of some research results than a thorough methodological discussion. It focuses on the application of lexicology onto the terms of enlightenment in French and in German (“Aufklärung” and “lumières” (‘enlightenment’) and their derivatives). Ricken can show that, in German, “Aufklärung” was originally initiated by collocates such as “Begriffe aufklären” (‘enlighten or clarify concepts’(62)). Unfortunately, metaphorists look in vain for a thorough discussion of the similar, but not identical, metaphorical background of “Aufklärung” and “lumières”. Moreover, Ricken’s observations rarely comprise the development of discourse or social history. Even the anecdotal remark that it is possible to say in French “Eteignez les lumières en quittant la salle” (‘please turn out the light when leaving the hall’ (63)) is in essence a purely linguistic observation. In this respect, it might have been more illuminating to invite linguists with a stronger interest in discourse analysis.²

Hans Erich Bödeker: Reflexionen über Begriffsgeschichte als Methode (73-121)

This is Bödeker’s second contribution to this volume and it investigates methodological and theoretical issues of the German tradition of conceptual history. He provides a detailed account of some terminological and methodological discussions about “Begriff” (‘concept’), “Bedeutung” (‘meaning’) and “Gebrauch” (‘use’). Bödeker shows that conceptual history is mainly concerned with reconstructing complex knowledge reservoirs and ways of interpretation that accompany the use of particular words such as “republic” or “liberty”. However, this emphasis on particular words raises the question about the special status of

² The work of Dietrich Busse et al. in historical discourse analysis might have provided this aspect, cf. Busse (1987): *Historische Semantik*, and Busse/ Hermanns/ Teubert (eds.) (1994): *Begriffsgeschichte und Diskursgeschichte*.

fundamental concepts in language: Why and how are basic concepts such as “liberty” different from other words? Bödeker provides a useful overview on how historians such as Reinhart Koselleck or Rolf Reichardt have defined these basic concepts, and the (mostly linguistic, e.g. Busse, 1987) criticism at these definitions. This includes, in particular, long citations from Koselleck’s work, such as the following:

„As distinguished from concepts in general, a basic concept, as used in the *G[eschichtliche] G[rundbegriffe]*, is an inescapable irreplaceable part of the political and social vocabulary. [...] Basic concepts combine manifold experiences and expectations in such a way that they become indispensable to any formulation of the most urgent issues of a given time. Thus basic concepts are highly complex; they are always both controversial and contested. It is this which makes them historically significant and sets them off from purely technical or professional terms. No political action, no social behaviour can occur without some minimum stock of basic concepts that have persisted over long periods; have suddenly appeared, disappeared, reappeared, or have been transformed, either rapidly or slowly. Such concepts therefore must be interpreted in order to sort out their multiple meanings, internal contradictions, and varying applications in different social strata.” (90)³.

Bödeker’s own opinion is not always clear when he discusses definitions and criticisms of the term “basic concept”. Thus, this chapter offers a detailed description and discussion of the methodology of “Begriffsgeschichte”, but no explicit guideline for future studies in conceptual history.

Jacques Guilhaumou: L’histoire linguistique des usages conceptuels à l’épreuve des événements linguistiques (123-158)

Guilhaumou’s contribution offers a French perspective on conceptual history. He shows that the French tradition is less homogenous by far than those in Germany or Great Britain (125f., 132). His research programme of a “linguistic history of the use of concepts” is particularly interested in the historical contexts of the meaning of important terms of the social-political vocabulary and the underlying linguistic interaction (127).⁴ Guilhaumou first describes the international context of the French tradition of conceptual history (127-132), before depicting

³ Cited after Koselleck (1996): „A Response to Comments on the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*“, in: Lehmann/ Richter (eds.): *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts*: 64.

⁴ „De notre point de vue, il s’agit [=histoire des concepts] d’un domaine de recherche qui s’intéresse au contexte historique de signification des concepts majeurs du vocabulaire socio-politique, sans pour autant le réduire à de simples considérations lexicologiques dans la mesure où ces concepts sont appréhendés au sein de relations sémantiques multiples et plus largement d’une interaction sociale à caractère langagier. L’histoire des concepts prend donc en compte les usages d’un langage spécifique dans une situation spécifique à l’intérieur desquels les concepts sont développés par des auteurs, des acteurs et des orateurs spécifiques.“ (127).

several research programmes in France that could be understood as a collaborative work of a dictionary of social-politic usage in contemporary French, e.g. the project on *In/égalité/s* (Fiala, 1999) and the projects around the book series *Dictionnaire des usages socio-politiques du français*. Corpus linguists may have wished to have more information about the use of corpora in this vein of research, as there is a longstanding experience of historical corpus analysis with the database FRANTEXT in France (134). Guilhaumou, however, puts emphasis on the problem of how to relate linguistic material with the historical and social context; he clearly prefers a rather hermeneutic approach to texts, which also addresses the issue of the *abuse* of words (142).

Mark Bevir: The role of contexts in understanding and explanation (159-208)

This article provides a more differentiated picture of the Cambridge School, since Bevir emphasises the differences within the Cambridge School of the history of ideas, in particular between John Pocock and Quentin Skinner. John Pocock, on the one hand, is associated with a “contextualist” position, “who argue that the meaning of a text derives from the paradigm or *langue* to which it belongs” (165) – thus, the ways of thinking, writing and speaking that exists in their communities determine what authors may say (167). Quentin Skinner, on the other hand, is associated with a “conventionalist” position “who claim that meanings embody authorial intentions albeit that authors must express their intentions conventionally” (165). Thus, the reconstruction of intentions requires a reconstruction of conventions that govern the treatment of such issues (168f.). Bevir highly values their undogmatic, important work but he is not an unconditional supporter of the Cambridge School, as he challenges the opinion of both Pocock and Skinner: his main criticism is that the study of linguistic context is a prerequisite of any adequate work in the history of ideas (170, 173). Hence, the chapter is mainly concerned with proving that studying the linguistic context may provide a heuristic tool, but not a method for the history of ideas. This tool function is placed in Bevir’s programme of semantic holism, in order to explain beliefs and ideas.

Rüdiger Zill: “Substrukturen des Denkens”. Grenzen und Perspektiven einer Metapherngeschichte nach Hans Blumenberg (209-258)

In Germany, almost any historical study of metaphor contains references to Hans Blumenberg and his project of a historical metaphorology (Metaphorologie). This is, on the one hand, due to his pioneering work, as he investigated the function of metaphor to make the world

comprehensible since the late 1950s.⁵ On the other hand, Blumenberg has written historical studies of particular metaphors such as “reading” or “light”. However, the drawback of Blumenberg’s work has always been the absence of an integrated theory of metaphorology and a clear terminology (219). Rüdiger Zill’s chapter aims at reconstructing this metaphorology by providing a clearer terminology which includes, for instance, a thorough discussion of the Blumenbergian term “absolute metaphor”, (metaphors which are necessary to have a grasp on unintelligible concepts, e.g. “world”) or the examination of Blumenberg’s general term “metaphor” (which was used in a very broad sense as ‘loose’ non-terminological speech that includes simile and analogy (223)). Zill tries to find out what Blumenberg’s history of metaphor is really about, but in order to reconstruct the exact object of investigation, Zill has to make use of considerations by other theorists such as Max Black. Zill’s reconstruction is more convincing when he relies on sources that Blumenberg may actually have used, e.g. Kant’s rational concepts (“Vernunftbegriffe” (233-235)). Zill’s considerations culminate in a proposal for the future directions of metaphorology as described above.

Lutz Danneberg: Sinn und Unsinn einer Metapherngeschichte (259-421)

Lutz Danneberg has written by far the longest article in this volume. Extended footnotes provide an excellent account of the theoretical literature on metaphor from 1960s to the early 1990s (more recent literature is not treated in the same depth). However, the relevance of this extended review of theoretical (and mostly philosophical) research remains unclear, as Danneberg concludes that they are of little use in answering particular questions of the history of metaphor (404). Nevertheless, Danneberg shows great interest in the practical analysis of metaphors, as the issues (1) metaphor identification, (2) the cognitive dimension of metaphor for knowledge, (3) the analysis of their meaning, and (4) their benefit as a tool for the investigation of the history of science and philosophy receive particular attention.

Most relevant is Danneberg’s opinion about metaphor identification as he explains metaphor identification by deviation (269), which is defined with regard to semantic, syntactic rules and world knowledge (272). He concludes that, given that metaphors are also defined against the background of a (historically varying) world knowledge, it is possible that a certain expression may be both metaphorical and non-metaphorical. Thus, Danneberg accepts for example that the use of the expression “world as machine” by 18th century philosopher

⁵ E.g. Blumenberg: „Paradigmen einer Metaphorologie“, in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, 7-142.

Christian Wolff was not metaphorical, as Wolff was explicitly convinced that he was using a well-defined concept and not a metaphor (291). However, it is conceivable that a history of metaphor should still include such a case as a particular way of using a metaphor. Moreover, I doubt that Wolff resisted the analogical implication of this metaphor.

Conclusion

This is a volume with interesting, but also divergent, contributions about historical discourse analysis that provides insights for anybody interested in this field of research. It gives an international overview of various projects and traditions of conceptual history, albeit with a strong emphasis on German research. In particular, it points at many directions for future interdisciplinary dialogues and research. However, we can find little traces of an interdisciplinary dialogue between the contributors in this volume. Maybe, the contributors have read each other, at least, they sometimes cite the recent articles and books of each other, but there are no references between the chapters. As a result, there is a lack of coherence beyond the chapters, although the contributors are often concerned with similar issues. An index might have improved the readability and coherence of this volume.

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