

Introduction

Introduction

Professor **Kari Palonen** celebrated his 60th birthday on 5.2.2007. This collection of his articles has been published in conjunction with the jubilee seminar organised at the University of Jyväskylä. Both the seminar and this publication celebrate Palonen's long and distinguished career in political science. Thirty years ago, Palonen was appointed Acting Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Jyväskylä, which, under his influence, became a forum for the intellectual and political movement against the technocratic university reforms of the 1970's. He was instrumental in creating a research profile which emphasised theoretical and continental currents of thought. This continental and conceptual outlook continues to this day to be highlighted in Palonen's work, and he practices his own brand of conceptual history in his publications, which includes the use of an extensive range of primary material.

Palonen himself refers to the essays in this book as "by-products" or "complementary essays" of his monographic work, and it is for this reason that I would like to briefly highlight some of the focal points of his research.

Palonen published his first international articles around 1980, and his main monograph, *Politik als Handlungsbegriff* (1985), already contained an early version of his interpretative scheme on the conceptual history of politics. Palonen claims that it did not become possible to actually "politicise" things until the early 20th century. He proposes that there was a "horizon shift" in the concept of politics from the old discipline *politica* toward the activity of politics. His *Thematisierung der Politik als Phänomen* (1990) analyses the differences in the thematisation of *Politik* in the French and German debates. In it, Palonen also refers to the German and French debates as well as to the problems of conceptual transfer, i.e. the late and mainly derogatory reception of the calls for politicisation in France.

Politik als Vereitelung (1992) deals with Jean-Paul Sartre's concept of politics in *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Palonen offers a rhetorical reading of Sartre, and constructs a perspective across Sartre's explicit narrative based on a number of rhetorical *topoi*. Palonen claims that for Sartre, the key figure of politics is *déjouer*,

Introduction

which refers to outplaying one's adversary and derailing his or her policies. In other words, politics is an asymmetric game operating through negating turns.

Next, Palonen published two books on Max Weber: *Das 'Webersche Moment'* (1998), which examines politics in terms of contingency and pinpoints Weber's historical singularity to his notion of *Chance*, and *Eine Lobrede für Politiker* (2002), which paints an intimate portrait of Weber's essay *Politik als Beruf*. These studies, together with a number of articles in German and English, have brought Palonen in close contact with other Weber scholars, including the editorial board of *Max Weber Studies*. Palonen was awarded the Aby-Warburg-Professorship at the Warburg-Haus in Hamburg for the second half of 2006.

In the mid-1990s, Palonen began to compare the works of Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner. The work resulted in *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe* (2004), which is a *Werkgeschichte* of both authors that illustrates their individual thematic profiles. While carrying out his research on Koselleck and Skinner, Palonen was asked by Polity Press to write about Skinner for the series "*Key Contemporary Thinkers*". The result was *Quentin Skinner. History, Politics, Rhetoric* (2003), in which Palonen accentuates the different foci of Skinner's work and emphasises the Skinnerian "revolutionary turn" in political thought as part of political life itself.

The Struggle with Time. A Conceptual History of 'Politics' as an Activity (2006), offers a synthesis of Palonen's thought. Here, Palonen moves closer to the activity of politicians and constructs rhetorical history of conceptualisation. Already in 1993, he broke the concept of politics down into "policy, polity, politicking and politicisation," and in *The Struggle with Time*, he examined the temporal layers of the concept of politics. Palonen identified nine *topoi* (irregularity, judgment, policy, deliberation, commitment, contestation, possibility, situation, and play & game) which offer different perspectives on the conceptualisation of the activity of politics. In his most recent work, Palonen engages in a more concrete discussion of the politics connected to democratisation and parliamentarism.

Palonen also established the *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, which has been published since 1997. The new editorial team changed the name to *Redescriptions* and

Introduction

moved to LIT Verlag in 2005. *Redescriptions* is currently part of the "Finnish Centre of Excellence on Political Thought and Conceptual Change," which is headed by Palonen.

Some of Professor Palonen's other intellectual activities also deserve mentioning: *The History of Political and Social Concepts Group* was founded at the initiative of Melvin Richter, Henrik Stenius and Kari Palonen in 1998. Currently, the group has members from all over the world and organises annual conferences at various locations, each with a different thematic emphasis. Palonen has also been a board member of the nationwide Finnish Doctoral School VAKAVA (1994-1998, 2003-2006), and a supervisor of several high quality doctoral theses. He was awarded the Finnish Academy Professorship from 1998 to 2003. Palonen's European Science Foundation Network project "*The Politics and History of European Democratisation*" (PHED) also deserves a special mention. Its board consists of 11 first rank European scholars. The group also selected a number of outstanding young scholars to be the main participants in five workshops organised from 2003 to 2005 in Málaga, Jyväskylä, Turin, Greifswald and Copenhagen.

In Kari Palonen's afterwords for this book, he reveals that when he was 10 years old he dreamed of becoming a radio sports reporter rather than a sportsman himself. This is certainly a metaphor for why he became a professor of political science and not a professional politician. Kari Palonen is indeed a true *homo politicus* who has organised his life around his ongoing research. His independent intellectual commitment to his work and his unique personality is highly respected by a vast number of friends, colleagues and students. And on behalf of all, I would like to wish Professor Kari Palonen the most memorable 60th birthday.

KIA LINDROOS