

*Postscript: Why Does Politics Still Fascinate Me?***Postscript: Why Does Politics Still Fascinate Me?**

In 1979 I published a booklet in Finnish called *Mitä politiikka on?* [What is Politics?], indicating in the subtitle that it was merely the first draft or sketch of a further study. The 16 articles published in this collection in English are evidence of the fact that dealing with the concept of politics would ultimately become, as I have put it before, the project of my life.

In the sixth essay from 1988 I declared "that 'politics as such' means nothing". Nine years after the publication of my booklet I had come to the conclusion that politics actually "is" not anything, but instead refers to a contested and controversial concept, to a phenomenon that can be analysed from a number of different perspectives. In this volume I both analyse the historically different interpretations of the concept and attempt to classify them by applying a constantly changing analytical apparatus.

To my own surprise, this volume includes two articles with the same title, *Two Concepts of Politics*, although with a different subtitle. There exists a certain continuity from the late seventies to the present, and in 1979 I distinguished – following the anthropologist Georges Balandier – between the sector- and aspect-concepts of politics. In the two *Two Concepts of Politics* essays from 2000 and 2006 I distinguish between the sphere- and activity-concepts, as I also do in my synthesising monograph on the conceptual history of politics, *The Struggle with Time. A Conceptual History of 'Politics' as an Activity*, also published in 2006.

I am no longer content with the declaration that "everything" has the potential to include a political aspect, but claim instead that the "political aspect" is actually an "activity" that is "contingent". Contingent activity also refers to the opposition between the spatial and temporal aspects of politics. In other words, my thesis is that speaking of politics itself refers, both in everyday and academic sources, to two concepts, one of which is spatial and the other temporal. In both *The Struggle with Time* and the seventh essay here, I discuss the origins of the activity-concept and its rivalry with the sphere-concept.

I use the activity-concept to emphasise the priority of time over space. In 2007, I will also publish a short piece in *European Political Science* entitled *Politics or the Political?*, in which I take a stand

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in favour of activity over structure, performance over ontology, Max Weber over Carl Schmitt – in other words, "politics" over "the political". I face the recurring questions: How do we conceptualise the contingent, the controversial and the temporal, which constitute the phenomenon of politics? How has it been done in the past and how could it be done in the future?

In the essays included in this collection, I approach the temporal and contingent activity of politics from four different angles. In the first section, I operate with the focus on the ideal typical distinctions and classifications which may render the act of speaking about politics intelligible without reducing its contingency and allowing for variation amongst the "pure" types. The main tool I use is one I have been developing since its debut in the 1993 *Introduction of the Reading the Political* volume, the replacement of the triad of nouns used to refer to the English adjective *political*, namely politics, polity and policy, by splitting "politics" into "politicisation" and "politicking". The schema is then interpreted in temporal terms so that the term polity becomes a stabilising borderline-figure of politicisation and polity the same of politicking.

In the second section, the dissolution of the unity and givenness of politics has been analysed by means of conceptual history. This analysis further illustrates my thesis that there has been a definite historical "horizon shift" as a break with the post-Aristotelian discipline-concept of politics, which was rendered completely obsolete by the activity-concept over the course of the nineteenth century. The articles offer different approaches to and case studies of how the "drawing of new horizons" of the activity-concept actually occurred and how the conceptual changes spread throughout different countries and linguistic areas.

The two last sections of the volume highlight the shift from being to doing. Instead of asking "What 'is' politics?" I ask "What are individuals actually 'doing' when they are 'acting politically'". This is, surprisingly enough, a topic which is barely discussed in academic literature or by scholars, and quite rarely focussed on by journalists and politicians.

The claim that everything has a political aspect implies that "politics should not be left to the professional politicians alone". A corollary of this is, as Max Weber writes in *Politik als Beruf*, that "we all are occasional politicians". Posing the question "What do politicians do?" is thus equivalent to asking "What am I myself doing when 'acting as a politician'?" As I put it in my 1994 *Politics, Rhetoric and Conceptual History*, this Weberian figure of the occasional politician could actually

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replace the depoliticised concept of "citizen". It is from this perspective that I analyse cases of "acting politically" – from refusing to do military service to the process of naming streets to travelling – as examples of the activity-concept which are not intelligible in terms of the sphere-concept.

The last three essays focus on the figure of the professional politician. Instead of joining the chorus of those who are opposed to the figure – illustrated by Werner Sombart in the fifteenth essay – my focus is on the rhetorical revaluation of the politician. The figure of the professional politician enables us to highlight the distinct chances and practices related to how we, as occasional politicians, have the potential to act politically when we want or need to. Politicians are professionals in dealing with contingent, contested and controversial situations. Thus instead of opposing the citizens to the professionals, the latter serve as a model for the occasional politicians, in so far as they encounter contingent, contested and controversial situations. In the ninth essay I also hint at the possible existence of the ideal type of the "professional politician of one's own life".

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These essays in English are by-products of my monographic work, which has thus far been published mainly in German. The monographs are strictly historical and rhetorical analyses of specific texts. The majority of them deal with a broad range of primary sources from the perspective of conceptual history – *Politik als Handlungsbegriff* (1985), *Thematisierung der Politik als Phänomen* (1990) and *The Struggle with Time* (2006). Some are rhetorically oriented studies of the work or even single texts of one or two authors, as is the case with *Politik als Vereitelung* (1992), *Quentin Skinner* (2003) and *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe* (2004). *Das 'Webersche Moment'* (1998), which serves as a bridge that connects the two styles of my work.

The essays included in this volume complement my monographic work. The clearest examples of this are the studies on conceptual history in the second section and the two empirical studies in the last section, which deal with the same subject matter as my as yet uncompleted monograph on the rhetorical *topoi* in the defence of politicians. These essays represent my own personal style of examining conceptual history through a large number of primary sources, many of which are quite foreign to present-day political theorists, just as they were to the contemporaries.

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Some of the essays are more speculative than others. In the words of Max Weber, I refer to them as "ideal typical" analyses, which transcend the strict divisions between empirical and normative, historical and analytical approaches. This corresponds to the Weberian concept of *Chance*, analysing phenomena in terms of the possible. The studies aim at constructing pure types of conceivable possibilities which are then confronted with each other. This refers to the aim of accentuating the plural aspects of politics.

These ideal types are historically related to a definite context of politics and way of theorising about politics, but they also transcend this context and play the role of distinct analytical categories. These categories can be applied to historical studies as tools through which the vocabularies of the agents can, to a certain extent, be typologised in an historically relevant manner; the four aspects of politics are applied to the Finnish conceptual history of politics, although in a somewhat modified form (see also my article "Historische Begriffe und analytische Kategorien, Anmerkungen zur 'Politisierung' der Begriffe und zum Sprechakt 'Politisierung'", *Scientia Poetica* 2; 2006, 318-331).

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The essays can also be read as signposts of my intellectual biography. A few "insiders" will undoubtedly be able to read through them links to my own life and to the political situation in the world in general and Finland in particular, although this is not explicitly thematised. I regret not having had the time to add additional explications and footnotes for my younger colleagues and students in order to improve their understanding of the contextual index of this volume.

Without delving into any further autobiographical reflections, I will take up the obvious question: Why – after having studied it for some 30 years – does politics as a concept interest me? When asked this question, I frequently respond with an autobiographical anecdotal analogy. When I was around 10 years old, my dream was to become a sports journalist on the radio (in a piece published in Finnish in 1992 I carried out a rhetorical analysis of some of the 'texts' of a famous Finnish football reporter's commentary on some of the games of the 1990 World Cup in Italy) – as I was never a sportsman myself. This is also why I became a professor of political science and was never tempted to become a professional politician myself. I am, of course, a *homo politicus*, but I operate

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at a safe distance from the actual events and real lives of politicians. Sometimes I invite politicians to academic events in order to better understand the distance between the worlds of scholars and politicians. The present leader of the Green parliamentary fraction in *Eduskunta* and former M.E.P., Heidi Hautala, is my favourite politician in this respect.

In other words, my admiration of politicians is related more to the ideal than the empirical type of politician. The point, however, is that the empirical types of politicians are actually much more interesting, clever and resourceful than the widespread popular-cum-academic parodies of them lead us to believe. The last essay of the volume provides some grounds for this; it is not the personal qualities of the politicians that fascinates me, but their highly competitive existential situation in parliamentary regimes, which "forces them to be free" in the Rousseauvian-Sartrean sense. Politicians in a democratic parliamentary regime are obliged to innovate and improvise in order to survive and succeed as politicians. The point is to understand the activities of politicians from precisely this type of existential perspective.

The actual situation of the professional politician also serves as a point of reference in terms of reading the everyday choices of life. In this sense, I also regard the politician as a paradigm to be followed, although obviously with certain modifications, by present-day professors. The paradigm of the politician is both more appropriate and more challenging than the competing ideal types of the official, the lobbyist and the entrepreneur, which are currently frequently compared to professors. In this sense, perhaps the dilettantish politicking of my youth was not all in vain, and my focus on the rhetorical and conceptual history of politics and politicians has definitely also served me well in terms of the application of rhetoric and the disregard for or subversion of bureaucratic demands.

The last essay, originally presented at a conference to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Quentin Skinner's *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* in Cambridge, April 2003, also alludes to my rhetorical revaluation of the parliamentary style of politics. The point, inspired above all by Skinner's studies on the Renaissance rhetorical culture, is to treat the parliamentary procedure as a paradigmatic approximation of the politics of *dissensus*. Read in retrospect, the celebration of dissensus, controversy and struggle is a common *topos* of the analysis of the distinct concept of politics in all its historical variations. The current direction of my studies on politics and politicians is moving toward the rhetorical and conceptual historical analysis of parliamentary

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sources. The distant admiration of politicians remains, but shall be accentuated by the increased analysis of their own words in deliberation and debate.

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Kari Palonen