THE *HISTORISCHES WÖRTERBUCH DER PHILOSOPHIE*

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The *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (*HWPh*), whose first volume came out in 1971 and whose last volume will appear in 2004, is the immediate successor of the *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe*, which was edited by R. Eisler and whose fourth edition dates back to 1927-1930. But it is also, in its own way, a continuation of the great tradition of dictionaries of philosophical concepts, a tradition that includes Goclenius and A. Lalande's *Vocabulaire Technique et Critique de la Philosophie*. In a similar manner, in 1774 J.G. Feder put forward the "idea of a philosophical dictionary" with the intention to help philosophy to overcome the calamity of having to deal with "concepts that are not precisely determined" ("nicht genau bestimmten Begriffen"). The remedy consisted in a "thorough elucidation of the true contents and origin" of the concepts. At the heart of all these dictionaries, however, lay the idea of the Enlightenment, that by clarifying and precisely determining the various meanings of the given concepts an internationally valid terminology of philosophy could be created, thereby avoiding all quarrels in philosophy. The *HWPh* is much less ambitious. It is mainly oriented towards the German language, but it also includes the technical terms from other languages, especially from the Greek and Latin traditions. If an expression originating in Greek or Latin logic or ontology has also been adopted in a modern European language as a term and lives on there, this expression and its historical background are included under the entry of the vernacular term. If, on the other hand, the vernacular version has not become

commonly accepted, the concept receives its historical treatment in its Greek (e.g. "Epopteia") or Latin form (e.g. "communes conceptiones"). Sometimes terms from a culture of the Far East were included as well (for example, "Bushido"). In this manner, it may happen that one becomes aware of a specifically German development of a concept, as it may be observed in the case of "Willkür" ('arbitrariness') as opposed to "Freiheit" ('freedom, liberty') – a distinction that does not have an exact counterpart in another language, be it Greek or Latin or another modern language.

The basic idea behind the *HWPh* is to provide documentary evidence by tracing the historical development of philosophical concepts, with regard to what remains constant concerning a philosophical problem against the background of changing historical positions and the antagonisms of the various currents and schools, and, likewise, with regard to the wide range of interpretations that are possible when dealing with a philosophical object. This means, however, that the *HWPh* is deliberately directed against and opposes any abstract determination of the object of philosophy by drawing attention to the historical genesis and the historical change of the meanings of concepts and terms. This conception implies that a philosophical object does not exist separately from a concept and its historical change. Philosophy has its objects only through and in a concept. The thing itself does not exist without its concept. More precisely: the awareness of something cannot be traced without having its concept. By following this approach, the *HWPh* not only fits well into the great tradition of philosophical dictionaries, but, on the other hand, its peculiar traits become apparent against this background as well. J.G. Walch was one of the first, in 1726, to point to the "historical" aspect of concepts, which belongs to the same level as the "dogmatic" aspect, and which likewise needs to be scrutinized. The idea of this twofold aspect permeates his dictionary, as he attempts, on the one hand, to present the

"things themselves according to all their parts" (die "Sachen selbst nach allen Teilen derselbigen"), and, on the other hand, to give an explanation of the terms belonging to philosophy. In contrast, W.T. Krug expressed the demand for a dictionary of conceptual history as early as 1806, and he also formulated a program for a "historical and critical dictionary of philosophy"

> It should be very instructive to have a work containing all philosophical concepts and theorems, presenting them in alphabetical order and specifying their origin, development, change, their contestations and defenses, their distortions and corrections and citing all the sources and the authors of all times down to the present.[1]

This idea was taken up by R. Eucken, who gave a decisive impetus to the lexicography of conceptual history with his call for an "edition of a historical dictionary of philosophical terminology" (1872) which was meant to include all the words that have "received a peculiar philosophical meaning" and that can be represented "in their emergence and their development down to the present" (Eucken 1872-1873, 81 ff.). Finally, in the 20th century, it was E. Rothacker who pursued the idea of "a conceptual history based upon the historical consciousness" ("einer Begriffsgeschichte im Sinne des historischen Bewußtseins"). This idea materialized in 1955 with the foundation of the "Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte". The philosophical awareness of a thing, however, is a peculiar one, namely a reflective knowledge of it. It was Hugh of St. Victor who had already emphasized the reflective structure of human

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[1] "Es müßte sehr instruktiv sein, wenn man von allen philosophischen Begriffen und Sätzen ein Werk hätte, welches sie in alphabetischer Ordnung reihete, dabei ihren Ursprung, ihren Fortgang, ihre Veränderungen, ihre Anfechtungen und Verteidigungen, Entstellungen und Berichtigungen mit Angabe der Quellen, der Verfasser, der Zeiten bis auf den gegenwärtigen Augenblick angäbe" (Krug 1806, 436).

knowledge in his book on human knowledge, the *Didascalicon.* But, of course, a simple natural knowledge of a thing always precedes the philosophical one. Thus, for example, people practised agriculture for a long time and thus had knowledge of it before agriculture became the object of philosophical reflection in the context of the so-called *artes mechanicae*. What is already known by natural consciousness is known once again in philosophy, but in a different manner. What is known in a reflective way, is reflected in the philosophical terminology, which has its own history. To give another example, drawn from the first volume of the *HWPh*: of course the human mind had always analyzed or composed something when thinking about something, but the awareness of this ability of "analysis" and "synthesis" comes into existence only when the concepts of "analysis" and "synthesis" appear. As for the rest, the entry "Analyse/Synthese", one of the best in the dictionary, traces the historical development of this pair of basic methodological notions from Plato down to the 20th century. It seems, however, that this fundamental principle of the dictionary sometimes leads into difficulties. For example, can we really say that according to this principle, there is no metaphysics in Plato, as the Greek concept of $\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \mu\varepsilon\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$ does not appear in his writings, or what is more, that there is no metaphysics even in Aristotle, as he does not use this expression either, as you know? Well, as far as Aristotle is concerned, there are enough alternative concepts such as "wisdom" or "First Philosophy" and the like that allow us to find sufficient evidence for the awareness of what was later expressed by the concept of "metaphysics". The case of Plato is more difficult. It would be absurd not to deal with Plato's philosophy in an entry on "Metaphysik", but the name of this discipline is absent in his writings. Again in this case, one has to draw on alternative concepts such as "dialectics" or the

"epoptikon" of the *Phaidros*, which will later become a designation for metaphysics. But in any case, names of disciplines are exceptional, insofar as they almost always were invented and coined much later than that which was dealt with under the respective name.

The meaning of a concept is always determined by the opposite concept as well. The change of the meaning of one and the same concept may thus be perceived most adequately if the corresponding opposite concept can be found. This can be seen very clearly in the case of the concept "transcendental". "Transcendental" is a fundamental notion in philosophy. The philosophy of Kant introduced a significant change in the meaning of this concept. Whereas the concept of "transcendents" –which becomes "transcendentals" in the later Middle Ages without undergoing any change of meaning then– from its emergence to the time immediately before Kant, signifies the most general determinations of being in an ontological way – that is, it presupposes the possibility of an immediate cognition of the object. In the philosophy of Kant and its successors the very same concept is used as a predicate of that kind of knowledge which deals with the *a priori* conditions of experience. This fundamental change in the concept's meaning becomes evident by looking at the change of the opposite concept. The scholastic concept of the transcendental, which is the proper object of metaphysics since Albert the Great, is opposed to the concept of the categorical: The transcendental is the transcategorical. From the 15th century onward, the transcendental determinations often appear in contrast to the so-called "supertranscendentals", which are those utmost general determinations such as the "opinabile", the "intelligibile" or the "apprehensibile", common to both the real things and the beings of reason. With regard to this opposite concept of the "supertranscendental", the "transcendental" or the transcendence must be understood as the most general determination of all real beings including

even God Himself, though sometimes a distinction is made between the transcendence of God and transcategoriality proper. This constellation of concepts undergoes a change in Kant. The concept of the transcendental as a general predicate of certain cognitions is opposed to the concept of the empirical. Idealism and Romanticism become explicitly aware of what Kant anticipated: the transcendental becomes the label for a certain method, a standpoint or a point of view, in contrast to which the metaphysical or the transcendental in the sense of the transempirical designates the aiming point of philosophy. Kant's transcendental question, which was renewed and expanded in Neokantianism (H. Cohen, P. Natorp, E. Cassirer, W. Windelband, H. Rickert), is taken up again in Phenomenology with regard to the world as the totality of all possible experience, so that here, as well as with M. Heidegger, the concept of the mundane or of the world serves as the terminological opposite or point of reference. Under the conditions of the linguistic turn, "transcendental" seems to have developed into a purely formal concept in the 20th century, as becomes especially evident from the debate on the so-called "transcendental arguments". It is obvious now what this example can show us: the change in the respective opposite concept is an indication that a more or less decisive transposition or change of meaning of the original concept has taken place.

The *HWPh* is thus guided by an idea of philosophy, according to which philosophy develops and is continually enriched through the antagonism of concepts, schools and currents. This development has to be understood as being a fundamentally open process. As the first editor of the dictionary, J. Ritter, remarked in his guidelines ("Leitgedanken"), this kind of a historical foundation for philosophy stands in opposition to the Cartesian position, according to which the clear and distinct concept "also comprises the object of philosophy in a definite precision that is excepted from all historical change"

(Ritter 1964; 1965; 1967). The *HWPh* thus takes up basic ideas of H. Blumenberg, who, in his Metaphorology, indicated that the desire for a completed terminology would only destroy the reasonable history of concepts. The history of concepts would come to an end if the language of philosophy strove to realize its conceptual final state and the ideal of a definitive terminology. In contrast to this, conceptual history has chosen a more modest task. By historically investigating concepts and opinions, positions and issues, methods and problems, it can contribute –as L. Geldsetzer expressed it– to preventing a kind of philosophy that "invents new concepts without regard to continuity and revels in its own terminology", that is, to use Goethe's beautiful expression, that tries to play the fool at its own hand ("die den Narren auf eigene Hand zu spielen versucht").

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