

EDITORIAL

THE POLITICS OF RENAMING

REDESCRIPTIONS. *Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History* is the new name of the *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*. Renaming is in itself a form of rhetorical redescription which indicates both that the old name has given rise to misleading associations and that a new page in history has been turned. The renaming of the *Yearbook* is a move that corresponds to the trends in current academic politics. As national traditions are dissolving, the relationships between intellectual centres and peripheries are tending to increasingly underlie a process of reformation, and as the old strictly discipline-bound academic journals and yearbooks are becoming stagnant, new types of names are becoming increasingly necessary.

The *Yearbook* has a record that surpasses the intention of its founders that it serve as a modest and rather amateurish enterprise. Throughout its seven volumes, the *Yearbook* has developed an intellectual profile of its own and manifested a high academic quality. World-famous political theorists, historians and philosophers have contributed to the seven volumes, including Reinhart Koselleck, Quentin Skinner, Adriana Cavarero, Janet Coleman, Terence Ball, Frank Ankersmit and Patricia Springborg. Similarly, the *Yearbook* has published contributions by first-rank younger scholars, such as Simona Forti, Mark Bevir and Hubertus Buchstein. Leading Finnish

scholars in political thought, philosophy and intellectual history have also contributed to the *Yearbook*. The *Yearbook* has brought studies from the Finnish project on conceptual history and other discussions on Finnish history, politics and philosophy to an international audience.

The further professionalisation and internationalisation of the *Yearbook* is a goal we intend to achieve. The third editorial team renamed the *Yearbook* and added a subtitle indicating the thematic profile. A formalised reviewing process, a website (<http://www.jyu.fi/yhtfil/redescriptions>), the possibility to easily order back issues and the introduction of an electronic version of the journal have been established. From Volume 9 onwards, the participation of Lisa Disch (University of Minnesota, USA) and Hubertus Buchstein (University of Greifswald, Germany) on the editorial team will accentuate the *Yearbook's* international ambitions.

Redescription refers to a rhetorical move. In terms of classical rhetoric, redescription alludes to a group of moves that alter a concept in one sense or another. Following Quentin Skinner we can discern four aspects of redescription, namely reconceptualisation (revision of meaning), renaming (name change), re-weighting (shifting significance) and re-evaluation (alteration of the normative colour). One of the main sources of rhetorical redescription is the scheme of *paradiastole*, which refers either to the de- or revaluation of the normative tone or to the increasing or decreasing significance of the concept in question. In a broader sense, the point of both renaming and reconceptualising can lie precisely in the corresponding changes that increase or decrease the acceptability of the concept.

The political use of concepts is typically controversial and contested, and includes the omnipresence of redescriptions of concepts. Accepting this condition of the understanding of political thought and conceptual change requires paying special attention to the moves of redescription involved in the study of political thought and conceptual history. The presentation of a description already poses a challenge for its revision, or redescription, although it is impossible to tell in advance the exact point that the redescription will mark or all the levels of significance it can be given afterwards.

The name *Redescriptions* refers to the need to analyse in microscopic detail the rhetorical dimension of conceptual changes. The concept of

“conceptual history” that is included in the subtitle alludes to the key role of concepts as “pivots”, as Reinhart Koselleck puts it, around which the political controversies rotate. In a broader sense, conceptual history also refers to an increasing interdisciplinary research programme, which has resulted in impressive monographic studies around single concepts or conceptual controversies, as well as in noteworthy lexical projects. Studies representing of all these types have also been published in the *Yearbook*. The growing international interest in conceptual history also alludes to a close co-operation with the *History of Political and Social Concepts Group*, founded in 1998. The *Yearbook* has provided a major forum of publication for papers presented at the annual conferences of the group, and the addition of conceptual history to the subtitle indicates a direction of interest.

The *Yearbook* welcomes original scholarly contributions on any aspect of political thought regardless of the academic discipline to which the author belongs. Articles paying specific attention to the changing and contested character of concepts are particularly welcome.

The increasing role of Finnish scholars in new academic subfields and international networks is a further reason for changing the name of the *Yearbook*. There is no longer any special need to increase the international awareness of the strange thinking on the Finnish periphery: there are enough fora for this purpose. Dealing with Finnish subjects will require dissociation on two distinct levels, which allow us to treat on two distinct levels Finland as a foreign country that happens to be familiar to the authors. This was also the programme of the Finnish project on conceptual history, of which a first volume, *Käsitteet liikkeessä* (Concepts in Motion) was published in December 2003. The volumes of the *Yearbook* remain indispensable in the presentation of an overview of Finnish conceptual history and political thought in general. The practice in which Finnish scholars review recent international literature and foreign scholars review Finnish literature on the field will also be continued.

Redescriptions is included as an independent section of the research unit *Political Thought and Conceptual Change* and the main research area of *Political Theory and Analysis* at the University of Jyväskylä, which remains the site of *Redescriptions*.

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