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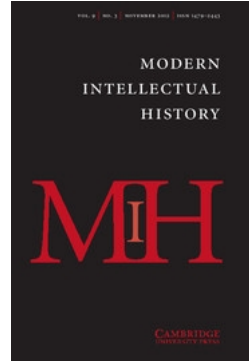
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FORUM: INTELLECTUAL HISTORY IN AND OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY*

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What can one say about the state of the art in the Federal Republic? A number of aspects are discernible, not only in the practices and various traditions of intellectual history there, but also in its politics: the stark dichotomy between Marxists and anti-Marxists; the ever-present metahistorical question of which (sub)discipline, field, or method would set the political agenda; and the position of Jewish émigrés. These issues raise still more basic ones: how to understand the Nazi experience, which remained living memory for most West Germans; how to confront the gradually congealing image of the Holocaust in private and public life; and the related matters of German intellectual traditions and the new order's foundations. Had the Nazi experience discredited those traditions and had the personal and institutional continuities from the Nazi to Federal Republican politics delegitimated the latter? These were questions with which intellectuals wrestled while they wrangled about historical method. In this introduction, I give a brief overview of these and other innovations in the field, before highlighting some of its characteristics today.

INTRODUCTION

In 1971, the German historian Theodor Schieder wrote an article for West Germany's premier history journal, the *Historische Zeitschrift*, on the state of "political history of ideas" (*politische Ideengeschichte*) in the Federal Republic. His reflections on the fate of a book series that published translations of the "classics of politics"—e.g. by Thomas More, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Thomas Hobbes—was the starting point for a general, if brief, survey of the field. In the 1920s, Friedrich Meinecke and Hermann Oncken began the series that Otto Heinrich von der Gablentz, Siegfried Landshut, and Dolf Sternberger revived after the war, but how dramatically the conditions for the project had changed in the

* My thanks are extended to Sean Forner, Christina von Hodenberg, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffman, Daniel Morat, Marcus Payk, and Natasha Wheatley for helpful comments on previous drafts, though this is not to suggest that they agree with all my assessments.

ensuing decades, he observed. Whereas the founders could count on the “lively interest” of a broad public beyond professional historians, their successors now encountered “an often thoughtless heriticization” (*Verketzerung*) by those who interpreted political theory “in the main or exclusively in terms of social history”. In the postwar constellation, not historians but political scientists, like the new series editors—now in newly established departments of their own—conducted the political history of ideas.¹

Political science could easily replace history in this regard, speculated Schieder, because of its theoretical orientation, whereas history always pretended to be a “reality discipline” (*Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*). It was all the more important, then, to refute the criticism that Meinecke’s history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*) was removed from social reality by recalling that he had challenged the positivism of mainstream historians who rejected the import of ideas outright. Besides, the history of ideas was never intended as an end in itself but to thematize particular topics for general historiography. “One read [Meinecke’s] *Machiavellianism: The Doctrine of Raison d’Etat and its Place in Modern History* for orientation about historical problems rather than to prepare for a political science exam.”²

More importantly, Schieder continued, for Meinecke and his school the history of ideas was also a vehicle to critically grasp the new political reality of the Weimar Republic, which they supported as “republicans of reason” (*Vernunftrepublikaner*), rather than to escape it. “Many of them needed to leave Germany in 1933”, he added, and by “‘the cunning of reason’ they contributed to the establishment of the history of political ideas in the USA.”³ There the *Journal of the History of Ideas* and the field of “intellectual history” presented a synthesis of the traditional political history of ideas and the intellectual orientations of social groups, institutions, and scholarly disciplines. This welcome development was all but ignored in West Germany, he lamented, where the Meineckean legacy was “almost entirely uprooted” and the history of political ideas was seen as “totally obsolete” by the hegemonic positivism of the social sciences. Only his opponents, the Marxists, he remarked ironically, were interested in the history of doctrines and ideologies.⁴

What can one say about the state of the art in the Federal Republic some forty years after Schieder’s bleak assessment? A number of aspects are discernible, not only in the practices and various traditions of intellectual history there, but also

¹ Theodor Schieder, “Politische Ideengeschichte”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 212 (June 1971), 615–22.

² *Ibid.*, 616.

³ He used the terms “political history of ideas” and “history of political ideas” interchangeably.

⁴ Schieder, “Politische Ideengeschichte”, 618.

in the positionality he occupied and articulated, namely the stark dichotomy between Marxists and anti-Marxists; the ever-present metahistorical question of which (sub)discipline, field, or method would set the political agenda; and the oblique reference to the contribution of Jews—those who “needed to leave Germany in 1933”—like Landshut, who returned.⁵ These issues raise still more basic ones: how to understand the Nazi experience, which remained living memory for most West Germans; how to confront the gradually congealing image of the Holocaust in private and public life; and the related matters of German intellectual traditions and the new order’s foundations. Had the Nazi experience discredited those traditions and had the personal and institutional continuities from the Nazi to Federal Republican politics delegitimated the latter? These were questions with which intellectuals wrestled while they wrangled about historical method.

Certainly, Schieder would have been surprised by the impressive range of work and reflection in the field today, supported as it is, since 2007, by a dedicated journal, the *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte*, and many recent handbooks and anthologies.⁶ Even by the time he died, in 1984, he had witnessed the consolidation of “conceptual history” (*Begriffsgeschichte*), though not yet the registration in West Germany of anglophone developments like the “Cambridge School” or the influence of Foucault. I proceed as follows: first, I give a brief overview of these and other innovations in the field, before highlighting some of its characteristics today.

⁵ On Landshut see Rainer Nicolaysen, *Siegfried Landshut: Die Wiederentdeckung der Politik: Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt, 1997). Schieder was right that the *Journal of the History of Ideas* was supported by those who did not return, though, again, he does not mention that they were predominantly Jewish: Leo Spitzer, George L. Mosse, Gerhard Masur, Hans Baron, Eric Auerbach, and Erwin Panosky. Anthony Grafton, “The History of Ideas: Precepts and Practice, 1950–2000”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), 9. Schieder may have been thinking of, among others, Hajo Holborn, a Social Democrat whose wife was Jewish. Holborn himself critically raised the question of philosophy and social history soon after the war. Hajo Holborn, “Der deutsche Idealismus in sozialgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 174 (1952), 359–84. For Meinecke’s relation to his exiled students see Gerhard A. Ritter, ed., *Friedrich Meinecke: Akademischer Lehrer und emigrierte Schüler: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, 1910–1977* (Munich, 2006).

⁶ E.g. Manfred Brocker, ed., *Geschichte des politischen Denkens: Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt, 2007); Hauke Brunkhorst: *Einführung in die Geschichte politischer Ideen* (Munich, 2000); Hans Fenske et al., *Geschichte der politischen Ideen: Von Homer bis zur Gegenwart*, rev. edn (Frankfurt, 2003); Iring Fetscher and Herfried Münkler, eds., *Pipers Handbuch der politischen Ideen*, 5 vols. (Munich, 1985); Marcus Llanque, *Politische Ideengeschichte: Ein Gewebe politischer Diskurse* (Munich, 2008); Henning Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2001).

THE PATHS OF INTELLECTUAL HISTORY IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC

Schieder did not mention the metahistorical significance of intellectual history as a practice in West Germany, an omission symptomatic of his desire to remind the burgeoning social history about the “enormous significance of the individual personality as the creator of ideas and ideologies”.⁷ The tremendous prestige of intellectual history, at least in the sense of recovering “classic” wisdom, from the immediate postwar years until approximately 1960, was based on a number of factors: the Cold War that was in part a battle of ideas; the prominence of émigré/survivor proponents of totalitarianism theory—Hannah Arendt, Karl Popper, Jacob Talmon, Sigmund Neumann, and Carl Joachim Friedrich; the establishment of political science as an explicitly democratic discipline with the task of re-educating West German elites (this was before the age of the mass university); and the search for the intellectual origins of Nazism. Neo-Aristotelianism, in particular, represented by figures like Sternberger and the young Wilhelm Hennis, could reconnect Germany to wider European intellectual and political traditions. This was “practical philosophy”, intellectual history with political intent, namely to justify the new liberal political order against totalitarianism, a transatlantic project in which émigrés like Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss also participated.⁸

Different questions were raised in the 1960s by a new generation of graduates and students who flowed into the expanding university system. Rejecting the totalitarianism theory wielded by liberal and conservative elites whose democratic credentials they questioned, these younger Germans were interested in understanding structural inequalities and social change, even transformation, rather than consolidation, for which intellectual history could not account. Meinecke’s approach had made the “state” and “nation” its objects of inquiry; now “society” was the organizing paradigm for knowledge.⁹ Attempts by older scholars like Hans-Joachim Schoeps to rescue the field by proposing a *Geistesgeschichte*

⁷ Schieder, “Politische Ideengeschichte”, 618.

⁸ Udo Bernbach, “Bemerkungen zur politische Theoriengeschichte”, in Harald Bluhm and Jürgen Gebhard, eds., *Politische Ideengeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert: Konzepte und Kritik* (Baden Baden, 2006), 185; Eckhart Hellmut and Christopher von Ehrenstein, “Intellectual History Made in Britain: Die *Cambridge School* und ihre Kritiker”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (2001), 162.

⁹ Cf. the surveys by Wolfgang J. Mommsen, “History of Political Theory in the Federal Republic of Germany: Strange Death and Slow Recovery”, in Iain Hampsher-Monk and Dario Castiglione, eds., *The History of Political Thought in National Context* (Cambridge, 2001), 40–57; Herfried Münkler, “Politische Ideengeschichte”, in *idem*, ed., *Politikwissenschaft: ein Grundkurs* (Berlin, 2003), 103–31; Harald Bluhm, “Politische Ideengeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert: Einleitung”, in Bluhm and Gebhard,

of the *Zeitgeist* fell on deaf ears.¹⁰ The Nazi catastrophe had cast doubt on the efficacy of *Geist* (spirit) and the meaningfulness of the historical process. Of course, this was an international phenomenon. Similar generational patterns of conflict played out throughout the Western academy with the collapse of faith in national traditions and increased interest in experience from below.¹¹

This was the state of play when Schieder intervened in 1971. The history of political thought could continue in departments of political science, as it does today, where it is usually coupled with political theory; these departmental subsections bear titles like *Politische Theorie und Ideengeschichte* and *Politische Ideengeschichte und Theorien der Politik*.¹² Some of the Federal Republic's most accomplished intellectual historians conduct their work there, like Alfons Söllner, who has excavated the country's "archaeology of democracy", especially the contributions of the exiles, and Harald Bluhm and Michael Th. Greven.¹³ It is no accident that the first and most intensive West German discussions of the "Cambridge school" appeared in political-science journals.¹⁴ At the same time,

Politische Ideengeschichte im 20. Jahrhundert, 9–29; Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, "Was heisst Ideengeschichte?", in *idem*, ed., *Ideengeschichte: Basistexte* (Stuttgart, 2010), 7–42.

¹⁰ Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Was ist und was will die Geistesgeschichte? Über Theorie und Praxis der Zeitgeistforschung* (Göttingen, 1959); Frank-Lothar Kroll: "Geistesgeschichte in interdisziplinärer Sicht: Der Historiker Hans-Joachim Schoeps", in *idem*, *Das geistige Preußen: Zur Ideengeschichte eines Staates* (Paderborn, 2001), 209–40.

¹¹ Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Ann Arbor, 2005); Grafton, "The History of Ideas", 3.

¹² These titles are taken from the Universities of Hamburg (www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/institute/ipw/wir-ueber-uns/teilbereich-politische-theorie-und-ideengeschichte) and Hannover (www.ipw.uni-hannover.de/pol_geschichte_theorien.html) respectively, but are broadly representative.

¹³ Alfons Söllner, ed., *Zur Archäologie der Demokratie in Deutschland: Analysen politischer Emigranten im amerikanischen Geheimdienst*, vol. 1, 1943–1945 (Frankfurt, 1982); *idem*, ed., *Zur Archäologie der Demokratie in Deutschland*, vol. 2, *Analysen von politischen Emigranten im amerikanischen Außenministerium 1946–1949* (Frankfurt, 1986); *idem*, *Fluchtpunkte: Studien zur politischen Ideengeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Baden Baden, 2006); Harald Bluhm, *Die Ordnung der Ordnung: Das politische Philosophieren von Leo Strauss* (Berlin, 2002); Harald Bluhm and Walter Reese-Schäfer, eds., *Die Intellektuellen und der Weltlauf: Schöpfer und Missionare politischer Ideen in den USA, Asien und Europa nach 1945* (Baden Baden, 2006); Michael Th. Greven, *Politisches Denken in Deutschland nach 1945: Erfahrung und Umgang mit der Kontingenz in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegszeit* (Opladen, 2007).

¹⁴ Lothar Kramm, "Vom Un-Sinn eine politischer Ideengeschichte", *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 22 (1981), 168–80; Hartmut Rosa, "Ideengeschichte und Gesellschaftstheorie: Der Beitrag der 'Cambridge School' zu Metatheorie", *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 35 (1994), 197–223; Olaf Asbach, "Von der Geschichte politischer Ideen zur 'History of Political Discourse'? Skinner, Pocock und die 'Cambridge School'", *Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 12 (2002), 637–67; Marcus Llanque, "Alte und neue Wege der politischen Ideengeschichte",

jurisprudential scholars influenced by Carl Schmitt also wrote about the history of political and legal thought.¹⁵

Historians, though, regarded such attention to the great thinkers as abstract *Gipfelwanderung* (hiking from one mountain peak to another). As we shall see, an intellectual history that would appeal to German historians had to answer questions that Schieder, whose own student Hans-Ulrich Wehler became a leading proponent of social history,¹⁶ held to be intrinsic to any viable research program: “The basic scholarly question would always be whether and to what extent doctrines and ideologies can be related to political or social change. But the reverse question about the effect [*Wirkungen*] of ideologies on political or social reality is no less interesting; indeed, in view of a largely ideologized world, it is almost more fascinating.”¹⁷ As we shall see below, these questions have been answered by the current crop of German intellectual historians by writing less about the history of ideas than about the history of intellectuals.

When he wrote this article in 1971, Schieder would have been aware that his colleagues, Werner Conze and Otto Brunner, along with Reinhart Koselleck, then a forty-eight-year-old historian (young by German standards), were about to publish the first volume of their legendary *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (historical foundational concepts), which inaugurated the particularly German field of *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history).¹⁸ In view of the many commentaries on *Begriffsgeschichte* in German and English, I shall do no more than briefly highlight the main points.¹⁹ Koselleck, influenced by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Carl Schmitt, and his collaborators were preoccupied with the transition to modernity in Central Europe. They identified the century after 1750 as the “saddle age” (*Sattelzeit*) of this transformation, which they argued was registered

Neue Politische Literatur 49 (2004), 34–51. See, generally, Daniel Schulz and Alexander Weiss, “Introduction: Approaches in the History of Political Thought”, *European Political Science* 9 (2010), 283–90.

¹⁵ E.g. Roman Schnur: *Individualismus und Absolutismus: Zur politischen Theorie vor Thomas Hobbes* (Berlin 1963); *idem*, ed., *Zur Geschichte der Erklärung der Menschenrechte* (Darmstadt, 1964); *idem*, ed., *Staatsräson: Studien zur Geschichte eines politischen Begriffs* (Berlin 1975). See Frieder Günther, *Denken vom Staat her: Die bundesdeutsche Staatsrechtslehre zwischen Dezision und Integration 1949–1970* (Munich, 2004).

¹⁶ Schieder and others of his generation supported Nazi demographic plans for its conquest of Europe. Cf. Ingo Haar, *Historiker im Nationalsozialismus: Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft und der “Volkstumskampf” im Osten* (Göttingen, 2000); Winfried Schulze and Otto Gerhard Oexle, eds., *Deutsche Historiker im Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt, 1999).

¹⁷ Schieder, “Politische Ideengeschichte”, 616–19.

¹⁸ *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart). Volume 1 appeared in 1972; the last, eighth volume in 1997.

¹⁹ E.g. Hans Joas und Peter Vogt, eds., *Geschichte: Beiträge zum Werk Reinhart Kosellecks* (Frankfurt, 2010); Mark Bevir, “Begriffsgeschichte”, *History and Theory* 39 (2000), 273–84.

and stimulated by new concepts and meanings as the linguistically mediated “spaces of experience” and “horizons of expectation” diverged in unprecedented ways. Rather than study individual thinkers or traditions, then, they focused on specific concepts, like “estate” (*Stand*) and “revolution”, as captured in all levels of reflection, from contemporary dictionaries to philosophical works. At the same time, Koselleck himself published programmatic articles seeking to accommodate social history and conceptual change by showing that one cannot be understood without the other, as well as outlining a historical anthropology of the basic structures of historical experience (*Historik*), like the distinction between master and servant, friend and enemy, and generational change.²⁰

Koselleck’s theoretical approach came after his early critical study of the Enlightenment, *Critique and Crisis* (1959), and his habilitation (1965) on the signal reforms of the Prussian state in the age of revolution, which linked intellectual currents with social groups and institutional development.²¹ Although it could not be said that he formed a tight-knit school, as did his rival social historians, his approach gained widespread attention and influenced a generation of German postgraduates at the University of Bielefeld, where he taught.²² As a metatheory, however, *Begriffsgeschichte* did not dominate the German historical terrain, possibly because, as Martin van Gelderen has noted, it downplays human agency by ignoring the instrumental communicative strategies of actors in particular situations.²³ The now familiar rivalry between social history and orthodox

²⁰ See Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, 2002), chaps. 1 and 2; and *idem*, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York, 2004), chaps. 5 and 11. His student Lucian Hoelscher has continued the tradition: *Semantik der Leere: Grenzfragen der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Göttingen, 2009). See the lucid discussion in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, “Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical Experience”, *History and Theory* 49 (2010), 212–36.

²¹ Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge, MA, 1988); *idem*, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution: Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791–1848* (Stuttgart, 1967).

²² E.g. Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *The Politics of Sociability: Freemasonry and German Civil Society, 1840–1918* (Ann Arbor, 2007); Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945–1973* (Göttingen, 2006); Paul Nolte, *Die Ordnung der deutschen Gesellschaft: Selbstentwurf und Selbstbeschreibung im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2000).

²³ Martin van Gelderen, “Between Cambridge and Heidelberg: Concepts, Languages and Images in Intellectual History”, in Hampsher-Monk and Castiglione, *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, 227–39; Cf. Willibald Steinmetz, “Vierzig Jahre Begriffsgeschichte: *The State of the Art*”, in Heidrun Kämper and Ludwig M. Eichinger, eds., *Sprache—Kognition—Kultur: Sprache zwischen mentaler Struktur und kultureller Prägung* (Berlin, 2008), 174–97; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Dimensionen und Grenzen des*

historicism characterized the 1970s and 1980s until the challenge of cultural history and what was even termed “the new intellectual history” in the 1990s.

As might be expected, it was the political scientists who noticed the intense debates about political thought in the anglophone world, no doubt aided by the fact that political theory and the history of political ideas transcend the nation state frame. What is more, scholars in departments of political science in England had founded the journal *History of Political Thought*, showing that the German landscape was hardly unique. Just as there were no chairs for intellectual history in German history departments, neither were there in England—except for Sussex and Cambridge. In Cambridge, the New Zealander J. G. A. Pocock had posited “political languages” as the unit of analysis, while Quentin Skinner followed social history’s critique of disembodied history of ideas by insisting that political thought be rooted firmly in local contexts, by which he meant, relying on speech-act theory, the illocutionary effect of specific statements. Reconstructing the question-and-answer nexus of particular texts was the key to unlocking their *historical* meaning.²⁴

Although the Cambridge approach excited some attention in Germany—again, mainly among political scientists—it did not catch on either.²⁵ It invested historical actors with agency, but did not sufficiently tie them to social and cultural developments for German tastes, let alone explain why societies and cultures as a whole change. Moreover, its application to the early modern Atlantic world made it less attractive to those many students wanting to write about the twentieth century. Recourse to the repertoire of political languages and speech-act theory would have to be eclectic.²⁶ Here was a missed opportunity

Begriffsgeschichte (Munich, 2006). But note the interest in “Historische Semantik des 20. Jahrhunderts” at the Center for Contemporary Research in Potsdam: www.zzf-pdm.de. Intense interest in “historical semantics”, as the field is also called, persists in northern Europe in the History of Political and Social Concepts Group: www.hpsc.org. See also two new English-language journals: *Redescriptions: Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History*, and *Contributions to the History of Concepts*. And there are signs of interest in global conceptual history: Hagen Schulz-Forberg and Morakot Jewachinda-Meyer, eds., *Appropriating the Social and the Economic: Asian Translations, Conceptualizations and Mobilizations of European Key Concepts from the 1860s to the 1940s* (London, forthcoming).

²⁴ In the place of many possible references see Quentin Skinner, “The Rise of, Challenge to and Prospects for a Collingwoodian Approach to the History of Political Thought”, in Hampsher-Monk and Castiglione, *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, 175–88.

²⁵ See note 14 above.

²⁶ This author utilized these categories for his own purposes in A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge, 2007). Attempts to reconcile *Begriffsgeschichte* and the Cambridge school have been undertaken by non-Germans: Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts* (Oxford, 1995); Kari Palonen, *Die Entzauberung*

for historians working in the German language to become more self-aware about their tendency to ascribe ontological status to ideas and thereby fall into essentialist traps uncovered by Skinner over forty years ago. Symptomatic was Axel Schildt's statement about conservatism that "it is not possible to foresee in which organization and ideological forms conservatism will develop (itself)", as if defenders of feudalism and anticommunist technocrats were members of the same intellectual tradition.²⁷

By the mid-1990s, senior historians felt that German historiography should respond to these international developments by devoting serious reflection to a methodologically defensible intellectual history.²⁸ That was the intention behind the large project, financed by the German Research Council (DFG), called *Ideas as a Social Formation Force in Modern Europe: Approaches to a New "Intellectual History"* (*Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit: Ansätze zu einer neuen "Geistesgeschichte"*), which ran from 1997 to 2003 and has produced a steady stream of monographs. Lutz Raphael led the undertaking, which had trouble distinguishing itself from cultural history, such were the variety of studied topics: discourses, styles of thought, systems of communication and distribution, everyday knowledge, systems of social order, interpretive systems, even the "meaning of meaning."²⁹ Sensibly, Raphael declined to lay down a "royal road" that conclusively reconciled social and intellectual history, content that studying any of these objects was now legitimate, and that Germans could join the international discussion about ideas and method.³⁰

In the main, the new interest in intellectual history in the 1990s and 2000s was inspired by indigenous sources. But why this interest at all? Such a question is impossible to answer definitively, but one may speculate that relevant factors were the passing of time and generational change. By 1998, the Federal Republic had existed for half a century and begun to develop traditions of its own. Its foundations were still contested, though less bitterly than in decades before; certainly, the Nazi past was as ubiquitous as ever in public discussion. The "45er" generation of intellectuals born in the 1920s was retiring and their younger rivals, the "68ers", were at the height of their careers. Who was to take credit for the success story of Germany's political and cultural rehabilitation? As usual,

der Begriffe: Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck (Münster, 2004).

²⁷ Axel Schildt, *Konservatismus in Deutschland: Von den Anfängen im 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1998), 252.

²⁸ Frank-Lothar Kroll, ed., *Neue Wege in der Ideengeschichte* (Paderborn, 1996).

²⁹ Lutz Raphael and Heinz E. Tenorth, eds., *Ideen als gesellschaftliche Gestaltungskraft im Europa der Neuzeit: Beiträge für eine erneuerte Geistesgeschichte* (Munich, 2006).

³⁰ However, see the criticism in Alexander Gallus, "'Intellectual History' mit Intellektuellen und ohne sie", *Historische Zeitschrift* 288 (2009), 139–50.

metahistorical considerations framed research programs.³¹ And, as usual, the legitimacy and effects of the student movement and new left of the 1960s and 1970s was as central a bone of contention as the legitimacy of the country's foundation in 1949, issues that manifested themselves in heated debates about the role and status of intellectuals.³² Space limitations prohibit a detailed analysis of this intellectual civil war, but I return to it briefly below.

Younger historians could find plenty of inspiration in Continental traditions that accommodated the questions posed by Schieder. Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge drew attention to intellectuals as a social group whose networks and function were as interesting as their writing: intellectual history as the history of intellectuals.³³ A "pure discourse of intellectual history approach is insufficient", declared two authors. Instead, "communicative networks" should be reconstructed because intellectuals often did not possess a uniform or integrated ideology.³⁴ A variation on this theme was to focus on the "transfer" of intellectual ideas through particular networks.³⁵ Intellectuals could also be "bearers" of discourses that they used to position themselves in power constellations, an

³¹ Symptomatic: Clemens Albrecht, Günter C. Behrmann, and Friedrich Tenbruck, *Die intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik: Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt, 1999).

³² From the conservative side: Arnold Gehlen, *Moral und Hypermoral* (Frankfurt, 1969); Helmut Schelsky: *Die Arbeit tun die anderen: Klassenkampf und Priesterherrschaft der Intellektuellen* (Opladen, 1975); Kurt Sontheimer, *Das Elend unserer Intellektuellen: Linke Theorie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Hamburg, 1976); Paul Noack, *Deutschland, deine Intellektuellen: Die Kunst, sich ins Abseits zu stellen* (Frankfurt and Berlin, 1993). The reply from the center and left: Frank Trommler, "Intellektuelle und Intellektuellenkritik in Deutschland", *Basis* 5 (1975), 117–31; and Hauke Brunkhorst, *Der Intellektuelle im Land der Mandarine* (Frankfurt, 1987).

³³ Dietmar Lieser *et al.*, eds., *Intellektuelle und Sozialdemokratie* (Opladen, 2000); Gangolf Hübinger, *Gelehrte, Politik und Öffentlichkeit: Eine Intellektuellengeschichte* (Göttingen, 2006); Gangolf Hübinger and Thomas Hertfelder, eds., *Kritik und Mandat: Intellektuelle in der Politik* (Stuttgart, 2000).

³⁴ Erhard Schütz and Peter Uwe Hohendahl, eds., *Solitäre und Netzwerker: Akteure des kulturpolitischen Konservatismus nach 1945 in den Westzonen Deutschlands* (Essen, 2009), 10; characteristic: Dirk van Laak, *Gespräche in der Sicherheit des Schweigens: Carl Schmitt in der politischen Geistesgeschichte der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Berlin, 1993); Tim B. Müller, "Die gelehrten Krieger und die Rockefeller-Revolution: Intellektuelle zwischen Geheimdienst, Neuer Linken und dem Entwurf einer neuen Ideengeschichte", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33 (2007), 198–227; *idem*, *Krieger und Gelehrte: Herbert Marcuse und die Denksysteme im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg, 2010).

³⁵ Uta Gerhardt, *Denken der Demokratie: Die Soziologie im atlantischen Transfer des Besatzungsregimes: Vier Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart, 2007); Arnd Bauerkämper, Konrad H. Jarausch, and Marcus M. Payk, eds., *Demokratiewunder: Transatlantische Mittler und die kulturelle Öffnung Westdeutschlands 1945–1970* (Göttingen 2005).

approach influenced by Bourdieu.³⁶ With similar effect, the notion of the “thought collective” (*Denkkollektiv*) and “thought style” (*Denkstil*) of the Polish Jewish scientist Ludwik Fleck was mentioned occasionally to highlight how individual researchers are conditioned by particular interpretive or epistemic communities to produce knowledge within specific paradigms of which they are barely conscious. Not for nothing was Fleck’s work an inspiration for Thomas Kuhn, also with a scientific background, in his pathbreaking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.³⁷

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY IN AND OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC TODAY

By the later 1990s and 2000s, doctoral students born in the 1970s had begun to reconstruct the Federal Republic’s intellectual traditions. The telos was no longer 1933 but 1949 and beyond. In doing so, intellectual biography or group biography was a necessary vehicle, an unthinkable dissertation project for historians in the 1970s and 1980s. Important figures like Hans Rothfels and Helmut Plessner have now been treated, and the contributors to this issue of *Modern Intellectual History*, Sean Forner, Daniel Morat, and Marcus Payk, have written studies on the intellectual history of the early West German state.³⁸ Methodologically, they are at the forefront of the development among younger historians to replace

³⁶ Cf. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *Eingreifendes Denken: Die Wirkungschancen von Intellektuellen* (Weilerswist, 2007); Morten Reitmeyer, *Elite: Sozialgeschichte einer politisch-gesellschaftlichen Idee in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Munich, 2009).

³⁷ Ludwik Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, trans. Frederick Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn (Chicago, 1979); Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962), preface. Cf. Daniel Morat, “Intellektuelle in Deutschland”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 41 (2001), 593–607.

³⁸ Jan Eckel, *Hans Rothfels: Eine intellektuelle Biographie im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2005); Carola Dietze, *Nachgeholtes Leben: Helmuth Plessner 1892–1985* (Göttingen 2006); Sean A. Forner, “Für eine demokratische Erneuerung Deutschlands: Kommunikationsprozesse und Deutungsmuster engagierter Demokraten nach 1945”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 33 (2007), 228–57; Daniel Morat, *Von der Tat zur Gelassenheit: Konservatives Denken bei Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger und Friedrich Georg Jünger 1920–1960* (Göttingen, 2007); Marcus M. Payk, *Der Geist der Demokratie: Intellektuelle Orientierungsversuche im Feuilleton der frühen Bundesrepublik: Karl Korn und Peter de Mendelssohn* (Munich, 2008). For more recent work on these early years see Monika Boll, *Nachtprogramm: Intellektuelle Gründungsdebatten in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Münster, 2004); Barbara Wolbring, “Nationales Stigma und persönliche Schuld: Die Debatte über Kollektivschuld in der Nachkriegszeit”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 298 (2009), 325–64; Alexander Gallus and Axel Schildt, eds., *Rückblickend in die Zukunft: Politische Öffentlichkeit und intellektuelle Positionen in Deutschland um 1950 und um 1930* (Göttingen, 2011).

the Meineckean political history of ideas with the history of intellectuals; rather than study ideas as such, they reconstruct their production, dissemination, and appropriation by intellectuals—an approach that distinguishes them from many North American counterparts who also write in the traditions of critical theory and the history of ideas, often combining the two.³⁹

As a consequence of their historicist remoteness from the objects of inquiry, this generation of German historians has been able to distance itself from the cultural civil war waged between “45ers” and the “68ers” by writing balanced, i.e. nonpartisan, analyses addressed to an international audience. Unfortunately, this imperative has proven more difficult for some political scientists, who believe that they must use intellectual history for the “analysis and evaluation of current debates and conflicts” in Germany alone, a sort of disciplinary licence to blend scholarship with politics.⁴⁰ Because of the controversy they have provoked, recent interventions by Jens Hacke require some attention. He has made it his task to restage the battles of previous decades by writing somewhat cloyingly hagiographic accounts of his favored tradition, the liberal conservative Hegelianism of Joachim Ritter and his students, especially Hermann Lübke, and disparaging ones of their opponents, the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas and his colleagues.⁴¹ The conflict between these and other “schools” (for want of a better word) was real and it is important to reconstruct it historically. It is another matter to write with a drawn sword or as a hanging judge. The polemical temptation is not checked by the culture of academic publication in Germany where so much necessarily appears in conference volumes and journals that do not conduct anonymous peer review. As a result, too often the simplistic narrative strategies and sloganeering of political journalism—e.g. the picture of the beleaguered West German state that was inexplicably “rejected” by “the left”, “the intellectuals” and the *Meinungsführer* (“opinion directors”) in thrall to a

³⁹ For a representative sample see the contributions in Warren Breckman *et al.*, eds., *The Modernist Imagination: New Essays in Critical Theory and Intellectual History* (New York, 2009).

⁴⁰ Münkler, “Politische Ideengeschichte”, 109. The political scientists’ ambivalence about the radical historicism of this anglophone approach was based on their disciplinary proclivity to apply the concepts they studied, and not just to reconstruct their meaning for long-dead contemporaries—an ambivalence shared by some British colleagues, one might add: Iain Hampsher-Monk, “Speech Acts, Languages or Conceptual History”, in Iain Hampsher-Monk, Karin Tilmans, and Frank van Vree, eds., *History of Concepts: Comparative Perspectives* (Amsterdam, 1998), 37–50.

⁴¹ Hacke agrees with his teacher Münkler on this activist component of political science. Jens Hacke, “Politische Ideengeschichte und die Ideologien des 20. Jahrhunderts: Im Spannungsfeld historischer und politiktheoretisch geleiteter Absichten”, in Jens Hacke and Matthias Pohl, eds., *Theorie in der Geschichtswissenschaft: Einblicke in die Praxis des historischen Forschens* (Frankfurt and New York, 2008), 157.

self-hating “negative nationalism” and in favor of “revolution”—make their way without nuancing into print.⁴²

Hacke’s project, expressed in many essays and a monograph on the liberal conservatives of the Ritter school, is to rescue the Federal Republic from the spiritual undermining of “the left” by reminding Germans of their positive traditions. Influenced by Arnold Gehlen, his concern is that the functionalism of the German economy cannot hold the country together if the system does not work as Germans are accustomed to. The emotional bonds of patriotism must compensate for the orientation and solidarity that technocratic capitalism cannot provide.⁴³ The problem is that Germans’ shaky collective identity, especially its missing emotional (i.e. irrational) dimension, has been eroded by decades of incessant talk about the Nazi past and prohibition of natural “we-feelings” (*Wir-Gefühle*).⁴⁴ If only “the left” can be stopped, then Federal Republican traditions can infuse Germans with the patriotic fervor he admires in Israel and the USA. Hacke seems typical of “integrative republicans” who decry the “redemptive republicanism” of “Non-German Germans” as further corroding the supposedly little national tradition remaining in Germany; here he articulates a long-held resentment against the “moralism” of intellectuals expressed earlier by Carl Schmitt and Gehlen (*Moral und Hypermoral*). Echoes of the early postwar fear that the new Republic could collapse like its Weimar predecessor seem to be lurking unnecessarily in the background.⁴⁵

I do not propose to raise all the obvious problems with this project, which would take us too far from our subject. From a disciplinary perspective, however,

⁴² Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit: Die liberalkonservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2006), 9. In a similar prosecutorial and defensive vein, Riccardo Bavaj, *Von links gegen Weimar: Linkes antiparlamentarisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2005), and his many essays on the Federal Republic; and Stephan Schlak, *Wilhelm Hennis: Szenen einer Ideengeschichte der Bundesrepublik* (Munich, 2008).

⁴³ Jens Hacke, “Konservatismus des Standhaltens: Arnold Gehlens Analyse der modernen Industriegesellschaft”, in Schütz and Hohendahl, *Solitäre und Netzwerker*, 121–34; *idem*, *Die Bundesrepublik als Idee: Zur Legitimationsbedürftigkeit politischer Ordnung* (Hamburg, 2009).

⁴⁴ Herfried Münkler and Jens Hacke, “Einleitung”, in Herfried Münkler and Jens Hacke, eds., *Wege in die neue Bundesrepublik: Politische Mythen und kollektive Selbstbilder nach 1989* (Frankfurt, 2009), 7–13; Herfried Münkler and Jens Hacke, “Politische Mythisierungsprozesse in der Bundesrepublik: Entwicklungen und Tendenzen”, in *ibid.*, 15–31; Hacke, “Wir-Gefühle: Repräsentationsformen kollektiver Identität bei Jürgen Habermas”, *Mittelweg* 36 6 (2008), 12–31.

⁴⁵ See Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*; *idem*, “The Weimar Syndrome in the Federal Republic of Germany: Carl Schmitt and the Forty-Fiver Generation of Intellectuals”, in Holger Zaborowski and Stephan Loos, eds., *Leben, Tod und Entscheidung: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, 2003), 187–207.

some comments are in order. How can a satisfactory account of West Germany's liberalization be written without reference to the actual liberals, like the émigré political scientist Ernst Fraenkel, who was the target of the conservative jurist acolytes of Carl Schmitt whom Hacke admires?⁴⁶ Where is the contribution of the Jewish émigrés, whether liberal or Marxist, like the Frankfurt school?⁴⁷ Hacke's conception of the "German nation" writes them out of the postwar story, as it does the millions of subsequent immigrants. They simply do not figure in his image of who Germans are, the actual problems they face, and what the country's future might resemble.⁴⁸ He is interested solely in nonrational mechanisms of integrating (nonimmigrant) Germans rather than in the mechanisms of exclusion that code immigrants as non-German in perpetuity and inhibit their integration. Such blindness seems intrinsic to national political rather than scholarly agendas.

Happily, space exists in the German academy for a pluralist conception of its intellectual traditions. The contribution of German Jews, especially in terms of critical theory, is honored in departments of sociology, philosophy, and literature, whose various journals represent the functional equivalent of *New German Critique* in North America.⁴⁹ Dan Diner supervised theses on German Jewish intellectual history at the University of Essen before becoming director of the new Simon Dubnow Institute of Jewish History and Culture in Leipzig, which nurtures that subfield by hosting doctoral and postdoctoral researchers from around the world.⁵⁰ And now with the *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* a dedicated organ exists for all the approaches that Germans gather under intellectual history: *Ideengeschichte*, *Intellektuellen-Geschichte*, *Geistesgeschichte*,

⁴⁶ Those connections are being studied by younger American and Israeli scholars. Noah B. Strote, "The Returns of Exile: German Emigrés and the Creation of West Germany, 1933–1960" (PhD diss., University of California, 2010); Udi Greenberg, "Germany's Postwar Reeducation and Its Weimar Intellectual Roots," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 46 (2011), 10–32.

⁴⁷ See the work of Tim B. Müller, "Der Intellektuelle, der aus der Kälte kam", *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 1 (2007), 5–18.

⁴⁸ See Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge, 2007).

⁴⁹ Thomas Meyer, *Ernst Cassirer* (Hamburg, 2006); Detlev Claussen, *Adorno: One Last Genius* (Cambridge, MA, 2008). When American intellectual historians visit Germany it is no accident that they spend more time with sociologists and philosophers than with historians.

⁵⁰ Raphael Gross, *Carl Schmitt and the Jews: The "Jewish Question", the Holocaust and German Legal Theory*, trans. Joel Golb (Madison, 2007); Annette Vowinckel, *Geschichtsbegriff und historisches Denken bei Hannah Arendt* (Cologne, 2001); Yotam Hotam, "Overcoming the Mentor: Heidegger's Present and the Presence of Heidegger in Karl Löwith's and Hans Jonas' Postwar Thought", *History of European Ideas* 35 (2009), 253–64; *idem*, *Moderne Gnosis und Zionismus: Kulturkrise, Lebensphilosophie und nationaljüdisches Denken* (Göttingen, 2009).

and *Begriffsgeschichte*. Like the *Journal of the History of Ideas* and the newer *Modern Intellectual History*, it is a genuinely interdisciplinary endeavor, publishing contributions from all humanistic disciplines. Now that intellectual history is again being conducted by historians as well, without having to place the name of the field in embarrassing quotation marks, its prospects in Germany look bright.⁵¹

The three articles that appear in this issue of *Modern Intellectual History* pertain to the early Federal Republic of Germany in the characteristic approach of the new German historiography: by writing the history of intellectuals, not only the history of ideas. As might be expected, intellectuals' abiding concern after 1945 was how to respond to the immediate past, and of course that is very much the case. But, as current research is showing, processes of remembering, identifying, and reckoning did not necessarily address Nazism and the Holocaust directly; "the past" was mediated and refracted into myriad political questions that bore indirectly on the past, like cultivating student elites who would resist totalitarianism or fascism, depending on one's view of what had caused Weimar's collapse and Nazism's rise. Thus scholars' attention has been drawn to debates over the new order's legitimacy, recuperable or contaminated traditions, continuity or rupture in individual and group trajectories, and how the experience of Nazism recast old political convictions, also about intellectuals' appropriate roles in and stances toward politics. The authors here historicize early postwar intellectual life by laying bare the survival techniques, adaptation, and application of conservative, liberal, and socialist visions of Germany under conditions of occupation and incipient independence. With increasing distance from Germany's cultural civil war, they construct a historiography of international significance.

⁵¹ See the forum on "The Intellectual History of the Federal Republic", *German History* 27 (2009), 244–58.