1. The aim of this paper is the brief presentation of the two principal directions that Begriffsgeschichte took in Italy and to attempt to enucleate a few theoretical proposals from the Italian model to further European historical - conceptual research. The history of political concepts in fact has not been directly applied in Italy to develop lexicographical works and neither has it been used to reconstruct the political vocabulary. It has acted rather as a stimulus for the importation of German constitutional and social historiography, for the translation, in volume, of individual items from the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, for the planning of seminars and journals and above all for the production of research and anthologies with a strong unitary set up through which it has elaborated a strategy for autonomous use and, which I believe, is unique on the international scene.

The main centres for study and research on the History of political concepts in Italy today are the University of Trento and the Institute of Italo-Germanic History in Trento which publish the journals «Scienza & Politica» and the «Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico» in Trento and the universities of Padua and Bologna with the journal «Filosofia politica» - the first part of each issue is dedicated to the presentation of «Materiali per un lessico politico europeo» (material for a European political lexicon) and the anthologies of the research on modern political concepts. At the universities of Milan and Bologna there are also more general editorial projects, with the aim of producing volumes for general consultation and political dictionaries which take into due account the specific History of political vocabulary. (Ornaghi-Parsi, 1991; 1993).

2. The method and the perspectives of the history of concepts were introduced into Italy with German constitutional historiography. The interest in a method of research which united cultural, juridical, institutional and economic history in a comparative prospective to investigate the complex and many-sided logic of the western political experience was pre-eminent in a
phase when the attention of the historian was drawn to the material constitution and to the complex structures of the modern state. Amongst the leading lights in Italy involved in this renewal of methodology who allowed a «global» approach to the state and to institutional history, were historians and legal historians of the ilk of Otto Brunner, Otto Hintze, Werner Conze, Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde and Reinhart Koselleck.

In this context the history of concepts has served above all as an instrument for the «historicization» of the juridical categories with which the very notion of «constitution» (Konstitution) was interpreted, and which paradigm to adopt to develop the field of research towards that of social history, beyond the limits of formal rights. It has its origins in the 19th century bourgeois state, that is - this is when the first contribution was made in the true sense to the history of concepts - categories such as «rights», «individual», «division of power», «distinction between public and private» or «society»/«State», could not have been applied to previous institutional and political realities as they previously were unknown. What came into play - according to a conceptual distinction which can be traced to Costantino Mortati and to Carl Schmitt, the latter the author who at the time entered the Italian debate exerting a great influence (thanks to G.Miglio and P.Schiera) - was a different, a wider-ranging «material» conception of constitution (Verfassung). This could be used to investigate the problem of political unity in ideological and institutional contexts, which had preceded the forming of the system of co-ordinates in the 19th century State (Rechtsstaat). It was by these means that politics could be studied independently of the presumed universality and all pervasive nature of its own concepts in the 19th century State and be reconstructed around a system of self supporting and specific concepts in the «constitutional» context (in the sense of the material constitution, or that which in German is called Verfassung) which every now and again were taken into consideration. The history of concepts therefore made its entrance from the beginning in this renewal of constitutional historiography. It was used as an instrument to test the categories of the historiographical reconstruction so as to avoid misunderstandings or inaccuracies from the moment in which concepts which did not belong to the semantic contexts under investigation could not be used and to analyse the latter by means of their own specific concepts.

German constitutional historiography was introduced into Italy between the 70’s and the early 80's through the translations of Böckenförde, Brunner, Hintze and Koselleck and with the initiation of important research on the modern State. During that period the role played by Pierangelo Schiera and his students and collaborators and by the «Istituto Storico Italo-Germanico» of Trento were decisive in carrying forward that undertaking. The translation of the work of those authors and the subsequent participation which ensued as a result has opened the way in Italy to research into the global history of the modern State which employs openly
comparative perspectives and which assumes in political concepts and in their history, the material «use value» of the doctrines.

All of this has created a profound renewal in the study of political history in Italy. On the one hand it has permitted the State as a theme to be rescued from the obscurity (at the highest level furthermore) of juridical history. On the other, it has brought about the inclusion of the history of political theory in the most extensive seat of the history of ideological political structures, detaching it from the idealist rhetoric which reigned supreme in the theme of the history of thought to anchor it to the complexities of political, administrative, economic events and the vicissitudes of political theory concerning the modern State (Schiera 1971-74).

By taking on the Koselleckian premise that in the German political lexicon it is possible to document a process of ideologisation, of democratization and of politicization of political concepts from the end of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th which document and accompany drastic changes in historical experience. The horizon of which becomes mobile and temporalized by the discovery of foreseeing the future in the past and by the grafting of the present into the patterns of the philosophy of history. This first direction of Italian conceptual historical research has focused its attention upon the ideological changes which have been produced in the constitutional theories of the 19th century and has formalised the necessity of studying political theory through the filter of «political doctrine» (Gherardi-Gozzi, 1992; 1995; Schiera, 1996). In the latter or rather in the description of the link between theory and practice, between the theoretical imagination and concrete political practice which occurs with the processes of the ideologisation of theory, it is possible for historiography to recover the material “use value” of political concepts, taking them on in the intermediate space between the thought and the action, between theoretical speculation and the course of history, and to evaluate the concepts like this as Koselleck described much as indicators of the historical process as, and yet at the same time, concrete factors of the same.

The area where political doctrine takes shape, precisely because it is intermediary between theory and practice is the area of the production of knowledge and the practice of government where the process of hegemony which guide constitutional processes are asserted (Schiera, 1987; Gozzi, 1988). In this perspective the area offers itself therefore with grounds for research which combine the historiography of political theory with social and juridical history, with the aim of historicizing and contextualizing the concepts of the political lexicon within a system of structures and processes, both ideological and political, which guide the articulation of individual historical phases. Tracing the history of concepts therefore signifies - in this perspective - the analysis of the latter within the material context of use and evaluate the contribution that the concepts and the political doctrines make in the setting up and or in the obstruction of historical constitutional processes.
Before an area like that of the political doctrines can evolve and before the political concepts can be contextualized within that area it is obviously necessary to differentiate between the theory and the practice which are antecedents and results of the processes of ideologisation of political theory. It is also necessary for the area of the constitution to be invested with processes of controversial political polarization which temporalise the processes of recognition of problems relating to the constitution, problems of government and priority within the political agenda (Ricciardi, 1995). All of this is necessary to obtain the hegemony on which the concepts of the political lexicon are drawn up, the authentic Kampfbegriffe, in opposite political camps.

Having stated thus, this first guiding general plan of the Italian reception of the history of concepts directly takes on a large part of Koselleck's model. It investigates the concepts as elementary components of the doctrine and historicises them by contextualising them within the framework of the processes of ideologisation, politicisation and temporalisation of the political historical experience. These begin to be perceived between the end of the 18th century and the 19th century. This has made it possible for the «Istituto Storico italo-germanico» of Trento to promote seminars and research initiatives which concentrate above all on constitutional history and on those themes which result fully in a social, political and practical involvement of the concepts: the area of the science of knowledge for example, or that of the theoretical and immediately applicable, of the public administration, of the Polizeywissenschaften, of the Statistics and of the Staatswissenschaften, of administrative law.

In each of theses fields, historical constitutional research uses the history of concepts as a preferred instrument in the contextualisation of the political theory of the practical system of government to whose setting up it has contributed (Shiera, 1987; 1996; Gherardi-Gozzi, 1992; 1995).

In synthesis this first directive in the Italian reception and re-elaboration of the history of concepts coherently develops and with important results the following theoretical premises:

a. it evaluates the elements of the political lexicon - or rather the concepts - with a permanent dynamic relationship within the referred social context and takes them on only in so far as the power games and the struggle for hegemony in which the material constitution (Verfassung) of a historical epoch are expressed.

b. As a consequence it takes on the concepts, in view of a coherent historicisation, as fundamental mechanisms of the passage between theory and practice within a specific historical phase.

c. It allots a fundamental relevance, with the aim of understanding the historical sense of the convergence of political theory and the processes of the modern state, to the «science» (Wissenschaft) or the process of constitutional recognition of the doctrines and theoretical
knowledge (the institutionalisation at university level of the political and administrative disciplines, the birth of political science, the theoretical framework for the founding of universities, of scientific academies, of Grandes Écoles).

d. It assigns the history of concepts an auxiliary role in relation to social or constitutional history within the «global» reconstruction of logical mechanisms and political, economic and institutional, strategies on which the vicissitudes of the constitutional transition between the 19th and 20th century are based.

e. All this coherently pursues the aim of an accurate historicisation of thought in view of a more precise reconstruction of the constitutional circumstances of the modern state.

3. Leading on from the effects of modern political philosophy on the constitution (the way in which it has, anticipated, included or planned the system of logical references of the modern state) and following in the wake of Schiera's initial work, relying in turn on the work of those historians that he introduced into Italy (Brunner above all, but also Hintze, Conze and Koselleck) a second direction in Italian research responded in a markedly more philosophical way to the formation of a European political lexicon.

For this second direction the problem of the choice of concepts on which to trace the history was resolved by the same methodological option as the Begriffsgeschichte, understood in the manner of Brunner as «the history of modern political concepts». The task is that of reconstructing, genealogically, the system of categories and the modern political concepts and the effect of organisation of reality that they produce. An effect so powerful as to determine a logical framework which is stepped around with difficulty and capable of producing that illusion of «objectivity» and «universality» of modern political concepts and categories which allows it in turn to project the same concepts and categories - even if typically modern - into previous idealogical and semantic contexts which did not know them (Duso, 1999b)

The epoch of modern political concepts - isolated from research on texts of the political philosophy tradition and enucleated, beginning from the latter, as historically circumscribed and determined (I emphasize here the latin derivation terminus, limit, boundary) - requires inevitably the historical reconstruction of its own conceptual times. While the adoption of this same perspective deprives the supposition of linear continuity in the processes of transformation which have assigned logical elements and structures of the political lexicon, of meaning. (Duso, 1994; 1997; Chignola, 1990; 1997)

Politics cannot be seen, in this perspective, as a continuous sequence in its historical and temporal scanning, nor can it be represented, along the axis of its own history, outside the categories that were adopted to produce it. Modern politics - or rather the system of concepts forged in the doctrines of the social contract in the black hole of the religious and civil wars (Duso, 1987) - consists of a sequence of organisation which is logically and historically de-
terminated. Included, that is, in a theoretical area, the circumference of which, is possible to trace and to reconstruct the procedures of constitution.

And commencing from such assumption, that a second modality for the re-elaboration of the history of concepts questions the modern political lexicon and animated not with the intention of recomposing but rather by an instance of criticism and of deconstruction. Here recomposition is intended properly as the reconstruction of a map of fundamental concepts, as the composition of linear histories of the concepts from antiquity to the contemporary era, as the task of providing more refined instruments for the theoretical political elaboration as an accurate historicisation of linguistic usage. Or rather, precisely the way in which a person believes they can use the model of the history of concepts. This critical interpretation, on the contrary, deems that recomposition as an authentic misunderstanding of the methodological premises of the Begriffsgeschichte. If it is possible to assign a limited historicity to modern political concepts, then of the modern political concepts it will be possible to critically denounce the pretences of «universality» and «objectivity» and not reconstruct the framework of the entire western political experience around the modern political lexicon and its limited historicity (Duso, 1999).

This second thread of interpretation and research, which was elaborated in particular within the «Gruppo di ricerca sui concetti politici moderni» (the modern political concepts research group) active from the end of the 70's under the direction of Giuseppe Duso at the Istituto di Filosofia of the University of Padua, re-elaborates the Begriffsgeschichte of Koselleckian stamp in a duplicate direction.

First of all, Koselleck's methodological proposal is radicalized. This is grafted onto a notion of «historical science», the contingency of which is never brought into question (even though it is the same Koselleck who is author of an important history of the concept of «history»). Koselleck on the contrary, is obliged to assign a foundational value to general meta-historic categories (the categories, rigorously formalised and therefore «modern» in historic time, for example past, present, future or «experience» and «expectation») which alone allow for the provision of a «frame» in which histories which traverse different historical semantic contexts are enclosed. Even those, like classical antiquity where the philosophical historical distinction is unknown — early eschatological-christian and then modern and secularized — between «experience» and «expectation», should instead remain «impermeable» at such an interpretation (Biral, 1987; Duso, 1994; Chignola,1990).

In second place, the historical semantic torsion is objected to in the Koselleckian model. What is in question, in this second Italian proposal, is not the social history of the «words» or the evaluation process which gives them surplus value political weighting and transforms the «words» into «concepts» on the level of collective action. This, on the other hand is what happens in The Trentino model of the history of concepts. Neither is it the intention to dissolve the logical power of the modern political concepts through extenuating procedures of
contextualisation. What is being brought into play here is not exquisitely historical. The problem, to which a solution could be offered in conceptual-historic terms, is that of the genesis of modern political philosophy as modern political science. (Chignola, 1997; Duso, 1997).

In this perspective, what is taken on board from the Koselleckian model, to be further radicalized in its theoretical logical consequences is, essentially, the supposition (originally Nietzschean) according to which the «concepts do not have history». That the concepts should have no history, as Koselleck opportunely reveals, and that nonetheless they contain it, means essentially that the concepts can not be taken on as identical entities in themselves, or anyhow permanent, that they project themselves, evolving and changing their significance in relation to each individual historical context they traverse on the chronological and temporal plane of «history».

The concepts do not have history because they do not carry a constant rational nucleus which is possible to trace the history of. To relinquish this supposition would signify a contradiction of the theoretical premise of Begriffsgeschichte itself and a renewed assumption of the concepts as general universal entities, «constant» in any event even if moving or in constant transformation.

Only of the modern concepts is it in fact possible to state that they have a «history». This is because their origins are historically definable and because it is only with them that the formal categories of time appear which permit a historiographical representation (Duso, 1999b).

What is more if the history of concepts limited itself to the tracing of the history of ideas or of words, then it would do not other than assume, dogmatically and as an «objective», the framework of references and co-ordinates of modern science. By doing so it would do none other than eternize and universalize the theoretical device of modernity and imperialistically subsume all of history to its categories (Duso, 1999).

The question is not the prerogative of this perspective, the re-composition of the European political lexicon via the reconstruction of the histories of the individual concepts. Nor is it to safeguard, thanks to the universal plane of «historical science», the perfect logical translation of ancient concepts to modern ones, to be able to evaluate instances of continuity and of transformation in the process of contextualisation of the western political experience (Chignola, 1997). What is in question here is the problem of the specificity (or the partiality) of the modern political categories and the capacity for criticism which is possible to claim in their respect once they are deprived of their supposed universality (Duso, 1997; 1999).

The study of the political lexicon cannot be, following the course of this study, anything other than a critical genealogical study on the specificity and on the determined meaning of modern political categories, on the process of their eternization and naturalization produced by modern political scientism, on the way of their conditioning our historical, theoretical and philosophical approach to the question of political action (Biral, 1997).
It is for this range of motives that the historical contextual perspective of the Padua group has taken two directions: 1) it has carried out research on the «Trennung» between ancient and modern which has impelled them to pre-date the «Schwellenzeit» in historic time. 2) it has questioned the modern characteristic of «achievement» and reopened the philosophical question of politics, from the excesses exercised by the question of justice in relation to the logical system of the modern concepts, which they have historically neutralised in juridical terms (Duso, 1987; 1999b; Biral, 1987; 1997).

The process at the beginning of the revolution in political modernity is produced through moral philosophy and the politics of the mechanism and with the doctrines and the social pact. In that context — which is a context to be understood in substantially logical terms rather than historical temporal terms, because the artifice of the categories and the concepts is what is created here and politics will be perceived by these means up to the period of the 19th crisis — the system of anthropological references on which ethical-political considerations are founded — is radically transformed. The issue here is the dissolution of the long term horizon of which a Christian «aristotlianism» had taken hold and the imposition of a new epistemological foundation based on the mechanistic irreducibility of action and of the importance of political mediation in the crisis which has upset every type of consolidated topology of the natural order since the age of the wars of religion and the rising bourgeois individualism (Biral, 1999).

Modern political science refutes the system of natural logic of government which stems from the self-government (or self discipline) of the wise and free man, capable of dominating passions to extend into the political space. Since it refuses to consider men to be different in terms of differently wise or differently inclined, by nature, to command or to obey, modern political science annihilates classical political anthropology by attempting to scientifically co-ordinate the supposition of equality with that of the political order. Modern political science and the more geometrico interpretation of ethics and of human behaviour attempt to artificially create the conditions for peace and the neutralisation of ethical-religious conflicts. Modern law originates from the capacity of theory to anticipate and forecast what, with regard to human conduct, pure wisdom can no longer control.

How easy it is to deduce that, skill and practical wisdom, as in the «self-government» of the exercise, have more to do with the world of «virtue» than they have with science. This much is vouched for in the insistence — from Cicerone to Jean Bodin — of the metaphor of gubernator rei publicae, as the helmsman of the ship of state. For centuries, the topos has recited the apology of an order of politics which precisely because it referred to a whole composed of parts (the differences in nature between men, between father and son, between male and female, between the nobility and the plebeians, between the different orders and états of the corporate - class society), required the virtue of wisdom and of mediation of its governor (Duso, 1999b). It is this practical aspect, prudential and phronetical of virtue which disappears from
the scene when the revolution of equality — anticipated by the natural right — breaks up the possibility of an order founded on the immediate legitimacy of the «government» of the best (Biral, 1999).

In the context of the wars of religion the wise man is not he who strives to impose moderation and counsel in the public debate, but he who has understood how anarchy and revolt can only be halted by a unitary and sovereign power which defines the good act in the same way for all the «public» criteria. In this way legality becomes, through an ironic twist of history, the only earthly form possible of justice. The state is the guarantor of peace and the equality of the subjects (Biral, 1999).

The caesura between «internal» and «external», between «public» and «private», articulates the «Trennung» between the modern and the ancient world. Only in the modern world do the individuals, who have been rendered equal by the power which liberates them from subjection and dependence in relation to other men, are able to exercise reason «in private» — also in a critical way, as Koselleck himself reminds us — and not to interfere one with the other as a force which imposes peace amongst them. The society of modern man, as opposed to the society of the ancients (politiké koinonia, societas civilis), is no longer representable as a whole composed of parts where the prudential and phronetical logic of government are affirmed, because this becomes a space where the individuals, liberated from subjection and dominion, can freely lead their own lives so long as they obey the laws and are respectful of the equality and liberty of others.

The distinction between the modern societas sine imperio — free federation of rational egoistic individuals which negotiate the reciprocal recognition of their equality in the equal independence for all, entrusting it to the legal form — and the ancient societas cum imperio, of which the «government» sanctions the internal differentiation founded on inequality, is the fundamental distinction which operates within the artifice of the social pact — the «epoch» of which coincides, in this second Italian interpretation of the Begriffsgeschichte, with the «epoch» of the modern political concepts — having a considerable effect on the constitutional level for many centuries to come (Biral, 1999; Duso, 1999b)

It is thus that the theories of the social contract — or rather the system of concepts and of logic on which the sovereignty question is based — have founded the constellation of concepts of political modernity (Duso, 1987; 1999a). The problem of the just disappears, to be replaced by that of legality. Men are equal in their will, and therefore free: the political expression of the collective body, since neither differences nor «parts» no longer exist within it, must of necessity be represented as unique. The uniqueness of the sovereign will, as a result, will not be able to be produced in representational terms, and will become legitimised through rational procedures, from the moment in which the supposition of equality has rendered the immediate legitimacy of the logic of government politically evanescent. According to Duso «End of
government and the birth of power» is another way of describing the dissolution of the ancient world and the birth of the modern (Duso, 1999b).

«Individual», «equality», «subject», «liberty», «will», «rights», «representation», «legitimacy», «sovereignty» — amongst others — are the fundamental concepts of modernity (unknown in antiquity) and they correspond, according to this proposal, to the transition which invests politics to the measure in which it begins to be thought of according to the scientific interpretation of ethics and of the categories of the modern legal form. The Political now coincides with the Juridical. The modern political lexicon with a logical device in which each of the concepts are deferred to the others, and none of which have a founding external reality. There are no values, nor are there objective historical realities, where, the task of substantiating the constituent procedures through which modern political concepts produce their effect of organising reality could be demanded of them. This means that this second interpretative direction, even though taking on board the problem of the European political lexicon of the modern epoch, is not applicable to the reconstruction of the history of the individual concepts, but favours instead the analysis of the logical device which has shaped their (the modern concepts) unitary significance. It concerns an important point which needs to be confirmed. In this research project the historical-conceptual perspective, as we have already confirmed, does not function as a simple methodological option. «Instruments» (the concepts) and «modality» (the historical-conceptual perspective) of research are given by the «object» (the modern political lexicon), to which the research is applied. It is the «object» of the research which defines the plan of its fundamental elements — or to provide the list of the necessary concepts to understand the shape of modern politics and to request an interpretative perspective which assumes the absolute discontinuation of the latter with regard to how much historically precedes it. A discontinuation which leads from the revolution of the logical device which poses the modern political concepts in relation to it (and in reciprocal tension).

Not by chance, the second effect of the torsion of the political lexicon — after that of the «scientification» of ethics which promotes the distinction between «public» and «private» — is produced from the ideologicisation of thought which bends the concepts into vehicles for the organisation of reality. The applied distinction between «theory» and «practice» is exclusively modern, according to which the second relies on the first. Political modernity, unlike ancient thought, departs from the supposition that from the act it is possible to isolate a perfect and rational model, which must then be applied to real historical relations. Yet again the «Trennung» is placed at the level of the theories of the social contract, when political thought posed the task of constructing a rational and rigorous theory for the first time, the model of which has the precision of the mathematical sciences and which justifies, in absolutely rational terms, the difference which is created between sovereign and subject.
Thought — the «political theory» — gives way to the destructuring of the normal everyday political experience in which the surplus idea of the good and the just is reaffirmed, as, for example, happens in the platonic experience (Biral, 1997), it affirms itself now as the vehicle for the rational organisation of practice and as a principle of giving structure and legitimacy to the political obligation. In the modern world — there cannot be a relationship of command/obey which is not legitimate in exclusively rational terms. The epistemological revolution of modern political science (and of its concepts) starts from here. This implies at least two important consequences on the level of historical-conceptual methodology. The first is, — once more — the impossibility of accessing ancient thought without causing a hypostasis of the categories of modern political science. Nothing like the «theory of ancient politics» exists, if with that expression we mean the corresponding version of the logical device which modern thought believes it is able to mould reality. On the contrary, the experience of ancient political philosophical thought could be replicated as a recovering of that question on the just and the good which was discarded and concealed — because it was potentially subversive and de-stabilising — from the theoretical process of modern political science. The second concerns instead, the fact that the sources investigated according to this perspective are exclusively those in which the flow which constitutes modern political theory has crystallized to the greatest extent. Not a history of individual concepts then, nor is it a study intent on isolating the items for a composition of the lexicon of modern political concepts, but rather a critical analysis of the logic which has presided over, on the base of the annihilation of the politiké epistéme of the ancients, the constitution of modern political theory, carried out on the authors and the sites of greater theoretical density and of more immediate effect on the constitutional practice of the modern era.

In synthesis, this second modality of the approach to Begriffsgeschichte, has favoured, leading from the radically historical conceptual premise, a criticism of the modern political lexicon (above all of the pretensions of universality and objectivity of its categories and then of the effects of depoliticization and expropriation of action which they render operable in the name of guarantees conceded to the rising possessive individualism, is evidenced as follows:

a. importance of not dealing with the history of the individual concepts, but with the process which formed the unitary logical device formed by the effects of a reciprocal resonance in modern political concepts.

b. the importance of retracing that process as a set of transformations which intend to bury classical ethics and politics (the scientification of moral philosophy, the «public/private» distinction, the schism between «theory» and «practice») and which inaugurate the founding of modern political science.
c. the importance of treating this process through an analysis of the phases of constitution in the «high» places of modern political philosophy in which the theoretical frameworks, which will have evident constitutional consequences, have established themselves.

d. an anchorage for philosophy — beyond the crisis of modern political science — as a knot removed from the modern trend of giving an empty juridical interpretation to the question of good and justice.

Such a type of approach to the history of modern political concepts achieves the effect of de-structuring, by tracing the genealogy of modern political categories, the ideological block which has come about between modern political science and its very own retrospective representation of the conceptual times of its own history. It allows an unveiling, even if reconstructed in terms that are rigorously political conceptual structures of modernity, of the aporia and the contradictions on which the modern neutralisation of the question of good and justice has been fed.
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