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Political strata and the flows of history: Hans Freyer's conservatism in light of its metaphors

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the political nature of history and the historical aspects of politics in the work of the German conservative theorist Hans Freyer. Freyer's view of history is inseparable from his political theory because both were metaphorically conditioned. Suggesting the relevance of political metaphors as argumentation rather than mere rhetoric or cognitive basis, this article engages critically with Freyer's metaphors of history as flow upon and within political grounds, occasionally altered by volcanic revolutionary outbursts that redirected, accelerated, or restrained the flow. By this metaphorical structure, Freyer was able to merge both conservative and radical elements in his political and historical theory, to retain the political nature of history without assuming supra-historical goals, and, finally, to readjust, rather than discard, the geological and aquatic metaphors in his eventual transition from radical to moderate conservatism. With the case of Freyer, the article exemplifies how the functional analysis of political metaphors discloses otherwise inaccessible information regarding the aims, argumentative structures, and strong or weak points in the work of individual political theorists or groups and thus serves exegetical ends in political theory and intellectual history.

KEYWORDS

Hans Freyer; metaphors; conservatism; political thought; intellectual history

1. Introduction

As Reinhart Koselleck once noted, it is difficult to conceptualise time – and by implication history – without resorting to metaphors, particularly those of space and speed, and the quasi-geological model of ‘temporal layers’ Koselleck himself suggested for depicting history, served to relativise the ideas of history as singular progress and as cyclical recurrence alike.¹ As an abstract and unobservable entity, politics, like history, is in need of representations by its very nature,² and thoroughly intertwined with the questions of time and history. Whoever combines the two and asks for the political aspects of history or the historical ramifications of politics is likely to come across previous metaphorical depictions – or produce novel ones. While metaphors in general are difficult to avoid in historically oriented political theory, it makes a significant difference *which* metaphors one uses and how.

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This article makes a double contribution. In terms of content, it tackles the thought of Hans Freyer – an influential German twentieth-century sociologist, political theorist, and philosopher – particularly analysing the relation of history and politics in his argumentation, the emergence of the paradoxical formation of ‘radical conservatism’ on this basis, and the eventual deradicalisation of Freyer’s thought. Methodologically, Freyer’s case aptly exemplifies the benefits of an approach to political metaphors which focuses on metaphors’ argumentative functions rather than merely their origins and substance, on the one hand, or their ideological-cum-rhetorical aspects, on the other. Rather than being either deepest cognitive categories or merely surface rhetoric, metaphors are a key aspect of argumentation.

The additional value of ‘political metaphorology,’ as exercised in this article, becomes visible only in theoretically and linguistically sensitive analysis of metaphoric structures. Freyer’s comprehension of the political aspect of history was intrinsically intertwined with a sense for the historical dimension inherent in all creative politics, and both ideas emerged upon a carefully constructed metaphorical basis. Freyer’s idea of radical conservatism is only comprehensible in this light – as is his eventual deradicalisation, the article argues.

Freyer’s career spanned from radical conservatism via National-Socialist lure and disillusionment to moderate post-war conservatism. Although building on nineteenth-century ideas and belonging to the ‘conservative revolution’ in the Weimar Republic,³ Freyer also moulded the German post-WW2 mentality, suggesting gradual reorientation rather than an ideological leap towards the West. Freyer co-formulated the discourse of liberal conservatism in post-war Germany in a manner comparable to Carl Schmitt’s influence, which has been studied more extensively. Despite Freyer’s centrality in his day and beyond,⁴ his work is not well known in the Anglophone world.⁵ German scholarship has focused on Freyer’s sociology or cultural philosophy rather than historical or political thought.⁶

More specifically, earlier research has arguably underestimated both the importance of historicity for Freyer’s political theory and the role of ‘the political’ in his historical analyses, but, even more crucially, the interrelations between these perspectives have gone largely unnoticed.⁷ By engaging with his metaphors, I analyse Freyer’s political view of history and its continuities through the decades. The aim is to capture Freyer’s view of historical dynamism, the political nature of history, and the historical aspect of politics, also addressing his contingent political commitments. Rather than an end in itself, the analysis of political metaphors is an inlet into these considerations.

Freyer’s inclination towards metaphors has been observed, but the analytical potential of this perspective has been insufficiently capitalised. Muller briefly noted the image of life as a flow underlying Freyer’s cultural theory, his idea of tradition relying on metaphors of weight and depth, and the organic metaphor of ‘natural soil’⁸ without, however, specifically examining the interaction of Freyer’s various metaphors. I focus on Freyer’s view of history more particularly and analyse the flow of history systematically and in relation to Freyer’s political thought. For Freyer, history was a continuous flow of energy and events, but simultaneously included decisions, deeds, and human will. Correspondingly, I argue, the key metaphor in Freyer’s theory was that of history as flow upon, and within, geological layers occasionally pierced by volcanic outbursts. Political action sliced the flow of history into discontinuous segments or epochs, and solidified the flow

into lasting structures, as it were. This dynamism linked history and politics inseparably. To understand Freyer's view of the political nature of history, we must therefore analyse his use of geological, volcanic, and aquatic metaphors.

Freyer inherited the idea of history as flow from Dilthey's, Simmel's, and Bergson's philosophy of life,⁹ yet, to add a properly political dimension, seasoned it with volcanic metaphors reminiscent of Goethe's *Faust*. Rather than in explicating the sources, my interest, however, lies in studying Freyer's *use* of the material in constructing his political theory of history. The article, first, synchronically shows the interplay between metaphors of geological structures and volcanic activity as well as those of flowing water and nutritious fluids. This double framework encompassed both organic-geological stability and volcanic-aquatic dynamism, enabling Freyer to combine conservative and radical elements. Freyer's view of history reflected his political theory, and both, I argue, were metaphorically conditioned. Second, by diachronically tracing Freyer's metaphors, I show continuities in Freyer's meta-theoretical framework, thereby specifying Muller's thesis of the general 'deradicalisation' of Freyer's conservatism. Freyer certainly switched into more moderate conservatism after WW2. However, my analysis shows that the interplay between geological and aquatic metaphors remained throughout.

This critical perspective, however, requires an adjustment of how we perceive metaphors' role. So far Freyer scholarship has interpreted metaphors primarily as linguistic entities with rhetorical and strategic aspects. In casting metaphor as a surface phenomenon in contradistinction to conceptual system-building, Elfriede Üner risked overlooking the decisive systemic functions Freyer's metaphors served.¹⁰ Metaphors doubtless belong to an author's instrumental textual strategy, yet the persuasiveness of metaphors relies upon systematic structures. Metaphors are not only vehicles of 'literary manipulation',¹¹ but also, and more interestingly, 'substructures of thought'¹² – inexhaustible sources of ambiguous, yet cognitively useful and persuasive associations between otherwise unrelated ideas, associations that sometimes solidify into precise concepts. Metaphors pertain to the underlying structures of *thought*, yet manifest on the linguistic level and allow us to study thought by studying language. The stress therefore should be on internal links between thought-patterns in the author's works and their narrative structure rather than on metaphors' persuasiveness per se.

Hans Blumenberg briefly criticised the metaphor of 'secondary systems' in Freyer's cultural theory from this perspective,¹³ but I extend the analysis to Freyer's political thought in general. Three points are pertinent here. First, metaphors carry traces of authors' knowledge interests, and by studying metaphors' intellectual functions we gain insights to what authors sought to achieve with their systematic argumentative structures at different points. I show that although Freyer's metaphors remained materially intact he readjusted their implications according to his contemporary needs. Second, metaphors not only mediated between the different elements of Freyer's system synchronically but also enabled the diachronic transitions from one rendering of his conceptual system to another. Consequently, they must be read structurally and exegetically rather than only rhetorically. Third, metaphors not only enable concept-formation, but also 'inhibit' it or 'seduce' it to certain directions.¹⁴ Freyer's metaphors, I claim, pre-structured his concepts and thereby set limits to how far we can see Freyer as differing from his earlier arguments, given that both radical and moderate analyses were expressed within the same framework. Here metaphorology serves critical exegetical ends that transcend mere rhetoric.

Metaphors are clearly more than superficial eloquence, as argued by modern metaphor theory; neither should we, however, reduce metaphor analysis to identifying and categorising metaphors according to ‘source domains’ or proposing the existence of fundamental conceptual structures in all human cognition, as Lakoff and Johnson did¹⁵ largely in parallel with Blumenberg. Later scholars have emphasised that metaphor contains both cognitive and linguistic/rhetorical aspects and supplemented the categorising tendency with analysis of ‘pragmatic factors’ and a new level of ‘metaphorical argumentation.’¹⁶ As Musolff notes, political metaphors are ‘integral aspects of argumentative reasoning’ and serve as what Stephen Toulmin called ‘warrants’ in arguments, guiding us, often tacitly, from premises to conclusions and providing justification.¹⁷ This entails the need to identify metaphors’ ‘discourse functions’ and ‘purposes,’ or their ‘argumentative function and political bias,’¹⁸ rather than only scrutinising the metaphors themselves. Although Charteris-Black and Musolff stated this point clearly, its potential has so far been limited to reading the rhetorical purposes behind specific metaphor uses (Charteris-Black) and to further qualifying source domains by means of ‘metaphor scenarios’ or mini-narratives that speakers invoke to imply what typically follows from a metaphor (Musolff). Musolff has usefully pointed out the need for both presumably universal cognitive perspectives and contextual interpretations on particular metaphors in the history of political thought by discussing the conventional body-state analogy.¹⁹ Rieke Trimçev has recently underscored the need to read metaphors in political theory contextually and historically and particularly outlined the perspectives of metaphorical resonance, emphasis, and temporality, i.e. how metaphors typically resonate with ideas in several adjacent discourses, how certain metaphors possess particular pragmatic significance for a given author, and how the significance of metaphors transcends singular uses and becomes apparent when we treat them as repetitive structures with diachronic endurance.²⁰ While adhering to these starting points, I seek to take a further step and exemplify with Freyer’s case the wider *exegetical* utility of metaphor analysis for the history of political thought and political theory in cases of single authors. As neither pure cognition nor rhetoric but *argumentation*, metaphors are at the core of political thinking, and serve as means for the enhanced comprehension thereof.

My reading is historically informed, yet primarily textual and exegetical in its main lines, and structural and function-oriented as regards metaphors. I start by scrutinising volcanic, geological, and aquatic metaphors in Freyer’s pre-war essays, seeking to capture their central metaphorical structure and thereby linking the flow of history to Freyer’s radically conservative political theory. After that I analyse similar metaphors in the post-war period and especially the idea of ‘secondary systems.’ The subsequent section returns to the idea of history as flow by examining Freyer’s notion of progress as ‘cataract’ in the industrial society. No full-scale biographical engagement is viable here, yet brief recapitulations are included in each section to link the analyses to the overall development of Freyer’s work.²¹

2. Flow upon and within Volcanic Ground: Political Metaphors in Freyer’s Radical Conservatism

In his early days, Freyer had close ties to the German Youth Movement and expressionism, and he published cultural philosophy and essays inspired by the *Lebensphilosophie* of

Simmel, Dilthey, and Nietzsche.²² When Freyer turned to political theory and sociological methodology since the mid-1920s, he retained the poetical language. Freyer first theorised the state as a historical formation in ostensibly Hegelian categories, and later called for a ‘revolution from the right,’ the rise of a new historical subject ‘the people,’ and crushing the industrial society.²³ He reconceptualised sociology as the study of historically embedded social structures.²⁴ When the regime changed, Freyer first rode with the tide by promoting Nazi principles in the academia and theorising political education, authority/dominion, and political planning.²⁵ In *Pallas Athene*, Freyer provided a mythological rendering of state theory in terms of the goddess of war, stylistically reminiscent of his earlier essays *Antäus* and *Prometheus*. After gradually distancing himself from National Socialism, Freyer engaged with less controversial historical topics, such as German state theory, Machiavelli, and utopianism.²⁶

Reading the poetical-political essays of this period as a single unified corpus, I next summarise Freyer’s main political-theoretical considerations at the time and analyse the metaphoric structures in these works in order to establish a baseline for observations regarding Freyer’s later views of the political nature of history. On the basis of his Hegelian cultural theory, Freyer presented politics as the realisation of a particular idea by a sovereign state on a world-historical stage inhabited by other such states. Despite this idealistic rendering of politics, Freyer was a post-Hegelian historicist who struggled to jettison any remnants of Hegelian rationalism and telos-orientation: for him, there was no higher principle or goal beyond the particularistic, and often chaotic, struggle of nations. History was a dynamic process, but not progress. It was possible to create temporary structures of relative stability through nationalistic, authoritarian, and decisionistic politics, but in conditions of feeble liberalism, this required radical revolutionary measures that altered the course of world-history.

My thesis is that Freyer’s metaphors answered the fundamental dilemma of radical conservatism (or ‘conservative revolution’) – that of balancing the contemporary need for a radical rupture with the simultaneous emphasis on permanence, traditions and historical determination stemming from the conservative tradition. Radical conservatives assessed phenomena on the basis of their historical determination and duration, yet sought to shatter precisely this structure in favour of a political order more in harmony with their substantial authoritarian valuations. Moeller van den Bruck called for the creation of things worth saving²⁷ – an apt summary of simultaneous conserving and creative impulses in radical conservatism. But how stop the revolution once it had commenced? Further, as a post-Hegelian thinker, Freyer – significantly more than his fellow radical conservatives – struggled with another dilemma: how, exactly, did his own eschatological anticipation-cum-propagation of revolutionary change differ from the ideological chiliasm, relying on philosophy of history, which he critically identified in Marxian revolutionary prophecy? Freyer criticised others’ ideological oscillation between depicting revolution as inevitably emanating from the laws of history and seeing it as human action, yet himself both promoted and predicted a revolution from the right, and thereby struggled to escape this very dilemma.

To balance both radical and conservative elements in his political theory and meaningfully tie them to his historical theory, Freyer resorted to, first, the imagery of history as flow and, second, of political decisions as volcanic outbursts. The resulting double image is complex, but unless we analyse it, Freyer’s aspirations remain inexplicable.²⁸ Vice versa,

Freyer's metaphors are oftentimes extravagant, but when we identify the argumentative needs he had as a radical-conservative theorist and historicistic observer, the metaphors become comprehensible and turn out to be arguments rather than eloquence. Should we skip the analytical-functional part and instead merely acknowledge Freyer's metaphors, classify them according to their substance, and then sideline them in favour of a focus on the supposedly pure content of his theorising, we would already implicitly assume that metaphors are extrinsic to thought. Certainly, in many cases the same argumentative functions could be served by some other metaphors – but not with the same persuasiveness, the same argumentative and sometimes normative implications, and not with the same consequences for the structure of Freyer's political-historical thought in its entirety.

Let us therefore start by unpacking the Freyer's aquatic and volcanic metaphors from a functional perspective. Freyer, generally, saw life as flow,²⁹ and repeatedly invoked the 'the stream [*Strom*] of history.'³⁰ To make room for human action, however, Freyer noted that this stream of history made 'souls into its waves, into the carriers of its motion' – in other words, human action transmitted historical changes instead of them being merely developments in an inanimate process.³¹ The stream of history also flowed in and upon a particular ground, which consisted of the institutions of culture and the state, whereby the key idea of historicism and particularity is inserted into the dynamics of history. 'There is a river bed, and there flows the stream [*Strom*].'³² The geologically formed river bed symbolised stability and continuity vis-à-vis the constant historical flux, and in turbulent times only the political institutions of the state, Freyer maintained, could provide such stability. In his idealistic remake of Schmitt's notion of the political, Freyer described the political as the 'ground' or 'soil' (*Boden*) upon which particular cultures, religions, or philosophies grew.³³ This ground, however, was not mere geological mass, but an organic basis, which steadily nourished culture by 'the circulation of tranquil inner fluxes [*Ströme*],'³⁴ and in fact politicians actively pierced 'through the crust of the late centuries into the holy strata of life' and made 'the inexhaustible springs of the people flow.'³⁵ In Freyer's metaphorical system, there were thus streams both over and underneath the cultural fundament.

However, the grounds were inherently unstable. For Freyer, the political was not only a ground, but simultaneously also an energetic force that 'creates the grounds' upon which 'spirit grows.'³⁶ This implied that the river bed, which directed the flow of events, was liable to change. The foundations were constantly evolving in volcanic developments, and what appeared as permanent cultural basis, could be reshaped overnight. For Freyer, political action was uncontrollable and unpredictable like volcanic eruptions: 'the progress of civilisation' had not been able to tie all natural powers and some of them still 'break through the cover [*Decke*].'³⁷ Later he specified with the same wording that this was the onset of truly political existence: 'Politics begins where forces break out from the molten nucleus of the Earth through the cover [*Decke*] of civilisation.'³⁸ With these subtle metaphors, Freyer questioned the Enlightenment interpretation of history as a process of civilisation and pacification, called for a strong German state aware of its historical mission, and tied his political theory inextricably to the question of war – a cultural phenomenon he generally affirmed.

In Freyer's work, I argue, the paradox of 'conservative revolution' rests upon this metaphorical basis, which is as ambivalent as the term itself. Resolute political action, comparable to earthquakes in its effects, was needed to overcome torpid liberalism; but were

politics only volcanic convulsions, there would soon be little ground to conserve and, to remain within Freyer's image, the nutritious fluids could not circulate. This antinomy led Freyer to explicitly specify that the 'image of volcanic eruption' implied only that 'volcanic masses break through' the layers of rock, not that they would tear the grounds completely.³⁹ Aware of the radical implications of his imagery, Freyer retained the conservative element of organic grounds. Eventually only the combined metaphor of volcanic outbursts occasionally redirecting the flow of history was what enabled Freyer's politics – politics that was 'conservative in the revolutionary sense.'⁴⁰

The wasteful use of volcanic, aquatic, and other metaphors made Freyer's prose aesthetically challenging, which may have shifted the focus away from his actual arguments and created the impression of general argumentative imprecision. While his poetic expression probably drove away some readers and while metaphors can sometimes be used to mask the lack of clarity as profundity, Freyer's metaphors were arguable there for specific reasons. The key implication of Freyer's metaphors was as follows. While not destroying the grounds, volcanic eruptions nevertheless shaped the surface anew, and after the outburst of political energies, history flowed in a different way and possibly to a different direction. The historical relevance of politics lied precisely in its ability to redirect the flow of history. Correspondingly, Freyer extended the volcanic metaphor by speaking of a 'relief that changed as a result of political outbursts. Here Freyer utilised the geographical term, referring to the differences in vertical elevation of a given area, metaphorically to capture the changes brought about by the rise of new power centres: 'Every polis that piles up also makes the surrounding political ... When a relief is elevated in the middle, slopes [*Gefälle*] towards the outside emerge.'⁴¹ It was only natural, the metaphor suggested, that the rise of political powers would have effects on their neighbours, and in the politically reshaped landscape, history would flow differently. Such imagery, obviously, could be utilised to justify harsh political decisions and to underplay the associated liabilities; if smaller nations were drowned in political processes, it was apparently only the unstoppable stream of history that flooded them. This metaphor scenario was rhetorically vital for Freyer's power politics, and it perfectly exemplifies metaphors' ability to imply the most drastic normative conclusions without expressing this directly.

However, the metaphors also had systematic functions. By combining geological/volcanic metaphors with aquatic imagery Freyer could argue that political decisions redirected the flow, although humans could never fully control or predict history. This was crucial for his anti-Hegelian attempt to retain the political nature of history while simultaneously jettisoning inevitable historical progress. Freyer began reckoning with Hegelian philosophy of history in 1930, calling for historical study of social structures with respect to the contemporary epoch rather than ahistorical social morphology. History was not the unfolding of a single metaphysical principle, but rather contained transformations and decisions: by being bound to will in the present moment, history had a direction, albeit no overall telos.⁴² The task of sociology was to analyse the institutional implications of this view of history, tie social and cultural forms to specific epochs, and thereby make the analysis genuinely historical.

This anti-Hegelian endeavour of historicising societal forms contained a discernible political component throughout. A key category in Freyer's model of historical inquiry was the dynamic principle of historical events or 'happening' (*Geschehen*): rather than a historically neutral form, society was for him a 'result of the overall situations through

which the flow [*Strom*] of historical becoming' went, and time itself was not a 'homogeneous series of points in time,' but had a 'qualitative structure' with different 'modes of being.'⁴³ These differences resulted from political action. Historical decisions created structures of dominance and historical movement 'pierced' (*durchbrechen*) the rudimentary forms of community suddenly and unexpectedly.⁴⁴ The image of political forces restructuring the Earth's cover gave Freyer's historicism an unmistakable political twist. The state was always something still 'becoming,' and dominion was 'in a state of flux [*Fluß*].'⁴⁵ Social forms were crucial instruments to 'dam up' (*stauen*) time for a moment, yet they first 'consolidated' or 'solidified' and then quickly 'loosened,' 'dissolved,' or were 'revolutionarily broken up.'⁴⁶ Also during the Nazi period, Freyer consistently underscored the temporary nature of social forms. Only hopelessly utopian political thought could bring history to a halt just as if 'a restless stream [*Bach*] had joined a calm lake.'⁴⁷ National Socialism, by contrast, was a 'forcefully swelling movement' that made the contemporary moment 'flow' (*fließen*) as 'a wide stream [*Strom*]' towards the goal of 'liberating the state from the forces of the society.'⁴⁸ There is little doubt regarding Freyer's willingness to readjust his thought to meet the ideological needs of the Reich, but the basic vocabulary with which he embraced the novel ideological orientation predate the Third Reich and, as I show in subsequent analysis, also survived the openly ideological period. This testifies to the flexibility of political metaphors: rather than being determined by the metaphors per se as substantial entities, the normative conclusions in metaphorical argumentation depend on which parts of the rich potential implicature are actually activated in a given speech situation.

3. Geological and Organic Imagery After 1945

A crucial intermediary step between Freyer's radicalism and later conservatism was *Weltgeschichte Europas* (1948) – a treatise on world history as essentially European history. The book argued that Christianity and particularly the Germanic Europe had successfully cultivated the Greek and Roman heritage, but that lately the European tensions had taken global dimensions and, through industrialisation, technologisation, and class antagonism, produced an unprecedented crisis. Freyer's perspective now changed from the call for national revolutionary deeds to detached observation of historical phenomena on the global scale.

Despite this shift of emphasis, the primacy of political considerations remained, I argue. The volume introduced new analytical vocabulary, yet retained the aquatic-volcanic imagery and the tension between individual decisions and quasi-natural developments. Its meta-theoretical vocabulary paradoxically combined voluntarism with geology. On the one hand, Freyer, in line with his pre-war work, underlined how history consisted of decisions and deeds that manifested a will and produced structures of dominance. On the other hand, however, Freyer confronted Spengler's idea of world history as steady organic growth by employing Dilthey's 'volcanic image': politically active cultural spheres were like continents arising out of ocean rather than seeds that developed steadily in accordance with natural laws. The destiny of such 'continents' was to 'become flooded [*überflutet*] or break apart' after their epochs were over, wherein both aquatic and volcanic tones reverberate.⁴⁹

By switching the metaphor from botany to geology, Freyer retained the idea of cultural life cycles, which Spengler interpreted pessimistically. Yet he simultaneously detached this idea from the steadiness of organic growth and, by inserting the uncertainty of volcanic developments, relativised the possibility of knowing in advance when the time of a culture was over. This followed directly from the central role of decisions in history: Historical powers do not ‘work steadily like natural forces’ but rather ‘act, burst open, break through, make epochs,’ high cultures emerge in decisions and rise ‘like continents or steep islands from the happening,’ and historical events were therefore ‘not developments, but decisions.’⁵⁰

These geological-volcanic images recycled the earlier depiction of political forces. A truly political people had ‘chosen’ and ‘stepped into history,’ Freyer noted in 1935, and the political history of humanity, was therefore ‘stretched between decision and decision.’⁵¹ In 1948, the perspective was that of world history rather than national particularism, but history was still a result of conscious political acts, and precisely this was expected to relativise the continuity implied by organic images. The world of politics, for Freyer, was full of surprises, and the unpredictable outburst of political energies that he glorified in the 1930s became a part of his meta-theoretical framework of world history. He now sought to map ‘strata [*Schichten*] in the composition of historical humanity’ and ‘the underground of the European spirit.’ History still consisted of layers, and the energetic aspect also remained. Sometimes the ‘whole structure’ of an era would be altered through ‘secret re-stratification [*Umlagerung*]’ so that a ‘relief’ was ‘totally reshaped by the inner mass without the cover [*Decke*] cracking,’ yet sometimes the ‘cover’ was ‘pulled away, broken, pierced through.’⁵²

After WW2, Freyer became an important conservative critic of the industrial society. Particularly his *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (1955), selling 16,000 copies,⁵³ captured the prevailing sentiments in Germany. It sketched the trends of the Western industrial societies in a critical and conservative but nevertheless rather moderate manner, mapping the discrepancies between anthropological requirements and present-day reality. The geological imagery remained intact in the novel phase. All that happened, Freyer noted, became stored into the ‘strata [*Schichten*] of historical life’ like ‘layers [*Lagen*] in rock.’ History was thus present in the contemporary moment as ‘stratification’ (*Schichtung*) just like the Earth was ‘the stratum structure [*Schichtengefüge*] of layers [*Lagen*] and eruptions out of which it had accumulated.’⁵⁴

Rather than a radical conservative, Freyer had arguably become a ‘traditional’ conservative, who could be expected to accept plurality and liberal political institutions as inevitable in modern societies up to a point, while simultaneously harshly criticising ideological excesses and the meaninglessness of life in consumerist societies.⁵⁵ However, metaphoro-logical analysis shows that, such shifts notwithstanding, a distinguishable political element remained in historical accumulation, testifying to the radical origins of Freyer’s imagery. History, Freyer noted, not only ‘piled up’ or ‘became dammed’ (*sich aufstauen*) but also ‘became charged’ (*sich aufladen*). Under the ‘layers’ (*Schichten*) out of which humanity currently lived, there were always unused ‘layers [*Lagen*] of potentiality,’ or ‘covered layers [*Lagen*],’ and there was a ‘wide primitive layer [*Schicht*]’ also in every ‘civilised society.’⁵⁶ The reader will recall how these ideas, like the 1948 imagery, stem from Freyer’s interbellum political essays. In light of his metaphors, I believe we should read Freyer as still cherishing the potential for abrupt political changes rather than suggesting

purely passive resistance, although he did not promote totalitarian solutions anymore. While right-wing contemporaries like Ernst Jünger and Arnold Gehlen suggested a transition to a 'post-historical' period of ripe cultural crystallisations, Freyer still believed in historical dynamism, and this belief had a discernible political component.

The comparably moderate tone of Freyer's *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* has led some scholars to emphasise discontinuities between Freyer's interbellum work and his late theories. For instance Volker Kruse claimed that Freyer's post-war work was 'conceptually and in terms of theories and conceptions a new beginning that bade farewell to his most important theorems of the 1920s.'⁵⁷ My analysis suggests otherwise. Freyer admittedly abandoned his active call for revolutions and now only analysed the excesses of pluralist societies. Despite the political changes, however, Freyer's meta-theoretical framework, supported by dense metaphorical imagery, remained intact.

A salient example of this is Freyer's most central post-war category of 'secondary systems.' This was a complex mixed metaphor of organic and geological elements, and in this capacity, it captured Freyer's dominant political imagery into a single, ostensibly unequivocal technical term. This idea, however, directly utilised the metaphor of geological strata and pre-structured Freyer's post-war view of history. 'Secondary systems' referred to the independent subsystems of the industrial society that were artificially constructed rather than emerged naturally; examples ranged from production and consumption to the insurance system, transportation, and central administration. Such self-contained systems treated human beings as carriers of particular roles (as consumers, clients, or passengers) instead of whole beings, and, through demands for adaptation, in fact produced the subjects they needed.⁵⁸ The natural rhythms of life had been mechanised, and in this regard Freyer's idea largely recapitulated the analyses by Marx, Tönnies, Riesman, and others, as pointed out by Muller.⁵⁹

Freyer's idea of secondary systems was intimately tied to the metaphorical framework of geological layers and volcanic outbursts, sketched above. While pre-modern societies were built on 'natural ground,' in modernity the Earth was covered by a novel and 'highly uniform stratum [*Schicht*]' of secondary systems that lay 'all around the planet ... like an unbound sediment [*Sediment*]' and comprised the societal life of all countries almost completely.⁶⁰ The implications of the metaphor are evident: the new geological layer that emerged with the modern industrial society consisted of loose material accumulated by the flow of history, and it insulated contemporary societies from deeper cultural layers; yet this loose sediment of mass culture provided no stable grounds to build upon. The image captured Freyer's post-war criticism of the industrial society concisely and vividly: the industrial society was simultaneously both too rigid to allow true freedom and too fragile to support historical culture.

Yet the imagery, and in fact the very term 'secondary systems,' derived from Freyer's early expressionistic works. In modernity, a 'system of order and drought' had 'merged like the formations of geological nature' and now seemed to 'close in densely and more densely.' This layer was precisely that of secondary systems and simultaneously the cover of civilisation that volcanic powers were to pierce in the political image analysed earlier. The early Freyer found consolation in observing that the 'crust [*Kruste*] of civilisation over the living Earth' was 'not yet closed.' He also cherished the presence of 'volcanic moments' to counterbalance 'thousand-year sedimentation [*Schichtung*],' and remarked affirmatively that 'our *secondary system* is still disturbed from the outside by storms,

earthquakes, eruptions of crime and every kind of free nature.⁶¹ In *Pallas Athene*, he similarly noted that even when the Earth had been ‘a peaceful sediment’ for centuries, political forces could still emerge from its substances and ‘break through the stratum [*Schicht*] of gathered civilisation.’⁶² Not only the term ‘secondary systems’⁶³ itself, but also the supporting metaphors of sediments and strata thus derived from Freyer’s pre-war work. In that context, this imagery, further, was directly linked with the actively political metaphor of volcanic forces piercing the artificial crust around the Earth.

In 1955, Freyer was highly critical of secondary systems. Yet precisely the looseness of the stratum, which he had also observed in 1923, still enabled secondary systems to transmit nutritious fluids to the ‘social body.’ Here geological strata were supplemented with organic metaphors of the body politic, on the one hand, and of vegetation, on the other. The resulting image is admittedly complex and extravagant; yet without grasping the underlying metaphorical structures and their interaction, I posit, we cannot understand what was at stake in Freyer’s post-war social theory. We should not get carried away by Freyer’s metaphors per se, but follow them closely nevertheless in order to understand the route of his thought.

Freyer did not condemn modernity completely: at their best, secondary systems were like ‘arterial systems, or at least capillaries [*Kapillarien*] that lead from the roots to the crown of a tree or from the ground water to the roots’ and thus contributed to the ‘beneficial flow [*Zustrom*],’ unless they were completely ‘pinched off and sealed.’ Freyer, however, left little room for consolation in the post-war situation. The loose stratum had gathered slowly during the industrial era, but a conscious ‘attempt to lay a bed of concrete’ had now been ‘truly undertaken,’ ‘an impermeable ... stratum [*undurchlässige Schicht*]’ and ‘an artificial grounding [*Fundament*]⁶⁴ had been built, which isolated contemporary societies from the organic cultural basis.

While Freyer earlier underscored the decision by a *Volk* to become a political (1935) or historical (1948) force, and thereby to ‘crack the cover of civilisation,’ in 1955 he perceived precisely the fabrication of an insulating secondary system as resulting from political decisions rather than natural growth. Instead of enabling it, this structure hindered the flow of vital fluids, and it is precisely here that the link between geological and organic metaphors, whether bodily or botanical, is to be found. Secondary systems had ‘cut the whole venation [*Geäder*] of historical formations,’ and for the insulating project to be successful, ‘roots had to be cut,’ ‘capillaries [*Kapillarien*] obstructed,’ and the ‘capillary system in which historical forces rise high’ had to be ‘squeezed.’⁶⁵ With these metaphors, Freyer wanted to imply that others’ intentional political decisions had caused an anthropologically unbearable predicament, where fluids no longer circulated.

The twice-invoked ‘capillaries’ refer both to small blood veins, and, by analogy, also to similar parts of plants and trees, and the imagery thus oscillates between the two different liquids that capillaries transmit: blood and nutritious fluids. These images again stem from Freyer’s early prose poetry and relate to the active and vitalistic description of political forces. In *Prometheus*, Freyer had evoked ‘secretly flowing saps’ and ‘fluids’ that arose ‘from the depths’ and were ‘pumped ... from the ground by our root tips’ as well as ‘natural capillaries’ that transmitted organised will and historical deeds ‘from the depths to the heights.’ Modernity offered only surrogates, abstractions, and ‘phantom images’ in which ‘blood will never run,’ while particularly strong political will, by contrast, not only derived its vitality from its own blood but also sucked ‘alien blood from alien

veins' 'with a vampire's force,' thereby causing 'the death of many,' yet producing higher energies and 'a state ready for history.'⁶⁶ The imagery underlined political vitality and remorseless activism in the pre-war era; in the post-war variant, it captured the loss of natural energies in the industrial society somewhat more moderately. The metaphor was now toned down from agitation to lamentation, yet it remained materially intact.

We should not conclude that Freyer was simply rhetorically ambiguous. Rather than being haphazard impressions, the ambiguities we perceive still in 1955 derive from Freyer's earlier work, on the one hand, and reflect the central metaphorical structures of his political thought, on the other. For instance, the reoccurrence of 'capillaries' is far from arbitrary or insignificant, as this term was needed to amalgamate the metaphors of societal plants and political bodies, and, via the idea of geological strata that transmitted or blocked nutritious fluids, also to link organic metaphors with the geological imagery that had equally cumulated since the early Weimar Republic. Rather than mere mixed surface-level metaphors, we are here dealing with systematic metaphorical structures that manifest in Freyer's interbellum work and post-war analyses alike. Certainly the metaphors sought to persuade; from the perspective of historical and political theory, however, their true significance lies in what they enabled in terms of system-building.

4. History as accelerating flow in Freyer's late work

The above ambiguities were inherently linked to how the past, in Freyer's view, still affected the present and prepared the future. Here Freyer supplemented his vocabulary of streams and secondary systems with the notion of 'heritage' (*Erbe*) – which he, however, depicted with the same geological-aquatic imagery. To make sense of his literary formulations, we must first note that there were, again, two different streams in the image: the beneficial underground flow of nutrition and energy, assimilated with organic life, on the one hand, and the problematic overground flow of mere events, on the other.

With respect to the first stream, flowing connoted continuity and, in invoking the idea of deriving from the depths of springs, also profundity. This use was in harmony with how Freyer in the 1930s spoke of 'inexhaustible springs' to be reinvigorated by political action. Freyer now conceived historicity affirmatively as a continuous 'influx [*Einströmen*] of the past into the present.' Rather than merely repeating the past, however, history was essentially future-oriented and open, and in the ideal case the past was a 'well-house from which all of the present and the future stream out [*ausströmen*].' Nevertheless, by fabricating secondary systems, Freyer noted, mankind had 'blocked itself from history' and could therefore move forward only haphazardly.⁶⁷ Three years earlier Freyer had still described secondary systems somewhat more positively as being 'open downward' and resting upon a 'primary stratum,' capable of transmitting 'life force.' While providing the secondary systems with 'vitality, human meaningfulness, human fullness and fruitfulness,' these strata also restricted what secondary systems could achieve. However, their function, Freyer noted, was thoroughly positive: not to 'brake' progress, but to 'let themselves be melted down into this process and osmotically provide what could never grow autogenously' in the secondary systems. To be capable of this, the restraining forces had to be flexible, for 'what only persists and opposes changes will not play a part in history for long.'⁶⁸ While the 1952 image was remarkably optimistic, the 1955 book consistently emphasised how any such osmosis was blocked by insulating layers. Here the counter-

measure of cultural heritage became instrumental. Freyer described heritage itself as a stratified entity that gave rise to flows, noting that forces had to be ‘fetched from the deep strata of heritage as a wide river [*Strom*]’ and that forces ‘stream’ (*einströmen*) from the heritage ‘into the present moment.’⁶⁹ Heritage was clearly crucial for social metabolism in allowing the positive underground flow to reach modern societies.

Yet Freyer also, perplexingly, described heritage with respect to the second flow, the vertical flow of mere historical events on the surface. Heritage was ‘a filter and grid through which all continuously flowing happening must go’ – a selective principle and definitely one of the ‘restraining forces’ Freyer called for.⁷⁰ Yet it had to fulfil this function in a flexible manner, because ‘what only resists soon becomes flooded and washed away.’⁷¹ The formulation suggests that heritage functioned like the permeable strata in Freyer’s geological images, which allowed material to rise from the depths: in terms of functions, the sieve performed horizontally what strata and secondary systems did vertically. However, Freyer also described heritage as a ‘pre-given bed’ that received ‘the flow [*Strom*]’⁷² of historical happening. While the metaphors of sieve and river bed are materially incompatible, they are *functionally* parallel and thereby comprehensible. It was the function of the European cultural heritage to filter the stream of daily impulses and thereby capture what was durable and simultaneously to provide a basis or bed, as it were, upon which the uncontrollable flow of history would at least have a direction, although no pre-set goal. A merely rhetorical reading would conclude that Freyer’s metaphors were simply inconsistent, as extensive metaphors tend to be. My structural and functional analysis, however, suggests that also Freyer’s post-war key concept of heritage relied on and upheld his basic metaphorical system.

These ideas, importantly, reappeared in Freyer’s criticism of accelerated societal progress in *Schwelle der Zeiten* (1965), which analysed thresholds between epochs in general and the transition to the industrial society in particular. Like the 1955 book, this work engaged with the problems inherent in unencumbered progress, particularly when intensified by a progress-oriented philosophy of history. Progress was a pivotal ideological term of both liberalism and Marxism. Whilst admitting that progress empirically took place on many fields, such as technology, Freyer criticised its elevation into an image of history as a whole: this was a dangerous ideological move.⁷³ To depict history as having a particular telos would be a secularised residue of Chiliasm, Freyer noted, relying on Löwith’s arguments.⁷⁴ For Freyer, history was open-ended and did not proceed towards a particular goal – it only had a general direction or a trend that could be observed at a given time.⁷⁵ Therefore, the ‘correct’ image of history as movement was the advance of a stream, which was contingently directed by the river bed but not predestined to reach a particular point. This implied that the flow of the stream was dependent on the geography of the region – and in fact here we can perceive remarkable continuities with Freyer’s early work.

Freyer’s criticism of progress built particularly upon the second idea of the flow of history identified above: the flow of mere events. In the industrial society, progress was accelerated, and became a ‘natural process, a slope [*Gefälle*] of historical reality, and ... a cataract [*Katarakt*]’ – that is, a powerful waterfall such as those found in the river Nile.⁷⁶ When ‘historical happening’ is excessively rapid, Freyer noted, and ‘gives rise to always new and stronger impulses before the old ones have run dry [*auslaufen*], it becomes a cataract.’ The political developments that had brought about the cataract-

like acceleration were evident in the post-war context: not only the universalising tendency of technology per se, but also the political impulses of the two world wars and the two competing superpowers had turned the world into a single force field. At the time, Freyer saw no escape from the logic of industrialisation and increasing world unity, expressed in terms of universal history. There could be ‘tributaries’ and ‘whirlpools’ that momentarily took other directions, yet returned as even stronger impulses to the main current that ‘rushed’ (*stürzen*) forward.⁷⁷ Crucially, the world as a whole was driven into this development. The cataract image was closely linked with the idea of the Earth being covered by a novel universal stratum of secondary systems: it was precisely upon this artificial crust that the stream of history, isolated from its natural river banks, became a cataract. I will analyse this combination in two steps.

First, there was the waterfall itself. The image, which Freyer here employed in a melancholy argument against the industrial society, again, derived from his early praise of political energies. In 1935, Freyer noted that human beings could not know how ‘the inner rhythm of life’ may ‘accumulate’ (or ‘become dammed,’ *sich aufstauen*) and ‘suddenly rush [*überstürzen*].’ A people might similarly grow out of its land and unexpectedly step into a political future: ‘This stream of birth,’ Freyer noted, could ‘suddenly double itself, to rush [*überstürzen*] and to become a cataract [*Katarakt*] without any exterior cause.’ When this happened, ‘the banks’ were ‘no longer in place’ and the ‘surface of the river’ was broken.⁷⁸ Here the river symbolised life force, and Freyer employed the cataract image to justify nothing less than the occupation of land areas as necessitated by the mythical rise of the people. In both the pre-war and post-war variants, the cataract was a result of political decisions. However, in the earlier context, the cataract symbolised healthy political force and resulted from intentional action, while after the war the same phenomenon was conceived as an indirect result of the actions of political forces from without as well as a source of both ideological problems and instability in the industrial society. What Freyer earlier celebrated, he now critically observed and lamented.

Second, the cataract of progress still flowed upon a particular terrain that had been formed by political decisions. The strata of political decisions and the flow of historical happening were thus two parts of a single image. In the Cold War, the cover of the Earth was full of ‘overcoatings [*Überschichtungen*] and fissures [*Zerklüftungen*].’⁷⁹ This was due to both the novel stratum of secondary systems and the geological restructuring caused by political actions. The reader will recall how Freyer in the 1930s analysed outbursts of political energy that altered the relief (*Relief*) of the Earth.⁸⁰ Similarly, in 1965, the ‘relief of the political earth’ was a ‘restless,’ ‘fissured,’ and ‘turbulent substratum.’ This image had an intrinsic relationship with the cataract figure: the form of each cataract, Freyer noted, depended upon the ‘inclination angle of the underground, gorge formations, and the stratification [*Lagerung*] of bedrock masses.’ Precisely the tension-ridden political situation thereby provided the ‘restless ground’ upon which the industrial process ‘swelled into a cataract.’⁸¹ In other circumstances the flow of history might have been tempered, channelled, or spatially restricted, yet now Freyer perceived no attempts to control the ‘rushes’ (*Überstürzungen*), and in fact all ‘flood gates’ had been ‘opened’ – whereby intentionality was implied. With the emergence of secondary systems, the world had become a single ‘wide field,’ and therefore not only particular nations but in fact ‘all continents’ would be ‘flooded’ (*überschwemmt, überflutet*) by the cataract of industrial culture.⁸² In other words, national and political differentials had disappeared, and nothing resisted

the triumph of liberal universalism. Epochal ruptures and the historicism they implied were superseded by universal history, Freyer lamented.

In analysing the uneven ‘relief’ of the Earth, Freyer also reintroduced ‘slope’ or ‘declivity’ (*Gefälle*), equally deriving from the pre-war period. Any ideological project and active political planning had to ‘be aware of the terrain’ and ‘the declivity’ to which it would ‘run.’ This image supported Freyer’s criticism of socialist or liberal attempts to steer society and fulfil history. Building on abstract philosophy of history, such projects disregarded concrete political conditions and became irresponsibly ideological. Marxists or liberals could fantasise that the ‘stream [*Strom*] of history’ would ‘flow into the sea of the classless society’ or ‘the sea of the enlightened humanity, organised according to the rule of law and the law of nations.’⁸³ In reality the political world was hopelessly unstable, and in such surroundings, the uncontrolled flow of events would drown all humanity, Freyer vitriolically implied. The cataract metaphor, with its close links to volcanic activity, was thus a counter-metaphor to the image of *steady* and predictable flow – a metaphor utilised by liberals and Marxists to depict the inevitability of progress, criticised by Freyer since the 1930s.⁸⁴

Not only the key concept of ‘secondary systems’ and its metaphorical supporting structures but also Freyer’s central post-war figure of ‘cataract’ and its various metaphorical specifications, such as ‘rushing,’ ‘relief,’ and ‘declivity,’ thus derived from Freyer’s radical imagery. In the pre-war era, these metaphors painted the picture of German political prowess and its inescapable consequences for the European political map. In the post-war period, by contrast, Freyer depicted Germany as a victim of the impetuses in universal history given by Western powers – impulses that now threatened whole humanity. Correspondingly, Freyer now readjusted his metaphors to support his sceptical observation of historical flows rather than the active promotion of national particularity.

While in 1952 and 1955 Freyer had called for restraining powers to emerge within the same complex framework of strata and osmosis, in 1965 he argued that the nutritious flows and the flow of events had been cut apart and that the restraining forces were in fact powerless vis-à-vis the bursting progress. The first one was largely a subterranean current, while the latter flowed on the surface, and due to the insulating layers of the industrial society, little could be ‘fetched from the deep strata of heritage.’ Disconnected from the regulatory framework of the beneficial cultural flows, the accelerating stream of mere historical happening would flood the entire globe. Life in the secondary systems suffered from de-politicisation in the sense that the first flow had stagnated, yet simultaneously from over-politicisation insofar as the latter flow had become a cataract amidst excessive ideological contestation. Without cognisance of this double structure, which Freyer fabricated by metaphorical identifications, we could not fully comprehend his conservatism.

5. Conclusions

Rather than steady development, Freyer saw history as a contingent process channelled and sped up by political action, and his view of history thus reflected his political theory. His perspective turned from the active call and anticipation of German shows of political power first to the observation of the potency of other cultural spheres in world history and eventually to the melancholy criticism of universalised technology

and a form of reluctant modernism. The continuities across the epochal threshold of 1945 were substantial. My analysis shows how many of Freyer's late sociological concepts and supporting metaphors, such as 'secondary systems,' 'capillaries,' 'cataract,' 'relief,' or 'declivity,' derived from his radical pre-war work. Substantial alterations notwithstanding, he retained the meta-historical imagery of strata and flows intact throughout his career, only accentuating it differently in different contexts.

I would like to conclude by pointing out three implications. First, the analysis suggests significant continuities in Freyer's argumentation despite political changes, and this finding shifts the emphasis in Freyer scholarship slightly from discontinuity towards continuity. Instead of replacing his metaphors with new ones, Freyer rather toned them down and adjusted their ideological implications. Metaphor is a medium flexible enough for such purposes, and given that Freyer's key imagery predates his National Socialist commitment, he apparently felt no need for a complete rupture. In fact such continuities may be both personally and scientifically decisive for a thinker's intellectual integrity: not to renounce one's past completely, but to reinterpret it and control its effects on the contemporary moment were lessons that resonated with Freyer's personal fate and the wider German post-war situation alike.

The continuity shown is thus not that of National Socialist influences simply prevailing in the post-war era, because Freyer was a radical and revolutionary thinker already before the rise of National Socialism. Rather the continuity pertains to the categories immanent to Freyer's historical-political thought throughout – categories that facilitated his ideological conversion and apostasy in the first place. While Muller's general thesis of Freyer's political 'deradicalisation' is doubtless to the point, the dynamism of this change was somewhat more complex than a simple transition, and the thesis becomes more cogent once we turn from Freyer's direct political preferences to the logic of his thought and its systematic metaphorical construction. The perceptible toning-down and partial 'deactivation' of Freyer's vocabulary warrants the conclusion that a 'deradicalisation' took place in, and *through*, his metaphors. To paraphrase Reinhart Koselleck's formulation on concepts, metaphors are not only indicators, but also factors of historical change. When changes take place within the work of a single author, the analysis of metaphors along Blumenbergian lines serves concrete exegetical ends.

Second, Freyer's case reflects the more general perpetual struggle by German historical theorists to find a path between single universal and goal-oriented history, on the one hand, and the relativism purportedly following from full-blown historicism, on the other. Since the early nineteenth-century historicists, these considerations have always been tied to questions of politics, and Freyer's theorising exemplifies this in a paradigmatic fashion. Despite his criticism of modernity, bordering on cultural pessimism and resignation, Freyer still held on to a genuinely historical outlook on the world, and politics served as the guarantor thereof. In Freyer's powerful post-war image, the flow of history admittedly accelerated into an unrestrained cataract, flooded the fields of universal culture, and filled the world with purposeless undulation. Stressing these aspects, Freyer's theory may be linked to the debate on the end of history.⁸⁵ Given Freyer's attempt to surpass Hegelian teleology with genuinely historical categories, we should, however, not underestimate the dynamism inherent in Freyer's view of history. Rather than complete resignation in the era of post-history, his theory emphasised the ever-present political potential underlying historical happening even in periods of apparent stagnation. The liberal and socialist attempts

to fulfil history that Freyer observed at the time underscored, rather than undermined, this potential.

Particularly the metaphors of flow upon geologically stratified ground endowed Freyer's thought with a crucial dynamic element. In his criticism of the secondary systems of modernity, the potential of active historical intervention remained: the relief of the Earth could still be altered by decisions – and the flow of history thereby reinvigorated. The flow towards universal *Völkerrecht* and constitutional law was not quite steady, Freyer sardonically remarked, implicitly summoning volcanic political forces that could cause restratification and restore the link between the two historical flows. This was a direct outgrowth of his pre-war categories. While doubtless less radical in their ideological import than Freyer's pre-war imagery, the post-war metaphors still carried potential pointed implications; Freyer now actualised these implications only in part, as was advisable in his struggle to regain academic position after denazification.

Freyer's historical thought built upon his conservative political theory, and both rested upon a solid metaphorical basis. Consequently, the Freyerian flow of history was a de-radicalised image, capable of being *re*-radicalised at any time by re-accentuating the metaphors. Freyer's work is a prime example of historicism turned political, or political decisionism metamorphosed into historiography. A greater part of our scientific historical categories than usually perceived have originally emerged in political project. To dissect the logic and structures of such theories is of vital importance in the historical discipline's struggle with the lure of direct political engagement. Freyer's criticism of ideological uses of history contributed to this critical task, yet his thought also exemplifies the very problem. The political aspect of historicity and historicism itself cannot be relativised away by means of historicism; it must constantly be controlled theoretically. The key means thereto is the control of meta-theoretical language by critical analysis such as the political metaphorology exercised in this article. In Freyer's case, it was the abundant geological, volcanic, and aquatic metaphors that made history political and politics historical, and acknowledging this mechanism is crucial, given Freyer's role as an influential figure in political and historical thought in post-WW2 Germany.

Third, and finally, Freyer's case suggests the utility of using metaphors as an inlet into argumentation in political thought. Clearly, the above perspectives would be unattainable without the analysis of often subtle but recurring metaphorical moves. By following the systematic structures that metaphorical imagery creates within the thought of a single author, we gain crucial insights into how their whole *oeuvre* is constructed (in this case, the links between Freyer's historical theory and political theory) and into its diachronic changes (in this case, the deradicalisation and simultaneous continuities in Freyer's theory). In light of metaphors and the argumentative gaps they oftentimes serve to bridge, we may also better identify weak points in theories – in this case, Freyer's early paradoxical call for a conservative revolution, on the one hand, and his struggle with the Hegelian heritage by depicting history as a flow-like process which nevertheless had no particular goal and could be redirected by politics, on the other.

The relevance of metaphors for political theory and the history of political thought has been recognised by many in principle,⁸⁶ but so far there are no full-fledged methodological guidelines specifying how, exactly, they should be studied in intellectual history or the history of political thought, or systematic discussion of the exegetical utility thereof.⁸⁷ The present article exemplifies how metaphors may, from the author's point of view, be

useful in merging elements otherwise combinable only with difficulty, in allowing ideological changes without excessive intellectual ruptures, and, with their subtle normative implications, in lending support or an aura of inevitability to ideologically dubious conclusions. Further research is needed to identify more argumentative functions that metaphorical structures may serve in political theory and, consequently, more ways in which their analysis may aid intellectual history and the history of political thought. Metaphors are, obviously, also literary vehicles, and many of Freyer's texts can be read as essayism bordering on prose poetry, thus exemplifying the political relevance of literature; further, metaphors reflect the most fundamental cognitive categories of the mind, as Lakoff and Johnson and others have shown. From a political perspective, however, metaphors' relevance relates primarily to their role as argumentation and what they enable authors to do – and from scholars' perspective, to the otherwise inaccessible information metaphors are capable of transmitting.

Notes

1. Koselleck, *Zeitschichten*, 9–10, 26.
2. Cf. Miller, "Metaphor and Political Knowledge," 163.
3. See Siefert, *Konservative Revolution*, 164–97.
4. Freyer crucially shaped German historiography (Schulze, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft*, 281–301), particularly structural history (Chun, *Bild der Moderne*; Muller, "Historical Social Science,"). For Freyer's role behind German conceptual history, see Olsen, *History in the Plural*, 119–23, 127–8 and Pankakoski, "Historical Structures."
5. Beyond Muller's seminal study (*Other God*), the Anglophone scholarship is narrow. See Kruse, "Hans Freyer's Economic Philosophy"; Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*, 121–9; Pankakoski, "Globalizing the Political."
6. Üner, *Soziologie als 'geistige Bewegung'*; Remmer, *Hans Freyer*; Kruse, *Historisch-soziologische Zeitdiagnosen*, 141–86; Grimminger, *Revolution und Resignation*.
7. Pankakoski, "Globalizing the Political," offers some observations on this in comparison with Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger. For a reading of Schmitt's political view of history, largely parallel to my examination of Freyer, see Lievens, "Singularity and Repetition."
8. Muller, *Other God*, 92, 94, 196, 341–2.
9. *Ibid.*, 48–9, 92.
10. Üner, *Soziologie als 'geistige Bewegung'*, 72–3.
11. Muller, *Other God*, 194.
12. Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, 5.
13. Blumenberg, "Beobachtungen an Metaphern," 213–4.
14. *Ibid.*, 212.
15. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.
16. Charteris-Black, *Corpus Approaches*, viii, 9; Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse*, 6.
17. Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse*, 32–3.
18. Charteris-Black, *Corpus Approaches*, 39; Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse*, 39.
19. Musolff, "Metaphor in the History of Ideas," 244.
20. Trimçev, *Politik als Spiel*, 43–51.
21. For closer contextualisation, see Muller, *Other God*.
22. See Üner, *Soziologie als 'geistige Bewegung'*, 1–11; Muller, *Other God*, 43–50, 65–72.
23. Freyer, *Staat*; Freyer, *Revolution von Rechts*.
24. Freyer, *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*; Freyer, *Einleitung in die Soziologie*.
25. Freyer, *Politische Semester*; Freyer, *Herrschaft und Planung*.
26. Freyer, *Politische Insel*; Freyer, *Machiavelli*; Freyer, *Preußentum und Aufklärung*.
27. Moeller van den Bruck, *Das Dritte Reich*, 215.

28. For time, life, and the world as ‘flow’ more generally, see Stegmaier, “Fließen.” For metaphors of ground, mountains, and earthquakes in German thought, see Böhme, “Berg,” and Briese, “Erde, Grund.”
29. See e.g. Freyer, *Staat*, 13–4, 97, 107.
30. Freyer, *Antäus*, 51; Freyer, *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*, 135–6.
31. Freyer, *Antäus*, 51.
32. Freyer, *Pallas Athene*, 104.
33. Freyer, “Das Politische,” 63.
34. Freyer, *Prometheus*, 44.
35. *Ibid.*, 120.
36. Freyer, “Das Politische,” 44.
37. Freyer, *Prometheus*, 58.
38. Freyer, *Pallas Athene*, 39.
39. *Ibid.*, 39.
40. *Ibid.*, 120.
41. *Ibid.*, 82–3.
42. Freyer, *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*, 78, 88, 100.
43. *Ibid.*, 67, 88.
44. *Ibid.*, 249.
45. Freyer, *Staat*, 84, 193.
46. Freyer, *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*, 81, 85.
47. Freyer, *Politische Insel*, 35.
48. Freyer, “Gegenwartsaufgaben,” 140–1.
49. Freyer, *Weltgeschichte Europas*, I, 58, 130, 148, 152, 159, 209; II, 604, 672, 901.
50. *Ibid.*, I, 209; II, 759.
51. Freyer, *Pallas Athene*, 20, 86.
52. Freyer, *Weltgeschichte Europas*, I, 180, 278; II, 744, 760.
53. Muller, *Other God*, 352.
54. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 160, 177.
55. Muller, *Other God*, 349.
56. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 8, 161, 170, 235–6.
57. Kruse, *Historisch-soziologische Zeitdiagnosen*, 145.
58. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 89, 95, 97.
59. Muller, *Other God*, 341–2, 353.
60. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 79, 86–7.
61. Freyer, *Prometheus*, 9, 53, 55.
62. Freyer, *Pallas Athene*, 39–40.
63. Remmers (*Hans Freyer*, 162n57) also notes the use of the term in 1935.
64. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 180–1, 190–1.
65. *Ibid.*, 181, 191.
66. Freyer, *Prometheus*, 18, 53, 73, 97. One possible source for Freyer’s vampire metaphor is Marx’s depiction of capitalism as vampire-like living on dead labour, see Neocleous, “Political Economy of the Dead.”
67. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 187, 218, 237.
68. Freyer, “Fortschritt und die haltenden Mächte,” 82.
69. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, 241, 245.
70. *Ibid.*, 180, 240.
71. *Ibid.*, 179.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*, 292–3.
74. *Ibid.*, 206–20.
75. *Ibid.*, 246; Freyer, *Schwelle der Zeiten*, 293.
76. Freyer, *Schwelle der Zeiten*, 295, 298. In Herodotus’s and Hegel’s footsteps, Freyer (*Weltgeschichte Europas* I, 75–6, 211, 236–7) also dealt with literal cataracts.

77. Freyer, *Schwelle der Zeiten*, 298, 300, 308–11.
78. Freyer, *Pallas Athene*, 105.
79. Freyer, *Schwelle der Zeiten*, 309.
80. Freyer, *Pallas Athene*, 82–3.
81. Freyer, *Schwelle der Zeiten*, 309, 310, 314.
82. *Ibid.*, 301–2, 308, 323.
83. *Ibid.*, 301, 307.
84. Freyer, *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*, 134.
85. Niethammer, *Posthistoire*, 20n13, 33.
86. E.g. Ankersmit, “Metaphor in Political Theory,” 155; Tralau, “Deception, Politics and Aesthetics,” 112; Anter, *Max Weber’s Theory*, 197.
87. For some useful starting points, see, however, Trimçev, *Politik als Spiel*, 35–55.

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