



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

**University Research Priority Program (URPP) Asia and Europe
Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies**



Concepts in Transition

Modes and Effects of Change

International Workshop, Zurich, September 9–11, 2015
URPP Research Field 1 *Concepts and Taxonomies*

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Cover

Anatoly Fomenko, *Mathematics: 2-adic solenoid* (with the kind permission of the artist)

Anatoly Timofeevich Fomenko (born 13 March 1945 in Stalino, USSR) is a Soviet and Russian mathematician, professor at Moscow State University, well known as a topologist, and a full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Fomenko is the author of extensive writings in his original fields of mathematics (geometry and topology, variational calculus, symplectic topology, Hamiltonian geometry and mechanics, and computer geometry), and is also known for his original drawings inspired by topological objects and structures.

Conference Outline

Theories of concepts are being developed by several academic disciplines, reflecting the plurality of approaches and views on mind, language and philosophy. Focusing upon these developments, a workshop Concepts of Concept was organized in 2014 by members of the research field “Comparative Conceptual Research” of the URPP Asia and Europe at the University of Zurich, which discussed how “concepts” are defined in analytic philosophy, history, linguistics and psychology.

Concepts are also means by which research domains can impact each other: changes in domains can occur as a result of a concept transition from one domain to another. For example, the conceptual inputs from cognitive sciences, semiotics and phenomenology into “classical” art history have turned the latter into a much more broadly defined discipline when it comes to studying images per se. In recent years, an interdisciplinary understanding of concepts, which focuses on the crossing of boundaries between research domains, has gathered momentum in cultural studies. How concepts move from one domain of knowledge to another and what changes occur both to the concepts and the involved domains as the result of this transition are being investigated intensely with the aim of revealing hitherto unnoticed properties and functions of concepts, but also of contributing to finer-grained models of the structural changes their host domains undergo.

Questions of this type are even more acute for scholars who are involved in cultural or regional studies, since ambiguity may simply arise in the process of comparing language use in various cultural and pragmatic settings. If, for example, the Chinese term *wèi* 位 (customarily translated as ‘place’) is analyzed by scholars trained in “Western” paradigms, European notions of “space” are involuntarily superimposed on the Chinese term and may interfere with the indigenous epistemic context. The latter problem revolves around the applicability of pre-established European concepts and categorizations of knowledge for other regions of the world.

In view of the increasing importance of comparative studies for a wide area of scientific disciplines, the lack of established methodological tools to trace and analyze conceptual transitions in relation to their social and cultural environments is rather surprising. While a growing body of research in the fields of historical seman-

tics and conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) addresses such topics as change in meaning of terms and concepts over time, focusing on historicity of conceptual change, interdisciplinary inquiries into concept transitions across domains largely remain an unresolved issue so far. Discourse analysis, by definition an interdisciplinary research program that is often applied to analyze transitions and changes in epistemic structures, does not provide a conclusive methodology to analyze the transitions themselves and often resorts to descriptions of past events.

4 In the interdisciplinary approach to concepts through transitions, the focus shifts away from both the inquiry into the “nature” or ontological status of concepts and the evolution of concepts along the timeline to the following problems: how do concepts change when they move between domains (including changes in semantic content, function, properties of the concepts); how do properties and functions of a concept differ, when it operates in different domains; how do concepts move from one domain of knowledge into another (by which means and modes of transfer: rhetorical strategies, means for settling meanings, etc.); and how do domains change when concepts move into them?

Concept transitions may involve domains of different kinds, traditionally separated by disciplinary divides (e.g. religion vs. the sciences). In this context, a broad definition for the domains is required: specific areas of cultural, symbolic and epistemic activity, such as art, religion, language, science and similar large-scale systems within which concepts emerge. Transitions between domains can also be of different kinds, such as intertextual transitions, transitions between different media or semiotic systems (e.g. text to image, music to image, or vice versa, etc.), or transitions across specific disciplines or branches of knowledge. Intra- and intercultural transitions add complexity to this multi-layered structure.

Whereas a convincing definition that would encompass a variety of uses of “concept” has probably to remain an unresolved issue, as it raises more questions than provides insights, a tighter systematization of the variety of actual transformations and changing properties of concepts can be developed. In the proposed workshop Concepts in Transition we shall therefore consider different case studies focusing on

emergence and transitions “concepts” undergo, which, as a side effect, might also provide clues related to general properties of “concepts”. The main purpose of this workshop, is to initiate discussion on possible classifications of concept transition that could help scholars working interdisciplinarily to come to terms with this phenomenon.

Program

Wednesday, September 9

10:30–12:00 Guided Tour at the Museum Rietberg

14:00–14:45 Introduction

Ralph Weber (University of Basel)

Introduction Remarks: From the Concepts of Concept to Concepts in Transition

6 **14:45–15:30** Keynote Speech

Raji C. Steineck (University of Zurich)

Concepts in Transition: The Perspective of Symbolic Forms

15:30–15:45 Coffee break

15:45–18:15 Panel 1: Concepts of Culture and Concepts in Cultural Practice

Panel Chairs: **Ralph Weber (University of Basel), Christoph Mittmann (University of Zurich)**

15:45–17:15 **Phillipp Seitz (University of Leipzig)**

Limiting and Expanding the Concept of Culture

Oleg Benesch (University of York)

Nation, Identity, and Modern Japanese Concepts of “Individualism” between East and West

17:15–17:30 Coffee break

- 17:30–18:15** **Rebecca Pates (University of Leipzig)**
Human Trafficking as Contested Concept: Some Thoughts towards
Developing a Method to Study the State
- 18:15–19:00** **Discussion**
- 19:00** **Apéro**

Thursday, September 10

09:45–14:45 Panel 2: Conceptualizing the “Outside”

Panel Chairs: Philipp Hetmanczyk (University of Zurich), Christoph Uehlinger (University of Zurich)

09:45–10:30 Juljan Biontino (University of Seoul)

Death, Dying and Burial Practice in Korea from 1876–1945

8 10:30–10:45 Coffee break

10:45–12:15 Zhu Li (University of Konstanz)

Christmas and Passion Story in Medieval Chinese (Con-)Texts

Jens Rüffer (University of Bern)

The Monastic Experience: Perception, Description, Representation of Space

12:15–14:00 Lunch break (catering on location)

14:00–14:45 Brian Baumann (University of California, Berkeley)

Reckoning with the Void: Redeeming Science from Modernity

- 14:45–18:15** **Panel 3: Concepts Across Scientific Disciplines**
Panel Chairs: Thomas Hüllelein (University of Zurich), Raji C. Steineck (University of Zurich)
- 14:45–15:30** **Steven Savitt (University of British Columbia)**
Changing Concepts of Space in Physics and Art
- 15:30–15:45** **Coffee break**
- 15:45–17:15** **Catherine Stuer (Denison University)**
Space & Place: From Spatial Theory to Chinese Geo-historical and Visual Representation
- Rainer Schützeichel (ETH Zurich)**
Space Between: Space as Design Object in Late 19th Century Urban Planning
- 17:15–17:30** **Coffee break**
- 17:30–18:15** **Andrea Bréard (University of Heidelberg)**
Language Mathematized: Some Reflections on Conceptual Entanglements across Disciplines
- 18:15–19:00** **Discussion**
- 19:00** **Dinner reception (by invitation)**

Friday, September 11

09:00–10:30 Young Scholars Panel

Panel Chairs: Thomas Hüllein (University of Zurich)

10:30–10:45 Coffee break

10:45–14:45 Panel 4: Concepts Mediated by Language and Other Sign Systems

Panel Chairs: Wolfgang Behr (University of Zurich), TBA

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10:45–12:15 Kwan Tze-wan (Chinese University of Hong Kong)

Lexical Field Theory and Translation of Philosophical Works into Chinese

Efstathia Soroli (Université Lille 3)

Language as (a Window to) Thought: From Spatial Concepts to Cognitive Representations and Vice Versa

12:15–14:00 Lunch break (catering on location)

14:00–14:45 Taras Ivchenko (Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow)

“Virtue” in Chinese and Russian Proverbs

14:45–17:15 **Panel 5: Formation and Functioning of Concepts in Arts and Aesthetics**
Panel Chair: Polina Lukicheva (University of Zurich), TBA

14:45–15:30 **Markus Klammer (University of Basel)**
Use and Abuse of the “Principles” in Aesthetics

15:30–15:45 **Coffee break**

15:45–17:15 **Ling Lizhong (Shanghai Museum)**
Principles of Chinese Art seen through Observation of Painting and Calligraphy

Friedrich Wolfzettel (Goethe-University, Frankfurt)
Critical Perspectives in Transition: Remarks on Historical Impacts of the “Sublime”

17:15–17:30 **Coffee break**

17:30–18:15 **Discussion**

General Information

Location	University of Zurich Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies Room RAA G-01, Rämistrasse 59 CH-8001 Zurich
Organizers	URPP Asia and Europe, Research Field 1 <i>Concepts and Taxonomies</i> Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Behr (Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, Chinese Studies) Philipp Hetmanczyk, lic. phil. (Institute of Religious Studies) Thomas Hüllein, M.A. (Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies, Japanology) Polina Lukicheva, M.A. (URPP Asia and Europe) Christoph Mittmann, M.A. (URPP Asia and Europe)
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