Translator's Introduction

The essays collected here were written between 1965 and 1977, chiefly as contributions to symposia or academic occasions, and were first published together under the title *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* in 1979. Koselleck's two previous books were his doctoral dissertation, published as *Kritik und Krise* in 1959, and *Habilitationsschrift*, published as *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution* in 1967. His chief scholarly activity since the 1960s has been the organization and editing of a massive dictionary of "historical concepts"—*Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*—which had by the mid-1980s reached the fifth of six volumes. For any other scholar, such facts might lead one to expect a form of writing dominated by pressures of the moment and the less stimulating aspects of occasional literature. Koselleck is an exception. His published work, and indeed his professional career, has depended to a great extent on a curious dialectic of chance and obligation. His writing is, however, marked by an originality and clarity that belie the manner in which it comes into existence. The essays printed here, whether read separately or together, display a combination of scholarship and coherence which transcends the diverse nature of their origins.

One thread drawing these essays together is their coincident relation to the planning and organization of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. Indeed, some were written expressly for meetings organized in association with the project. As such, the essays can be read as so many variations on the systematic themes being developed by Koselleck and others for this project. Thus, a clearer understanding of these essays requires

some knowledge of the project, as well as of the general nature of *Begriffsgeschichte*.[1] What will, however, strike the Anglo-American reader at once is the range of intellectual interests and capacities that these essays display. It would be hard to imagine work of such depth and theoretical diversity being produced today by a senior, English-speaking professor of history. The peculiar combination of historical, political, and theoretical concerns that surfaces in these essays is, at least in part, the result of Koselleck's participation in the postwar resumption of a German academic tradition, and his membership of a postwar generation of students who began their studies in the late 1940s and who now occupy leading positions in the cultural geography of the Federal Republic.

Born in Görlitz in 1923, Koselleck attended the University of Heidelberg from 1947 until 1953, studying history, philosophy, law, sociology, and the history of art and occasionally attending lectures in medicine and theology. In the sociology seminar led by Alfred Weber, he presented papers on the French Revolution and on Hobbes, and around 1950 he began to prepare his dissertation. The philosophy seminar he attended was led by Gadamer and Löwith; under their influence, and, stimulated by the frequent attendance of Heidegger, he developed much of his historical methodology. At this time he considered himself equally active in history, sociology, philosophy, and law (*Staatslehre*); among his fellow students were Hans Robert Jauss, Juri Striedter, and Dieter Henrich—Romanist, Slavicist, and philosopher, respectively. Only one of his fellow students could be termed a historian, and this contact was outside of the university context.

Koselleck's interest in *Begriffsgeschichte* dates from this period and is attributed to the stimulation of Heidegger and Carl Schmitt. Both men were barred from teaching during this period, a consequence of their National Socialist associations.[2] Schmitt was often in Heidelberg at this time, since his wife was seriously ill in hospital there, and Koselleck came to know him through private contacts. Heidegger impressed Koselleck in discussion by his method of tracing concepts back to their roots: isolating the manner in which key categories shifted and transformed over time and highlighting the resonances present in the contemporary vocabulary of sociopolitical language. Schmitt, on the other hand, taught Koselleck how to pose problems and seek proper solutions, reducing the question of method to the posing of good questions that provide a barrier against a drift into generality.

It was under Schmitt's theoretical influence that Koselleck's dissertation on the relation of Enlightenment and Revolution took shape. This is apparent both in the perception of the contemporary world as one characterized by civil war and in the manner in which the structure of the argument develops.[3] Emphasis is placed on the dialectic of the prospect of Enlightenment and the covert development of Enlightenment thought within the lodges of Freemasonry, promoting a tension between the activity of criticism and the absolutist social order that was to result in the crisis and the destruction of this order. The research that went into this dissertation was intended as a preliminary to a larger study of the critical-political potential of Kant; this was never completed, but the reader of the present essays will find traces of this project in the scattered allusions to Kant.

Following the completion of his dissertation, Koselleck spent two years as a Lektor at the University of Bristol, where he devoted what time he could spare to reflections on historical problems and the sociology of literature; here he formulated the idea of history in the "collective singular," which forms a major component in his analysis of the reconstitution of historicity in the early nineteenth century. In 1956 he returned to Heidelberg, first as assistant to Johannes Kühn and then to Werner Conze, who was then engaged in the establishment of a research group in modern social history.[4]

Conze had studied in Königsberg with Ipsen and Rothfels, and while the former had to some extent preserved a German sociological tradition through the period of the Third Reich, it was to Rothfels that Conze felt particularly indebted. Conze continued the studies initiated by Ipsen on demography and Prussian agricultural organization, and it is important to note that the establishment of social-historical research at Heidelberg during the latter 1950s predates the international reception of the *Annales* historians and of English social history.[5] Another important influence at this time was Otto Brunner, Professor of History at Hamburg, whose pathbreaking study of late medieval Austrian politics, *Land und Herrschaft*, was a model for the deployment of conceptual analysis for solving sociopolitical questions.[6]

On taking up his post at Heidelberg, Koselleck began to consider topics for further research leading to *Habilitation*. His first choice was to study the temporal structure linking the Vienna Congress to Versailles, investigating, for example, the temporalities governing decision-making and the perspectives of futurity that were involved. Conze was

not keen on this idea, however, and gave him the Prussian reforms to work on instead.

The result was *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution*,[7] a social history in the sense that it was a study of the reformation of a social order through the gradual penetration of new distinctions, qualifications, rights, and procedures. This is not, therefore, a social history in the English sense, for which a minimum requirement is a focus on the lived experience of real people, delineating the network of social relations through the medium of social action. Koselleck's account begins with the draft and revised versions of the Prussian Civil Code and examines the relationship of the state to its various elements, be they *Stände*, societies, families, or individuals. 'The social' is thereby explored in terms of sets of categorizations, their mutual relations, and their articulation in the administrative activity of the state (which, in the case of Prussia, was the dynamic element in the process of "modernization"). Emancipation is traced as a dual process: of the state from the monarchy and of the free citizen from the state. This citizen is an individual who owes primary allegiance to the state but who can take a variety of forms—the laborer, the peasant, the landowner, the bourgeois, the poor.

During the period 1956–1965, Koselleck worked on his *Habilitation*, taught intensively, and wrote reviews but had little opportunity to develop other work. It was in this period that he presented to Conze his idea of a lexicon of historical concepts, which was to have been a one-volume work covering all major concepts from Antiquity to the present. Conze encouraged the idea but insisted that the project be limited to the German-language area and focus primarily on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Resulting from this was the characteristic shape marking each contribution: a concentration on a process of transition to modernity in the late eighteenth century (casually nicknamed the *Sattelzeit* by Koselleck, since become a concept in its own right), preceded by a period in which concepts are no longer intelligible to us without interpretation and exegesis, and followed by a "modernity" in which the conceptual structure does not generally require such elaboration. A meeting of Koselleck, Conze, Brunner, and other collaborators in the autumn of 1963 resulted in proposals for development of the lexicon. A programmatic statement based on this meeting appeared under Koselleck's name in 1967.[8]

In 1966, Koselleck became Professor of Political Sciences at Bochum. In the same year he joined the planning commission for the new university at Bielefeld, conceived as a well-endowed modern university which would be a center for advanced research and teaching. Here again, Conze was instrumental in this development. As one of Germany's leading modern historians, Conze had been appointed to the commission, but when he saw that it would be several years before the Faculty of History was to be established, he withdrew and nominated Koselleck to serve in his place. He returned to Heidelberg to occupy a chair in modern history from 1968 to 1973 and in 1974 became Professor for the Theory of History at Bielefeld, a post he still holds.

Although *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* appears under the joint names of Brunner, Conze, and Koselleck, Brunner never played a direct role in the actual editorial work, which was shared by Conze and Koselleck. The true nature of the project lies closer to Koselleck's own intellectual interests than to those of Conze. Thus, it is perhaps inevitable that the work be more closely associated with his name than with Conze's, who nevertheless continues to bear a considerable share of the editorial work. As suggested above, the essays included here are in many respects a product of Koselleck's participation in this project, and so a brief consideration of its features will shed some light on their central preoccupations.[9]

The inclination of German historical work toward a form of analysis emphasizing the importance of conceptual distinctions and categorical reorganizations can perhaps be attributed to the place of law and philology in the German academic tradition. This provides a historical background to the development of *Begriffsgeschichte* as a method, and also helps explain why, once such a project was conceived, it was possible to find so many contributors who were both sympathetic and capable of providing material. "Key concepts" of sociopolitical language—such as *Politik*, *Geschichte*, *Demokratie*, *Gesellschaft*, *Kritik*, *Adel*, and *Arbeiter*—were selected and subjected to an investigation which charted their shifting usage and the consequent perspectives they created for their users. What counts as a key concept is determined by the project's purpose: to examine "the dissolution of the old world and the emergence of the new in terms of the historicoconceptual comprehension of this process."[10] It is the genesis of modernity, rather than modernity itself, that is at stake; hence the emphasis on the

Sattelzeit. The original program aimed at a coverage of 150 concepts, but it was never intended that these should be dealt with uniformly. Some entries would merely register the formation of a neologism (*Faschismus*, for example); others would provide short essays of about thirty pages on terms which became either more or less central during their progress through the *Sattelzeit* (*Polizei* is a good example). Several entries have almost become monographs in their own right, whether written singly or jointly—Riedel's contributions on *Gesellschaft* and Sellin's on *Politik* fall into the first category, while the 123-page entry for *Geschichte, Historie* has sections written by Koselleck, Christian Meier, O. Engels, and Horst Günther.

In his 1967 outline of the project, Koselleck provided a list of questions to be brought to bear on each term: Is the concept in common use? Is its meaning disputed? What is the social range of its usage? In what contexts does the term appear? Is the term articulated in terms of a concept with which it is paired, either in a complementary or adversary sense? Who uses the term, for what purpose, and to address whom? How long has it been in social use? What is the valency of the term within the structure of social and political vocabulary? With what terms does it overlap, and does it converge with other terms over time?[11] It is clear from these questions that the exposition of a concept's meanings was anticipated from the beginning to involve its placement within a hierarchy of meaning, the cumulative effect of the lexicon being to elucidate a complex network of semantic change in which particular concepts might play a varying role over time. Organizing the concepts in terms of such leading categories as "state" or "economy" was regarded as impractical, though desirable; this would in any case involve a form of interpretation that would diminish the usefulness of the project. Instead, the neutrality of an alphabetic arrangement was settled on, with each contribution adhering to a strictly chronological presentation. In the later phases of the preparatory work, three qualities the contributions should assess were emphasized: the term's contribution to the question of temporalization, its availability for ideological employment, and its political function.[12] Such guidelines could be no more than rules of thumb, however; on the whole, a general pragmatism ruled the project's execution, beginning with the identification of key concepts, continuing with the selection of suitable contributors, and affecting space allocation and the evaluation of final contributions.

It is only to be expected that a large collaborative project display inadequacies and uneven coverage. Few of the contributors can match Koselleck's theoretical rigor and command of material; the tendency is for one or the other to predominate, with varied results, depending on the concept at issue. Theoretical criticisms based on the difficulty of rigorously defining the distinction between "word" and "historical concept," and the consequent impossibility of elaborating a method specific to this mode of doing history, ignore the fact that *Begriffsgeschichte* is more a procedure than a definite method. It is intended not as an end in itself but rather as a means of emphasizing the importance of linguistic and semantic analysis for the practice of social and economic history.

Such is the background against which the essays translated here were written. The themes which run through them—historicity, temporality, revolution, modernity—also find expression in Koselleck's contributions to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, principally in the entries "Geschichte, Historie" and "Revolution." The actual mode of argument, however, owes much to Gadamer and Schmitt and has much in common with that of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* as developed by Jauss.

As noted above, it was in Gadamer's seminar in Heidelberg that Koselleck encountered Heidegger and became interested in the use of concepts to solve historical problems. More generally, there is much common ground between Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, first published in 1960, and the basic, interpretive framework within which Koselleck moves. Shared by *Truth and Method* and these essays is the construction of a hermeneutic procedure that places understanding as a historical and experiential act in relation to entities which themselves possess historical force, as well as a point of departure in the experience of the work of art and the constitution of an aesthetics.[13] Aesthetic experience is elaborated by Gadamer by examining the development of the concept *Erlebnis*, or experience in the sense of the lived encounter.[14] This term was developed as a counter to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and is characteristic of an aesthetics that centers on the manifestation of the "truth" of a work of art through the experience of the subject.

From this point, Gadamer proceeds to the philosophical question of what kind of knowledge is thereby produced. Modern philosophy is perceived as discontinuous with the classical tradition; the development of a historical consciousness in the nineteenth century made

philosophy aware of its own historical formation, creating a break in the Western tradition of an incremental path to knowledge.[15] Koselleck takes up this problem and approaches it as a historical question: What kind of experience is opened up by the emergence of modernity?

The dimensions of this experience are charted with respect to time and space, specifically through consideration of the "space of experience" and the "horizon of expectations," terms which form the subject of Koselleck's final essay and which in many ways summarize the themes of the preceding essays. More emphasis is given to the latter notion, combining as it does the spatial extension apparently available to a historical subject with the temporal projections that issue from this space. The perspective that opens up to a historical subject is doubled by the perception of the site occupied by this subject as one characterized by a conjuncture of heterogeneous dimensions—the *Gleichzeitigkeit der Ungleichzeitigen*, or the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous.

These ideas have been developed most explicitly by Jauss in the context of literary history conceived in terms of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*.[16] Like Koselleck, he joins historicity and experience, treating the reception of a literary work as a progression through the horizons of expectation of a succession of readers, whose expectations are constituted by both their historical circumstances and the unchanging literary forms they successively encounter.[17] The study of literature thus becomes a study of the ongoing reception of a text, where this text no longer occupies the position of a stable positivity, but rather is transformed by this process of reception, and, in turn, as an element in the transformation or modification of the experience of its readers, is reproduced as a work of literature. As Jauss emphasizes, not only is it necessary to overcome the diachronic emphasis of literary history through the construction of synchronous structures of perception; one must also recognize that it is the junction of synchronic and diachronic orders and the place of the reader at this junction which make historical understanding possible. By its nature, this junction is constituted by a concatenation of diverse elements, of different histories advancing at different rates and subject to varying conditions. Hence was developed the characterization of the moment of experience as a point of contemporaneity in which all that occurs together by no means enters into this moment in a uniform fashion.[18]

In its own way, *Begriffsgeschichte* is a form of *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, charting the course of the reception of concepts and examining the experience that they both contain and make possible. Overlying this is the continuing influence of Carl Schmitt, the man from whom Koselleck learned the merit of posing good questions. As with *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, the essays presented here are concerned more with the modern world's process of formation than with its actual structure. The perception of modernity as a problematic, if not crisis-ridden, condition is, in these essays, not as obvious as in *Kritik und Krise*, but it nevertheless plays a significant organizing role.[19] Enlightenment rationalism raised the prospect of unending progress and human improvement, and this vision was transformed into a future, realizable utopia through its articulation in the political programs of the French, and later, European revolutions. These broke decisively with the closed and cyclical structure of the eschatological world view in which predictions of the coming End of the World and the Final Judgment set the limit to human ambition and hope; instead, society was now perceived as accelerating toward an unknown and unknowable future, but within which was contained a hope of the desired utopian fulfillment. These utopias and the hopes embodied in them in turn became potential guarantees of their own fulfillment, laying the basis for the transformation of modern conflict into civil war. Because the fronts of political conflict run along ideological grounds, conflict becomes endemic, self-generating, and, in principle, endless. In one sense, then, we exist in a modern world traversed by such conflicts, in which permanent civil war exists on a world scale; and which, while it is directly related to the aspirations of Enlightenment rationalism, is a world quite different from the one anticipated. This modern world represents a future which once existed, is now realized, and is perpetually in danger of outrunning the power of its inhabitants to control its course.

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provement. I would also like to thank Nicola Pike for preparing the index.

Notes

1. This can be translated as "conceptual history" or the "history of concepts." Koselleck clearly demarcates it from "intellectual history" (*Geistesgeschichte*) and the history of ideas; he suggests that its postwar development is owed especially to a confrontation with the kind of *Geistesgeschichte* practiced by Meinecke, seeking to historicize this approach by taking as a point of departure the sociopolitical experience of particular conjunctures.

2. On Schmitt, see J. W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, 1983) 274–276.

3. Koselleck's dissertation was accepted in 1954, but it was not published until 1959. It was republished as a paperback by Suhrkamp in 1975, with a new preface.

4. Cf. W. Conze, "Die Gründung des Arbeitskreises für moderne Sozialgeschichte," in H.-D. Ortlieb, B. Molitor, W. Krone (eds.), *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik (Festgabe für Carl Jantke)* (Tübingen, 1979) 23–32. Shortly before being offered the post in Heidelberg, Koselleck had also been offered a similar position with Ipsen in Dortmund in the Sociology Faculty.

5. The development of recent sociohistorical work in West Germany is influenced more by those, like Wehler and Kocka, who draw on the work of Hans Rosenberg and Eckart Kehr, the former joining the emigration to the United States and the latter dying there in May 1933.

6. O. Brunner, *Land und Herrschaft* (Darmstadt, 1973). First published in 1939, it is subtitled *Basic Questions on the History of Territorial Organization in Medieval Austria*. An important collection of essays by Brunner was published in 1956 under the title *Neue Wege der Sozialgeschichte* (Göttingen, 1956). He died in 1982.

7. This is Koselleck's *Habilitationsschrift* of 1965; it was published under the title *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution* in 1967, and the second edition (Stuttgart), which has since been reprinted, appeared in 1975.

8. "Richtlinien für das Lexikon politisch-sozialer Begriffe der Neuzeit," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 11 (1967) 81–99.

9. Koselleck's own reflections on this can be found in this text, in his essay "Begriffsgeschichte and Social History."

10. Koselleck, "Richtlinien," 81.

11. Ibid., 87–90.

12. Koselleck, "Einleitung," in O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart, 1975) Bd. 1: xvi–xviii.

13. Koselleck's serious interest in aesthetics and art history led him to develop a comparative project on the commemoration of those killed in European wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: see his essay "Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen der Überlebenden," in O. Marquard, K. Stierle (eds.), *Identität* (Munich, 1979) 255–276.

14. H.-G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1975) 55 ff.

15. Ibid., xiv, xv.

16. For a general discussion on this, see R. C. Holub, *Reception Theory* (London, 1984).

17. Jauss sought to bridge the gap between literary history and sociological research and to this end introduced the notion of "horizon of expectations" in his *Untersuchungen zur mittelalterlichen Tierdichtung* (1959). This idea was already to be found in sociological literature; cf. K. Mannheim, *Man and Society* (London, 1940) 179 ff. See also H. R. Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in R. Cohen (ed.), *New Directions in Literary History* (London, 1974) 36.

18. Jauss attributes this notion to Kracauer, who first elaborated it in his contribution to the Adorno Festschrift of 1963. Jauss, "Literary History," 32.

19. The introduction to *Kritik und Krise* (Frankfurt a.M., 1975) begins with the words: "The present world crisis, determined by the polar tension between America and Russia as world powers, is, from a historical point of view, the resultant of European history." Koselleck notes in his preface to the second edition that this orientation had led to a great deal of misunderstanding (p. ix).

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Notes on Translation and Terminology

As with all translation, ambiguities and resonances which might be of significance in understanding the meaning of the text can be wiped away through an accurate but inadequate choice of word or phrase. In this case the problems begin with the title: "Futures Past" has a grammatical feel to it, but "The Bygone Future" might be a more accurate, if flatter, rendering, introducing a slight sense of archaism. Where serious conceptual problems arose in the translation, I have followed the usual practice of inserting the original word in parentheses, or in some cases have placed the original passage in the notes. Koselleck follows two patterns in his use of Latin citations: sometimes he glosses it in the text, and other times he simply cites it. In the latter case, I have inserted a translation in the main body of the text, placing the Latin original in a note. Where a Latin citation occurs in the notes, I have simply replaced it with an English translation.

When translating German sentences into English, a distinct problem arises that is related to technical possibilities of word and sentence construction in these languages. On the whole, it is possible to employ a German stem in a wider variety of verb, noun, adjectival, and adverbial constructions than is usually possible in English. Consequently, when translating into English, one is sometimes unable to replicate a systematic conceptual development, with the result that a line of argument might be obscured. Various strategies have been adopted in such cases and are explained at appropriate points. It might be useful, however, to briefly elaborate some of the more central terms in these notes, so that the reader can anticipate problems that might arise.