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»Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker: Zu den Bedingungen möglicher Geschichten« is a contribution to the ongoing wave of historiographic research into how and in which contexts the famous German historian Reinhart Koselleck developed his work and what he sought to accomplish with it. The volume stems from a conference taking place at The Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University in December 2018. The book contains all in all 15 contributions and a manuscript that Koselleck wrote as a student (in 1950) on »Der Jakobinismus und die Französische Revolution«. Koselleck's contributions to conceptual history, his writings on Prussia, and his work on representation, identity, and memory, loom large in the volume. However, it also offers analyses of many other themes related to his work.

To illuminate how Koselleck was »made« as a historian, the excellent introduction, authored by the two editors, Manfred Hettling and Wolfgang Schieder, draws not only on material from Koselleck's archive in Marbach, but also on belongings from the family archive. On that basis, it reveals new details about Koselleck's intellectual trajectory. One example concerns the significance of the discussions taking place between Koselleck's father, Arno Koselleck, and Koselleck's godfather, Johannes Kühn, for Koselleck's interest in and understanding of historical philosophy as a young man. Moreover, examining the available archival material, the introduction offers a much-needed critical perspective on Koselleck's autobiographical recollections of his experiences of National Socialism and as a soldier in the Wehrmacht. These recollections are, so the authors show, characterized by major blank spaces (for example, Koselleck spoke little about his experiences in the German army) and narrative devices that in various ways rationalize, normalize, and justify his and his family's orientations and actions between 1933 and 1945. The point is that Koselleck's memories should be treated with caution.

However, while the introduction provides more detailed insights into Koselleck's life and work, it does not offer fundamentally new understandings of his oeuvre. Hettling and Schieder deem three contexts particularly important for Koselleck's formation as a historian: his family upbringing in the German *Bildungsbürgertum*; his experiences as a soldier in the German army and in Russian captivity during and after World War II; and his academic socialization among a range of charismatic teachers and likeminded students at Heidelberg University in the late 1940s



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and early 1950s. This we already know from previous studies of Koselleck. The same is the case with the editors' argument that Koselleck's work is characterized by a preoccupation with the conditions of human action in history (and with ways of thinking about and writing history), and that the *Historik* which Koselleck outlined in the 1950s encompassed ideas for how to approach these themes that remained (more or less) constant throughout his career.

Many of the contributions to »Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker« follow in the footsteps of the introduction. Using hitherto unstudied material or exploring new themes, they provide great overviews of and uncover a wealth of new details about Koselleck's work, but they do not significantly alter our appreciation of it. This is arguably the case with Steffen Kluck and Richard Pohle's analysis of when and how Koselleck took inspiration from Martin Heidegger to construct his *Historik*; Christof Dipper's reflections on the much-debated intellectual relationship between Koselleck and Schmitt; Reinhard Blänkner's investigation of Otto Brunner's contribution to German conceptual history; and Wolfgang Schieder's exploration of Werner Conze's interest in conceptual history and how it matches Koselleck's.

One of the most important contributions to the volume is Jürgen Kocka's piece on Reinhart Koselleck as a social historian of Prussia; a theme, which has been little explored in previous research. The analysis centers on Koselleck's *Habilitation* »Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution« that Kocka already reviewed in 1970. According to Kocka, Koselleck's approach to social history in this book is strong in its appreciation of structures and processes, its considerations of discrepancies and tensions, and its ways of linking theoretical assumptions and tools to the scrutiny of empirical material in the analysis of the Prussian *Vormärz*. On the other hand, Kocka notes, Koselleck's *Habilitation* is limited by its scant interest in cultural and economic issues, its uncritical view of the Prussian bureaucracy as the force of historical development and as a benign promoter of the common good, and its insufficient reflections on the long-term implications of the Prussian reforms in German history. As such, Kocka not only provides important new insights on Koselleck as a social historian, but also of the significance of the framework that Koselleck unfolded in his *Habilitation* for his later work. These perspectives are deepened in Monika Wienfort's contribution on »Reinhart Koselleck, Preußen und das Recht«, which succeeds Kocka's analysis in the volume under review.

The most audacious contribution to »Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker« is arguably Reinhard Mehring's piece on the philosophical foundations of Koselleck's reflections on primary experience in the 1990s and 2000s. The piece seeks to explain how Koselleck moved from his early criticism of historical philosophy in the 1950s to a historical theory in his later academic and political writings on memory that in fact relies on distinct historical philosophical assumptions. This theory, Mehring shows, offers



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a set of political instructions that propose to level all victims of National Socialism and war and to remember these through memorials that invoke existential experiences of meaninglessness; a theme, Koselleck outlined with reference to his own personal experiences rather than to philosophical discussions. By analyzing these features – which involves revisiting the ways in which Koselleck read and reacted to a range of his »teachers« and illuminating a hitherto overlooked dialogue with Kant – Mehring manages to place his overall intellectual trajectory in a new light. Moreover, he discusses the political and ethical implications of Koselleck's work in ways that go far beyond existing research.

Other themes analyzed in »Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker« are Koselleck's work on the political cult of the dead (Manfred Hettling); his reflections on images as a space for thought and experience of possible stories (Bettina Brandt and Britta Hochkirchen); his writings on photography (Tobias Weidner), his discussions of historicism (Peter Tietze), his *Historik* (Sebastian Huhnholz); his work on historical memory and experience (Ulrike Jureit); and his theories of historical anthropology and language (Dieter Langewiesche).

There are no weak contributions to »Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker«. All authors display an intimate knowledge not only of Koselleck's work, but also of the relevant secondary literature, archival materials, and societal and intellectual contexts. Two things, however, are lacking in the volume. The first is a traditional index with names of people, places, events, and concepts illuminated in the volume. Such an index would have been useful for other scholars. The second is a perspective on the reception of Koselleck's work that has taken place across national and disciplinary boundaries for decades, and for which historiographic explorations of his writings might have major implications. Despite these reservations, »Reinhart Koselleck als Historiker« can be highly recommended, both for a broad audience and for more specialized scholars. There is a lot to be learned from the volume, and it provides an inescapable starting point for further research into one of most innovative historians of the 20th century.



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