

Foreword

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It is a great honor to be invited to present this collection of Reinhart Koselleck's essays and addresses. Some Anglophone readers will already know his *Futures Past*, a seminal work of historical theory. This collection of essays is much more far-ranging and evidences Koselleck's status as one of the most important theorists of history and historiography of the last half-century. Koselleck's work has implications for contemporary cultural studies that extend far beyond discussions of the practical problems of historical method. He is the foremost exponent and practitioner of *Begriffsgeschichte*, a methodology of historical studies that focuses on the invention and development of the fundamental concepts (*Begriffe*) underlying and informing a distinctively historical (*geschichtliche*) manner of being in the world.

If this formulation of Koselleck's project seems somewhat intimidatingly Hegelian to Anglophone sensibilities, it is because his work is itself deeply grounded in the tradition of *Geisteswissenschaften* that extends from Kant and Hegel through Marx, Dilthey, and Nietzsche, down to Weber, Heidegger, and Gadamer. But there is nothing insular about Koselleck's work. He has a profound knowledge of the British, American, and French contributions to philosophy of history, and he takes the whole sweep of European history, from the Greeks to the present, as his field of inquiry.

It is, however, to the study of the concept of history itself that Koselleck has devoted most of his scholarly life. It is not that Koselleck treats history's concept as some kind of Platonic paradigm against which every individual "idea" of history can be measured. On the contrary, he believes that the notion of history itself had a long period of historical development, extending from Herodotus to Gibbon, before it achieved conceptualization as a fundamental mode of human existence in the nineteenth century. Before this epoch, men certainly possessed a number of ideas about