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# HISTORICAL SEMANTICS AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF DEATH IN REINHART KOSELLECK<sup>1</sup>

Faustino Oncina Coves

Everyone – above all his Spanish hosts during his 2005 visit to our country – remembers Koselleck as a kind of press photographer, replete with camera, tirelessly searching for an as yet untaken snapshot of a monument, which might be of an equestrian statue, and letting loose some childlike remark when he found it. This passion which increased as he grew older has been seen as the sublimation of his missed vocation as a caricaturist.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately all that we are left with is a *compositum* of works which still needs to be, first of all, collected and, secondly, strung together to form a systematic, or at least systematized, whole. Both of these tasks remain to be done, or else finalized, and for that reason it can seem as if we are faced with the scattered pieces of a mosaic or puzzle that needs to be reassembled. There is an unavoidable rhapsodic first impression which complies as much with chronological causes as with the genre chosen to disseminate his researches. Koselleck's essays continue to appear posthumously to the slow rhythm of their printed publication and, as well, are to be found scattered through media that are not strictly academic, and in the so-called mass media. Koselleck discovered his journalistic vein late in life, but, having transcended an insincere corporate zeal, then surrendered himself devotedly to accepting the invitations of editors and to allowing himself to become known as a feature writer. He was in demand as a contributor and interlocutor with daily and weekly publications of all colours (the left-wing and alternative *Tageszeitung* and *Libération*, the social democrat

*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the progressive *Die Zeit*, the tough-minded *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the provocative *Der Spiegel* and the liberal conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). He rejoiced in graceful language. It was not for nothing that he won the Sigmund Freud prize for the best scientific prose in 1999.

Amongst the materials that he left with a view to an »Introduction« to the now posthumous *Begriffsgeschichten* (redrafted as an »Epilogue« by Carsten Dutt) we find a reply to the reproach of Rolf Reichardt to the effect that conceptual history, despite distancing itself from the theory of a traditional history of ideas, continued to travel »the high road« typical of the latter.<sup>3</sup> Probably, in the prolegomena to a future volume about political sensibility he would have had a reply saved up for his unruly disciple, who, by way of psalmody, took every opportunity to indicate yet another shortcoming of an iconological nature. For Reichardt historical semantics has to pursue the reconstruction of socio-linguistically relevant usage, and for that the best procedure consists in putting together a serial corpus of sources progressively and assessing it empirically.<sup>4</sup> He disapproves of the praxis of the

1 Abridged version of Faustino Oncina Coves, »Memory, Iconology and Modernity: A Challenge for Conceptual History«, in: Javier Fernández Sebastián (Hg.): *Political Concepts and Time. New Approaches to Conceptual History*, Santander 2011, S. 305–344.

2 »Formen der Bürgerlichkeit. Reinhart Koselleck im Gespräch mit Manfred Hettling und Bernd Ulrich«, in: *Mittelweg 36. Zeitschrift des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung* 2 (2003), p. 73; *Vorbilder – Bilder, gezeichnet von Reinhart Koselleck*. Introduction by Max Imdahl, Bielefeld 1983.

3 These excursions through the heights (*Gipfelwanderungen*) »give priority to the great canonical theories from Aristotle to K. Marx, without testing their social representativeness and without seeing through ordinary language« (*Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich (1680–1820)*, Munich 1985, pp. 62 ss.). Koselleck's reply to the objection that he practices a »highflying literature« (*Höhenkammliteratur*) is to be found in »Nachwort. Zu Einleitungsfragmenten Reinhart Kosellecks«, in *Begriffsgeschichten*, pp. 536–540. Such a literature, reviled by Reichardt, is very profitable, as it »records and produces new knowledge, new experiences, which normally elude the ordinary speaker ..., because it is not the job of the ordinary speaker to reflect on his own semantic or social assumptions« (p. 538).

4 »Wortfelder – Bilder – Semantische Netze. Beispiele interdisziplinärer Quellen und Methoden in der Historischen Semantik«, in: G. Scholz (ed.), *Die Interdisziplinarität der Begriffsgeschichte*, Hamburg 2000, pp. 112, 115, 120, 123, 132.

*Begriffsgeschichte*, which analyzes words as autonomous carriers of meaning, wrenched out of contexts and communicative situations, thereby aggressing against the discursive, that is to say the pragmatic, nature of language.<sup>5</sup> With regard to Koselleck this is a repetitive and irresolvable objection. A comprehensive conceptual history (*umfassende Begriffsgeschichte*) needs to account not only for texts, but also for collective actions and for images, culminating in a history of symbols. It advocates lending more scientific attention to the iconicity of dominant words. Mediating the illustration of a concept with images not only makes their scope and semantic relations clearer than writing would, but also displays their emotional charge, their popular nature and their power of address. In short, *Begriffsgeschichte* would gain in keenness and insight were it to go beyond studies of fragmented words to the analysis of textual fields and were to also take into consideration expressive sources (slogans, symbolic actions, posters, songs, images, etc.).

In two other densely written contributions – one programmatic and the other practical<sup>6</sup> – Reichardt stresses once again the conjunction between socio-historical semantics and iconography and insists on the, always postponed, signifying aspect of language. Alongside textual archives, image memories of the past as pregnant factor in collective representations

and the importance of visualizing the meanings of words are highlighted. He explicitly declares that the Germanic *Begriffsgeschichte* and the *GG* have focused on lexical and semantic levels, where concepts are to be found in the fabric of argument, but it has hardly assessed their diffusion in visual forms and in oral and semi-oral media. There has been, therefore, a neglect of the narrativity of concepts, which plays a decisive role in their social propagation. The battering »striker« justifiably impinges on the macrodictionary – hence Reichardt's promotion for another alternative undertaking – but does not at all target the historical-conceptual concerns unfolded by Koselleck.

The marriage of conceptual history and the history of iconology (or visual semiotics, or political sensibility, or iconography – which are all aliases for the same thing) is blessed not only by the *prius* of the *Historik* with regard to both but also by the criteria which have governed his researches, and consequently, by its focus on modernity. There is a connecting thread here which allows us to catalogue, to evaluate and to organize the materials bequeathed to us, over and above the false impression of being faced with a jumble or mass of minor works without order or internal agreement. In the early studies about the professor of Bielefeld allusions to this facet of his work were either meagre or exotic, or else were regarded as purely anecdotal or were simply dismissed out of hand.<sup>7</sup> And even when he began to emerge from his initial ostracism and to win supporters, one of the mandarins of his discipline with whom he did not refuse to cooperate with scientifically, Hans-Ulrich Wehler vg., obstructed the publication of his findings.<sup>8</sup> The recent

5 It suffices to compare the guidelines he sent to the contributors to the dictionary *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (*GG*) – who of course did not always comply with them, being vulnerable to the aforementioned methodological objection – and in which he explicitly referred to the pragmatic aspect of language (in the form of the question »Cui bono? Wer gebraucht in welcher Lage mit welcher Absicht einen Begriff?«) as much as to its discursive aspect (which requires taking conceptual networks into account: »die Bezogenheit aller Begriffe aufeinander«, »das Beziehungssystem von Begriffsgruppen als ganzen Vorgang«) (»Richtlinien für das Lexikon politisch-sozialer Begriffe der Neuzeit«, in: *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 11 (1967), pp. 88 ff). The reply to these reservations, to a significant extent analagous to those of Reichardt, from Quentin Skinner and from John Pocock, is ultimately convincing (cf. »A Response to Comments on the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*«, in: H. Lehmann y M. Richter (eds.), *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts. New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, German Historical Institute, Occasional Paper N° 15, Washington, 1996, pp. 63–66).

6 Entitled, respectively »*Historische Semantik zwischen lexicométrie und New Cultural History*. Einführende Bemerkungen zur Standortbestimmung« and »*Lumières versus Ténèbres*: Politisierung und Visualisierung aufklärerischer Schlüsselwörter in Frankreich vom XVII. zum XIX. Jahrhundert«, in: R. Reichardt (ed.), *Aufklärung und Historische Semantik: interdisziplinäre Beiträge zur westeuropäischen Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin 1998, pp. 7–28, 83–170 (see especially pp. 26–27, 36–37).

7 For example, Ch. Dipper, in his exhaustively thorough survey of how of conceptual history slides into the theory of historical times, does not pay much attention to the iconographic research of Koselleck (»Die ›Geschichtlichen Grundbegriffe‹. Von der Begriffsgeschichte zur Theorie der historischen Zeiten«, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 270 (2000), pp. 281–308).

8 The relationship with Wehler and Jürgen ocka revolved around historicism (which for them was suspect) and the theory of modernization (to the extent that both had used it, in an historiographically controlled manner, to overcome the past of the German nation). Nevertheless, Koselleck together with his colleagues at Bielefeld participated in the founding of the journal *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*. Whereas for the latter there was a parity and complementarity between the hermeneutic and the social-historical aspects, the former understood the Gadamer-Habermas polemics in terms of black and white which, somewhat simplistically, could embody, respectively, both conservatism and liberalism, when in reality Habermas advocated a *Tiefenhermeneutik* or »deep hermeneutics« (see »La pretensión de universalidad de la hermenéutica« (1970), in: *La lógica de las ciencias sociales*, Madrid 1988, pp. 291, 297, 302).

monographs devoted to Koselleck have raised those findings to the same rank as other very influential publications of his.<sup>9</sup>

And for this reason the elucidation of the nexus between conceptual history and iconography becomes more peremptory. Koselleck affirmed this but did not analyze it explicitly. In his Madrid interview with Javier Fernández Sebastián and Juan Francisco Fuentes, he responded evasively to their question about the methodological relationship between his studies of monuments to those killed in wars and the history of concepts, dissociating himself from Pierre Nora and *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory) because of his subordination to the constitution of French identity. Only later and in a disappointingly laconic manner did he announce that »from a conceptual point of

view« there was no difference »between visualization and rationalization« but that »both are very similar approximations«. <sup>10</sup> Here he is categorical enough, but too terse. Nonetheless, it is important to underline that the author finds no hiatus between the two spheres, nor any qualitative leap. Attention to memorial architecture and statuary is not the job of a new and autonomous researcher, unless it is part and parcel of the natural development of conceptual history, and of an inalienable and ultimately necessary evolution.<sup>11</sup>

But his interest in the »aesthetics of memory« not only responds to his efforts as a caricaturist, but also to biographical, that is to say generational and personally formative motives. On the one hand, he belongs to the so-called sceptical generation; and on the other hand, the cultural hegemony in Heidelberg was hermeneutics. Having been part of the »modern social history work group« of Werner Conze up to his *Habilitation* in 1965, Koselleck did not really leave the Gadamerian intellectual orbit without still remaining under its aegis. And, whilst still having one foot in the campus on the banks of the Neckar, he began to frequent the itinerant *Poetics and Hermeneutics* group, in which, as Odo Marquard recalls, »it was Hans Robert Jauß who set the pace, but it was Hans Blumenberg who was dominant as a philosopher.«<sup>12</sup> Their first meeting took place in Gießen in 1963, and along with the four founders, Hans Blumenberg, Clemens Heselerhaus, Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauß, Koselleck (in those days attached to the History Department and still only at doctoral level) participated in their meetings from the beginning. There were people representing philosophy, philology (German, English, Romance and Slavic), modern history and the history of art (for example, the art historian Max Imdahl had a decisive influence on Koselleck).<sup>13</sup> In the epilogue to the last volume under the auspices of this illustrious group, the pace-setter, Hans Robert Jauß,<sup>14</sup> shortly before his death, provided invaluable

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Another persistent point in the dispute rested on the fact that Koselleck had not accepted the concept of *Sonderweg* (see Jürgen Kocka, »Tras el fin de la *vía especial*. Sobre la solidez de un concepto«, in: *Historia social y conciencia histórica*, Madrid 2002, pp. 195–210) because he considered it to be theoretically weak, cognitively invalid and characteristic of a normative historicization. The jibes he directs at the moralization of history and politics, which tend towards a kind of irresponsible jacobinism, are notorious. One recalls likewise the distrust of Gadamer (in the rehabilitation of a metacriticism) and of his student with regard to the Enlightenment and critical philosophy (denounced for its hypocrisy and crypto-bellicism). Koselleck involved himself – in a subtle and oblique manner – in the debate over the *Sonderweg*. This debate arises in the context of the controversy unleashed by Fritz Fischer in 1961, which implicitly defended mimesis in regard to the military goals of imperial Germany and the Nazis, thus highlighting the way to Auschwitz from 1914, to the detriment of Auschwitz itself. The apologists of the *Sonderweg* placed emphasis on the ill-fated path leading to 1945 – and, therefore, were more concerned with proto-nazism than with nazism, even though Wehler had rectified this shortcoming with a controversial fourth volume of his series *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte (Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten 1914–1949*, Munich 2003). Divergences also were generated around the common line of research to do with »*Bürgertum*« when Wehler rejected the choice of monuments as an appreciable mode of mediation and transmission of historical experiences and would not accept the contributions of Koselleck's team in the collection »*Beiträge zur europäischen Gesellschaftsgeschichte*«. Koselleck finally found a home in a collection of his own entitled »*Sprache und Geschichte*«. Whilst the latter carried out comparative and international research, the duo referred to giving priority to nationally focussed research. (»Reinhart Koselleck im Gespräch mit Christof Dipper, Begriffsgeschichte, Sozialgeschichte, begriffene Geschichte, in: *Neue Politische Literatur* 43 (1998), pp. 197–199, 205).

9 Kari Palonen, *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe. Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck*, Münster 2004, pp. 286 ss.; Willibald Steinmetz, »Nachruf auf Reinhart Koselleck (1923–2006)«, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32 (2006), pp. 427 ss.

10 »Historia conceptual, memoria e identidad (II). Entrevista a Koselleck«, in: *Revista de libros*, n° 112, April 2006, p. 7.

11 »Hinweise auf die temporalen Strukturen begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels«, in: H.E. Bödecker (ed.), *Begriffsgeschichte, Diskursgeschichte, Metapherngeschichte*, Göttingen 2002, p. 31. Here he recognizes that the methodological and doctrinal assumptions of the GG macrodictionary end up for him as a »theoretical straitjacket«.

12 »Descarga del absoluto. Para Hans Blumenberg, in memoriam« [1996], in: *Filosofía de la compensación*, Paidós, Barcelona, 2001, p. 111.

13 »Vorwort« to H. R. Jauß (ed.), *Nachahmung und Illusion*, Fink, Munich, 1964 (1969), pp. 6–7.

14 »Epilog auf die Forschungsgruppe *Poetik und Hermeneu-*

information concerning the vicissitudes of this very flamboyant and influential circle.

On a common basis for understanding was that of the aesthetic sense as the best catalyst for communication that goes beyond specializations. A second basis for consensus lay in the affinity of the group with *Begriffsgeschichte* and historical semantics. What could not be achieved by means of a discussion with well-defined concepts from a logical perspective was permissible within a history of the understanding of sense in the *medium* of its genesis and unfolding. From the hermeneutic point of view, aesthetic experience and history are inseparable. The imprint of Koselleck is obvious in the terminology of the participants, as they forged a kind of common, shared jargon made up out of magic words: *Sattelzeit*, *Erfahrung und Erwartung*, *Beschleunigung*, *Kollektivsingular*, ..., Koselleck also published in several volumes of the *Poetics and Hermeneutics* group and he was the co-editor of two of them.<sup>15</sup> The first essay of any great depth on iconography emerged in the context of one of the group's seminars, devoted to »identity«, although he actually began to concern himself with representations of death in revolution and war on the occasion of the student revolt of 1969/70.<sup>16</sup> The fact that »Monuments to casualties of war as places for the foundation of identity of the survivors« seemed to be spurred on by the meetings of *Poetik und Hermeneutik* shows that Koselleck's aesthetic learnings found an excellent soil here.<sup>17</sup> Its coinciding in time with *Vergangene Zukunft* (1979) – especially the first chapter, originally published 1968 –, and, to

that extent, with the concerns of historical semantics, suggests that the *Begriffsgeschichte* anticipated the iconic change of direction in the sciences of the spirit. It absorbed not only the »linguistic turn« but also, in some ways, was in advance of the »iconic turn« or »pictorial turn« promoted in the Anglo-Saxon world by W.J.T. Mitchell<sup>18</sup> and in the

18 Mitchell defines »iconology« in the literal sense of the term as »a study of the ›logos‹ (the words, ideas, discourse or ›science-) of ›icons‹ (images, pictures or likenesses). It is thus a ›rhetoric of images‹ in a double sense: first, it is a study of »what to say about images« – the tradition of ›art writing‹ that goes back to the Philostratus's *Imagines*, and is centrally concerned with the description and interpretation of visual art; and, second, as a study of »what images say – that is, the ways in which they seem to speak for themselves by persuading, telling stories, or describing« (*Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1986, pp. 1–2). Its main interlocutors are six authors: »Wittgenstein's critique of the ›picture theory‹ of meaning and modern theories of ›poetry and mental imagery‹; Nelson Goodman's critique of ›iconicity‹ in relation to semiotics; Ernst Gombrich's argument for the ›naturalness of imagery‹, and ›nature‹ as an ideological category; Lessing's attempt to formulate generic laws separating ›poetry‹ from ›painting‹, and Germanic cultural independence; Burke's aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful in relation to his critique of the French Revolution; Marx's use of the ›camera obscura and the fetish‹ as figures for the psychological and material ›idols‹ of capitalism« (pp. 2–3). A family tree of images (likenesses, resemblances, similitudes) would be as follows: 1) *Graphic* (pictures, statues, designs); 2) *Optical* (mirrors, projections); 3) *Perceptual* (sense data, ›species‹, appearances); 4) *Mental* (dreams, memories, ideas, fantasmata); 5) *Verbal* (metaphors, descriptions) (pp. 9–10). The work of Goodman, Gombrich, Lessing and Burke provides a panoramic view of ways of differentiating between text and images (p. 51). Lessing, an author whom Koselleck was very fond of, would make the iconology of death do service, not only for the *Laoconte* (Tecnos, Madrid, 1990), but all for the brief treatise entitled ¿Cómo los antiguos se imaginaban a la muerte? (*How did the ancients imagine death?*) (*La Ilustración y la muerte: Dos tratados (Enlightenment and Death: Two treatises)*, Debate, Madrid, 1992). On the other hand, Koselleck's reluctance to incorporate metaphors (which Mitchell included in the genealogical tree of icons) in the *GG* lexicon conflicts with his ability to invent them: apart from the legendary *Sattelzeit*, there is striking geological metaphor, *Zeitschichten*, which provides the title for one of his books. In the final volume of *GG* he presents a summary of the main criticisms directed at the macro-dictionary. Of those that he considered to be fair (»Some objections refer inevitably to new approaches which demand privileges of their own«) he mentions the following: »Equally it could be objected that the metaphorical nature of our concepts indicated by Hans Blumenberg has not been studied systematically. All these proposals await a subsequent development which would have been beyond our lexicon to have dealt with immediately« (*GG*, vol. 7, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1992, p. VIII). The two poles between which he moves are those of definition and metaphor. Koselleck dissociates himself from the first of these because of its a-historical nature and its pretention to univocity, which are what separates it from a history of words and terminolo-

tik«, in: G. V. Graevenitz and Odo Marquard (eds.), *Kontingenzen* (Poetik und Hermeneutik, vol. XVII), Fink, Munich, 1998, pp. 525–533.

15 »Epilog auf die Forschungsgruppe *Poetik und Hermeneutik*«, pp. 527–529, 532–533. See Reinhart Koselleck and Wolf-Dieter Stempel (eds.), *Geschichte – Ereignis und Erzählung* (Poetik und Hermeneutik V), Fink, Munich, 1973; Reinhart Herzog and Reinhart Koselleck (eds.), *Epochemschwelle und Epochenbewusstsein* (Poetik und Hermeneutik XII), Fink, Munich, 1987.

16 »Das musste für die Studenten, die ja Revolutionäre sein wollten, ein gutes Thema sein: gewaltsame Tode von den Bauernkriegen bis Kennedy. Die marxistischen Studenten verweigerten sich übrigens, für sie war das zu bürgerlich. Aber ich habe gemerkt, wie viel das noch zu erforschen ist« (»Bundesrepublikanische Kompromisse: Die Deutschen und ihr Denkmalskult. Rainer Metzger sprach mit Reinhart Koselleck,« in: *Kunstforum* 136 (1996), pp. 467–468).

17 »Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen der Überlebenden«, in: Odo Marquard and Karlheinz Stierle (eds.), *Identität* (Poetik und Hermeneutik VIII), Fink, Munich, 1979, pp. 255–276.

Germanic world by Gottfried Boehm and baptized as *Bildwissenschaft*, which in time formed a hybrid science, with some exquisite products.<sup>19</sup> From his address at the prestigious Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (*Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung*) at the University of Bielefeld he organized in 1976 a common front of work around the topic of »images of death and funerary monuments: political iconology in art and politics« which alternated with another on »linguistics and history«. The participa-

tion in this forum of Max Imdahl (his *Iconic* was a continuation and superation of Panofsky's iconographic and iconological model) and of Martin Warnke (who was the head of a research center about political iconography between 1990 and 1999 at Warburg-Haus in Hamburg, where Koselleck was a visiting professor 1996–97) had a great relevance.

Everything that had gone before, the totality of his personal vocation and intellectual training, would explain in part his interest in the *aesthetics* of memory, but it is also important to elucidate the »memory« part of it as such. And here obviously we would need to pay attention to the relationship between memory and memorials,<sup>20</sup> two veins that the historian linked together and exploited fruitfully in his latter years. The now emeritus professor at that point abandoned the niche of his academic position and joined the fray, but not out of any puerile dilettantism; rather this leap was motivated by reasons of coherence, and in order to make his academic labours publicly transparent, being convinced that he could help to clear away the prevailing confusion in his country, the homeland of the perpetrators of a genocide.

But as well as this passage from memory to its plastic representation, he managed also to place this line of research in the context of his project to do with the optimization of modernity or in his theory of modernization. The attention to monuments had to do with the convenient introduction of elements which delay or slow down what we have referred to (appealing to Goethe, an author dear to Koselleck) as »*velociferine*« modernity.<sup>21</sup> How the two meta-categories of »experi-

gies (»Introduction« to vol. 1 of GG, pp. XIX–XX, XXII–XXIII; see *Futuro pasado*, Paidós, Barcelona, 1993, pp. 117–118). The history of concepts, so reluctant at first, was not able to resist the vigour of metaphor, and the same publisher which had once promoted the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (i.e. the Swiss firm Schwabe, together with the Academy of Sciences and Literature of Mainz, which had also been so active in bringing out the *Begriffsgeschichte*), now sponsored an analogous enterprise concerning metaphor (»*Das Metaphernprojekt –Scientia Metaphorica*«), headed by Lutz Danneberg, Petra Gehring, Helmut Kühn, Roland Kany, Margarita Kranz and Jürgen Niederhause, which was itself broken down into three projects: a) *Historisches Wörterbuch der Metaphern in Philosophie und Wissenschaften. Lexicon Metaphorologicum*, b) *Analyse von Metaphern in argumentativen Kontexten. Analytica Metaphorologica*, and c) *Beiträge zur Metaphernforschung. Studia Metaphorologica*. [Finally this ambitious and difficult project was not realized]. In »Estructuras de repetición en el lenguaje y en la historia« (Structures of repetition in language and history) Koselleck affirms that all discourse feeds off the possibility of reference to pre-established knowledge, deposited in the language and capable of reiteration: »Take for example the case of metaphor, that performance immanent in language, which at the level of comparison creates and engenders knowledge. A phrase as apparently lacking in sense as »Alexander is a lion« can only be understood if we are able to reproduce the comparison that Alexander fights valiantly and intrepidly, and vanquishes like a lion. For its effectiveness, metaphor lives off prior linguistic knowledge and its repeated use in the heart of a language community. This is valid in a general sense. No sentence, spoken or written, can be understood which does not refer back to something already inscribed in the language, to prior understandings in the sense intended by Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Revue de Synthèse* 1 (2006), p. 160; this is the inaugural lecture of the conference *Historische Anthropologie*, which took place in Fribourg-en-Brisgau in September 2005. This was the same lecture, with qualifications, that he delivered at the *Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales* (Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies) in Madrid in the spring of 2005 (*Revista de Estudios Políticos* 134 (2006)).

19 Gottfried Boehm (ed.), *Was ist ein Bild?*, Fink, Munich, 1994; Klaus Sachs-Hombach, *Wege zur Bildwissenschaft. Interviews*, Herbert von Halem Verlag, Köln, 2004; *id.*, *Bildwissenschaft. Disziplinen, Themen, Methoden*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2005. Some real gems among these visual strategies are: Horst Bredekamp, *Thomas Hobbes' visuelle Strategien*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1999; *id.*, *Die Fenster der Monade: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz' Theater der Natur und Kunst*, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2004; Reinhard Brandt, *Arkadien in Kunst, Philosophie und Dichtung*, Rombach Verlag, Freiburg i.Br./Berlin, 2006<sup>9</sup>.

20 I dealt with this issue in my presentation to the Theory and Practice of Conceptual History Conference, held in Valencia between 27th and 29th of November 2006: »Necrológica del *outsider* Reinhart Koselleck: el «historiador pensante» y las polémicas de los historiadores« (»Obituary of Reinhart Koselleck, the outsider: the «thinking historian» and the polemics of historians«) (*Isegoría. Revista de Filosofía Moral y Política*, 37 (2007), pp. 35–61).

21 Faustino Oncina, »Historia conceptual, Histórica y modernidad velociferina: diagnóstico y pronóstico de Reinhart Koselleck« (»Conceptual History, *Historik* and *velociferine* modernity«), in: *Isegoría* 29 (2003), pp. 225–237; and »La modernidad velociferina y el conjuro de la secularización« (»*Velociferine* modernity and the spell of secularization«), Introduction to Reinhart Koselleck, *Aceleración, prognosis y secularización (Acceleration, prognosis and secularization)*, pp. 11–33. See *Futuro pasado (Futures Past)*, p. 356; his publication *Studien zum Beginn der modernen Welt*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1977, and the interview »Begriffsgeschichte, Sozialgeschichte, begriffene Geschichte«, p. 197. Goethe coined the word »*veloziferisch*« as a characteristic of modern times, and compound of *velocitas* and *Lucifer* (*Goethes Briefe*, IV, Christian Wegner Verlag, Hamburg,



ence« and »expectations« are intertwined and rooted anthropologically in memory and hope depends on the prevailing conception of time in each era. In the tension between tradition and future, modernity has let go of the burden of the past in the illusory belief that this would thereby hasten the glorious dawn of utopia.

*Nolens volens* the speeding up of things has become an emblem of modernity – there is an experience of accelerated amnesia. Speed is the form of ecstasy provided to human beings first by political revolution and secondly by technology.<sup>22</sup> It is a poisoned gift, at once emancipating and subjugating, since the pandemic of haste has turned into an inexhaustible focus of friction. This is an idea present in another of the founding fathers of conceptual history in Germany, Joachim Ritter, who instilled it into his successors in that school,<sup>23</sup> Odo Marquard and Hermann Lübbe,

likewise distinguished members of *Poetics and Hermeneutics*. Thereby a far from trivial phenomenon is linked to a certain epoch-making cultural background. The preoccupation with monuments forms part of a culture of sensibilization and conservation of memory which constitutes a counterweight (the technical term used is »compensation«) to our ultra-fast modern civilization. The leader of the Münster *Collegium Philosophicum* – Joachim Ritter – identified it as the true function of the sciences of the spirit in the modern world.

Lübbe promoted a symptomatology and phenomenology of the progressive poverty of specific experience in the process of our civilization and a compensatory *vade mecum* to palliate it. With the conservation of monuments »we support past times as our own past, graspable and imputable« and thereby compensate for the loss of trust derived from the frenetic rhythms of change under living conditions in today's world, with the consequent rapid ageing of tradition (understood as trans-generational validating orientations).<sup>24</sup> Marquard also made good use of this task.<sup>25</sup> Our

1967, pp. 159, 146).

22 *Futuro pasado (Futures Past)*, pp. 287–357 (corresponds to the chapters »Modernidad« (»Modernity«) and »Espacio de experiencia: y »Horizonte de expectativa«, dos categorías históricas« (»The Space of Experience« and »The Horizon of Expectations«, two historical categories«). See Andreas Huyssen, *En busca del futuro perdido: cultura y memoria en tiempos de globalización (Search of the lost future: culture and memory in a time of globalisation)*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 2002; Manfred Osten, *Das geraubte Gedächtnis. Digitale Systeme und die Zerstörung der Erinnerungskultur*, Insel Verlag, Frankfurt a. M., 2005, p. 9; Harmut Rosa, *Beschleunigung. Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2005. M. Kundera has put it in a precise way: »There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting. [...] In existential mathematics, this experience takes the form of two elemental equations: the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting.« (*La lentitud (Slowness)*, Tusquets, Barcelona, 1995, pp. 47–48). And further: »Several corollaries may be deduced from this equation, for example the following: our era surrenders to the demon of speed and for that reason forgets itself so easily. Well, I prefer to invert this affirmation and say: our era is obsessed by the desire to forget and, in order to realize this desire, it surrenders to the demon of speed; it accelerates the pace because it wants us to understand that we no longer desire to remember it; that it is fed up with itself; sick of itself; that it wishes to extinguish the tremulous flame of memory.« (pp. 146–147).

23 J. Ritter, »La tarea de las ciencias del espíritu en la sociedad moderna« (»The task of the sciences of the spirit in modern society«) (1963), in: *Subjetividad. Seis ensayos (Subjectivity. Six essays)*, Alfa, Barcelona, 1986, pp. 93–123. Marquard himself has spoken of the Ritter School (*Ritter-Schule*) (»Zukunft und Herkunft. Bemerkungen zu Joachim Ritters Philosophie der Entzweiung«, in: Kurt Röttgers (ed.), *Politik und Kultur nach der Aufklärung. Festschrift Hermann Lübbe zum 65. Geburtstag*, Schwabe, Basel, 1992, p. 97 ss., and his epilogue to the new enlarged edition of *Metaphysik und Politik. Erweiterte Ausgabe*, Suhrkamp,

Frankfurt a. M., 2003, pp. 453–456).

24 »Pérdidas de experiencia y compensaciones. Acerca del problema filosófico de la experiencia en el mundo actual« (»Loss of experience and compensation. Concerning the philosophical problem of experience in the present world«), in: *Filosofía práctica y Teoría de la Historia (Practical Philosophy and Theory of History)*, Alfa, Barcelona, 1983, pp. 168–169, 158; *Im Zug der Zeit. Verkürzter Aufenthalt in der Gegenwart*, Springer, Berlin, 2003<sup>3</sup>, pp. 3, 55 s., 281–304). Koselleck's affinity with Gadamer's principle of conservation and the Ritter School axiom of compensation is obvious. In response to a question from Palonen concerning modern acceleration, Koselleck expressly used the term »compensation«, dear to the members of the Münster *Collegium*: »Acceleration cannot go on to infinity. There are values and finite facts which cannot be superceded.« (for example: population increase, acceleration of means of transport, the exploitation of the earth's resources) »To that extent one can observe compensatory (*kompensatorische*) factors. [...] There are values and finite facts which place limits on any acceleration. From that the necessity of structural stabilization arises.« («Zeit, Zeitlichkeit und Geschichte – Sperrige Reflexionen. Reinhart Koselleck im Gespräch mit Wolf-Dieter Narr und Kari Palonen», in: J. Kurunmäki y K. Palonen, *Zeit, Geschichte und Politik. Zum achtzigsten Geburtstag von Reinhart Koselleck*, University of Jyväskylä, 2003, pp. 23–24 – I refer to a typescript version provided by Annita Kananen).

25 The human sciences compensate for the damage done by modernization by telling stories. They tell three types of stories: 1) »Sensitizing Stories... this modern disenchantment of the world is compensated, also in modern times, by the substitute enchantment of the aesthetic realm«; 2) »Preserving Stories... Modernization has the effect of an accelerated artificialization (that is, denaturalization) and objectivization (that is, de-historicization) of reality, both of which are compensated, in specifically modern fashion, by

senses precede all culture. The visibility and the audibility of the world are antecedent to its readability. Wherever and whenever the majority of a population is illiterate, the senses are invoked in a completely different manner to what happens in a world interpreted through writing. In that case, images and dreams speak directly. For a medievalist, for example, the sensory load of the world of symbols and images is continuously overwhelming. Sources of plastic representation have a communicative potential that is prior to and foreign to the alphabet – it can even be said of the plastic nature of written sources that the more remote they are in time, the more they gain in enunciative power. From the preceding it follows that, for the historian's praxis, along with his critical-philological methods, iconic, iconographic and iconological approaches are also important, for without the latter it is not possible to break down the worlds of completed or past-tense experience. There is a surprising parallelism between the research areas of historians of both the Middle Ages and our own society, between pre-modernity and post-modernity (conducted audio-visually).<sup>26</sup>

The anthropological assumptions of Koselleck's analysis of monuments are based on the fact that language is not the only receptacle in which history or memory coalesces. It is a corollary of his controversy with Gadamer, accentuated problematically in his autobiographical or biographical notes. If in the one case the difference between text and fact, source and history, resides in the conviction that, beyond the universal ontology of language, there exist, in history, long-term, pre-linguistic structures and courses;<sup>27</sup>

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the development of an appreciation of nature (from the discovery of landscape to nature conservation) and by the development of an appreciation of history, with the associated conserving activities: the museum, recollection through research, the preservation of monuments«; and 3) »*Oriental Stories...* Modernization has a disorienting effect, and this is compensated, again in modern times, by the encouragement of traditions with which one can identify« (»On the Unavoidability of the Human Sciences« (1985), in: *Apologie des Zufälligen. Philosophische Studien (In Defense of the Accidental. Philosophical Studies*, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, 1991, p. 98–99), Reclam, Stuttgart, 1986; *Philosophie des Städtischen*, Reclam, Stuttgart, 2000; *Aesthetica und Anesthetica. Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 1989, pp. 12, 15). See also J. Ritter: »Landschaft. Zur Funktion des Ästhetischen in der modernen Gesellschaft« (1963), reprint in: *Metaphysik und Politik*, pp. 407–434.

26 »Preface« by Koselleck to *Mundus in imagine. Bildersprache und Lebenswelten im Mittelalter. Festgabe für Klaus Schreiner*, Fink, Munich, 1996, pp. 9–10.

27 »The historian [...] makes use basically of texts only as testimonies from which a reality existing beyond the texts might

then in the other case linguistic articulation with individual experiences can end up betraying them (hyperbolizing the maxim *tradurre è tradire*), since the process that mediates a stock of concepts, metaphors and narrative and rhetorical resources, transforms the subject's experiences; by exchanging them with other experiences and putting them on the same plane and level as the experiences of other people.<sup>28</sup> Obviously

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be determined« (*Historia y Hermenéutica* (History and Hermeneutics)) (HH) [1987], Paidós, Barcelona, 1993, p. 91). »Writing the history of a period means making statements that could not ever have been made in that period« (p. 92). And more categorically: »No text from any source contains the kind of history which is assembled and expressed purely with the aid of textual sources. [...] There are historical processes which escape all compensation or linguistic interpretation« (p. 93; see p. 88). In one of his interviews he stresses the same idea »the language which compiles experience and pre-formulates future experiences, has a limited capacity to integrate the world into its knowledge, into the modes of behaviour and the challenges which orient our action. But, contrary to universal hermeneutics, language offers only one perspective on what the real world possibly is for human beings« (»Begriffsgeschichte, Sozialgeschichte, begriffene Geschichte«, p. 188.) In fact »it is characteristic of the fundamental phenomenon of the business of history that texts are certainly necessary to understand it, to recount it, to repeat it and to rewrite it. Without texts I cannot do history, but texts are not really the only authority, because no text provides what it is that characterizes a history. [...] Any history is more or less what the source is able to say. This goes for the structures of historical events, .. and it is valid with even more reason for long term processes which do not figure in any source« (»Historia(s) e Histórica. Reinhart Koselleck en conversación con Cartsten Dutt« (»Histories and History. Reinhart Koselleck in conversation with Cartsten Dutt«) (2001), in: *Isegoría* 29 (2003), p. 213). See also the »Introduction« by Koselleck to the German edition of Hayden White, *Auch Klio dichtet oder: Die Fiktion des Faktischen*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1986, pp. 1–6.

28 Diachronically, one can establish that there is time lag between distant events and modes of linguistic elaboration of experience: »Linguistic schemata for translation are brought in which retroactively restructure the context of the experience of war. New linguistic contents produced by the war, ideologies, stereotypes and slogans are superimposed on or eliminate the original context of the experience of war. And to this are added all those experiences which individuals have collected during the war without being able to articulate them linguistically« (»Las esclusas del recuerdo y los estratos de la experiencia. El influjo de las dos Guerras Mundiales sobre la conciencia social« (»The floodgates of memory and layers of experience. The Influence of the two World Wars on social conscience«) (1992), in: *Los estratos del tiempo (Layers of Time)*, p. 143). The article about his experiences of 8th May 1945 reiterated that the »sensory presence of the truth« of his memories is faded to the extent that he related them and recorded them in writing, that is to say, to the extent that they were converted into literary histories: »There are experiences which flood the body as if with a mass of incandescent lava and which coagulate there. Pitilessly they can return from then on and make their presence felt, at any time and immutably. Not many

there are paintings and sculptures that can be translated into language by means of descriptive accounts, but they belong to an extralinguistic domain. Since monuments contain above all political messages, it is a case of a political aesthetics.

In his studies he usually applies the same criteria to determine their »*Sattelzeit*« or »*Neuzeit*«:

»Of course, my semantics, my iconography and iconology are formed in parallel. What is not sayable (*sagbar*) can possibly be showable (*zeigbar*), and what is not showable can perhaps be sayable. This relationship makes my approach manifest. My selection criteria are important because, by showing something with their help, it is possible that I simultaneously silence it. To show is always at the same time to silence (*verschweigen*). This also corresponds to selection criteria for fundamental concepts with a similar pregnant force. To this extent many elements of semiotics, of semantics and of iconography and iconology are readable in an analogous way. The question of comparative thresholds in the evolution of the cult of monuments and of political language can be linked to it. At the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth centuries a democratic impulse can be seen unequivocally in the political cult of the dead. The democratization of the cult of the dead is a long-term process which commenced with the French Revolution and in some ways came to a conclusion after the Second World War. Up to the Second World War all funerary symbols and monuments, admonitory monuments and sites of memory were oriented towards the establishment of meaning (*sinnstiftend*). [...] In any case, the cult of the dead had to establish a meaning for the viewer. Any iconographic landscape now has as its main theme the impossibility of establishing a meaning. As a whole monuments dedicated to the Holocaust have as their theme absurdity as such«.

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of these experiences can come to be memories, but when they do, then they are based on their sensory immediacy. Smells, tastes, sounds, feeling and the visual field, in short, all the senses, accompanied by pleasure or by pain, are reawakened and do not need any work of memory to be and to remain real. Of course, there are many memories which I have often related and repeated, but the sensory presence of their truth has long since been dispelled. They are only literary histories for me, I can only give them credence when listening to them myself. But I cannot guarantee their sensory certainty. [...] There are experiences which are neither exchangeable nor communicable. (»Glühende Lava, zur Erinnerung geronnen. Vielerlei Abschied vom Krieg: Erfahrungen, die nicht austauschbar sind«, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6th May 1995).

The passage from this interview with Narr and Palonen provides several illuminating keys for the evaluation of this linkage (here affirmed unhesitatingly) between semantics and iconography in conceptual history. They share the same set of criteria (temporalization, democratization, politicization and ideologization) and the same point of inflection: modernity.<sup>29</sup> Amongst the novel traits which would prevail, from the eighteenth century up to the middle of the twentieth century, in the iconography of those fallen in combat what stands out is the extinction of the transcendent meaning of death, and the ever-growing anchorage of its innerworldly representation. That is to say, the twilight of Christian interpretation left the way clear for political and ideological interpretations. To such a *functionalization* was added *democratization*, that is to say, if the pre-revolutionary symbolization of death differed according to the immediate social order, after the Revolution funerary monuments divested themselves of traditional hierarchizations.

Therefore, Koselleck stresses three aspects of the political cult of the dead, which are tied in with the four explanatory hypotheses concerning the origins of modernity expounded in *GG*. In the first place, whilst a dynastic cult does not need any violent deaths in order to consolidate the monarchic state, in the Age

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29 »Zeit, Zeitlichkeit und Geschichte«, pp. 22–23. We do not understand why Palonen maintains that Koselleckian studies on monuments neglect »*Sattelzeit*« or »*Neuzeit*«. Although the historian prioritizes those erected as a result of the two World Wars, he never loses sight of the modern focus, to the point where this label is ostentatiously apparent in the titles of his most notable works: *Der politische Totenkult: Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne*, Fink, München, 1994 – in the »Introduction« Koselleck is, if that is possible, even more explicit: »Der folgende Band beschäftigt sich mit dem politischen Totenkult der Neuzeit. Erst seit der Französischen Revolution, vorbereitet durch Schriften der Aufklärung, gibt es in ansteigender Zahl Denkmäler, die an den gewaltsamen Tod jedes Einzelnen in Krieg oder Bürgerkrieg erinnern sollen« (p. 10); »Les monuments aux morts. Contribution à l'étude d'une marque visuelle des temps modernes«, in: *Iconographie et histoire des mentalités*, Marseille, 1979, pp. 113–123; »Die Utopie des Überlebens. Der politische Totenkult der Neuzeit«, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 12.03.1994, p. 65; »Die bildliche Transformation der Gedächtnisstätte in der Neuzeit«, in: *La mémoire*, Presses Universitaire de Lyon, 2003. »Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen« includes a crucial section: »Der Übergang zur Moderne«. For this reason we disagree with the Finnish professor, when he insinuates that interest in »political iconography« is different to that of *Begriffsgeschichte* and even independent of it. Paradoxically, in the epigraph to the political iconography of monuments to those fallen in combat he strives to show how this focus is faithful to the guidelines of conceptual history (*Die Entzau-berung der Begriffe*, pp. 286, 181).

of Enlightenment such deaths legitimized the unity of political action. Secondly, he draws attention to the process of secularization (and thereby of temporalization) under the banner of progress: »The Christian hope of salvation for each and every soul, the so-called other world is entrusted to the political community, who are obliged to remember every death in combat. The hope of the other world is transferred to the hope of a terrestrial future for the community of political action, the promise of eternity is temporalized.«<sup>30</sup> And thirdly, even unknown or disappeared soldiers need to be remembered. This postulate follows from the fundamental, democratic decision to never forget anyone who has given his life for everyone else. The unknown soldier becomes a metonymical figure for the whole nation.

In the face of the attempt, in accordance with the ancient ideal, of immortalizing the glory of heroes with an eye to patriotic, charismatic or identificatory legitimations, in the essay on Daumier he emphasizes the other side of the coin of progress and the withering of humane values, which brings to the surface a negative evaluation of the exaltation of individual deaths in the name of a »sense of history«, and this becomes heightened after the forthcoming massive slaughter of the First World War. Monuments alert us to the fetishism of meaning. The costs which collective singulars have committed us to are too high, since they are under the advocacy of history, of the future, ..., they excuse us from the responsibility of individual work and bless a totalitarian and terrorist optimism.<sup>31</sup>

In his pioneering foray into this subject matter it is clear that the death remembered in monuments to the fallen is not that of Heidegger's *Sein zum Tod* (Being toward death), but rather that of *Sein-zum-Totschlagen* (Being toward beating to death). The question of meaning (the »what for«) of violent death is formulated as is typical of this author, in a temporal scale. The eventual meaning that the dead person could have had attributed to his death is unrecoverable and

should not be required to be accounted for *a posteriori*. But this peculiar iconology of death of Koselleck's is rooted in profound layers of theory, in his meta-history, in his anthropology of fundamental, oppositional relations, in that of which the pair referred to forms part of the warp of the conditions of possibility for histories, the dying/killing antithesis is a transcendental category of the *Historik*.<sup>32</sup> Man can be defined as a thinking and speaking being, but can equally be defined as a being capable of killing his fellow men. Reason and language are put to the service of killing. Humanity is characterized by its ineradicably conflictual nature. Political entities are constituted by means of the exclusion, the submission and the death of other. Sacrifice is the guarantee of survival, of liberation, of victory and of redemption. This foundation for meaning has been maintained throughout the centuries. The political cult of the dead turns into an anthropological constant interwoven with other binary oppositions:<sup>33</sup> inside/outside, above/below, before/after, friend/enemy, ... It is paradoxical that modernity's repertoire of categories flows from an eminently anti-modern source.

Koselleck has repeatedly rejected the existence of a collective memory. All memory derives from individual experiences which are not interchangeable. Any person has the right to his own memories, without which he could not live and which cannot be collectivized. Only the conditions under which they are realized and recollected may be referred to as supra-individual. For this reason it is advisable to distinguish between the primary experiences of those who have lived them as a first person and who bind them to their own memories, and the secondary experiences after the

30 *Der politische Totenkult*, p. 14; see pp. 12, 15; »Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen«, pp. 259–261; *Zur politischen Ikonologie des gewaltsamen Todes. Ein deutsch-französischer Vergleich*, Schwabe, Basel, 1998, pp. 8, 18.

31 »Historia(s) e Histórica«, pp. 211, 214. See *Los estratos del tiempo (Layers of Time)*, pp. 145–154; »Tod und Töten bei Daumier«, in: André Stoll (ed.), *Die Rückkehr der Barbaren. Europäer und »Wilde« in der Karikatur Honoré Daumiers*, Christians Verlag, Hamburg, 1985, pp. 53–62; »Vom Sinn und Unsinn der Geschichte«, in: *Merkur* 577 (1997), pp. 319–334.

32 »Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen«, pp. 256–258; *HH*, pp. 73–77; »Historia(s) e Histórica« (»Histories and the Historik«), p. 212. Koselleck himself links the pair »having to die« and »being able to kill« to the opposition between »friend« and »enemy« and adds: »It is amply well-known that this pair of concepts comes from the same political context which gave *Being and Time* its specific contemporary value.« (*HH*, p. 75). This is a context in which authors such as Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt are prominent. The metaphysics of war of the latter are applied to national sovereignty, since a nation is only truly sovereign when it recognizes an enemy and asserts itself in the face of the negation of its own existence. Everything political – and with that statement Schmitt d like to defame the liberal State for its weakness – protects itself through its preparedness to kill and to die. Only while the State represses its internal enemies, can it preserve its political substance in the struggle against external enemies.

33 *Zur politischen Ikonologie des gewaltsamen Todes*, pp. 5 s.; *Der politische Totenkult*, pp. 9–10; »Historia(s) e Histórica«, p. 213–214.

fact of those who were not present in the situation which gave rise to the immediate experience. This distinction also applies to memorials. The messages of monuments are open to a double exegesis: they evoke the unmistakable occasions that have led to death. Like primary experiences they are not interchangeable. But, even so, artistic responses to incomparable occasions repeat themselves. There is only a limited repertoire of aesthetic solutions for fixating violent death – which individually is always unique – in the memory. The illustration of memory feeds off a restricted range of motifs (the equestrian statue of Saint George fighting the dragon, the dying Gaul, ...) which are for this reason doomed to reiteration when visualizing the singularity of death. The iconological landscape of monuments as a whole changes only slowly. The uniqueness of the occasion along with the structural repeatability of aesthetic presentations are, consequently, placed at the axis of historical time with different velocities of change. The events of death and the cult of memorials referring to them differ according to and depending upon external factors. The deadly techniques of war have been perfected and enhanced continually thanks to industry. But the arts have also evolved. Originally the means of representation were inspired by repetitive motifs to later capture, with increasing speed, the historical uniqueness of events. With the media revolution we are experiencing an accelerating reproduction of these events, which ultimately become identical with their presentation in images. The discrepancy between the traditional arsenal of signs for preserving in durable form the memory of death and the unbridled current of fatal events is ever more painful.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, there was an unbroken prolongation in iconography from the French Revolution up to the Second World War, although the catastrophes of the First World War were premonitions of something else. The patriotic messages engraved on monuments were always positive: death had meaning and contributed to the identity of States and peoples. With the second great conflict there occurred a clean break, with new semiotic codes. History of aesthetics has its own immanent chronology, irreducible to a merely political history, in such a way that it leaves room for the artistic validity of monuments to those fallen in combat and their political obsolescence, which allows a relaxed re-adaptation, however such re-use

has limits (e.g. the recycling of the *Pietà* of Kollwitz, a work from 1937). The Koselleckian criterion for a monument adequate to a massive numbers of deaths is democratization. One problem, with regard above all to inscriptions, is the ambiguity of the concept of a victim, which undergoes a metamorphosis in its meaning in the 1950s. From being an active concept (sacrifice for Germany) it turned into a passive one (victims of fascism).<sup>35</sup> The only disputes that Koselleck got wholeheartedly involved in, writing avidly in a range of media, were the debate over the *Neue Wache* (1993) and that over the monument to the victims of the Holocaust (1977–1999). This public commitment was not a casual one, but complied with research to do with political iconology which he had been undertaking for some time.

34 »Vorbemerkung zur gegenwärtigen Debatte über den politischen Memorialkult«, prefacing epigraph corresponding to his work »Die bildliche Transformation der Gedächtnisstätten in der Neuzeit«, pp. 7–9.

35 »Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen«, pp. 273–275; *Der politische Totenkult*, pp. 10, 18–20; »Stellen uns die Toten einen Termin?«, in: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22.08.1993 (also in: Michael Jeismann (ed.), *Mahnmal Mitte. Eine Kontroverse*, DuMont, Köln, 1999); »Denkmäler sind Stolpersteine. Der Historiker Reinhart Koselleck zur neu entbrannten Debatte um das geplante Berliner Holocaust-Mahnmal«, in: *Der Spiegel*, 3.02.1997. After the demise of the nazis death notices abounded which read: »Died in combat for the Führer, the people and the fatherland« (»für Führer, Volk und Vaterland gefallen«).