

REVIEW ESSAY

TIME GARDENS, TIME FIGURES, AND TIME REGIMES

ZEITGÄRTEN: ZEITFIGUREN IN DER GESCHICHTE DER NEUZEIT. By Lucian Hölscher. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2020. Pp. 325.

ABSTRACT

In *Zeitgärten: Zeitfiguren in der Geschichte der Neuzeit*, Lucian Hölscher distinguishes between an embodied time and an empty time. Simply put, an embodied time includes histories, while its counterpart includes only dates and chronologies. He prefers the latter, for it offers an alternative to Reinhart Koselleck's idea of different layers of time. According to Hölscher, historians can achieve more unity in history through his empty temporality than through Koselleck's time of various speeds. Hölscher connects time with space to form a framework that, in addition to eras, chronologies, years, dates, and so on, especially includes time patterns, which he calls *Zeitfiguren*. These time figures form the infrastructure of all kinds of historiography, as Hölscher shows through his analysis of the studies of twenty German and four non-German authors. He exposes patterns such as progress, acceleration, and discontinuity, which form the building blocks of a philosophy of history based on the aforementioned empty time. Despite his criticism of Koselleck's ideas about time layers, Hölscher continues to follow in his footsteps, especially concerning his time of two levels, his future-oriented time, and his analytical, nonlinguistic method, which neglects absolute presuppositions. That's a pity, but what is positive is Hölscher's invention and thorough explanation of time figures.

Keywords: empty and embodied time, time of the modern, time figures, absolute presuppositions

TIME GARDENS: AN INTRODUCTION

In 1681, the French bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet wrote his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, a history of the changes of realms from the beginning of the world to the empire of Charlemagne, for the Dauphin of France, the later Louis XV. Lucian Hölscher's *Zeitgärten: Zeitfiguren in der Geschichte der Neuzeit* opens with an illustration borrowed from this *Discours*. It represents an almost mathematically ordered baroque garden that has been divided into two parts: a left side with data from salvation history and a right side with profane historical facts. Hölscher argues that this drawing is presented from the perspective the Dauphin would have had when he overlooked the garden from the second floor of his palace. Louis thus occupied a similar position to his garden as God does to all of history. This illustration suggests that there is only one history, albeit with a secular and a religious form.

By evoking Bossuet's drawing of the Dauphin's garden, Hölscher attempts to show that history is a singular entity and that time is closely related to space. He reinforces these arguments when his thoughts travel from seventeenth-century France to nineteenth-century England; through his analysis of a romantically ordered English landscape garden, Hölscher shows that an observer can look at the same space-time of history from different points of view. This emphasizes the idea that a multitude of views can be related to one history.

Based on the study of Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949), Hölscher offers a new alternative to the space-time relationship. Braudel presented the history of the Mediterranean in the form of three layers of time: at the bottom is the layer of almost immobile changes, such as those of climate, landscape, infrastructure, and cultivation; above that is the layer of economic cycles and the rise and fall of classes; and at the top are the vicissitudes and rapid changes of politics.

Hölscher departs from both garden metaphors and from Braudel's study of the Mediterranean because he seeks an alternative to Reinhart Koselleck's ideas about history and temporality. The latter's idea of history as a collective singular is represented by the two garden metaphors. Hölscher's representation tries to combine the singularity of history, as presented in his analysis of Bossuet's drawing of the baroque garden, with the possibility of different points of view, as evidenced by his discussion of the English garden.¹ With regard to temporality, Hölscher rejects Koselleck's idea that the unity of history can be found in Braudel's time layers. As an alternative, Hölscher proposes an empty time, of which the time layers are only a part (15–16). This empty time consists of eras, chronologies, years, dates, and, especially, time patterns, which he calls *Zeitfiguren*. He discovers these time patterns through an analysis of the studies of twenty-four historiographers. In addition to time layers, Hölscher also identifies figures such as progress, epochs, a time of two levels, and times of acceleration and discontinuity. He attributes to them special spatial forms. Despite his new theory of an empty time, Hölscher remains in Koselleck's footsteps with regard to his time of two levels, his forward-looking time, and his nonlinguistic, analytical method. Both Hölscher and Koselleck also neglect a past of absolute presuppositions. Nevertheless, Hölscher's time figures make a positive contribution to the integrative aspects of historical narratives or representations.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIME AND SPACE

Hölscher finds the roots of the time-space connection in two eighteenth-century discussions: the Newton-Leibniz debate and the Kant-Herder debate. He acquires his notion of an embodied time from Leibniz and Herder and his notion of an empty time from Newton and Kant. The embodied temporality consists of

1. This perspectivism is substantiated by Koselleck's reference to Johann Martin Chladenius (1710–1759), which enabled Koselleck to declare: "History is one, but representations of it are various and many" ("Perspective and Temporality: A Contribution to the Historiographical Exposure of the Historical World," in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, transl. Keith Tribe [New York: Columbia University Press, 2004], 135).

so-called historical individuals (such as states or nations), historical eras, and changing ideas (34). It encompasses all kinds of histories, making it, according to Hölscher, a collectivity that lacks any order. That's why he opts for an empty time.

Hölscher's time is "empty" because it does not ask about historical connections or their interpretations (34). However, he does not completely neglect an embodied time; in fact, he notes an interaction between the two temporalities (34–35). From this and from Koselleck's basic historical concepts (*historische Grundbegriffe*), Hölscher constructs time figures, which form the skeleton of a narrative or representation (63–64). These time figures represent fairly objective space-time relations; as such, they are hardly related to the historian's experiences.² Hölscher first examines an extensive selection of works written by twenty-four historiographers since the end of the eighteenth century; then, he summarizes their contents and, after that, inventories the time figures he has discovered in those writings. The separate treatment of content and structure, in the form of time figures, points in the direction of an analytical approach.

HISTORICAL WORKS

Hölscher discusses twenty German and four non-German historians.³ He considers Koselleck one of the most important German historians because the latter saw history as a science arising not in nineteenth-century historicism (as is commonly believed) but in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Koselleck launched the idea that, in this era of progress, a "time of the modern" was created, of which Hölscher completely takes the forward-looking aspect. As a result, the word "historicism" is barely used in Hölscher's *Zeitgärten*. The word doesn't have an entry in the book's index, and it appears only in a quote by Koselleck:

The dismantling of the progressive future has not saved history from maintaining a linear past in which every situation, both its own (of the historian) and the "observed" (the past he studies), is blurred. . . . Historicism has come to the resigned assertion that the relativity of all historical events and values is to be set absolutely as "relativity."⁴

Koselleck turned historicism into a bogeyman because it put everything into perspective, saw the past as the prehistory of the present, and left so little space between past and present. Hölscher endorses Koselleck's view (251), for he also wants a clear distinction between past and present.

2. The difference between time figures and time regimes lies in these experiences. Time figures exist only in historiography and arise from the rather conscious need to explain and integrate historical phenomena. Time regimes are unconscious cultural phenomena that result from experiences, such as those of the French or the Industrial Revolution. Time regimes are traced afterward through historical-theoretical research. For more on time regimes, see Harry Jansen, *Hidden in Historicism: Time Regimes since 1700* (London: Routledge, 2020).

3. The four non-German historians Hölscher discusses are the American Edward Bellamy, the Frenchman Lucien Febvre, the Italian Carlo Ginzburg, and the Englishman Eric Hobsbawm.

4. Reinhart Koselleck and Carl Schmitt, *Der Briefwechsel, 1953–1983 und weitere Materialien*, ed. Jan Eike Dunkhase (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), 10–11, quoted in Hölscher, *Zeitgärten*, 250. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

This is evident in his approving treatment of Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* (154–58), which recounts the story of the miller Domenico Scandella, also known as Menocchio (1532–ca. 1600), whose views differed fundamentally from those of the church. Menocchio characterized the beginning of the world as a cheese from which angels emerged like worms. Although the church also believed in angels, the Inquisition condemned him because its members saw angels not as worms in cheese but as real, celestial beings. Hölscher agrees with Ginzburg's view that this ecclesiastical process should not be seen as a curiosity that lacks rationality. He also agrees with Ginzburg's decision to characterize such processes as marking the end of an era in which popular and elite culture interact. After 1600, the two cultures began to follow separate routes. Ginzburg argued that, to discover such a fork in the road, we must eliminate all sorts of current prejudices and judgments and look with an archaeological eye at a past that was fundamentally different from our own time (157).

Through his discussion of Ginzburg's story about Menocchio, Hölscher demonstrates a time of two levels—that is, the level of the actors in a past present and the level of the historians who study them in the present present. This implies that the past of the historical actors *eo ipso* is not the same as the past that contemporary historians believe they see. Both levels have their own truth (254–55). Koselleck and Hölscher consider the double-leveled time, and especially the distance between the two levels, as a necessary condition for the historian's attitude toward the past. Both attribute a lack of distance between past and present to historicism, since, to it, “all things in the past are as relative as the things in the present” (250).⁵

One may wonder to what extent these objections to historicism are justified. Isn't Leopold von Ranke's statement, “Jede Epoche ist unmittelbar zu Gott,” the negative answer to this? Doesn't this statement mean that each period in history should be judged by its own values? Doesn't Ranke's assertion also refer to a time of two levels? Doesn't the “time of the modern” imply a projection back from the present to the past, leaving little distance between the two periods? Isn't this the same as what Koselleck accused historicism of? The answer to these questions is that history is always a contemporary story about the past. A certain relativism is thus inevitable. Hölscher's rejection of historicism means that he chooses Koselleck's “time of the modern,” albeit in the form of an empty time.

TIME FIGURES

Through his survey of works by twenty-four authors, Hölscher identifies eight time figures: progress, development and life cycle, time layers, the time of two levels, the great moment, revolution, discontinuity, and acceleration. Hölscher borrows these time figures mainly from Koselleck, who researched them extensively as basic historical concepts. Hölscher gives these figures a spatial form to indicate that time cannot exist without space. He emphasizes that this

5. According to Hölscher, “der Historismus ist bei der resignierenden Feststellung angelangt, dass die Relativität aller geschichtlichen Ereignisse und Werte als ‘Relativität’ absolut zu setzen sei” (250).

spatial dimension is real and not metaphorical. Concepts such as *Fortschritt* (progress), *Entwicklung* (development), and *Revolution* (revolution) should be taken literally in order to emphasize their spatiality. In German, these terms respectively mean “to set your feet apart,” “to loosen a ball of wool,” and “to trace the orbit of suns, stars, and planets” (213).⁶ These concepts, viewed literally and spatially, indicate an analytical method.

It is also important to note that there is a difference between the time of two levels and the other time figures. Whereas the latter can be observed in the historical narrative or representation, the time of two levels relates more to the historiographer’s invisible attitude. What is also striking in Hölscher’s representation of time figures is the fact that development and life cycle are grouped under the same concept as progress. Thus, in one and the same time figure, he places progress as goal-orientation and development and life cycle as origin-orientation. He associates the former with the “time of the modern” and the latter with Johann Gottfried Herder and organic thinking (235, 239–42). Hölscher does not consider past-orientation and organic thinking to be characteristics of historicism. These ideas are the opposite of the eighteenth-century idea of progress. Thus, he neglects a difference between future- and past-orientation in the past actor’s mind.

Hölscher here abandons an aspect of the time of two levels. He ignores two completely different time orientations that actors in the past could have had. He does this again when he refers to the hardships of the Industrial Revolution and emphasizes that historians have paid too little attention to workers’ belief in progress (256). Once again, at the level of the historical actor (the past’s present), it is future-thinking, not past-thinking, that predominates. Hölscher, following in Koselleck’s footsteps, pays hardly any attention to the actor’s burdensome past, which, in Marx’s words, can “weigh like an alp on the brain of the living.”⁷

It is surprising that, in his explanation of time figures, Hölscher again disregards historicism. Of the twenty-four historians he analyzes, at least ten are historicists of some kind. A number of his time figures are taken not from the Enlightenment philosophies of time and space but from the works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century historicist historians. In particular, terms such as “development,” “lifecycle,” “big moment,” and “discontinuity” are predominantly historicist.

A THEORY OF HISTORICAL TIMES

Hölscher’s book ends with a search for a theory of historical times. In this sense, he once again follows in Koselleck’s footsteps. In his *Historik*, Koselleck used Braudel’s ideas to develop a theory of time layers. Braudel

6. It is not entirely clear why the spatial form of *Fortschritt* is represented both by an upward line and by the spacing of feet.

7. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *Marxist Social Thought*, ed. Robert Freedman (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1967), 188. See also Jansen, *Hidden in Historicism*, 129.

used time layers to organize his empirical material; Koselleck applied them in a transcendental way in order to show that time has an autonomy and singularity of its own. Time is a collectivity of time layers as well as a singular stream in history. As a “collective singular” (*Kollektivsingular*), the multiplicity of histories still relates to one historical process (*Geschichte*).⁸ It is important to note that Koselleck connected the German term for “history,” *Geschichte*, to the German term for “layer,” *Schicht* or *Schichtung*.⁹ According to Koselleck, history therefore consists of different time layers, each of which has different speeds and rhythms.

Hölscher rejects Koselleck’s idea of achieving unity through distinct time layers, for he does not believe they are capable of integrating (280–81). To get rid of Koselleck’s plurality, Hölscher reformulates his collective singular in the form of two possibilities: the collective singular is, on the one hand, the unity of history as a metaphysical assumption and a regulative rule and, on the other hand, a construction that consists of separate stories and is thus incomplete. Hölscher identifies the first possibility with an empty time and the second with an embodied time. He prefers the former to the latter because, as space, the empty time shows universal openness to all kinds of structures, patterns, processes, and discontinuities (281–82). An empty time refers only to an outer relationship and not to an inner form. As a space, it makes connections between things that are possible and also makes them visible. This can be in the form of coexistence, interaction, or succession (284).

Despite their differences, Hölscher’s choice of an empty time can be understood only in the context of Koselleck’s theories. The relationship between the two historians’ ideas is based on their similar tendencies: (1) an aversion to nineteenth-century historicism and a preference for the future-orientated nature of the Enlightenment; (2) the use of a comparable analytical method; and (3) an argument based on a time of two levels (although the existence of absolute presuppositions is ignored).

KOSELLECK’S ENLIGHTENMENT AND FUTURE-ORIENTATION

Koselleck’s aversion to historicism resulted in him finding a new basis for historiography in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. His research into changes in fundamental historical concepts during that period showed a forward-looking temporality. For example, the term “republic,” which comes from the Latin phrase *res publica*, developed into a counter-form of monarchism at the end of the eighteenth century. As republicanism, it is constantly changing

8. Reinhart Koselleck, “The Unknown Future and the Art of Prognosis,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, transl. Todd Samuel Presner and Others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 137. See also Koselleck, “Transformations of Experience and Methodological Change: A Historical-Anthropological Essay,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 47; Koselleck, “Geschichte, Geschichten und formale Zeitstrukturen,” in *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), 143; and Hölscher, *Zeitgärten*, 148–49.

9. See also Hölscher, *Zeitgärten*, 149.

into new forms, such as liberalism, socialism, fascism, et cetera.¹⁰ These “isms” are all characterized by utopian goals.¹¹

We find a similar development in Koselleck’s ideas about time. Christian times before the Enlightenment saw the future in the form of the return of Jesus Christ. To be prepared for this, personal perfection was foregrounded. In the eighteenth century, the rise of the bourgeoisie coincided with secularization. This transformed the virtue of *profectus* into a vision of the future as *progressus*.¹² The then-arisen progressive “time of the modern” is characterized by a tension between “the space of experience” and “the horizon of expectation” in which the latter dominates the former.¹³ Later on, he even talked of *Beschleunigung* (acceleration).¹⁴ The “old-fashioned” past disappears from the present with increasing speed, and the future approaches this present even more rapidly. Hartmut Rosa has written, in this context, of “social acceleration.”¹⁵ Such an accelerating time also affects the present. The more rapidly approaching future makes the present shorter (*Gegenwartsschrumpfung*).¹⁶ From his analysis of this acceleration and shortening, Koselleck concluded that time creates an “otherness of the past,” giving history as science and discourse a certain autonomy.¹⁷ Acceleration implies that “time is no longer simply the medium in which all histories take place; it gains a historical quality. Consequently, history no longer occurs in, but through, time. Time becomes a dynamic and historical force in its own right.”¹⁸ Koselleck thus made a Heideggerian move with respect to time.¹⁹ Heidegger identified being and time, resulting in an ontological temporality that, like Koselleck’s temporality, was focused on the future. By focusing on ontologizing time, we can also identify a connection between Koselleck’s and Hans-Georg Gadamer’s

10. Reinhart Koselleck, “Concepts of Historical Time and Social History,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 128–29.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Reinhart Koselleck, “‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’: Two Historical Categories,” in *Futures Past*, 265.

13. *Ibid.*, 259–75, especially 267.

14. *Ibid.*, 269. Helge Jordheim has denied a relationship between Koselleck’s theory of historical times and his theory of modernity, which leads to a period of a “time of the modern”; see his “Against Periodization: Koselleck’s Theory of Multiple Temporalities,” *History and Theory* 51, no. 2 (2012), 151–71. I agree with Juhan Hellerma that there is a connection between them; see his “Koselleck on Modernity, *Historik*, and Layers of Time,” *History and Theory* 59, no. 2 (2020), 188–209, especially 209.

15. Hartmut Rosa, *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005).

16. Hermann Lübbe, *Im Zug der Zeit: Verkürzter Aufenthalt in der Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: Springer, 1992).

17. Koselleck, “Concepts of Historical Time and Social History,” 119–20. See also *Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the Borders between Present, Past and Future*, ed. Chris Lorenz and Berber Bevernage (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 14.

18. Reinhart Koselleck, “*Neuzeit*: Remarks on the Semantics of Modern Concepts of Movement,” in *Futures Past*, 236. See also Koselleck, “The Eighteenth Century as the Beginning of Modernity,” in *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 165.

19. For more on the relation between Koselleck and Heidegger, see Frank R. Ankersmit, “Koselleck on ‘Histories’ versus ‘History’; or, Historical Ontology versus Historical Epistemology,” *History and Theory* 60, no. 4 (2021), 36–58, especially 40–41, and Hellerma, “Koselleck on Modernity, *Historik*, and Layers of Time,” 194.

work.²⁰ Gadamer, in a similar way to Heidegger, ontologized time, but he turned it into a past-oriented temporality by underlining the significance of classical culture, authority, and tradition for the present.²¹ Koselleck maintained Heidegger's forward-looking ontology because he strove for a philosophy of history that enables all kinds of future forms of historiography.²² Heideggerian ontology led Koselleck *to*—not *over*—the frontier of an embodied time, because an embodied time is also one that experiences the past, as Gadamer showed. A time that is only forward-looking ignores past actors' experiences of their past.

Hölscher upholds Koselleck's idea that history is carried by future-orientation. He even admits that such a time can only be empty because possibilities can be seen, designed, or extrapolated but not experienced (284). Unlike Koselleck, Hölscher rejects the idea of an ontological time.²³ In my opinion, this impoverishes temporality because it lets go of the connection between being and an essential part of the past time—namely, the experienced past, especially in its form as a burden. This is a pity, especially because of Hölscher's aforementioned time of two levels.

ASSMANN'S EXPERIENCED PAST

To really pay attention to a time of two levels, historians should craft their analysis of the actor's past to be both forward-looking and past-oriented. A good guide in this respect is Aleida Assmann and her *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen? Aufstieg und Fall des Zeitregimes der Moderne*.²⁴ Her *Gedächtniskultur* provides memories and reflections on the past. For Assmann, the culture of remembrance creates time regimes with different interactions between past, present, and future.²⁵ In the context of a past-oriented past, it is significant that she borrowed Chris Lorenz's idea that trauma is a form of a "hot past" (*heisse Vergangenheit*) and Berber Bevernage's call for a "reversible past," through which Bevernage hopes to do justice to victims in countries such as Chile and South Africa.²⁶ "Hot past" and "reversible past" refer to a time in which past and future meet in the present, thus becoming an experienced tipping moment in which something new is created. Hölscher pays attention to this in the form of *der grosse Augenblick*, which he correctly relates

20. See Keith Tribe, introduction to *Futures Past*, xvi, and Froilán Ramos Rodríguez, "Huella de Hans-Georg Gadamer en Reinhart Koselleck: Aportes a la historia conceptual (The Hallmark of Hans-Georg Gadamer in Reinhart Koselleck: Contributions to Conceptual History)," *Historelo* 10, no. 19 (2018), 239–68, especially 253.

21. It seems to me that Koselleck's *Historik* and Gadamer's *Truth and Method* differ on the future- and past-orientation.

22. Hellerma, "Koselleck on Modernity, *Historik*, and Layers of Time," 193–94.

23. Koselleck was ambivalent about Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. On the one hand, he admired its ontologizing of time; on the other hand, he was aware that it ignores human interaction, which is so dear to historiography. See Ankersmit, "Koselleck on 'Histories' versus 'History,'" 40–41, and Ankersmit, *Meaning, Truth and Reference in Historical Representation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 7. Is that why Hölscher bases his time figures only on historiographical examples?

24. Aleida Assmann, *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen? Aufstieg und Fall des Zeitregimes der Moderne* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2013).

25. *Ibid.*, 272–74.

26. *Ibid.*, 302–3.

to Kairos, the Greek god of the right moment. Unfortunately, he only considers that “kairotic” time a *Deutungsmuster*, an interpretation pattern of the historian (258). He does not present it as a burdensome past experience that prompts one to change something for a better future.

Assmann’s interpretation of *Gedächtniss* (memory) as an experienced past raises new problems. François Hartog, for example, has characterized memory and heritage culture as not-too-serious views of the past.²⁷ According to Hartog, these views are at the expense of history as a science. Memory brings the past to the present, while historiography needs to keep the past at bay. Gabrielle Spiegel has therefore even returned to Koselleck’s postulate that historiography is possible only if the past disappears from the present.²⁸

A question arises from this context: Is it possible to combine a culture of remembrance and heritage with history as a science? Answering this question proves problematic, because a culture of remembrance and heritage requires a continuous time and history as a science requires a discontinuous time. This conflict can be resolved only by a linguistic approach. Memory and science are both conveyed through language, and language can erase differences in time.²⁹ Generally, Koselleck and Hölscher employ a nonlinguistic method, which introduces even more conflicts and ambiguities.³⁰ So, we must look at both historians’ approaches and search for an alternative.

ANALYTICAL-STRUCTURAL APPROACHES OF HISTORY

In light of the foregoing analysis, it is not surprising that Hölscher’s nonlinguistic method is derived from Koselleck’s. Despite the latter’s research into basic

27. François Hartog, “Time and Heritage,” *Museum International* 57, no. 3 (2005), 7–18, especially 14–16. See also Assmann, *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen?* 258–61.

28. Berber Bevernage and Chris Lorenz, “Breaking Up Time: Negotiating the Borders between Present, Past and Future,” in Lorenz and Bevernage, *Breaking Up Time*, 20n53. See also Assmann, *Ist die Zeit aus den Fugen?* 240.

29. Paul Ricoeur has confirmed this by saying that there is a reciprocal relationship between narrativity and temporality. See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* vol. 1, transl. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 3.

30. Koselleck’s theory in particular shows conflicts and ambiguities. From Koselleck’s theory of time layers, Niklas Olsen has distilled the idea that Koselleck strove for a multiple understanding of history; see Olsen, *History in the Plural: An Introduction to the Work of Reinhart Koselleck* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012). That is true, but Koselleck also wanted to see history as something singular (a collective singular). Jordheim has denied that Koselleck pursued a new theory of periodization with his “time of the modern.” Jordheim has also interpreted Koselleck’s philosophy of history as a theory of multiple overlapping temporalities. In my view, the “time of the modern” implicitly means a distinction between premodern and modern times. Moreover, a fully developed embodied time, in which the past of the past is completely incorporated ontologically, would have put forward absolute presuppositions. This implicitly means a new fundamental form of periodization. Hellerma has sought to synthesize all the different aspects of Koselleck’s ideas. He has understood Koselleck’s theory of time layers as constitutive of his notion of the “time of the modern.” The same goes for his theory of basic historical concepts, which shows historical change and acceleration. This can be seen as a specific experience of historical time and thus implies periodization. See Hellerma, “Koselleck on Modernity, *Historik*, and Layers of Time,” 198–202 and 207–9. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this essay to go into detail about these problems of Koselleck’s theory of time.

historical concepts, his approach is ultimately nonlinguistic.³¹ His philosophy of history, which is based on time layers, reveals a structural-analytical method that implies a clear lack of possibilities for synthesis. The contradictory elements in Koselleck's philosophy of history are the result of that method. It is remarkable that even Hölscher notices this. In responding to Koselleck's *Preussen zwischen Reform und Revolution*, Hölscher claims his method is more structural-analytical than narrativistic (148). He sees the same method in Koselleck's general line of thinking regarding historiography. According to Hölscher, Koselleck "was less concerned with the great narratives than with uncovering the 'conditions of possible stories' in which linguistic and extra-linguistic factors are always intertwined" (147).³²

Although Hölscher criticizes Koselleck's method, his own is comparable. This becomes evident when he analyzes metaphors such as progress (*Fortschritt*), development (*Entwicklung*), and revolution (*Revolution*) as referring to spatial movements (as discussed above). A more narrative or representational view would have accentuated the synthesizing properties of these metaphors, not their spatial and analytical elements.

The roots of the structural-analytical approach are mainly sought in eighteenth-century philosophies of time and space. Both Koselleck and Hölscher base their ideas about a "time of the modern" on these philosophies. In Hölscher's view, this "time of the modern" is an empty time that creates a framework through which the time figures end up in the right place. Just as a garden concept consists of circles, lines, squares, and balls, history consists of all kinds of time figures (17). This comparison illustrates that Hölscher investigates the totality of history along the lines of an analytic-structural method, a similar approach to the one Koselleck took. Neither historian has an eye for the integrative possibilities of language.

A HOLISTIC AND LINGUISTIC ALTERNATIVE

Hölscher and Koselleck have ambiguous relationships with Hayden White's narrativist and representationalist ideas. Although Koselleck employed a linguistic methodology, it only concerns his basic historical concepts. He recognized the importance of White's "preliminary metaphorical decisions [that] lead to the linguistic circle of communication before they have even been justified theoretically and scientifically," but he did not consider their integration options.³³ Koselleck's analysis of concepts and his theory of time layers hardly evidence any linguistic and holistic functions.

31. Koselleck knew of Gadamer's "Sprache der Dinge," but he did not go into further detail about it; see Reinhart Koselleck and Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik und Historik* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1987), 26 and 35. See also Damir Barbarić, "Die Grenze zum Unsagbaren: Sprache als Horizont einer hermeneutischen Ontologie," in *Hans-Georg Gadamer: Wahrheit und Methode*, ed. Günter Figal (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), 199–218, especially 200.

32. Hölscher's original German passage reads: "Es ging ihm weniger um die großen Narrative, als um die Aufdeckung der 'Bedingungen möglicher Geschichten', in denen sich stets sprachliche mit außersprachliche Faktoren verschränkten" (147).

33. Reinhart Koselleck, "Introduction to White's *Tropics of Discourse*," in *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 42.

Hölscher's linguistic methodology, like Koselleck's, is also limited. His time figures are borrowed from Koselleck's basic historical concepts, but he too is not interested in White's approach. According to Hölscher, White's plot structures (in the form of romance, tragedy, comedy, and satire) only highlight a *linearen Geschichtsabfolge*, a linear sequence of time (216). He finds these plot structures too limited—so limited, in fact, that nonlinear figures disappear from view.³⁴ Hölscher thereby ignores White's topological method, which enables an integrative approach that fits precisely with his multitemporal idea of time figures.

Nevertheless, when combined with White's tropes, the time figures are helpful for creating holistic forms of historiography, and, as such, the tropes and time figures are interdependent. Jonathan I. Israel's *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* is a useful example of this. "Radical Enlightenment" is a metaphor for a special period in European history (the phase from 1670 to 1730), and this metaphor can be based on the time figure of discontinuity. Figures of speech and figures of time work together in the concept of "radical Enlightenment" and, as such, articulate a break between a Christian past and a more secular present and future. However, tropes and time figures need to be distinguished for reasons of research. Tropes constitute the linguistic, integrating superstructure; time figures form the analytical infrastructure.³⁵ Time figures are shaped by research, but they nevertheless support the holistic structure of the topologically formulated whole.

This analysis of an integrative form of history writing is based on Jonathan Gorman's "The Limits of Historiographical Choice in Temporal Distinctions."³⁶ In this essay, Gorman begins with the idea that we create a past. He then goes on to reason that reality is what we structure through thought and language. This structuring occurs through general conceptions of reality, forming a "rolling web of reality-sorting expressions, of whatever temporal size."³⁷ Gorman also states that historians often write about large-scale temporal concepts, such as the Renaissance or the Enlightenment. Ludwig Wittgenstein characterized these temporal expressions as "world-pictures" or as "forms of life," Thomas Kuhn called them "paradigms," and Michel Foucault referred to them as "épistèmes."³⁸ Foucault compared the search for such conceptions to archeology, a term mentioned by Ginzburg (as discussed above).

Renaissance, "radical Enlightenment," and "time of the modern" are forms of periodization that have been molded into tropes. In research, they form a whole from the start.³⁹ Koselleck and Hölscher do the opposite. They start with an analytical approach and then try to find a whole. Koselleck attempted this through a layered time; Hölscher attempted it through an empty time.

34. "Linear sequence of time" is an unfortunate phrase, because the plot structure of history is indeed sometimes linear, but often it is not.

35. See Harry Jansen, "Research, Narrative, and Representation: A Postnarrative Approach," *History and Theory* 58, no. 1 (2019), 67–88, especially 83–88.

36. Jonathan Gorman, "The Limits of Historiographical Choice in Temporal Distinctions," in Lorenz and Bevernage, *Breaking Up Time*, 155–75.

37. *Ibid.*, 163.

38. *Ibid.*, 171.

39. Jansen, "Research, Narrative, and Representation," 78.

Gorman's holistic and linguistic approach has yet another effect: it gives Hölscher's time of two levels a much more past-oriented face than Hölscher himself intends. According to Gorman, "looking back, the past comes into idealistically understood existence as contrasting with the present when we see ourselves as no longer sharing the ongoing world with the past individuals in question."⁴⁰ Gorman here points to the existence of absolute presuppositions.

ABSOLUTE PRESUPPOSITIONS

Above, I discussed Hölscher's time of two levels, in which there is a difference between the author's present and the actor's present. He wants the author to have empathy for the *conscious* elements of the actor's present in the past (254). This becomes obvious when he blames Heinrich von Treitschke and Hans-Ulrich Wehler for lacking an eye for the *Eigensinn*, the identity and self-consciousness of a bygone era (254).

This might be true, but does Hölscher have an eye for elements of *unconsciousness* in the past? He does not address what Ginzburg meant by an "archeological" point of view. I think Ginzburg's story about the miller Menocchio is not only about the self-consciousness of the sixteenth century but is also an example of something we no longer share with individuals from the past. Ginzburg argued that the mixing of folk culture and elite culture in the time of the miller and the Inquisition differed from those cultures' relationships in later times. However, this is not the only way these times contrasted. After all, they also differed in terms of whether or not a self-evident belief in the existence of angels prevailed. Gorman has referred to such a paradigmatic distinction as a difference in absolute presuppositions. Without it, the whole trial against Menocchio cannot be understood. Absolute presuppositions create an epistemological discontinuity that is, according to Koselleck and Hölscher (and Spiegel), a necessary condition for the discipline of history.

Another example comes from Gorman, who—following in Herbert Butterfield's footsteps—has argued that, in the Middle Ages, it was believed that clergymen only had to obey church law.⁴¹ In contrast, in modern times, people think that it is necessary for everyone to obey the laws of their country. Living inside of them, we are not aware of absolute presuppositions; we can discover them only when we no longer share the unconscious assumptions of people in the past. These suppositions become evident "when people in the present become conscious of ideas which people in the past unconsciously assumed."⁴² They form the sharpest borderline between the past and the present and thus between the actor's time and the author's time. Koselleck came close to an absolute presupposition when he distinguished between an age in which the Christian *profectus* abounded and a

40. Gorman, "The Limits of Historiographical Choice," 175.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

secular era in which *progress* prevailed.⁴³ I consider this distinction evidence of a change of time regimes.

The sequence of time regimes in history has its origin in discontinuities, which are closely related to absolute presuppositions. Discontinuities are based on an embodied time, because every time regime consists of an ontological coherence of past, present, and future. In *Hidden in Historicism: Time Regimes since 1700*, I interpret Koselleck's time of *progress*, Ranke's *romantic* time (which is based on the time figure of rise and fall), and the Nietzschean *kairotic* time (which consists of "big moments" that act as tipping points) as some important examples of time regimes.⁴⁴

Being a system of successive time regimes, history is singular; but because, as a system, it is also a space, it can encompass a multitude of histories. In my opinion, this system is the collective singular that Koselleck and Hölscher seek. A sequence of time regimes can combine fundamental discontinuities with a whole host of other, less discontinuous time figures. As such, it can also embrace all kinds of time layers, accelerations, and speeds of time. Gorman's linguistic approach to absolute presuppositions does not make time figures redundant. These patterns of time illuminate the infrastructures that form the supporting elements of narratives and representations.

CONCLUSION

Hölscher's book remains Koselleckian through its orientation toward the Enlightenment and its author's aversion to historicism. Hölscher thus maintains a belief in the "time of the modern," with its forward-looking temporality of progress. Unlike several other experts on Koselleck's ideas, Hölscher puts Koselleck's theory of time layers into perspective with the associated different speeds, accelerations, and rhythms of time.⁴⁵ He rightly restores Koselleck's idea of history as a collective singular. His empty time is helpful in this regard, because, as a framework, it embraces all kinds of histories in the past, present, and future. Its consistency in this is commendable.

Still, his preference for an empty time remains a pity, because it maintains Koselleck's analytic-structural method. What's more, by excluding ontology, Hölscher's preference might even be understood as a step backward. In this respect, Koselleck's "time of the modern" is a hybrid. On the one hand, it implies an ontologized time with a developmental power of its own (Heidegger); on the other hand, it ignores the past as part of that ontological time. Hölscher could

43. Koselleck encountered this problem, but he unfortunately did not address it; see his "Representation, Event, and Structure," in *Futures Past*, 108.

44. Jansen, *Hidden in Historicism*, 80–82 and 163–64. In my opinion, a time regime often arises from some kind of revolution, whether it be fast or slow. It also often results in paradigmatic change. For more on slow revolution, see *De Trage Revolutie: Over de wording van industriële samenlevingen*, ed. Hans Righart (Meppel: Boom, 1991).

45. With regard to Koselleck's ideas about time layers, see my earlier discussions of how Olsen, Jordheim, and Hellerma have underlined the significance of time layers for Koselleck's theory of time. See especially Hellerma, "Koselleck on Modernity, *Historik*, and Layers of Time," 205–7.

have rectified this omission by referring to Gadamer's articulation of antiquity, authority, and tradition.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, his empty time prevents such a move.

Nevertheless, I don't want to end this essay on a bad note. Hölscher's distinction between an empty time and an embodied time is positive. It puts Koselleck's time layers into perspective and enables us to investigate the possibilities of an embodied time. Hölscher's attention to time figures is also important. The time of two levels points to the historian's duty to be compassionate in examining the past. The other time figures pave the way for a linguistic approach, since they give structure to stories and representations. Time figures thus form the infrastructure of historical stories and representations and give them explanatory and persuasive power.

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46. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, transl. Joel Weinsheim and Donald G. Marshall, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Continuum, 2006), 252.