

## Conceptual History: Ideological Conflicts and Understanding the New Meanings of the Text

Mohaddeseh Jazaei<sup>1</sup>  
Dr. Mehdi Najafzadeh<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Mohammadali Taghavi<sup>2\*</sup>  
Dr. Hossein Athari<sup>4</sup>

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### Abstract

“Conceptual history” is a relatively new theory and method which has been influenced by the tradition of continental philosophy and new historicism. This theory and method, with its critique of traditional historicism, puts emphasis on the “concept” and claims that by studying the creation, evolution and conception of concepts, one can represent ideological conflicts in a political structure. In the present paper, after defining conceptual history, attempt is made to address the role of this theory in continental philosophy by emphasizing the views of Reinhart Koselleck, the most renowned scholar in the field. In his seminal project on conceptual history, Koselleck explores the concept, its differences from the word, and how concepts influence political events. He believes that without concepts, neither society nor the political arena of action will exist. Moreover, to him every concept in the system of thought has anti-concepts that can overcome it by having a specific meaning. On this basis, Koselleck pits anti-concepts against concepts and speaks of a semantic battle that can justify and explain the efforts of political forces and groups to overcome a particular discourse. As a method, conceptual history also attempts to discover the meaning behind the accumulated layers of time.

**Keywords:** Conceptual History, Concept, Counter-concept, Reinhart Koselleck, New Historicism

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1. PhD Candidate in Political Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad.

2,3,4. Associate Professor of Political Science, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

\*E-mail: smataghavi@um.ac.ir

**Extended Abstract****1. Introduction**

Conceptual history has been affected by continental philosophy and new historicism. It offers a critique of traditional historicism and, while assigning a special role to concepts, tries to represent ideological conflicts in a political structure by examining, creating and transforming them. In the present study attempt is made to analyze the role and status of this theory in continental philosophy, with a focus on the ideas of Reinhart Koselleck. He has closely studied the nature of the concept, how it is different from the word and how concepts affect political events. He believes that without concepts, society and the political domains of actions cannot exist and through them political conflicts and the hidden meaning in political, historical and literary texts can be understood in new ways.

**2. Theoretical Framework**

This article relies on the theory of history of concepts developed by Reinhart Koselleck, which focuses on the study and analysis of changes and transformations in social and political concepts over time and in relation to institutional and structural changes. This theory tries to understand politics through conceptual changes.

**3. Methodology**

In the present study the ideas of Reinhart Koselleck are adopted to examine how political and social concepts have changed throughout history. He believes that the history of concepts is methodologically independent and represents concepts and changes occurring in them in a linguistic form in their historical context.

**4. Findings**

The main idea of conceptual history is that concepts are the sum of historical experiences. One of the tasks of conceptual history is the analysis of the convergence, changes or differences in the relationship between a concept and the events occurring throughout history. Conceptual history tries to find out 'where', 'when', 'for whom', 'why'

and 'how' a specific concept has been developed. Therefore, this method can help us study literary, historical and political texts and reveal ideological disputes that have affected the perception and meaning of these texts.

## 5. Conclusion

Koselleck's theory of conceptual history is important in that it shows that the study of concepts and their transformation throughout time and place in different contexts of each era can provide us with the means to examine political, social and cultural events. In this approach, the ambiguity of a concept suggests the presence of different signifiers that can only be understood through examining semantic conflicts over them in a specific context. Conceptual history, both as theory and methodology, can reveal hidden meanings in macro-narratives and structures, and provide us with a new narrative of hidden events in history. It can also be used as a new theoretical approach for reading literary, political, and historical texts.

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