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Begriffe der Moderne: Richard Koebner als Wegbereiter der Historischen Semantik

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Propositions:

1. Richard Koebner created a “scholarly persona” with a re-problematising “stance” at its centre. This stance was informed by the idea of a formative function of semantics for socio-political evolution, a sense of social responsibility and an awareness of contingency and historicity.
2. In examining how criticism remains possible in an epistemologically constructivist setting, Koebner established a “critical constructivism” on both an epistemological and ethical level.
3. Koebner saw himself neither as a “Zionist” nor as decidedly “Jewish.” Instead, he represented a universalist and liberal position, compatible with cultural plurality in the sense of “unity through diversity.” Koebner resembled thus a “rooted cosmopolitan” as defined by James Loeffler.
4. The main object of Koebner’s criticism was the “ideology of turning points in time” (*Zeitwende*). Koebner’s preferred countermodels were the British Empire and the United Nations.
5. Koebner’s concept of *Zeitwende* offers a more finely textured model for analysing chronopolitics than François Hartog’s “presentist” regime of historicity or Dipesh Chakrabarty’s notion of “empty, homogenous” historicist time.
6. By focusing on shared experiences, conceptual history as practiced by Reinhart Koselleck neglects shared emotions like “solidarity” and the sense of belonging.
7. The “crisis of historicism” was not only a “crisis of reality” but also an important stimulus to renew and further develop historiographical theory and method.
8. One part of historicism, i.e. the cultural pattern of historicization, still persists in the Western concept of history, because it corresponds to the fundamental pattern of modern societies, i.e. functional differentiation.
9. Historiographical methodology has hitherto focused too much on the possibility of ‘objective’, first-hand “understanding” of the past, instead of problematising the way historians unconsciously depend on popular historical narratives.
10. Ceterum censeo summam virtutem historiographiae reprehensionem et emendationem de se ipsam esse.