



WORK, WORK, WORK JOHN BREUILLY

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Work, in a Narrow Sense

When I arrived in Berlin I had tasks to complete and projects to start. I finished a book¹ with help from the college, especially Marianne Buck, who obtained the image used for the

¹ *Austria, Prussia and Germany 1806–1871* (London: Longman, 2002).

book cover. I completed an essay for a book on German nationalism.² I redrafted an essay on urbanization in 19th-century Germany for volume 3 of *Germany: A New Social and Economic History*³. I completed an essay on “Historians and the Nation”.⁴

However, my main concern was with new projects. I wrote an essay on state modernization in Napoleonic Germany.⁵ That helped with my main project: a book on modernization and German history based upon a concept of modernization as structural transformation of the societal division of labor. I aim to demonstrate that some such concept is necessary for a long-run, large-scale modern history of Germany, that it can organize and illuminate historical detail and suggest fruitful areas for future research. Much of my time in Berlin was spent reading relevant theoretical and empirical work. I sketched a structure for the book and wrote drafts of most chapters. Cambridge University Press will publish the book, which is intended as the first of two volumes: this one on achieving modernity (roughly 1780–1880), the second on coping with modernity (roughly 1880–1990). There is much still to do and a lot depends on the conditions I encounter back in the UK, with its deteriorating university system. However, without this time in Berlin I would be nowhere nearly as advanced as I am.

My stay also enabled me to make closer contacts with colleagues in Berlin (especially at the Centre for the Comparative History of Europe) and elsewhere, attend seminars, give some talks and participate in a couple of conferences.

Liz, helped by excellent computer facilities, including voice recognition software, was able to transcribe her mother’s correspondence with her father between 1937 and 1943, a necessary step towards producing a published edition of that correspondence.

Work, in a Broader Sense

The research of other Fellows and partners proved fascinating. The Tuesday colloquia, talks and seminars, lunchtime conversations, concerts of Helmut Lachenmann, films

² “Nationalismus als kulturelle Konstruktion: einige Betrachtungen.” In *Politik der Nation*, edited by Jörg Echternkamp and Oliver Müller, 247–268 (Munich, 2002).

³ Edited by Sheilagh Olgivie and Richard Overy (London: Edward Arnold, 2003).

⁴ “Historians and the Nation.” In *History and Historians in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Peter Burke, 55–87 (Oxford, 2002).

⁵ For a book on state formation and popular resistance in Napoleonic Europe, edited by Michael Rowe and due to be published in 2003 by Palgrave.

shown by David and Judith McDougall: these and much more revealed worlds that were either new to me or of which I had been only dimly aware. Some seemed promising in relation to my own projects, although when I was depressed some appeared threatening, representing forms of knowledge superior to that of academic history. Fortunately the latter mood soon passed.

A scheme for a group of historians and other social scientists to exchange ideas about the history of “Western” and “Muslim” society did not bear fruit, mainly because we were different kinds of historians who could not figure out ways of engaging in comparative dialogue that did not require more effort than was worthwhile. Nevertheless, I profited from those differences. Beshara Doumani and Suraiya Faroqhi rekindled an interest in Ottoman history, frequently neglected by historians of Europe, yet crucial to their own work. Jakob Tanner reminded me of the need to engage with new kinds of cultural history. Meeting David Sabeen finally induced me to read carefully his wonderful books on the south German village of Neckarhausen, something I trust will be reflected in how I treat kinship and family in German modernization.

Unexpectedly, I found myself attending the meetings of two interlinking groups interested in social norms and risk. My theoretical reading included W. G. Runciman’s *Treatise on Social Theory*, in which he argues for treating historical change as social evolution. The social psychologists, economists, biologists, and anthropologists meeting to discuss norms and risks, along with other biologists, were debating issues about evolution (biological and/or cultural, as overarching framework and/or specific tool of analysis) in a rigorous way. Most historians dismiss such debates as irrelevant to their research. Undoubtedly, attempts to import into the rich particularity of modern history interpretations drawn from studies of non-human biological evolution, or human pre-history, or experiments in economic decision-making are fraught with dangers. But apart from fascination with the imaginative and precise work of these natural and social scientists, I thought I could learn as historian to discriminate between usable and non-usable ideas from such fields. The Wissenschaftskolleg provided an ideal place for such learning. As far as fascination is concerned, I would highlight: Alex Kacelnik’s clever crows, Raghavendra Gadagkar’s primitive wasps, and how a cat’s back legs move. What I learned from Joe Henrich and Rob Boyd about cultural evolution I hope to use in my own work. If I remain unconvinced that without game theory all social science will remain in the stone ages, I see that the experimental work of Ernst Fehr and others undermines basic axioms of classical economic theory. How far one can

move from experiments to understanding behavior in the “real” world is a major challenge for such work and I hope to follow its progress.

Other intellectual relationships were more individual. I found the ways in which Jürgen Gerhards subjected big sociological ideas to empirical testing ingenious and persuasive. Richard Hauser and Catherine Eckel helped with (for me) difficult econometric history, while John McNamara explained some of the underlying concepts. Allan Young’s company was always fascinating, as was reading his marvelous book. Martin Kusch forced one to argue right or surrender, a service too rare in academic circles. David McDougall made me think about the notion of visual argument. If space permitted, I could give many more examples. Indeed, sometimes it seemed as if there was too much stimulation, especially as I returned after lunch to a tedious but essential piece of historical work.

Work, in the Broadest Sense

Intellectual exchange at the Wissenschaftskolleg is a form of sociability. It is difficult to distinguish between work and play, business and pleasure in such a world. Such blurring approximates to my idea of earthly paradise. Some activities, however, had more of play than work in them. I leave aside all that the city has to offer in the way of concerts, opera, museums, art galleries, food and drink, architecture, and much more. Berlin is sensually, not just officially, a capital city with all the buzz and excitement that go with that status. My experiences in this regard were nothing exceptional, even if special to me.

Making music is more worthy of note than listening to it. I joined a choir based on the British Embassy. Wednesday evening rehearsals were a welcome break from the Wissenschaftskolleg. (Even earthly paradise palls if one cannot leave it occasionally.) The performances were great fun: carols at Schloss Bellevue (with Johannes Rau joining in “O come all ye faithful”), church services at Tegel Prison and in Dresden, the Queen’s Golden Jubilee celebration at the British Embassy, a memorial service for the Queen Mother at the Berliner Dom, and a concert at the Dresden Elbhangfest with songs based on Shakespeare and readings from his sonnets. Volker Dürr displayed great initiative in forming a choir from Fellows and family. Thursday evening singing and performances at the midsummer and farewell parties gave the singers, and, I trust, the audience much pleasure. Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus came close to making me bankrupt by introducing me to new music, singers, and a discount CD store.

My most special musical experience was singing to piano accompaniment from Helmut Lachenmann. I had constantly to pinch myself to be sure this was happening. Apart from the pleasure of singing, I learned so much. Helmut with his expressive and generous nature, his vivid sense of humor, his pleasure in all kinds of music but, even more, his delight in the pleasure music gives to others, made hours rush past all too quickly. I doubt I will find another pianist willing and able to sacrifice fingers so that I can sing “Erlkönig”.

Another unexpected pleasure resulted from my “election” as a Fellow “speaker”, along with Sara Danius. At first this was a sinecure, since Sara took on the only duty involved: making announcements. Because relations between Fellows themselves and with the Wissenschaftskolleg were cordial, any mediating role envisaged for the speakers was unnecessary. We organized two informal seminars in which Fellows and others discussed the different ways they acquired “knowledge” and how the college functioned in this process. However, in the spring Sara and I found out that our real purpose in life was to take the lead in organizing the farewell party that the Fellows put on for the staff.

We got in some practice with a midsummer party. I found someone who supplied Fritz Ringer with an accordion so we could put his musical claims to the test. He rose to the challenge and I have photographs to prove it. Typically, Christine Klöhn and the other restaurant staff threw themselves with enthusiasm into the project and provided Swedish cuisine, while Gert Riedel made a midsummer tree. The choir sang a song in Swedish.

Two things especially made the farewell party enjoyable. First, it gave pleasure to the college staff, which was the point of the exercise. Second, it brought Fellows and families together in a cooperative project that revealed many and considerable talents. Margaret Boehm organized the cooking team with great skill. I don’t know who exactly cooked what, but I ate it all with great gusto. Ansgar Büschges had a preparing/maintenance/cleaning up team so well drilled that, as one put down an empty glass, Marty Hoffmann whipped it away. Fritz Ringer prepared his legendary bowle. Mary Ringer designed an invitation. Adonis astonished us with his generous donation of three of his collages as a collective gift to the college. Ansgar came up with the idea of personalized wine labels so that we could present bottles of “Chateau Wallot” to each member of the staff. Gottfried Boehm used his knowledge to select a good wine. Short speeches celebrating different sections of the college were each stamped by the individual personality of the speaker, sharing only sincerity in common. John McNamara and Jakob Tanner provided lighter moments with spoof talks that were ingenious and very funny. Others joined in in guying themselves. People came together in many different ways to produce an eventful and enjoyable

night. Sara and I enjoyed our coordinating role and think we should get a chance to do it again!

The party was a fitting climax to the year, though followed by a few anti-climactic weeks before we all left. I greatly enjoyed the companionship of my fellow Fellows, partners, and children (who helped make us less of an artificial community). I must particularly mention the loving care and hot chicken soup from Roberta Young and Judith McDougall when I had bronchitis in January.

The college staff provided everything one could wish for, and with such enthusiasm as well as efficiency that one never felt bad about asking for assistance. I regret that I learned too late or not at all of the talents and achievements of many of them.

I left Berlin reluctantly. I had worked and played hard, made friends, and had a marvelous time. My main fear now is that, like a satellite returning from heaven, I will burn up as I re-enter the earth's atmosphere. If I do land in one piece, I intend to make return visits to Berlin as often as possible. "Auf Wiedersehen" implies as much.