



MEANING AND COMMUNITIES MARTIN KUSCH

I was born on October 19, 1959 in Leverkusen (Germany). I received my Ph.D. in History of Ideas from the University of Oulu (Finland) in 1989. Subsequently I taught philosophy, sociology, and history of ideas in various universities in Finland and Canada. Between 1993 and 1997, I worked in the Science Studies Unit of the University of Edinburgh; and since 1997 I have been lecturer (later: “reader”) in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge (England). My main publications include: *Language as Calculus vs. Language as Universal Medium: A Study in Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer* (Dordrecht, 1989); *Foucault’s Strata and Fields* (Dordrecht, 1991); *Psychologism: A Case Study in the Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (London, New York, 1995); (with H. M. Collins) *The Shape of Actions: What Humans and Machines Can Do* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998); *Psychological Knowledge: A Social History and Philosophy* (London, New York, 1999); and *Knowledge by Agreement: The Programme of Communitarian Epistemology* (Oxford, 2002). – Address: HPS, University of Cambridge, Free School Lane, Cambridge CB2 3RH, United Kingdom. E-mail: mphk2@cus.cam.ac.uk.

My year at the Wissenschaftskolleg was a wonderful experience for three main reasons: it gave me the opportunity to write a first draft of a new book; it brought me in contact with a group of impressive and interesting people and ideas; and it enabled me to spend many hours every day in the company of my wife.

Defending Kripkenstein

It is often remarked upon in these yearbooks that, although the Wissenschaftskolleg likes us to arrive with a *Forschungsprojekt*, it also expects us to completely change track under the influence of ideas coming from other Fellows. For better or for worse, I did not live up to these expectations. I drew up an outline of a book and a rough timetable for completing it shortly before landing in Berlin last October. I did get stuck once or twice, but luckily such crises did not last too long, and as my Wiko year is drawing to a close, I am missing only the introduction and the conclusion.

My book is a defense of another book, which is an interpretation of a third book. In 1982, the American philosopher Saul Kripke published an interpretation of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* reads Wittgenstein as a meaning-sceptic (i.e., as someone who claims that "there is no such thing as meaning anything by any word") and as a communitarian (i.e., as someone who thinks that membership in a community is a precondition of human thinking and speaking). These are *prima facie* implausible views, both in themselves and as interpretations of Wittgenstein – a philosopher who claimed not to be putting forward controversial ideas. No wonder then that over the last twenty years more than three hundred papers and books have been written against Kripke's Wittgenstein. And it is now generally assumed that the position Kripke attributes to Wittgenstein is incoherent in its own terms and an implausible reading of the great Ludwig himself.

My book seeks to rehabilitate "Kripkenstein". I believe that (certain forms of) meaning scepticism and communitarianism are both defensible in themselves and also central to Wittgenstein's own thinking. I also hold that these ideas are of great significance for the philosophy of the sciences (and in the sciences themselves). Arguing for this belief meant taking on the three hundred odd replies to Kripke. Most of these criticisms were easy to handle: they were the product of superficial thinking and/or sloppy reading. But some thirty objections turned out to be "hard": breaking them down and finding responses to them proved difficult and, at times, frustrating. There were some whole days between November and March when I would pace up and down our flat with a portable tape-recorder in my hand – ready to record any insight that might pop up into my mind (for better or worse, I strongly believe that philosophical thoughts form best when we try to vocalize them). And when I finally felt – in early April – that I had "cracked" all the central issues, I organized a workshop with some of the brightest young minds working in this field. They

convinced me that I had to go back to the drawing board. Oh well, whoever said that philosophy would be easy?

The Wiko Communities

Although working on my book was mainly “lonely” work, I did learn a lot from my fellow Fellows, their spouses, and many members of staff. Perhaps the greatest *Bildungserlebnis* was the encounter with Helmut Lachenmann and his music. His talks – formal and informal – opened up a new world of art to me. Even if I had not learned anything else during this year, this in itself would have made my stay at the Wiko worth its while. But, of course, there was so much more. Staying with the fine arts, Gérard Mortier’s talks on the past and future of opera, Walter Levin’s lecture on Schönberg, and Adonis’ “singing” of his Arabic poetry are all truly unforgettable experiences. I also learned from the many other Fellows who study – rather than create – the fine arts (I here mention only Gottfried Boehm and Caroline Jones).

It was my good fortune that my Wiko year coincided with those of Sheila Jasanoff and Allan Young. I had been familiar with their work for some years, but I had never met either of them in person. We spent many hours in conversation and I feel I have learned enormously in and through these discussions. Sheila also organized numerous talks and a workshop, providing me (and us all) with a unique opportunity to form a view on the state of the art in Science and Technology Studies. Occasional chats with Peter Galison rounded off my learning process in the Science Studies area.

My Wiko cohort was decisively structured by the presence of three larger research groups whose work figured prominently in Tuesday colloquia and workshops: the norm group around the experimental economist Ernst Fehr, the risk group around the biologist Alex Kacelnik, and the locomotion group around the physiologist Ansgar Büschges. Of the many papers in these three areas, I was most impressed with Joe Henrich’s presentation of the results of a study on cross-cultural differences in co-operation and with Örjan Ekeberg’s sophisticated talk on computer simulations of locomotion.

I must mention also Richard Hauser and Raghavendra Gadagkar. Herr Hauser taught me everything I now know about economic and social policy in Germany over the past thirty years; acted as an enormously helpful and critical tester of my Tuesday colloquium; and treated my wife and me to a memorable performance of *La Calisto* at the Staatsoper. I met Raghavendra Gadagkar on my very first evening at the Wiko – the *Rektoratsüber-*

gabe – and the discussions we started on that memorable occasion lasted all year long. We did not always agree, and some of our debates ended up being heated and passionate. I like to think that it is precisely this common passion about intellectual matters that brought us closer together over these months.

I wish I had the space to recall the ways in which all other remaining Fellows – each one in their own way – have contributed to my education and enlightenment over the past ten months. Alas, here I can only send them a communal “thank you” through these pages.

The Fellows and guests of the Wissenschaftskolleg are of course only one of the communities that dwell in the Wallotstraße. Another important group is the staff. Dieter Grimm was a supportive, interested, and kind rector. Joachim Nettelbeck and Reinhart Mayer-Kalkus helped me greatly in planning my workshop and were also thought-provoking interlocutors on other occasions. The fellow services, Christine von Arnim, Andrea Friedrich, and Barbara Cusack, provided wonderful support throughout the year, as did Barbara Sanders at reception, the wonderful library team under Gesine Bottomley, the exceptional kitchen under Christine Klöhn, Monika Fogt, and the ever reliable Herr Riedel. I also am deeply indebted to Mitch Cohen who edited my chapters, to Marita Ringleb who taught my wife German, and to Daniel Zimmermann who helped me with my Spanish.

Zweisamkeit

In our “normal” life back in Cambridge, my wife and I do not get to spend as much time together as we would like. Sarah works as a legal advisor to asylum seekers, and her job involves regular evening and weekend duties. At times we have had to wait for more than a month until we had a full day together. Our time at the Wiko provided us with a wonderful break from this lifestyle. For much of the year we spent most of our time together – working in the same flat during the day, and exploring the nature and culture in and around Berlin at night. But here is where things get private, and thus I hasten to follow Bacon and Kant: *de nobis ipsius silemus*.