



EXCEPTIONAL WIKO-SABBATH
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I imagine that this report will only be read by some Fellow who decides toward the end of July to look at some old yearbooks before writing his or her report. I myself have read today those expressions of gratitude and testimonies of happiness. If you are this Fellow, I imagine that you are painfully aware, at this point in July, of all the opportunities of happiness around you that remain unfulfilled. Those unfulfilled opportunities belong now to the future generations of Fellows. “There is a secret link between the generations.”

A few days after arriving in Grunewald I learned that I was in the neighbourhood of Walter Benjamin’s childhood. I am not a Benjamin scholar, moreover my main concerns are scholastic or conceptual rather than poetic; nevertheless, I was playing on his playgrounds this year.

The subject of my writing this year was thinking as an activity. Looming large in my writings this year was a Benjaminian notion of a gesture. This notion underpins a conception of a philosophical life that differs from the classical conception of such life as the exceptional Sabbath of the intellect. Philosophical life understood in term of the gesture is a sabbath that occurs at any ordinary moment.

I am grateful to the Wissenschaftskolleg for the wonderful Sabbath of thinking I had this year in Berlin. It is sad that such a Sabbath can only be a rare exception in life.

Thus I would like to suggest that the opportunities of happiness contained at Wiko will be really fulfilled when Wiko is not only a rare exception. They will be fulfilled when the difference between ordinary non-Wiko life and the exceptional Wiko Sabbath is cancelled.