



THE TURNING POINT  
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When I arrived at Wiko in October, I had not had a full year's sabbatical leave in ten years. In addition to having taught non-stop, I had been co-organizing a massive exhibition (*Devices of Wonder: From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen*) and writing the catalogue for it for the Getty Research Institute. It opened at the Getty Museum, Los Angeles in 2001/02, to great success, I am happy to say! But I have to admit I felt burnt out when I got to Berlin.

Ever since the exhibition ended, and even in the odd, quiet moments during the multi-year preparation, I had been working fitfully on a new project. Continuing my longstand-

ing interest in the visual arts/science interface, I wanted to turn my attention to the neurosciences, cognitive science, and the “new” philosophy of mind. I also wanted to reconnect with my philosophical roots, having studied continental philosophy in the Pleistocene era of my educational history! Though truth be told, I never really abandoned it. In addition, I’d been attending the computational neuroscience workshop at the University of Chicago to force myself to en flesh the neuro-books I was reading with ongoing biological research. This was a humbling process and, in the beginning, I counted myself lucky if I understood the smallest fraction of what went on.

To my own amazement, when I started to pack to come to Germany, I discovered that I had actually amassed a fair amount of scholarly material on the topic. At first, in the fall, I was so wrung out, it never dawned on me that I might actually complete a book manuscript this year. Since neuroscientific research is not something you read casually or by fits and starts, my initial plan was to go over the notes I had taken, review the materials I had collected, throw out what had become obsolete (a daily ritual) and take stock of where I was. I knew I had to read a ton more, most of it new findings. As we all know, there is something magical about the Wiko librarians. They manage to bypass all obstacles and even the hardest-to-get volumes were conjured up. This miracle slowly began to sink in.

I’m not exactly certain when the turning point came. In the fall, I remember it was a joy to read constantly and uninterrupted. Or, more accurately, the only interruptions were people taking care of you! I think, especially, of the always-elegant Christine von Arnim. But I also remember others who were unfailingly friendly in answering silly questions, like Daniela Wendlandt. Or I think of the support of Christian Schmitz, who initiated me into PowerPoint. For fixing the recalcitrant computer, there were the patient Wiebke Güse, Roman Riebow, and Sven Harke. Then there was the serving of lovely meals by Christine Klöhn and Katarzyna Speder. And I much appreciated the dusting of furniture by Frau Lehmann. This easing of the burdens of daily life made other things possible.

In that early period, the twice-monthly meetings of the Bildwissenschaftseminar, under the lively leadership of Horst Bredekamp, also started up. Being in the presence of the stimulating “sense and stylists” (Jean-Louis and Sophie Fabiani, Luca Giuliani, Charlotte Klönk, Susanne Küchler, Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, Aube Taylor, and Monika Wagner) was energizing. It was then that I also began my systematic exploration of all the Berlin museums and galleries. Every Sunday, I hit the sidewalk from the wonderful anthropological collections at Dahlem to the joys of the Museumsinsel, to the always thought-provoking installations at the Deutsche Guggenheim on the Friedrichstraße. Even if I didn’t

feel like going out, which, candidly, was often, I hopped on the bus with my *Monatskarte*, and I was always glad I did at the end of the afternoon. And on returning from Christmas break, I suddenly knew I wanted to and would write a book. The total Wiko atmosphere had been seeping in.

I think what happened is that I realized the greatest treasure of Wiko is the library and its pearls of greatest price are the librarians. Instead of the customary “this book is not available” pink slip, every time I had a hankering after some new weird cognitive volume, it miraculously appeared on my shelf – and in record time too! My gratitude to Gesine Bottomley, Gudrun Rein, and Marianne Buck is difficult to put into words. I think of these three as my muses, since they let me conceive, and execute, the inconceivable. In the dark time of trying to get photos and permissions to ready the manuscript for presentation to the University of Chicago Press, it was Marianne who helped me get through it by locating the person or institution to whom one wrote for whatever portion of the image they owned (in a process that now resembles gene patenting). My debt to her is really boundless. The book *Echo Objects: The Cognitive Work of Images* is forthcoming at University of Chicago Press in April 2007.

During the course of the year, I also made a lot of friends. Hail to the *femmes savants* and to our jolly dinners! Catherine David, Carla Hesse, Susanne Küchler, Monika Wagner: in the not-too-distant future, I hope, we will reconvene on the Cook Islands and study shoes! But there were many others from whom I learned and whose conversations at Thursday dinner or weekly lunches I will sorely miss. I will not forget Ingolf Dalferth, Augustin Emane, Judit Frigyesi, John Hamilton, Irad Kimchi, Mordechai Kremnitzer, Patrizia Nanz, Dietrich Niethammer, Oliver Primavesi, Robert Salais, Samah Selim, Rudolf Stichweh, Paul Windolf, or Hans Zender. A special medal of honor goes to Paul Kleihues who was fated to be the only man living in the midst of Catherine, Monika, and myself on the third floor of the Villa Jaffé – along with those occasional, and happily, serene residents, the mathematicians Itay Neeman and John Steel, who had their offices on our level. What am I saying? I won’t forget the whole improbable lot.

Thank you for the year!