



CONFESIONS BRUCE KOGUT

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I came to Berlin troubled, where a cauldron of unholy loves was seething and bubbling all around me.

Portions of a manuscript consisted of published and unpublished articles going back two decades; ideas, many of them, though well received, published often in disparate fields, were far from integrated. I dreamt of the completion of this book project; our shaman Gaston did not have the only dreams at the Wiko. The Wiko represented the

necessary respite, I had already read the testimonies of past Fellows who said the same: a rare moment to complete that project, to be freed of the temporal demands, and to recover what had seemed to be lost labor's love.

And then there was the reflection of Berlin, a city whose own division once gave and still gives a psychotic energy without a sense of defined destiny, and worse, a city that prefers the abandonment of destiny and its definition. This had its dangers. I knew this city first when it was walled, from “the other side/*drüben*”, and I had returned often during a certain period, to see its “turn”, and even if the middle way proposed in those first heady months proved nightmarish, other middle ways were found and explored. The city still emanated an allure, without a pretext of innocence that nobody would believe, or want to, anyway – innocence is not why one comes to Berlin. I had often been on the verge of returning; I had not, and each time, there was an inevitable, though reasoned, regret.

I thought of times of an adolescent reading. Is Berlin what Mann foresaw in his *Death in Venice*, an island crushed by the weight of its history, sinking lugubriously into the high water table? Or is Berlin the new *Amerika*, Kafka's farcical and yet magical description of the new land, angels trumpeting greetings to the arriving émigrés? (How much nicer to write this than to be immigrants, those huddled masses, to which my grandparents belonged!) Winter surely slanted heavily toward the sinking weight of history – I still see our visiting son, walking along the banks of the Hubertussee, his head held low, his shoulders folded like the *Sunday New York Times* after everyone has read their bulimic share, the mist and fog at his feet, oh woe, this was just the harbinger of a winter that greyed our days long into the spring.

Then came finally a spring and summer. Birgitta lent us her book on *Prominente in Berlin-Grunewald*. Returning from a lovely bicycle ride to the Schlachtensee that ended in a light rainfall, my wife and I returned to the Villa Walther, sitting in the summer terrarium that became our living room, elm branches and green leaves encasing our glassed apartment. I opened Birgitta's book and found, “Ingeborg Bachmann, die beinahe kultisch verehrte österreichische Schriftstellerin, war wieder einmal mit ihrem Fahrrad im Grunewald unterwegs, wie so oft nahm sie die gewohnte Route vom Dianasee zum Grunewaldsee, durch das Naturschutzgebiet Hundekehlefenn, vorbei am Jagdschloss, bis nach Schlachtensee. Sie liebte diese Fahrradausflüge ...” Here Bachmann joined our winter reading of her stories (thanks Eva!) with our daily experience of the Grunewald and its forests that Bachmann had lovingly cycled before us. Spring was the fruit of that winter, and the year suddenly took on a promising clarity.

Meanwhile, toward the middle of my stay, my work on the transmission of productivity also began to pick up, and I decided to focus my efforts while in Berlin on the Weimar period. As I am not an historian, those miners of history whose dirty hands wash and polish the gems into analytical narratives, I tried ever so hard to stay focused on the economic facts and data that I needed for my project. Let's just say I read a lot of material outside of economic history and archival research.

This deviation brought me, inexorably, into the dangerous reading of Carl Schmitt. I was unprepared. His name came up infrequently, but persistently, at the Wiko. His shade, much like that of Hamlet's father, is even found in previous *Jahrbücher*, including notably a short description of a seminar held in 1986/87 that the media were prohibited to attend. That the yearbook should take note proudly of their banning of the media to permit "free discussion" provokes curiosity. Unfortunately, no information as to the content of that day was found in the files at the Wiko, though the essay by the seminar organizer Bernd Rüthers in the 1986/87 *Jahrbuch* focuses on the law in Nazi Germany.

Hubertus twice gave me the advice to look at the *Begriff des Politischen*, the Concept of the Political. Ulrich appeared to play with Schmitt, mischievously, craftily. Over one weekend in June at the Wiko, Dieter Grimm ran an intensive course on the constitutionalism of Schmitt for his Humboldt law students, leading them hand in hand across this territory, with Orpheus-like words not to look back, should they want to see light. Stephen Greenblatt (*Jahrgang* 1996/97) noted in his *Bericht* that he found the books of Schmitt to "be often disturbing and even loathsome" – he read them all the same.

I read Schmitt in June, essentially focusing on just the *Begriff*, and I confessed to Luca my reading of this forbidding material. It seemed on my part a betrayal to make an effort not only requiring time, but also engendering a strange ambivalence to read such a text that exposed the fragility of Weimar Germany and foreshadowed its coming descent into hell (and to the tragedy of my European family). Luca said to me something about the dangers of such a reading, while presenting me with his enchanted smile that suggested, hope abandoned, Weimar has disappeared either way, you might as well look at hell. I wrote him the next day.

"Yes, Schmitt is be-deviling ... he appears to be the strong masculine devil type, not the sneaky one who gets you to eat an apple or drink too much wine on a Thursday night. I am the devil, here is my tail, my horns, here are my views on enemies, friends, war, the necessity of the fight. This is the prefiguration of what is to come, you know this already, choose a side." I added, "Wiko in any event does not bear the liability."

But Wiko does bear the responsibility for those tempted to gaze around; this world, however reconstituted from year to year, is bound to confront you. Daniel, who is one of earth's treasures, said to me, "I did not care for you much at first, you seemed to be a technocrat." "Thank you Daniel," I said sincerely, "for technocracy, technology, numerology, all of this to me has a beauty and deep appeal." But the year made clear that this aesthetic could not easily satisfy a more famished humanistic analysis. People wanted, demanded an articulation of a transparent valued position.

I gained something intellectually important from these well-motivated confrontations. The project with which I came migrated from the sentiment to recover invested time to an excitement over a different framing and gestalt. The historical transmission of productivity linked to my current work in inequality. How are the gains of innovation shared, fairly or unequally? The punctuating impetus was the conversations, often on unrelated subjects, with many of the Fellows, current and past, sometimes in person, sometimes via their writings. It started with Menachem, a gentle intellectual giant, who pioneered the economic studies in fairness, and the conversation developed further in tutorial (how else to describe it?) with Cristina. Lunch with Claus Offe and Bruno Frey, frequent meetings with Jürgen Kocka, and a delightful evening with Hubertus to hear Wolfgang Streeck's engaging though desultory analysis of the current situation – these all led to a rethinking of fairness that is posed by economic innovation. Many discussions with Sasha Disko, a recent Ph.D. graduate in history from NYU who was as much my colleague as any other, consisted of mounting step by step a spiraling staircase through archives and period sources that led to eventual illumination. An interesting invitation to hold a public lecture at the ESMT on inequality produced a talk that encouraged my drift toward fairness and the innovative role of the State that consolidated around a simple question: where have the workers and the working class gone?

There were also of course the serendipitous lessons from which I benefited. Due primarily to Bill's organizing efforts and animation, we had a very successful evolutionary biology group bi-weekly meeting. I was interested in harnessing for the research that I do the causal machinery of genetics that crunches through complex interactions among genes to identify their effects on phenotypic expression. Whereas I did not learn much about these machines once the younger life scientists left, I did learn a lot about the diversity of work within biology, biologists' arguments (thanks in large part to Sonia's intoxicating evening lecture), and the emergence of gene markers in cultural anthropology research to map cultural pathways of diffusion. The latter dovetails with recent work

in economics. A colleague at Columbia (Jae-Suk Yang) and I began in April to recombine economics and linguistic anthropology research and produced an early draft by June on investment flows in a gravity model of economic networks, augmented by genetic and language distances. In addition, an articulate article by Joanna Masel on evolvability and neutrality helped the final revision of a paper using an N-K landscape model applied to organizations and was duly cited in the publication.

I noticed also during our evolutionary meetings that Robert utilized a heuristic to push heartily his knowledge into the public domain, and also to pull knowledge from others. (You can see his method at work in his 2008/09 *Jahrbuch* entry.) Jack utilized an analogous heuristic. How do you know this? Styles differ, but the underlying dialectic was to make explicit what was tacit or unobserved and ultimately to learn.

This was a good model and I tried to follow it in my own way. The democracy reading group was stimulating, even if less immediately consequential. The cliché that a jaundiced eye always sees yellow describes the attractor state that individually all wanted to avoid but collectively sometimes were doomed to visit; all pairs of eyes have their preferred color. Yet, there were many poetic moments, such as the discussion on sectarianism, consocial democracy and Lebanon, led by Ussama, which seemed to respond to former Fellow Fritz Scharpf's comments (*Jahrbuch* 2007/08). Scharpf, the much-admired former director of the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, wrote that, having left law for political science 40 years ago, "it was truly amazing to return to a literature that was preoccupied with the internal logic of dogmatic systems, but which at the same time claimed to guide the effective decisions of judicial authorities". Maybe Paul Schmid-Hempel (*Jahrbuch* 2006/07) was right: the Wiko is an ivory tower. Yet, Montaigne looked out the window and complained that "opinions are grafted upon one another; ... whence it comes to pass that he who is mounted highest has often more honor than merit". I learned from Jim Costa that biologists adopt an organism early in their career, they know their wasps and stickleback fish; it is not a bad way to do science despite the stings.

Our anthropologists seemed to have figured this out. A few of us wanted a more organized exchange to discuss our research that had implications for public policies. I don't think I ever heard a "no" at the Wiko. Belatedly, we asked Thorsten if we could sequester a room, coffee and *Kuchen*, and a bottle of wine for a day to discuss *Policies for Poverty and Disease*, a workshop jointly organized by Kelly, Gillian, Shakti, and me. "Of course" was the answer, even though our chosen day coincided with the *Beirat* meeting. Kelly discussed her research on the social contradictions of land reform in Tanzania; Gillian

explained in greater detail her work on the health effects of migration of Bangladeshi migrants to the UK; Shakti and I discussed our related projects on cooperation in rural India, especially in reference to microfinance; and Teri Reynolds, a medical doctor, presented her work on emergency medicine in Tanzania. Fellows came in and out, questions were asked, and we learned a lot. It was fun too.

My preferred mode, not always personally followed, is to begin with the “small” and to ask, sometimes by simulations, what are the macro consequences. This approach is now called “computational social science” and it is not a bad description of the methodological engine in this analysis. Former Fellow Carlo Ginzburg (who also wrote about Bachmann in his *Bericht* in 1997) came to stay with us in June and July, and there was a clear happiness that, so late in our year, such energy could still be felt in the air. Froma, our muse, was ecstatic. The maestro of microhistory had arrived; I did not know of this idea.

I decided to take to it immediately, for it expressed a fundamental agreement that was conducive to a subversive view: action and actors are local; ideas transport, but also mutate. It also indulged my jaundiced eye for seeing history as a complex and evolving network. This micro-macro view (whose originator was James Coleman, *Jahrgang* 1981!) is the foundation of the generative computer simulations that analyze and simulate complex networks with which I have *played*. Before coming here, I had thought of the possibility of a working group on generative history, in which actors much like genes form complex network interactions. Some say this type of approach is the death of the humanities. It is the other way around – especially in a time of world history where the danger of skating on thin ice is inevitable and requires compensatory new tools. The play is to say “end fact, try fiction”, contextual knowledge matters here but let’s simulate the implications of a conjecture. Is this allowed? I think this moment has arrived.

This was a musical year, Quatuor Diotima, Alfred Brendel, the iterant Helmut Lachenmann, Mauricio Sotelo, Mark Andre. Belonging to this music was the poetry of Lian Yang, whose reading in Chinese sounded its own tonal beauty. The year ended visually, with the art of Kamal Boullata and Kendall Baker. Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus was our Mephistopheles in these matters. He led us to many discoveries in music and in literature, and he has my deepest thanks.

Every Fellow feels the deepest gratitude for the kindness and competence of the Wiko staff – of the library I could write volumes of gratitude. We all fall in love with the usual suspects, but we also have our private loves, mine including a weakness for those from *drüben*. There is another gratitude that we did not expect to experience, and that has been

the life of children at the Wiko, and the sharing of the joy and thrill of the elements that inspire and perturb their lives. It has been no doubt noted elsewhere in this Yearbook that we have been a harmonious *Jahrgang*. I venture the hypothesis that our community was the dearer because of the laughter, occasional tear, and passion of the children we were all allowed to adopt, sadly on short-term loan.

And I acknowledge the loyal companionship of Momo, our 5 kg Tchit-zu, who boxes above her weight.

The Wiko was a cauldron, and unholy loves were entertained and enjoyed, dismissed or retained. I indulged in these sins, much was learned, and friendships were made.