

5. Berliner Colloquium zur Zeitgeschichte

**Tony Judt's Legacy—Social Democracy as a Challenge  
for Present and Future Generations**

Convenors: Tim B. Müller (Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung)  
and Susan Neiman (Einstein Forum, Potsdam)

Conference language: English

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**Questionnaire**

**Session 1      Genesis, Historical Achievements, and Problems  
                         of the Welfare State**

Introduction    Martin H. Geyer

Chair            Dierk Walter

- \* Is there a European and transatlantic comparative history of the genesis and development of the welfare state? What national and historical differences, what transnational commonalities and simultaneities can be observed? Are we talking about comparable structures and processes?
- \* What were the societal and economic foundations on which the development of the welfare state was based?
- \* What are the intellectual underpinnings of the welfare state? How egalitarian must the welfare state be?
- \* What concepts of justice are associated with the welfare state and what implications does it have for notions of freedom?
- \* What different strategies have been developed to deal with the tensions between justice and freedom, between the common good and pluralization?
- \* Who were the agents of the welfare state? Does Tony Judt identify social groups who advanced the welfare state project? Was the welfare state a social-democratic project, in the sense that Tony Judt used the term?
- \* Did the welfare state stabilize and save capitalism or modernize and re-invent it? Or did it instead come to manifest the characteristics of a post-capitalist order (and if so, when and where)?
- \* Do the political affinities of welfare states lie more with democratic political orders or with authoritarian/dictatorial orders? Does it have a »normative core« or can it be utilized by all concepts of political order? Have mechanisms been developed to safeguard the political order of the democratic welfare state?

\* Can we imagine a twentieth-century welfare state without war and revolution? To what extent have the experience of war, fears of revolution, or the exigencies of military mobilization contributed to the spread of the welfare state? Did the political rivalry of the Cold War stabilize the welfare state for a number of decades?

**Session 2     The Crisis of the Welfare State, the End of the Age  
of Social Democracy**

Introduction     Lutz Raphael

Chair             Bernd Greiner

\* Are we currently experiencing a crisis of the welfare state? Or has the history of the welfare state from the outset been a history of its crises and of debates about its failure?

\* How does the welfare state address—in different contexts—its inherent vice which, as Tony Judt pointed out, is paternalism? How was the welfare state created and transformed in multicultural societies; how strong were »social engineering« tendencies; how intense were efforts to promote pluralism and individual life plans?

\* What triggered the crisis (or crises) of the welfare state and how was it (or were they) dealt with? Did social or international constellations play a decisive role (demographic developments, economic crises, wars, the Cold War, etc.)?

\* Did the agents of the welfare state undergo learning processes?

\* When and why did attempts to resolve the crisis of the welfare state fail?

\* Is this indeed the end of the welfare state? Or are its presence and its continuities stronger than political debates suggest?

\* Are controversies over the crisis, the dismantling, or the demise of the welfare state merely mock battles, in so far as a set of key principles of the welfare state continues to be shared by many? Or does this set of convictions in fact mask fundamental differences and changes?

### **Session 3     The Welfare State and Its Enemies**

Introduction   Heinz Bude

Chair           Jens Hacke

- \* What alternative socio-political models exist?
- \* When and why did social democrats lose their role as defenders of the welfare state?
- \* In the course of recent decades, did (and do) the opponents of the welfare state (neoliberals, the New Left, New Labour, etc.) have better arguments? Are their counter-models intellectually rigorous, economically efficient, and socially desirable? Why have the critics become so influential?
- \* To what extent is the debate about the welfare state a struggle for political and cultural hegemony?
- \* What notions about human beings (their desires, goals, social embeddedness, options for action, and motivational structures) underlie this discussion?
- \* Who now has the upper hand in this controversy and what shifts are revealed if we chart the history of the debate? Is this a cyclic development or a fundamental paradigm shift? Has the current economic crisis had an effect?

### **Session 4     The Potential of the Welfare State**

Introduction   Berthold Vogel

Chair           Tim B. Müller

- \* What would a renewed, revitalized version of the welfare state look like? What lessons learned would be reflected in the changes made and what challenges would it have to come to terms with?
- \* What about the political and financial feasibility of such concepts?
- \* What definitions of the common good are available today? What are the assumptions upon which they are based?
- \* What effect does it have on political controversies when basic political concepts are based on philosophical ideas that are considered outdated?
- \* Hasn't everything already been said about the welfare state in the course of its history? Are we moving ahead in our discussions about justice and freedom?
- \* Does the welfare state need civil religion? Is there any alternative mode for creating and maintaining a sense of the common good—however we might define it?

- \* Doesn't this aspect demonstrate that the debate about the welfare state is Eurocentric? Is the welfare state—and the revitalization that we are discussing—perhaps merely a phenomenon of central and northwestern Europe?
- \* What small and local or large, national or translational approaches to renewing the welfare state can we currently observe; what initiatives and actors can be identified?

## **Session 5     Historicizing Tony Judt**

Introduction

and Chair     Susan Neiman

- \* What connections between Tony Judt's political-intellectual biography, his historical work, and his political interventions can be identified?
- \* What was unique about Tony Judt's life and work? In what ways was he a typical representative of a specific generation of left intellectuals?
- \* Were the re-discovery and the defense of the welfare state and social democracy logical consequences of Judt's work or his experience?
- \* Was he the last social-democratic intellectual? Who will carry forward the idea of a renewed social democracy?

## **Suggested Reading**

Ben Jackson, We are all social democrats now. In: James Purnell, Graeme Cooke (Eds.): *We mean power*. London: Demos, 2010; 49-62

Tony Judt, What Is Living and What is Dead in Social Democracy. In: *The New York Review of Books*, 17 December 2009

Tony Judt, *The Memory Chalet*. London: William Heinemann, 2010; 25-32, 91-99, 119-126, 173-181

Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*. Cambridge, MA, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2011; 41-76, 280-288