

## Wolfgang Loch – a German fate

Wolfgang Loch was born on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1915 in Berlin. His early childhood was already marked by The First World War. As one of his first memories he recounts :“ I am a very small boy - as far as I can reconstruct it I must have been two and half years old at the time – I enter the room in which eight to ten ladies are sitting round the dining-table – my mother's coffee circle. On the left at the top of the table, in the second or third place I can see my mother with a postcard in her hand which she is passing round to the others. She is in tears. All of the women begin to cry as they read the card. The postcard contained the announcement – I am sure of this - of my brother's death in Flanders in the autumn of 1917. He was 19 years old when he fell, so, 17 years older than I was.“

This brother left a heavy legacy, a bust of Nietzsche he had sculpted himself and a copy of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. In addition there was the mother remembered as one often suffering, no doubt the more so through this loss. Should we perhaps see Loch's later unceasing intellectual efforts as springing from a desire to bring the light of the mind to bear on depths of suffering?

He grew up in a liberal, sociable home in 1920s Berlin. Contacts with Jews were an absolute matter of course in relations of many kinds: the Jewish cloth merchants from the local market would display their goods in such homes and then there were neighbours` children and school friends, the family doctor, direct neighbours, friends of his parents. “On the evening of Hitler's *Machtergreifung* Dr V. came down from the upstairs flat to see us. I can see him sitting with my father at the living-room window. Both deeply depressed. Dr V. foresees a terrible catastrophe “<sup>1</sup>

One of these friends advised the young Wolfgang to emigrate. Loch never forgave himself for not following this advice. The choice of medicine as a subject for his studies - after his *Abitur* in 1933 – was primarily made in the hope that in this humanitarian field and protected by the political neutrality of the natural sciences he might most easily escape the subjugation of free thought by the regime. In this he was in fact mistaken in many respects.. From the winter semester of 1933 to 1934 enrolment as a student (perhaps only as a student of medicine?) was made dependent on membership of a „social“ organisation. On the advice of a friend of his father's in one of the ministries ( a person who admittedly later revised his view) Loch joined the SA. „What I encountered in the SA in sheer nastiness, vile attitudes, evil-minded and pig-headed fanaticism was indescribable. I tried by voicing critical comments on the „official“ version being propagated to sensitize the comrades. This was soon noticed“.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid P. 212

<sup>2</sup> Ibid P. 215

What some others (e.g. Scheunert) did not dare, namely to leave the party having realised their mistake, Loch managed to do. He was expelled after half a year in disgrace as incompetent and „unworthy“. He was able to display a certain talent for clowning and the ability, when need be, not to understand a thing: qualities that were to stand him in good stead more than once.

With the outbreak of war life became bitter earnest. Loch, who had taken his final exams in 1938, was instantly called up to the medical corps. He somehow found time over the Christmas break to finish his dissertation at the Pharmacological Institute. After he had experienced the „madness of war“ on the West Front, he was sent to Tilsit at the outset of the Russian campaign and there witnessed - from behind bushes - the shooting of row after row of naked youths and men.

It was at this moment that Loch ceased to be a pacifist, believing from then on that a dictator could only be removed by force. He must have been in a month-long state of mental paralysis, at first falling sick with dysentery and finally with „unclear blood count“ and dramatic loss of weight. Later in life he often suffered such bouts and indeed his final sickness may well have been a recurrence of this first attack.

After an interval with the reserve troops Loch was surprisingly declared „unabkömmlich“ - i.e. required on the home front and ordered to return to his scientific work in Berlin. Here, however, political pressure became intolerable, in particular the pressure to denounce his colleague Dr Robert Havemann, whom he greatly respected. So he waived his privilege and was sent back to the West Front where he was taken prisoner of war by the British in 1944 and spent three years as a camp doctor in Canada and in the English Midlands. Here was a highly-gifted person forced to spend the full decade of adolescence, Erikson's moratorium, acting under orders: an adolescence with no chance of autonomy. In 1947 he returned to Berlin and was able to give his energies to becoming, as he had long wished, a specialist in internal medicine, neurology and psychiatry.

It was at this time that he met his wife, Mechthildis, with whom he was to have three daughters and to whom he was devoted all his life – he was, as Adam Limentani called him, a family man.

It was while he was completing his training to become a consultant that Loch encountered psychoanalysis or rather what was left of it in Germany and what was just re-emerging.

„It's hard now to realise the level to which German psychoanalysis had sunk at that time“ he later once said. In his youth two encounters with psychoanalysis had touched him deeply: conversations with a Jewish fellow-student Rudi Dützer, who apparently later committed suicide in Argentina; and a gesture from his teacher Curtius, who secretly slipped him the *Studies on Hysteria*, though later withdrew from further conversations or questions. These were encounters which may have left traces and then „by chance“ Loch discovered Gaetano Benedetti and Melanie Klein in his work at the Wittenauer Heilstätten, a renowned but utterly conservative psychiatric institution.

“ This was where I discovered a world I had been looking for“<sup>3</sup>

First cautious steps in analytical self-awareness were taken. The encounter with Alexander Mitscherlich was decisive for, although Loch was offered a post researching into the endocrinology of schizophrenia at the Max-Planck-Institut in Munich In the autumn of 1956 he joined Mitscherlich's staff at the psychosomatic clinic in Heidelberg – reading Money-Kyrle and Melanie Klein having further confirmed his decision.

Loch and Mitscherlich furthered the re-birth of psychoanalysis in Germany significantly but in very different ways. Mitscherlich, just a decade older than Loch, had spent the period of National Socialism in Switzerland. He was a reporter at the Nurnberg trials of doctors and had published the well-known book „Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit“ (Doctors of Infamy, as far as I know). This lost him any chance of a university chair of medicine in restoration-bent post-war Germany. His friend Georg August Zinn, *Ministerpräsident* of Hessen, then enabled him to set up an institute and training centre for psychoanalysis - later called Sigmund Freud Institute – reporting directly to *Land* Hessen. A markedly liberal atmosphere reigned in this institute and training was largely borne by frequent, regular lectures given by supportive visiting **emigré** analysts. There were Lample de Groot, Piet Kuiper and van der Leuw from Holland and from England Willi Hoffer, Paula Heimann and last but not least Michael Balint. The friendship between Loch and Balint must have been founded in these years. Mitscherlich himself and his wife Margarete as also many of his staff were able to stay in London for month-long periods so-called *Tranchen* (slices ) to carry out their own analyses. Mitscherlich seems to have refused this opportunity to his deputy director Loch, a refusal which left a wound never healed. However it may also have been the difference in character that led to the break between them. For Mitscherlich psychoanalysis served first and foremost to foster enlightenment in the socio-political field, whereas Loch insisted on the primacy of the clinic, devoting his energies to intellectual exploration.“Psychoanalysis has swallowed me up“ he confessed when discussing its never-ending dialectics and reciprocity. He was criticised for being over-intellectual.

The sudden death of Schottländer in Stuttgart left a sad void in the Institute for *Tiefenpsychologie* there, and it seemed to Loch there might be a way of turning this institute into a center for psychoanalytical training. So he took on the post of *Akademischer Oberrat* with Professor Walter Schulte, who had the chair in Psychiatry at Tübingen University. Within a very short time he wrote his post-doctoral thesis „Preconditions, mechanisms and limits of the psychoanalytical process“. Loewald called this paper the first sign that psychoanalytical thinking had become possible again in Germany.

However a further four years were to pass before Loch was able to leave the basement room in the *Nervenklinik* and establish a separate department for psychoanalysis ( though still formally under its roof).

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid P. 223

For a university teacher in his mid- fifties this was still not an appropriate position and the Stuttgart plans had also not developed as wished. It was for these reasons that Loch stretched out his feelers in various directions, causing distinct irritation among some of his staff and analysts.

Finally it was members of the Arts Faculty of the University of Tübingen who succeeded in persuading the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Culture to create a chair dedicated solely to psychoanalysis, and the only one of its kind in Germany, specifically for Loch. This created a stable framework for over a decade of extremely fruitful teaching and clinical work. It was now possible to establish an independent, non-state-funded psychoanalytical training institute in the Stuttgart area – the Stuttgart-Tübingen psychoanalytical institute ( AG ) - linked to but distinct from other psychoanalytical groupings. Many of today's well-known analysts, among them a number of DVP chairmen owe their training to this institute.

Here too not only psychoanalytical candidates but also interested laymen, students of all faculties, practising consultants and doctors and those in training to be consultants had the opportunity to meet psychoanalysis.

Loch was keen to revive a psychoanalytical culture and tradition in Germany able to hold its own internationally. Lectures by visiting analysts were a standing feature of the faculty with frequent visits by Pierre Turquet, Hans Thorner, Enid Balint and last but not least Adam Limentani.

Loch for his part was a valued member of CAPS, vice president and later nominated secretary to the board of the International Psychoanalytical Association.

It was undoubtedly a proud moment for Loch to hear Limentani comment that the quality of discussions in our clinical seminar in no way differed from comparable ones held at the London institute. By contrast one of the bitterest moments in his professional career must have been the heated debate at the IPA general meeting in Jerusalem. He had not been able in advance to prevent his German colleagues to propose Berlin as the next venue for the International Congress.

The general acceptance of psychoanalysis in German society reached its peak almost simultaneously with this debate. Tübingen University proudly presented its chair of psychoanalysis with a symposium at the 500th anniversary of the founding of the university. In the same year psychoanalytical treatment was adopted in the catalogue of treatments supported by the statutory health insurance. Loch followed this deal with scepticism and was sure that high expectations would be followed by disappointment and devaluation.

Such a development was also to affect Loch himself as a person. Naturally as DVP chairman at the founding of the institute, as professor and representative of his subject there were conflicts he had to meet and fight out. He could be very uncompromising in defending his standpoint but could at times also be biased and unwilling to consider reconciliation. This meant there were well-established enmities which, however, as far as I can see, retreated further and

further into the background on his withdrawing from the institutions. The hatred of those who once revered him has cast a darker shadow. Out of a misconceived modesty on the one hand and a blindness to reality in his fact-defying belief in the freedom and autonomy of those facing him on the other hand, he did not always consider the force of the transference attached to him as an outstanding personality.

While he did indeed become an honorary member of the DVP, the institute he founded is divided on the question of his recognition.

As critics have noted, the deep sense of safe haven he was anxious to give his patients in the analytical situation, the sense that he knew and understood so well, was not granted to him personally.

He shared this fate with all of the analysts of the first generation in post-war Germany. But should this mar his importance in the international debate?

Now at last we have a situation in which everyone may form his own opinion on this question. At the beginning of the year an approachable English translation of his work „Deutungskunst - The Art of Interpretation“ came out in the IPA series.

What the reader meets here is the very particular style in which Loch takes Freud's long well-known basic tenets as his starting point and manages to weave the latest developments especially in the psychoanalysis of the Klein school and English object relation theory into the narrative in such a way that they appear to have been always present in Freud's thinking.

At a time when psychoanalysis is threatening to suffocate under its own pragmatism here the great German philosophers are called to support an impressive case for the power of thought. Loch wrote this book in 1993, a decade after retiring and, as the editor Peter Wegner justly remarks, absolutely in the spirit of his weekly Friday lecture. In the course of the same decade a number of other important works were written. It was no longer possible for Loch to deliver the last of his papers: „Psychical reality, material reality“ at the international congress in San Francisco. He died on 7<sup>th</sup> February 1995. The „Stiftung Wolfgang-Loch -Vorlesungen“ founded by Eickhoff has instituted an annual lecture held in Tübingen dedicated to keeping the memory of these Fridays alive and further developing Loch's approach.

It is harder to convey to those who were not present something of the expressive, „in a nutshell“ simplicity which characterised Loch's direct contact with patients and those he supervised. The best must be left unsaid, perhaps you can take this up. What is unspeakable, unfathomable, the ineffable individual mattered to him so greatly. We hope that in the method adopted from Balint which Loch used and honed, the so-called options in interpretations, we can hand on something of the interplay of immediacy, reflection and freedom.

And on this point Herr Hinz is now going to offer you a more detailed account.

