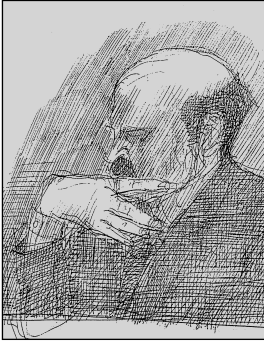


Richard A. Shweder

My Stay At Wiko



Richard A. Shweder is a cultural anthropologist and Professor of Human Development at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* and the editor or co-editor of several books in the areas of cultural psychology, psychological anthropology, and comparative human development. Professor Shweder has been the recipient of a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship and the recipient of the American Association for the Advancement of Science Socio-Psychological Prize for his essay “Does the Concept of the Person Vary Cross-Culturally?” He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and has served as President of the Society for Psychological Anthropology. He is currently co-chairing a joint Social Science Research Council/Russell Sage Foundation Working Group on “Ethnic Customs, Assimilation and American Law”, which is concerned with the issue of the “Free Exercise of Culture: How Free Is It? How Free Ought It To Be?” For the past thirty years, Professor Shweder has conducted research in cultural psychology on moral reasoning, emotional functioning, gender roles, and the moral foundations of family life practices in the Hindu temple town of Bhubaneswar on the East Coast of India. During the 1999/2000 academic year, he was a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (The Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin) working on the “Free Exercise of Culture” project and co-editing an issue of the journal *Daedalus* (Autumn 2000) titled “The End of Tolerance: Engaging Cultural Differences.” – Address: Committee on Human Development, University of Chicago, 5730 South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637, USA.

I anticipated that the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin would be a really fine intellectual center, and it turned out to be greater than expected.

On the other hand, I confess that, before arriving, I had some (predictable) trepidation about living for a year in Berlin. During the celebration for the year 2000, some commentator made the arresting remark that the first half of the twentieth century was the story of preparation for World War II and the second half of the twentieth century was the story of recovery from World War II. When I received an invitation to be a Fellow at Wiko, I was honored, excited, and pleased. Yet as I contemplated living in Berlin, the history of the twentieth century did loom large in my mind and my imagination roamed across many gray and uninviting images from the past. So I was really happy that the sun was shining when I arrived in late September. By late October, I was amazed by my enthusiasm for the city, and I realized that Berlin was a city in which I could feel at home and even reside permanently. Now, after ten months, I believe I know Berlin better than I know the city of Chicago, where I have lived for twenty-seven years.

Part of this feeling at home in Berlin is, of course, due to living under privileged circumstances and under the protective wing of the well-organized and ever-helpful Wiko staff. Some of it is due to a commitment my wife and I made to go out and systematically explore the city, which we did. We had many visitors during the year. This provided an incentive to become knowledgeable about the local urban scene. We also had Berliner friends, who educated us on the architecture of the city and took us on walking and car tours in and around Berlin. We greatly appreciated the kindness of our friends. They appreciated our rapidly acquired fondness for Berlin urban life.

The inclination to explore things emerged early. On day two, feeling a bit lost and at sea in a city I had previously visited but twice (and both times in the cloistered setting of academic conferences), I purchased a large map of the city. Shortly thereafter, Candy and I were provided with all sorts of information about public transportation and went off on the first of many trips of discovery into various sections or neighborhoods of the city. I had not realized that the city is 25% green, that for Berliners going to the opera or a music concert is like breathing, and that café culture is alive and well in the city. Three opera houses, five symphony orchestras, and many restaurants, movies, art galleries, and neighborhoods later, I feel that I have just spent a year in which there was a near perfect balance of community, hard work at scholarship, and social participation in the “high culture” and “low culture” aspects of Berlin.

Concerning the Wiko community, I felt welcome and well-treated. Jürgen Kocka was the ideal surrogate for Wolf Lepenies during the autumn period that culminated with a glorious Christmas celebration (André Laks at the piano and songs of the season in German and English). Jürgen

Kocka not only exemplified a high standard for seriousness of conversation but was also welcoming and able to convey (in word and deed) the Wiko ethos of being fanatically supportive of intellectual curiosity, free thinking, and pure research. Four languages (German, English, French, and Italian) were commonly spoken in the lunch room and sitting rooms of Wiko. German is of course the official language and English perhaps the language of default (the *lingua franca*). Jürgen Kocka was masterful in multi-lingual communication. Perhaps this encouraged Jürgen Falter to conduct his Tuesday Seminar presentation in both German and in English and to pull it off with great success. I also thought the very first individual seminar presentation, delivered by Franco Moretti, set a high standard for that event. Clearly, the weekly seminar is a major and challenging scholarly forum. A one-hour presentation followed by a full hour of critical questioning from leading scholars from a dozen or so disciplines is a thrilling experience to observe and to experience. Concerning the language issue and the weekly seminar, the challenge is obvious. A far larger number of native German-speaking scholars can follow a lecture in English than native English-speaking scholars can follow a lecture in German. The solution is less obvious. Jürgen Falter's multi-lingual presentation was a tour de force, but for that very reason hard to replicate. I think the current effort to make detailed written translations of all seminar presentations is well worth the effort. It is a good enough solution to the problem of informing the audience about the content of the talk to make questioning possible and there is a take-home message for everyone. And it permits individual scholars to speak in the language of their choice (for whatever complex reasons).

Looking back over the year, I am astonished at the seamless transition from the autumn to the winter and spring. Wolf Lepenies returned to Wiko in January and it was as if he had never been away. The Wiko spirit of civility, high seriousness, and intellectual fun is clearly an extension of his personality, which he has so masterfully managed to make manifest and give a life of its own in the ways of the Wiko (the "Wiko way"?). I also hold Joachim Nettelbeck responsible for some of this civility, high seriousness, and sheer intellectual fun.

One very important part of community life was the "informal seminars" that emerged during the year. I regularly participated in three: the "Work and Consumption" seminar (organized by Gerd Spittler), the "Language and Mind" seminar (organized by David Olson, Ray Jackendoff, and others), and the "Written Culture" seminar (also organized by David Olson and others). Although I only attended a couple of AGORA events, I much enjoyed my interactions with some of the younger scholars in res-

idence, in particular Albrecht Hofheinz, Elizabeth Dunn, Stefan Voigt, Shalini Randeria, Tazeen Murshid, and Sebastian Conrad.

I wish to comment as well on the intellectual generosity of the economists who were in residence, some of whom (Hans-Jürgen Wagener, Stefan Voigt, and Dieter Sadowski) participated with us anthropologists (Spittler, Shweder, Dunn, Macamo) in very lively (and for me enlightening) ways in the “Work and Consumption” group. Gerd Spittler was the hub of this group and I anticipate that our fellowship and friendship formed at Wiko will continue for many years.

As I think of all the individuals (permanent fellows, yearly fellows, guests of the rector, members of the staff) I had the pleasure to meet this year, I am flooded with recollections of discussions, debates, disagreements, and plenty of just fine and entertaining conversation. I dare not list them all. Having writers, judges, legal scholars, composers, and political commentators in the same house along with social scientists and scholars in the humanities gives the Wiko a unique, mighty character. I was impressed by its cosmopolitan sense of community and links to the political, social, intellectual, and cultural affairs of the city, the country, and indeed the world.

Concerning scholarship, I found the arrangement of working in my apartment at Villa Walter quite congenial. Indeed, I work this way when I am in residence at the University of Chicago. My main project on “The Free Exercise of Culture: How Free Ought It To Be?” reached fruition with the acceptance in June 2000 of a special issue of *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, which I co-edited on that topic and with that title. In addition, during the year I wrote several articles and two book chapters. 1. A long essay titled “What About FGM? And Why Culture Matters in the First Place”; 2. A much shorter and edited version of “What About FGM? ...”, which will appear in the *Daedalus* issue (the long version will appear in an edited book that will expand on the *Daedalus* project); 3. “Rethinking the ‘Object’ of Anthropology, and Ending Up Where Kroeber and Kluckhohn Began”, a defense and explanation of the “culture” concept, which is forthcoming in the *American Anthropologist* (and will be shortly previewed in the SSRC Newsletter “Items and Issues”); 4. “A Polytheistic Conception of the Sciences and the Virtues of Deep Variety”, a critique of E.O. Wilson’s notion of “consilience” and of reductive versions of social biology (this essay was delivered at the New York Academy of Sciences Conference on “Unity of Knowledge: The Convergence of the Natural and Human Sciences” and will appear in the *Proceedings of the NYAS*); 5. “The Psychology of Practice and the Practice of the Three Psychologies”, to appear in the *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* (revised and finalized at Wiko); 6. “Ethnic Conserva-

tism, Psychological Well-Being and the Downside of Mainstreaming” (with Randall Horton), to appear in an edited book on Midlife in the United States. Full references can be found in the attached vita.

Two other encyclopedia essays for the *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (IESBS), one on “Culture” and the other on “Cultural Psychology”, are in process. I also made progress on completing an edited collection of my recent papers and throughout the year served as editor of the “Modern Cultural Concerns” section of the IESBS. I continued to serve as the co-chair of the SSRC Working Group on “Ethnic Customs, Assimilation and American Law” and organized a major conference on the topic in preparation for the *Daedalus* volume and subsequent edited book.

Thanks for having us. It was a very broadening experience for both Candy and me.