

Arnold I. Davidson

Work Report



Born in 1955 in Boston, Massachusetts. Ph.D. in 1981 from Harvard University. Taught at Stanford University, Princeton University, and the University of California. Currently Professor of Philosophy and the Conceptual Foundations of Science at the University of Chicago and Executive Editor, *Critical Inquiry*. Most recently co-editor of *Questions of Evidence* as well as editor of, and author of the introduction to Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy As a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Address: Department of Philosophy, University of Chicago, 1050 East 59th Street, Chicago, IL 60637, USA.

When Diane and I first arrived in Berlin, after two months in Florence, we arrived disoriented and uncertain about what life in Berlin would hold in store for us. (Where, for example, could we find porcini mushrooms?) Luckily, the first colleague we met was Caroline Bynum, and after Caroline and I spent an hour discussing medieval views about whether Christ's body was resurrected with all of its parts intact, I knew that the Wissenschaftskolleg would reveal unexpected surprises. Being in the midst of a project (still to be completed, alas) on medieval representations of bodily miracles, especially the stigmata, a project that encroaches on the disciplines of philosophy, theology, history, and art history, Caroline's knowledge proved to be an invaluable resource. Shortly after our arrival, my old friend Hilary Putnam arrived, and we picked up our conversations as if they had never been interrupted. Hilary's interest in and knowledge about virtually everything was as inspiring today as it was fifteen years ago. Memorable conversations with Carolyn Abbate on music, miracles, and monsters continued throughout the year. Exchanges, both short and long, with Karine Chemla, Hans Medick, Irina Scherbakowa, Bettina Schöne-Seifert and Pamela Smith helped me to keep my intellectual footing. Becoming immersed in the music of György and Marta Kurtag was an experience I shall not easily forget. My deep admiration goes to those female Fellows who balanced child care necessities and intellectual demands in institutionally difficult circumstances.

Eventually as the year progressed, when Diane and I reminded people we were vegetarians, they no longer looked at us as if we were strange inhabitants from the redwood forests of California. Carolyn Abbate and Lee Mitchell showed how easy it was to cook a magnificent vegetarian Thanksgiving dinner, and when we were at the height of our Italian homesickness, Hans-Peter Ullmann and Heidrun Edelmann prepared an extraordinary Italian dinner that was the equal of any Tuscan restaurant. Our new friendships, and the renewal of old friendships, will mean that the year at the Wissenschaftskolleg will last indefinitely into the future.

I finished a short book on historical epistemology to be published next year in Italian and another short book on the tradition of spiritual exercises in the history of philosophy to be published in French. I obstinately refused to write in English this year, and ended up writing a long paper on St. Francis' stigmata in Italian and several papers concerning Michel Foucault in French. Speaking English, listening to German, and lecturing and writing in French and Italian meant that I was always slightly confused, but it was a type of confusion I hope to import into the United States. I am grateful to the library staff, and especially to the interlibrary loan service, for trying, against difficult odds, to track down strange Italian books, to Andrea Friedrich for helping to solve unanticipated problems with resourcefulness and a sense of humor, and to Barbara Sanders for making daily life so much more pleasant. But I must admit that there are two things about Berlin I could never get used to - the abominable weather (272 hours of sunshine in 10 months) and the worst coffee in Europe.