

About the Origins of this Volume

Beatrix Pfleiderer

We, a group of medical anthropologists, met in Hamburg from December 4th to 8th, 1988 to discuss the various culture-specific (or nation-specific?) strands that had developed out of the new and - as we discovered - also old field of medical anthropology.

From all over Europe (except the then socialistic countries), Canada and the United States gathered participants whose contribution guaranteed the presence of the most important directions medical anthropology has produced in the recent past.

The need for this particular conference was felt and articulated on both sides of the Atlantic. As far as I remember, it was Arthur Kleinman from Harvard who had approached Thomas Maretzki from the University of Hawaii, a frequent traveller to Germany. The latter had worked on "die Kur" in Germany and used his contacts in order to set up a conference that helped Americans to have a look at the "sources". Having incorporated the work of Alfred Schütz, Foucault, Fleck, Mannheim, and of course, Umberto Eco into their recent theoretical development, American medical anthropologists wanted to establish contact to European traditions of medical anthropology, cultural psychiatry, ethnomedicine and perhaps even ethnopschoanalysis.

But there were other reasons, too. A few years ago, while teaching a medical anthropology course, I instructed my class on the basic concepts of the field. When talking about the possible *Be-greifen* (perceiving) or *Be-schreiben* (describing) of a sickness in a subjective view as "illness" or in the (allegedly) objective view as "disease" as Kleinman (1980) has put it a medical student came up with the comment that he felt that the German founder of psychosomatic medicine Viktor von Weizsäcker (1987) had talked about the same thing, when he differentiated between "Krankheit" and "Kranksein". And that even long before him, Georg Groddeck (1983) who hated classifications where sick human beings were concerned and who wished medicine to be an art rather than a science, stated: "In Wirklichkeit gibt es gar keine Krankheiten, es gibt nur kranke Menschen." ("In reality there is no such thing as disease, there are only sick human beings."). A very brave sentence, indeed, in a time when Virchow and his cellpathology dominated the field (Groddeck 1983: 23-25). It was only that student's comment that made me and my fellow researchers aware of the fact that Groddeck's and von Weizsäcker's work are very little known outside of German-speaking countries. And that is in spite of the fact that for us German medical anthropologists the development of a "Cultural Medicine" is inseparable from the work of these two founders. In Germany medical anthropology made its entrance to the scene via the subdiscipline "Ethnomedizin", or Medicine in cultural comparison. Cut off from the mainstream by the fascistic scenario and its aftermath, cultural medicine did not develop in postwar-Germany as it did in other Western countries. This is also true for "Ethnomedizin". Although linked to the German philosophical tradition of the phenomenological school "Ethnomedizin" had to start from anew (cf. Sterly 1976/ 77). Caused by the postwar situation, academic "Ethnomedizin" followed the American formulation and articulation in teaching and research (Pfleiderer and Bichmann 1985). It did so without tracing its own roots, or at least by neglecting them.

The original idea of an American-German meeting was dropped soon, because there was another cause: European medical anthropologists started only in the eighties in small steps to organize

themselves, that is to get to know each other. We wanted this conference to be a forum for the presentation of the culture-specific traditions of the respective medical anthropologies that would result in a more detailed view of the cultural context of these traditions. And second, we wished inner-European communicative activities to be encouraged as a consequence of this conference.

The planning committee for the conference met in May 1987 in Bad Homburg. We were sponsored by the Reimersstiftung. The members were A. Richters, W. Bonsels, S. v.d. Geest (The Netherlands), B. Pfleiderer, T. Hauschild, H.-J. Diesfeld, E. Seidler (Germany), C. MacCormack (U.K.), and T. Marezki (U.S.A.). Herr v. Kroszigk of the Reimersstiftung helped us in a very hospitable atmosphere to develop the discourse we thought the conference should take. I want to thank the Reimersstiftung for funding our first meeting. In this pre-conference all participants gave papers on the state of art of our field in their own country.

The members of the committee parted with the task of composing a group of participants from his or her own country. I feel the result was a well-balanced group of scholars who first are in a wonderful way able to represent their discipline and second give us insight into their respective national tradition of anthropology. When the list of participants was established, Arthur Kleinman applied for funds from the Wenner-Gren-foundation. The application was successful and nine scholars from the other side of the Atlantic received travel funds. The European part of the conference was generously funded by the Stiftung Volkswagenwerk. I wish to express our gratitude to both of the funding agencies. I also want to thank Pfleiderer Industrie for their financial support which enabled us to organize a reception cum dinner party for the participants, observers, and guests from our University.

Without my students Peter Gössler, Elisabeth Bergner and Viola Langkusch we would not have had such good atmosphere during the meeting and a preparation with the fewest possible misunderstandings. With my thanks I would like to honour their talents as tough bargainers when it comes to hotel and meal prices, friendly hosts when it comes to catering and ticketing and "Mädchen für alles" when it came to replace lost xerox copies, among other things. And last but really not least I wish to thank Johannes Sommerfeld for his meticulous work, some extra day and night shifts and his special commitment while collecting these contributions and preparing this volume.

Most of the participants agreed to contribute to this volume with a final version of the paper read at the meeting. Some of the papers appeared also in a modified version in *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* (Vol. 14, 2, 1990). One paper was added later without having been read at the meeting.

The papers of this volume reflect the idea of the meeting. They show the state of art, tasks, and goals of medical anthropology. They also give us a taste of the country-specific flair of research. We, the editors, felt that the collection of papers suggests five sections for this volume. In the first section we arranged the papers that discuss the psychosomatizing process in their cultural specificity and context. We move from the original notion of "culture-boundness", a more static concept, to the dynamics and function of the illness narrative in the context of culture.

In the second section we continue the psychosomatic strand, but we move on to the form that the culturo-somatic dress furnishes (without labelling it as a A Bao A Qu [Pandolfi]). This form enables us to talk about "ethnicity" when it comes to the "symbolical and physiological" [Devisch], nerves [Lock], or the "extreme otherness of strange emotional worlds" [Pfleiderer]. In the third section we have four papers that deal with local cultures of biomedicine in three different worlds: America, Italy, and a rural area in Southwest-Germany. The fourth section starts out with an admonition that seems necessary to me at this point of the development of medical anthropology. I am sympathetic to this warning and not only because I lived and did fieldwork in a village called Nal-Damayantihal,

named after two ardent lovers that serve Francis Zimmermann as a proper example for reminding us that by "focussing on illness, we might well miss that part of the ethnographic material that eludes the clinician". In the fifth section, finally, we start out with the interesting attempt to view the development of two medical traditions as schismogenic processes within their society. The second paper gives us a concise analysis of the recent developments and fads in medical anthropology. The look at the cultural constructivist perspectives is necessary for this volume, since it appeared too often as a tacitly assumed postulate. The grasp for the "beyond" is helpful. It is the interest in the "beyond" that it shares with the third - and epistemologically very special paper- of this section. Carol MacCormack suggests that we remove the boundaries of perception, action and practice which become obsolete when we grow tired of the Cartesian metaphysical dualism. She directs our look to the possible changes that a holistic reality view could cause for us and, of course, our field.

References

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Beatrix Pfleiderer
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University of Hamburg
University of Hawaii at Hilo