

Congratulation to Dorothea Buck's 100th Birthday on April 5, 2017

On April 5, 2017, the Honorary Chair of the German Federal Association of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, will celebrate Dorothea Buck's 100th birthday. On this occasion, a Dorothea Buck Symposium will take place at the Hamburg University the day after (1). Dorothea, who lives in a nursing home for elderly people, will be connected by Skype. All people who cannot attend this meeting in person can instead watch her keynote lecture, "Seventy Years of Coercion in German Psychiatric Institutions, Experienced and Witnessed" to the congress "Coercive Treatment in Psychiatry: A Comprehensive Review," run by the World Psychiatric Association in Dresden in June 2007. The lecture, translated into English, is available on the Internet at <http://ki-art-multimedia.de/dresden/doro-english.htm>.



Photo by Reinhard Wojke, 2007

Dorothea is an extraordinary woman, gentle, clear, unbreakable, productive. Aged 99, she contributed her manuscript "Psychose verstehen – Erfahrungen der Betroffenen anhören und ernst nehmen" (*Understanding psychosis: Listen to the patients' experiences and take them seriously*) to Kirsten Becken's book *Seeing Her Ghosts* and repeated her central message: Psychiatrists should talk with the people and not treat them as soulless objects, and people with psychoses should try to make sense of their symptoms. In the book's prelude, the American writer Siri Hustvedt backs this message:

"In the rush to explanation, to diagnosis, to treatment, the particular drama and singular narrative of the patient is often forgotten. No human being is a diagnosis, and no subjective state can be reduced to the objective information provided by a brain scan." (2)

Twenty years ago, her friend Brigitte Siebrasse translated her biographical notes into English. Dorothea wrote about her post-war activities:

"Together with the work group of (ex-) users and survivors of psychiatry within the holding-organization of psychosocial aid organizations and many individual fighters, we founded our registered association Bundesverband Psychiatrie-Erfahrener (BPE; Federal Association of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry) in October 9-11, 1992.

Since May 1996, in cooperation with my sister, the publisher Dr. Anne Fischer-Buck, I have been working on information and on a collection of signatures against medical research on persons who have not the ability to consent – even when the research is not for their personal benefit – which is being planned by the Bioethical Convention of the European Council. We keep collecting signatures till April 30, 1997. In January 1, 1997 we have gathered 30.000 signatures.

We experienced the fate and life-destroying psychiatric interventions of forced sterilization and medical mass murder on patients, its missing insight and knowledge because of their withheld dialogue with us. Now we demand an empirical psychiatry, based on the experiences of the (ex-) users and survivors of psychiatry, as we all – the psychiatrists included – can only know for sure, what we have experienced personally." (3)

Dorothea is a victim of forced sterilization during the Nazi era. Beside this mutilation, she also suffered buckets of cold water poured over her head, lengthy baths in a tub covered with canvas, cold wet sheets,

cardiazol-, insulin- and electroshock, injections of paraldehyde, and she witnessed the effects of neuroleptics in her fellow patients. In her article “Seventy Years of Coercion in Psychiatric Institutions, Experienced and Witnessed” she looked back on the most modern psychiatric treatment and wrote:

“During my last psychotic episode in 1959, I experienced for the first time, along with all of the others on the ward, an immediate injection of high dosages of anti-psychotic drugs. I considered this to be a total dictatorship which prevented us from thinking and feeling and also caused extreme physical weakness; it was deeply repulsive.” (4)

After the liberation from the Nazi dictatorship, Dorothea Buck worked as independent artist (sculptor) and taught art and handicraft at the Technical College for Social Pedagogy in Hamburg from 1969 to 1982. Since 1970, she was active in the self-help movement. In 1992, she was not only one of different co-founders of the German BPE, but the key actor. Now she is BPE’s Honorary Chair. In 1997, she was awarded with the Bundesverdienstkreuz erster Klasse (decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany for service to the community), and on February 19, 2008, awarded with the Großes Verdienstkreuz des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, the greatest decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany for service to the community. You can find all these dates on her website www.dorothea-buck.de/ which also is available in [English](#).



Photo by Ursula Müller, 2007

I shared some years with her as board-member of BPE. Meanwhile, when we both left the board, I am her webmaster. On April 5, 2017, I have the honor to be one of the lectures in the symposium on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Together with psychiatrist Martin Zinkler, a strong opponent of forced treatment, I will speak about a psychiatric system without force, where the life, health and dignity of the patient are protected. I shared some years with her as board-member of BPE. Meanwhile, when we both left the board, I am her webmaster. On April 5, 2017, I have the honor to be one of the lectures in the symposium on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Together with psychiatrist Martin Zinkler, a strong opponent of forced treatment, I will speak about a psychiatric system without force, where the life, health and dignity of the patient are protected.

As Dorothea and myself wrote a lot about psychiatry during fascism and the time before, I will use the possibility to refer to a German psychiatrist that neither Dorothea nor myself like: Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926). In 1916, Kraepelin lamented:

“The lunatic is dangerous and will stay dangerous until his death which unfortunately rarely occurs rapidly!” (5)

Two years later, he prognosticated:

“An unrestricted ruler, who – guided by our present knowledge – could ruthlessly interfere with the habits of man, would in the course of a few decades be able to achieve a corresponding decrease in insanity.” (6)

Meanwhile, we know, that, in Europe, the life expectancy of psychiatric patients is reduced by, on average, 23 years; in the USA (where the rate of junk food consume seems higher) by about 30 years. In 2006, Joe

Parks, Chair of the Medical Directors Council of the American National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors, warned:

“It has been known for several years that persons with serious mental illness die younger than the general population. However, recent evidence reveals that the rate of serious morbidity (illness) and mortality (death) in this population has accelerated. In fact, persons with serious mental illness (SMI) are now dying 25 years earlier than the general population.” (7)

Parks’ statement was confirmed by many researchers; even the drug firm Janssen Pharmaceuticals stated:

“Research has shown that the life expectancy for people living with a serious mental health condition is, on average, 25 years shorter than the general population.” (8)

It is no surprise that mainstream psychiatrists and drug companies do not consider the potentially toxic effects of their drugs as the cause of this disaster, but suggest instead that it is the unhealthy living conditions of the patients, especially their bad health. If they were right, would it be not an even bigger crime to administer drugs with potentially toxic drugs to such a vulnerable group?

Knowing the mentioned wishful thinking of Kraepelin, it is no surprise that the catastrophe of increased mortality in psychiatric patients is accepted by mainstream psychiatry as matter of course, without a second thought. Still today, they honor him. Eugen Kahn, for example, a fellow worker of Kraepelin, published his appreciation for Kraepelin in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*. On the occasion of his 100th birthday, Kahn wrote:

“Emil Kraepelin died 30 years ago. The influence of his work in psychiatry continues; it may be greater than we are aware of, particularly in view of the recent efforts biologically and physiologically to get closer to the solution of many of our problems.” (9)

Some years later, in the context of his experience as a dispenser of neuroleptics, the Harvard psychiatrist Gerald L. Klerman gave credit to Kraepelin’s trailblazing work regarding modern psychiatry:

“American, British and Canadian psychiatry today is in the midst of a Kraepelinian revival, that is becoming the dominant force among research and academic leaders.” (10)

If you think that, in light of after more facts about the psychiatric crimes during 1933 and 1945 caused the enthusiasm for Kraepelin to decline, I have to disappoint you. On the website of the psychiatric Ludwig-Maximilian-University (LMU) in Munich, whose medical director is Peter Falkai, 2010-2012 president of the German Psychiatric Association and currently member of the Scientific and of the Organizing Committee of the World Conference of the World Psychiatric Association in Berlin in October 2017, you can read:

“The Psychiatric Clinic of LMU was set up in 1904 by Emil Kraepelin in the heart of the city of Munich. Many famous psychiatric researchers have here made decisive progress.” (11)

“Emil Kraepelin was the first medical director of the LMU Psychiatric Clinic. At the beginning of the twentieth century, he gained worldwide recognition in the psychiatric field.” (12)

The result of Kraepelin’s prophecy is well-known worldwide. Hundreds of thousands of psychiatric patients, disabled people and otherwise unproductive “ballast existences” were sterilized or killed by psychiatrists and their supporters, as soon as the requested ruler (Adolf Hitler) gave them the possibility to act unrestricted.

Mainstream psychiatrists celebrated the 100th birthday of their hero Kraepelin. Let us celebrate the 100th birthday of our Dorothea Buck, remember the many victims of psychiatric treatment and stay together – in

the spirit of the Declaration of Dresden (13) and the Declaration of Vejle (14) – against violent psychiatric behavior, against the reduced life expectancy of psychiatric patients and for an appropriate and humanistic support for people in psychosocial distress.

All the best for you, Dorothea, and thanks forever for all your work!



Remark

Thanks to Darby Penney for support in translation matters.

Sources

With David W. Oaks at the
WPA world conference in Dresden
(Photo by Reinhard Wojke, 2007)

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