

Between Social Psychiatry and Clinical Psychopharmacology: the establishment of psychiatric epidemiology in Germany, England, and France, 1954-1975

The apparent meaning of psychopharmaceuticals for psychiatry often seems to come together in the thesis that it was only with the establishment of neuroleptics and anti-depressants that the development of out-patient psychiatric treatment became possible. The introduction of these substances in the USA, as one famous study by Henry Brill (1906–1992) and Robert Patton (1921–2007) for example argues, led to a radical decrease in the number of beds in psychiatric clinics.¹ While this claim has been convincingly refuted for the USA little is known about the comparative state of affairs in Europe. In England, after the introduction of Chlorpromazine in 1954, the number of patients admitted to psychiatric clinics did actually decline.² At the same time leading epidemiologists continued to debate whether this effect was more the result of the expansion of psychiatric community care than of the introduction of somatic treatment procedures.³

What is rarely pointed out in this constellation however is that after the introduction of modern psychopharmaceuticals the number of beds in psychiatric clinics in France continued to rise until 1969 and in Germany until 1975.⁴ Between 1954 and 1975, the time period considered for this study, these three countries carried on intimate research relationships with one another. In the psychiatric discourse of the German, French, and English researchers of this time, questions of epidemiology were increasingly drawn together with questions of how psychopharmaceuticals could best be evaluated for effectiveness. Since 1950 psychiatric epidemiology had expanded greatly and had come to focus on the prevention and rehabilitation of psychiatric illnesses. Its work involved registering the frequency, type, and severity of psychiatric disturbances and also examining risk and protective factors for the progression of the illness.⁵ The goal of psychiatric epidemiology in particular was and is the application of basic statistical methods for the registration of which factors in interventions are most effective. In many regards psychiatric epidemiology had plenty to offer clinical psychopharmacology. For one thing leading epidemiologists set

¹ Brill, H./Patton, R. E.: *Analysis of 1955-1956 Population Fall in New York State Mental Hospitals in the First Year of Large-Scale Use of Tranquilizing Drugs*, American Journal of Psychiatry, 114, 1957, S. 509- 517.

² Tansey, E.M.: *'They Used to Call it Psychiatry': Aspects of the Development and Impact of Psychopharmacology*, in : Gisjwijt-Hofstra, M./Porter, R., *Cultures of Psychiatry and Mental Health Care in Postwar Britain and the Netherlands*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, S. 81.

³ Shepherd, M.: *The Epidemiological Impact of Psychotropic Medication*, in: G. Tognoni, C. Bellantuono, M. Lader (Ed): *Epidemiological Impact of Psychotropic Drugs*, Elsevier/North-Holland: Biomedical Press, 1981, S. 325-338.

⁴ Regarding the situation in France cf. Nicholas Henckes, personal communication, on the situation in Germany, German Bundestag: *Bericht über die Lage der Psychiatrie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland - Zur psychiatrischen und psychotherapeutischen/psychosomatischen Versorgung der Bevölkerung*. Drucksache 7/42000, Bonn 1975.

⁵ Schott, H./Tölle, R.: *Geschichte der Psychiatrie: Krankheitslehren, Irrwege, Behandlungsformen*. München: Beck 2006, S.4

standards for the controlled clinical trial, which had become established in the countries examined here at various rates after 1945. For another thing the representatives of this discipline were also concerned with the standardization of psychiatric diagnostics and the development of scales that made a standardized evaluation of effectiveness possible in the first place. But how was the cooperation between the two disciplines in Germany, England, and France able to become established?

Research Proposal:

The goal of my research stay is an examination of the various forms of connection between these two fields of research in the three given countries. With this project I would like to reconstruct the exchange between epidemiologically interested psychiatrists in Germany, England, and France, who were interested in the standardization of methods for evaluating the effectiveness of psychopharmaceuticals. Of particular interest to me is the way in which this discourse was related to the preventative use of psychopharmaceuticals.

The preventative use of psychopharmaceuticals, that currently seems to be emerging as a treatment approach for early forms of psychosis, ties in – when more closely examined – with the relationship between clinical psychopharmacology and epidemiology that has been solidifying since the early 1950s. While individual research pieces work out the influence of epidemiology on psychopharmacology in England,⁶ almost no work has been done on the spread of these new standardized measurement procedures, that were developing in the Anglo-Saxon world, into Germany and France. Also remaining open are the questions of how new understandings arrived at in England were received abroad and further developed. The question of epidemiology and its role in the standardized registration of effectiveness and in preventative approaches with psychopharmaceuticals in England will be examined using the archived sources from the Bethlem Royal Archive und the Wellcome Trust as well as a collection of contemporary publications. Was the establishment of the preventative role for psychopharmaceuticals successful early on? How was the influence of psychopharmaceuticals on epidemiological questions, in particular at Maudsley's, discussed? Which correspondences with colleagues in Germany and France can be reconstructed? I would like to reconstruct the situation in Paris on the basis of intensive conversations with researchers working in Paris who have produced or plan to produce work on this subject. Which particular forms of standardization became established in a country that, after the Second World War, looked at epidemiological questions skeptically? To what extent could the first epidemiological studies at the end of the period examined promote the

⁶ Healy, D.: *The Antidepressant Era*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

preventative use of psychopharmaceuticals? Regarding the situation in Germany I have already produced my own work, which I would like to discuss in the other two countries.⁷

Background

In considering the relationship between epidemiology and clinical psychopharmacology in England I plan to examine the Institute of Psychiatry at Maudsley Hospital in London as a case study. The research in this field produced here was significant internationally. From 1946 to 1966 the establishment was led by Sir Aubrey Lewis (1900-1975), one of England's leading epidemiologists and social psychiatrists. Lewis' own practical research was strongly influenced by German clinical psychiatry.⁸ Although Lewis himself maintained a skeptical distance to psychopharmacology⁹ he offered his colleagues like Willy Mayer-Gross, Hans-Jürgen Eysenck, Michel Shepherd, Malcolm Lader and Max Hamilton, who were interested in psychopharmacology, a good deal of space for their own research. He carried on a detailed correspondence about the first drug experiments with his colleagues from the clinic and also with other researchers, in particular with the German psychiatrist Willy Mayer-Gross (1889-1961), who had immigrated to England.¹⁰ For the developing relationship between clinical psychopharmacology and psychiatric epidemiology Mayer-Gross stands as a central figure.

On the one hand he dedicated himself to experiments with psychotropic substances and somatic and pharmacological therapies and sought to unite the insights gained through his own research with a new understanding of diagnostics.¹¹ On the other hand Mayer-Gross

⁷ Balz, V.: *Zwischen Wirkung und Erfahrung – eine Geschichte der Psychopharmaka. Neuroleptika in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1950-1980*, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2010; Balz, V.: *Die Geburt der Stammkarte. Zur Genese eines Epistems der neuroleptischen Wirksamkeit in der frühen Psychopharmakaforschung in der BRD*, *Medizinhistorisches Journal*, 43, 2008, S. 56-86; Balz, V./Hess, V.: *Psychopathology and Psychopharmacology: Standardisation from the Bottom-Up, Using the Example of Neuroleptics*, in: Bonah, C./Rasmussen, A./Massutti, C./Simon, J. (Hg.), *Harmonizing Drugs. Standards in 20th Century Pharmaceutical History*. Paris: GLYPE 2009, S. 255-278; Balz, V./Hoheisel, M.: *East-Side Story. The Standardization of Psychotropic Drugs at the Charité Psychiatric Clinic 1955-1970*, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Science* [Forthcoming].

⁸ Shepherd, M.: *A Representative Psychiatrist: The career and contributions of Sir Aubrey Lewis*, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 134, 1977, S. 7.

⁹ Lewis, A.: *The impact of psychotropic drugs of the structure, function and future on the psychiatric services*. In: Bradley, P.; Deniker, P. Radouco-Thomas, C.(Ed.): *Neuropsychopharmacology*, Vol I, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1959, S. 207-212. On Lewis' skeptical position Shorter, E.: *Geschichte der Psychiatrie*, Rowohlt: Reinbeck bei Hamburg, 2003, S. 389, Healy, D.: *The Antidepressant Era*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1997, S. 125, a differentiated estimation can be found in Keir Weddington: *Enemies within. Postwar Bethlem and The Maudsley Hospital*. In: Gisjwilt-Hofstra, M./Porter, R., *Cultures of Psychiatry and Mental Health Care in Postwar Britain and the Netherlands*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, S. 192.

¹⁰ Bethlem Royal Archive: *Aubrey J. Lewis*, box 1, Drafts and correspondence concerning drugs. Bethlem Royal Archive: *Aubrey J. Lewis*, box 10: Notes, articles, Correspondence.

¹¹ Mayer-Gross, W.: *Model psychoses: their history, relevancy and limitations*, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 115, 1959, S. 673-682. Mayer-Gross, W.: *A survey of the pharmacological possibilities in psychiatry*, *Encephale*, 45, 1956, S. 307-312.

published on epidemiological topics early on, calling for a consistency in treatment that should begin even in the early phases of the therapy.¹² The insights he had acquired in England he published in German medical journals.¹³ The relationship between psychiatric epidemiology and clinical psychopharmacology reached a high point at Maudsley with Michael Shepherd, who in 1967 ascended to the world's first chair of Psychiatric Epidemiology.¹⁴ Shepherd had become famous with his book on psychiatric illnesses in general medical practice. Here he emphasized the role of the general practitioner in prevention but also criticized such practitioners for being too quick to rely on psychopharmaceuticals for the treatment of all psychiatric disturbances.¹⁵ Ever since the introduction of Chlorpromazine in England in 1954, Shepherd had been continuously publishing on the new drugs.¹⁶ At the same time however, regarding the questions of the effect of psychopharmaceuticals on discharge rates from hospitals or even on their effectiveness as prophylactics, Shepherd remained skeptical.¹⁷ Shepherd had been secretary for the department of clinical trials at the Medical Research Council of Great Britain. In this capacity he studied the effectiveness of various treatment procedures and came to have an enduring effect on the standards of examination methodology.¹⁸ Apart from Shepherd there was the English psychiatrist Max Hamilton, also trained at Maudsley, who was also influential in the standardization of psychotropic effectiveness. Back in 1960 he had already published the "Hamilton Depression Rating Scale." This scale was used world-wide, not just in the recording of cases of depression but also in evaluating the

¹² Mayer-Gross, W.: *Selbsterschilderungen der Verwirrtheit. Die oneiroide Erlebnisform. Psychopathologisch-klinische Untersuchungen*. Berlin: Springer, 1924. Mayer-Gross, W.: *Mental health survey in a rural area; a preliminary report*, *The Eugenics review*, 40, 1948, S.140-148; Mayer-Gross, W./Cross, K.W./Harrington, J.A.: *The chronic mental patient in India and in England*, *Lancet*, 14, 1958, S. 1265-1267; Harrington, J.A./Mayer-Gross, W.: *A day hospital for neurotics in an industrial community*, *Journal of Mental Science*, 105, 1959, S. 224-234.

¹³ Mayer-Gross, W.: *Psychische Wirkungen chemischer Substanzen und ihre psychiatrischen Anwendungen*, *Klinische Wochenschrift*, 37, 1959, S. 53-59; Mayer-Gross, W.: *Kraepelins Arzneimittelstudien und die pharmakologische Psychiatrie der Gegenwart*, *Nervenarzt*, 28, 1957, S. 97-100.

¹⁴ Gerald Russell, *Obituary*, *Psychiatric Bulletin*, 20, 1996, S. 632-637.

¹⁵ Shepherd, M./Cooper, B./Brown, A. C./Kalton, G.W.: *Psychiatric Illness in General Practice*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, S. 158.

¹⁶ Davies, DL/Shepherd, M.: *Reserpine in the treatment of anxious and depressed patients*, *Lancet*, 1955, 16, S. 117-120; Shepherd, M./Watt, D.C.: *A controlled clinical study of chlorpromazine and reserpine in chronic schizophrenia*, *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*, 19, 1956, S. 232-235; Shepherd, M.: *Evaluation of drugs in the treatment of depression*, *Canadian Psychiatric Association journal*, 4 (supplement), 1959, S. 120-128.

¹⁷ Shepherd, M./Lader, M., Rodnight, R.: *Clinical Psychopharmacology*, London: English University Press, 1968, S. 252-253. On the arguments about the prophylactic effectiveness of lithium: Blackwell, B./Shepherd, M.: *Early evaluation of psychotropic drugs in man. A trial that failed*, *Lancet*, 14, 1967, S. 819-822; Blackwell, B./Shepherd, M.: *Prophylactic lithium: another therapeutic myth? An examination of the evidence to date*, *Lancet*, 1, 1968, S. 968-971. On the reception of this debate cf. Healy, D.: *The Antidepressant Era*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, S. 127ff. and Shepherd, M./Healy, D.: *Psychopharmacology: specific and non-specific*. In: Healy (Ed.): *The Psychopharmacologists II*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1998, S. 237-258.

¹⁸ Healy, D.: *The Antidepressant Era*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, S. 118.

effectiveness of antidepressants, and it came to play an important role in the redefining of the concept of depression.¹⁹

In Germany and in France it was a different story. Here the relationship between psychopharmacology and psychiatric epidemiology did not really take shape until after 1970.²⁰ Since the end of the 1950s though, a German neuro-psychopharmacology team (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Neuropsychopharmakologie (AGNP)) had been working to develop a “metering card.” This allowed for a statistical comparison of the effects of psychopharmaceuticals and drew heavily on the psychiatric-epidemiological work of Emil Kraepelin. The system also offered a new way of documenting clinical findings that made it possible to detect new clusters of effectiveness among psychopharmaceuticals.²¹ At the two German-French symposiums of the AGNP taking place in 1959 and 1960 the cards were discussed at length with the colleagues from France.²² In a discussion however, Thérèse Lémpière emphasized that Jean Delay and his team of researchers at the Clinique St. Anne in Paris were working on their own scale for effectiveness evaluation. Here the Wittenbornskala²³ was adapted to the French psychopathological tradition.²⁴ In the course of the 1960s the intimate cooperation between French and German psychopharmacologists fell apart, and the lack of agreement between the scales in Germany, England, and France made comparative studies increasingly more difficult.

Little is known about the further development of statistical procedures for the evaluation of effectivity in France. In general French authors like Alain Ehrenberg judge the epidemiological tradition even at the end of the 1960s as weak. For the evaluation of diagnostic and therapeutic questions in France scales had almost no meaning.²⁵ Even the controlled clinical trial in the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s met with little interest and by the leading clinical psychiatrists was even rejected altogether.²⁶ Prevention was

¹⁹ Hamilton, M.: *A Rating Scale for Depression*, Journal of neurology, neurosurgery and psychiatry, 23,1960, S. 56-62.

²⁰ Häfner, H.: *Psychiatrische Epidemiologie*, Berlin: Springer 1978, S. V.

²¹ Balz, V.: *Die Geburt der Stammkarte. Zur Genese eines Epistems der neuroleptischen Wirksamkeit in der frühen Psychopharmakaforschung in der BRD*, Medizinhistorisches Journal , 43, 2008, S. 56-86.

²² Anonymos: *Therapeutische Gespräche deutscher und französischer Psychiater*, 21-22.11.1959, Hospital du Vinatier, Lyon , La Revue Lyonnaise de Médecine, Sonderausgabe 1960; *Französisch-deutsche Gespräche über die psychiatrische Therapie. Symposium unter der Schirmherrschaft der Deutschen Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Neuro-Psychopharmakologie und der Psychiatrischen und Neurologischen Klinik der Freien Universität Berlin, Berlin (West), 8./9. 10.1960*, Medicina Experimentalis, 1962, Vol. 7, Suppl.

²³ An American rating scale, developed by the psychiatrist John Richard Wittenborn.

²⁴ Discussion by Lémpière in: Bente, D./Engelmeier, M. P./Heinrich, K./Hippius, H. u.a.: Entwurf eines klinischen Prüfungsprogramms für die psychiatrische Pharmakotherapie, Medicina Experimentalis, 7, 1962, S. 9-32.

²⁵ Ehrenberg, A.: *Das erschöpfte Selbst: Depression und Gesellschaft in der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt a.M. u.a.: Campus 2004, S. 180.

²⁶ Pichot, P./Healy, D.: *Psychopharmacology and the History of Psychiatry*, in: Healy, D. (Hg.),

indeed a central concept for French community care psychiatry, but preventative measures remained limited to the speedy start of treatment (in part with psychotropic drugs).²⁷ In the period studied Pierre Pichot alone seems to have concerned himself with the development of measurement scales in psychiatry. He published numerous books dedicated to the use of psychological tests and statistical examination methods in psychiatry,²⁸ and in the 1980s he published a book on the results of the seventh world congress of psychiatry, concerned with the topic of psychiatric epidemiology.²⁹

The Psychopharmacologists 1. London: Chapman and Hall 1996, S. 6.

²⁷ Henckes, N.: *Le nouveau monde de la psychiatrie française. Les psychiatres, L' état et la réforme des Hôpitaux psychiatriques de l' après-guerre aux années 1970*, Paris: Ecole des hautes études en science sociales, 2007.

²⁸ For example Pichot, P./Olivier-Martin, R.: *Psychological trends in psychopharmacology*, Basel u.a.: Karger, 1974.

²⁹ Pichot, P.: *Epidemiology and Community Psychiatry, Proceedings of the VII World Congress of Psychiatry held July 11-16 1983 in Vienna, Austria*, New York: Plenum Press 1985.