The Neuroleptics

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Foreword

This volume contains the Proceedings of the Interdisciplinary Week on Neuroleptics held in Liege in May, 1969 under the Honorary Presidency of JEAN DELAY and in the presence of Professor C.L. CAZZULLO as representative of the World Psychiatric Association and Dr. K. KUPKA and Dr. B.A. LEBEDEV as delegates of the World Health Organization. Its aim is to give a panoramic survey of the neuroleptics.

In this era of rapid diffusion of information, of audiovisual mass media, has the written word any longer any value, months after being pronounced? Yes, the written word does still have a meaning, months and even years after being pronounced, if it was at the time well founded from the standpoint of information, if it was understood as a commonly agreed upon expression and if, through the words themselves, it was possible to discern a balance sheet of light and darkness in the ideas discussed.

On September 7, 1966, at the IVth World Congress of Psychiatry
in Madrid, Professor MARIO GOZZANO presided over a Symposium devoted to the International Psychiatric Classification. The same evening, he confided to me, 'Now when we try to understand one another, we find we do understand one another less and less. This was not a question of a psychiatric classification, but of mental confusion. What am I saying - we were beyond confusion, we were in a state of complete mental dissociation.' This severe judgement was no more than a statement of fact, a linguistic fact, and therefore an intellectual fact.

We are experiencing at the present moment the paradoxical situation in which significants, signified, neologisms and computers are being multiplied only to achieve quite imperfectly the basic goals of communication. This lack of efficient means of communication, especially the lack of a nosological agreement, continually distorts scientific publications and statistics to some extent, in whatever field, from that of epidemiology to that of therapy.

VIII Foreword

The Paris school was the first in 1952 to study a neuroleptic in psychiatric treatment. The word neuroleptic itself was proposed by JEAN DELAY and PIERRE DENIKER in 1955 to the French Academy of Medicine. The term may be open to criticism in itself because it takes the part for the whole, but it has acquired the rights of usage and it remains the best.

In 1967, the World Health Organization sealed the fate of the term major tranquilizer, and, in parenthesis, thymoleptic in the sense of antidepressant. The recommendations of the World Health Organization have been followed in Lige, both in the Interdisciplinary Week on Neuroleptics and in the Belgian Collaborative Center of the International Reference Center for Information on Psychotropic Drugs (WHO-NIMH). With the same intention of finally eliminating inappropriate terms, neuroleptic catatonia has been replaced here by catalepsy whenever it is a matter of a cataleptic state and not, of course, in the animal, of a true catatonic state.

While the specialists in basic sciences confuse catalepsy and catatonia, the members of different clinical schools seem to confuse elementary ideas of nosology and even nosography as well. Thus the American Psychiatric Association ends up talking in certain cases about 'schizophrenia, simple type, not psychotic'. Again, because of a failure to apply basic definitions, the results of a US-UK diagnostic project show that 'almost all the large differences between the two sets of official diagnoses were due to the
psychiatrists, and not to the patients. For instance, on the official hospital diagnoses, the New York series contained 62% schizophrenic patients, and the London sample only 34%. On the project diagnoses for the same patients, this difference of nearly 30% was reduced to 6%: 29% in New York and 35% in London’ (p. 130).

We have tried in Lige to facilitate communication of ideas in two main ways. Firstly, we arranged for the abstracts of the individual papers to be precirculated, in order to leave more time afterwards for informal discussions, together with a hundred questions addressed by the participants to each other so as to guide these discussions along interdisciplinary lines; many questions are still waiting for an answer, and for this reason we have reproduced them here in their original form (pp. 168 to 172). Secondly, we organized the Congress in three phases: specialized round tables, public synthetic surveys, and then, undoubtedly the most fruitful, discussions in spontaneously formed groups on specific points of controversy which had arisen during these surveys.

IX Foreword

The bibliographies following the majority of the chapters were compiled by the author or authors of the surveys themselves. 'Other references' were supplied directly to us by the participants in the round tables or have been added by us. Finally we have quoted the abstracts which appeared in the Preprints, are still available from the Psychiatric Clinic, Lige.

Neuroleptics are serious drugs: they have provided and continue to provide benefits which are the greater the more severe the illness, the less capable the psychiatrist and the more the hospital is old, ill-equipped and understaffed.

In certain parts of the world, psychotherapy is restricted exclusively to the ‘gurisseur’ and pharmacotherapy that of the psychiatrist. In French Equatorial Africa, there is no opposition but cooperation between the two. We are well aware that it is always desirable for psychotherapy and pharmacotherapy to be combined, in whatever region, with whatever tribes and races we are operating. But is not the neuroleptic up to now, for the psychiatrist, the oil and the ‘sesame’ which provides him access to the psychosis, or, more modestly speaking, to the mind of the psychotic, to relieve his anguish?

JEAN BOBON, President
We wish to thank sincerely all the participants in the Conference. They were forced to accept an intense rhythm of activity, especially those who wrote the public surveys and these Proceedings. We are also grateful to Mr. SAMUEL M. GREENBERG, Director, Scientific Information Division, McNeil Laboratories, and M. LOUIS VAN HOEK, Librarian, Janssen Pharmaceutics Research Laboratoria, for their valuable assistance.