

Call for Papers

International Interdisciplinary Conference

Untold and Inexpressible: Gaps and Ambiguities in the Medicine as an Epistemological Challenge

Date: 15-16 June 2019

Place: Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Institute for History, Theory and Ethics of Medicine of the University Medical Center Mainz, Am Pulverturm 13, basement (lecture hall U1125)

Deadline: 31 January 2019

Organisation: Norbert W. Paul, Tanja Pommerening

Medical treatments aim to improve the patient's health. From the patient's perspective, the elimination of the suffering and the restitution of "normal" life is a crucial part of the process. Patients express this in communication with the practitioner by describing symptoms on one side and impairments affecting their lives on the other. Much of this can hardly be described in words, especially embodied experiences which do not correlate with medical findings and thus are often not deemed relevant. In this regard, the patient faces the rigid and rational diagnostic categories of the practitioner that sometimes do not at all coincide with the patient's own categories. However, how the gap between the concepts used by the practitioner and the patient could be bridged does rarely come up for discussion.

Not surprisingly, this problem is also highly relevant in the study of historical sources, textual or illustrative. Sources also communicate with us even when we use them only as research objects. They were not however transmitted for this end, and certainly one cannot pose them clarifying questions. One way to reveal the underlying concepts is by means of wide contextualization. Nowadays, a number of linguistic theories focus on the inexpressible; among them are the conceptual metaphor theory, the prototype theory, and translation theories. The untold remains however a gap.

These gaps appear to have been used in the history of medicine as projection areas. The still common attempts at retrospective diagnoses provide a good example of an overly reductionist view of ambiguous and sometime even opaque medical phenomena. Historians assume that the categories and concepts coincide with the modern ones and try to fill the gaps with narratives. This is not a novel phenomenon but rather a fundamental historico-epistemological problem of the history of science.

Our conference aims to explore these phenomena from a methodological perspective. We ask modern doctors how they bridge the communicative gap between their categories and those of the patients. We ask the historical disciplines how they deal with what is left untold or is inexpressible from the perspective of the sources. We are pleased to receive proposals of papers from historiographers of science studying old textbooks on medicine history and exploring the narratives used to fill the gaps in the primary sources.

We expect proposals of papers on the main theme, limited to 20 minutes, as well as panels with a series of papers, lasting 90 minutes. **Beside the specified theme, it is also possible to include other papers (limited to 20 minutes) from the domain of the pre-modern medicine.**

Please submit your proposals of papers or panels to Alexander Ilin-Tomich (ailintom@uni-mainz.de) before **31 January 2019** including an abstract (c. 300 words), which clearly describes the questions and outcomes of your study.

You will find further information on our homepage: <https://ancient-medicine.uni-mainz.de/>