

The Historiography of Nonconventional Medicine in Germany: A Concise Overview

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Quite a number of nonconventional forms of healing originated in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany (e.g., mesmerism, homoeopathy, hydropathy, anthroposophical medicine). This historical fact provides more than just an excuse for pursuing the historiography of nonconventional medical practices in German-speaking countries. It provides, too, a useful basis for a comparative look at this phenomenon, challenging the traditional view that “regular medicine and fringe medicine have had their own autonomous histories”.¹ Although recent medical history has preferred to look at structures, agents, trends and developments in biomedicine, in the last decades nonconventional medical views and practices have also found their historians, especially among scholars concerned with social history and the history of ideas.² Irrespective of the methodological approaches adopted, there can be no doubt about the expansion of the interest in the history of nonconventional medicine in Germany since the 1980s. However, there are already some earlier histories of nonconventional medicine, either of branches which are no longer widely available (mesmerism, exorcism) or of unorthodox therapies which have in the meantime developed into popular and well established health belief systems (e.g., hydrotherapy).³

Even historians have difficulties in finding a language in which simply to name and to describe, without imposing a connotative judgement. As Bonnie Blair O’Connor has pointed out, “the very actions of naming and describing presuppose a particular point of view and often carry a moral tone”.⁴ Most labels used to describe health belief systems other than modern, scientific, Western medicine, are relative terms, as for example “alternative”, “marginal”, “fringe”, “unorthodox” or “irregular”. They are either misleading or carry an unfortunate semantic load. “Marginal” and “fringe”, for instance, imply near or beyond the limits of acceptability, and so hint at inadequacy. “Irregular”

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¹ William F Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), *Medical fringe and medical orthodoxy 1750–1850*, London, Croom Helm, 1987, p. 1.

² For Anglo-American studies, see the volumes by Mike Saks (ed.), *Alternative medicine in Britain*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992; Norman Gevitz (ed.), *Other healers: unorthodox medicine in America*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988; Roger Cooter (ed.), *Studies in the history of alternative medicine*, New York, St Martin’s Press, 1988; Robert C Fuller, *Alternative medicine and*

American religious life, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989; Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Hilary Marland, Hans de Waardt (eds), *Illness and healing alternatives in western Europe*, London, New York, Routledge, 1997.

³ For an interesting case study of this intermingling, see, for example, T W Maretzki, Eduard Seidler, ‘Biomedicine and naturopathic healing in West Germany. A historical and ethnomedical view of a stormy relationship’, in *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 1985, 9: 383–421.

⁴ Bonnie Blair O’Connor, *Healing traditions: alternative medicine and the health professions*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995, p. 2.

connotes significant departure from a standard or an accepted norm but also aberrance, while “unorthodox”, as O’Connor has shown, “carries the ring of oddity, if not heresy”.⁵ Alternative medicine—a term widely used in Germany—gives the twin mistaken impressions that there is a real alternative and that patients or clients really have a choice. Throughout this paper I prefer to use the term “nonconventional medicine”, under which can be classed all therapeutic systems which are in contradistinction to conventional medicine, i.e., the medical system which enjoys the approval, co-operation, and protection of a country’s legal system and other supporting social institutions (e.g., sick funds, government licensing bodies, research agencies). This usage also recognizes that the word “conventional” is itself relative and context dependent. In countries such as China or India, for example, “conventional” refers not only to Western biomedicine but also partly to the indigenous or local health belief systems. Despite the fact that historians have studied the history and language of “quackery”,⁶ this term is also highly inappropriate for describing the gestation of nonconventional medicine in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as it is imbued with suggestions of depreciation and derogation.

In this paper I refer to or draw examples from a limited number of nonconventional therapies. A few are described in considerable detail (e.g., homoeopathy, naturopathy), while others are summarized very briefly, or referred to almost in passing. I have had to exemplify, as including every nonconventional practice of medicine would have made this historiographical overview an encyclopedic work of book-length.

The first part of the paper focuses on nineteenth-century attempts at a history of some of the major challengers to conventional medical practice, reflecting the wish of the adherents of those medical groups to establish corporate identities. Early examples are books by prominent homoeopathic doctors on the origins and history of homoeopathy in German lands. A look at their motives will give us a notion of the response of nonconventional medicine to a wide range of attacks by regular physicians and medical historians, who saw progress in the field of the new “scientific” medicine only. It goes without saying that both groups also shared the values and ideologies of the medical establishment.

The second part of the paper—which covers the period from the turn of the century to the end of World War II—examines the first attempts by professional medical historians as well as amateurs (physicians and healers) to write about the rise and fall of the most *popular* and influential groups and movements associated with what is today called nonconventional medicine. In the first half of the twentieth century, the most prominent among the German medical historians addressing the development and role of nonconventional healing systems were Paul Diepgen and Karl-Eduard Rothschuh. Both have been deeply influenced in their historical work by social, economic, philosophical and ideological considerations. For the sake of clarity I have restricted the classification “popular” to therapies relying significantly on print and other media, and frequently

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶ Cf., for example, Roy Porter, ‘The language of quackery in England, 1660–1800’, in Peter Burke, Roy Porter (eds), *The social history of language*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 73–104. For Germany, for instance, cf. Reinhard Spree,

‘Kurpfuscherei—Bekämpfung und ihre sozialen Funktionen während des 19. und zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts’, in Alfons Labisch, Reinhard Spree (eds), *Medizinische Deutungsmacht im sozialen Wandel des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Bonn, Psychiatrie Verlag, 1989, pp. 103–21.

having formal institutions and curricula for patient instruction or practitioner training (e.g., homoeopathy and naturopathy).

The third part is then centred on recent medical historiography on this subject. There we find a series of studies examining the relations between nonconventional and conventional medicine in particular fields at given times. While the few representatives of nonconventional forms of healing engaged in serious historical research can claim a long tradition of self-centred and biased historiography, the rising number of medical and social historians has clear professional motives for doing the same. Professional interests of this sort have frequently crossed and blurred with more oppositional stances held by those with commitments to modern medicine or to alternative subcultures in lay health care.

The Era of Partisan and Apologetic Medical History

The evolution of the historiography of nonconventional medicine is as fascinating a study as the history of nonconventional medicine itself. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, medical historiography was by and large in the hands of professors of medicine and medical practitioners.⁷ The same applies to the historiography of unconventional medicine, not only in Germany but also elsewhere. This partly explains why the approach was often doxographical rather than historical. Like the adherents of conventional medicine, those physicians who practised homoeopathy, hydropathy or other forms of nonconventional medicine were very well aware that medical knowledge in their particular case was almost exclusively transmitted through the opinions, experiences, and writings of the elders. From the very beginning, followers of medical “sects” (a label used quite frequently by their opponents) grew accustomed to learning about the works of their great masters and predecessors, thus elucidating their own position by agreement or by refutation.

The importance of doxography in contemporary medical books was greatly enhanced by the development of new and powerful nonconventional therapeutic systems in the first half of the nineteenth century, for example, homoeopathy and hydropathy. The fight between conventional medicine and the “sectarians” made it necessary for authors to declare their adherence or opposition to those healers. And the task of presenting the leading ideas and proponents of these competing therapeutic systems was one of the duties which nineteenth-century medical historians who were familiar with the doxographical tradition in medicine took upon themselves.

The first two attempts to give a full account of the origins of homoeopathy and the beginnings of the homoeopathic movement in Germany and in its neighbouring countries were made by two prominent homoeopaths: Clemens von Bönninghausen (1785–1864) and Gustav Wilhelm Gross (1794–1847). Both aimed at a larger, non-medical readership, explaining what homoeopathy meant and how it worked. Characteristically, both textbooks included a chapter on the history of homoeopathy. Bönninghausen, a lawyer by training who became Samuel Hahnemann’s favourite disciple and one of the leading homoeopaths of the nineteenth century, divided his historical account into three parts. He

⁷ Cf., for instance, Charles Webster, ‘The historiography of medicine’, in Pietro Corsi, Paul Weindling (eds), *Information sources in the history*

of science and medicine, London, Butterworth Scientific, 1983, pp. 29–43.

first provided a biographical sketch of Hahnemann, then gave an outline of the history of homoeopathy (mainly in Germany) up to his own time, and concluded with a bibliography of Hahnemann's writings. Bönninghausen justified his emphasis on the biographical and bibliographical approach by claiming that "the history of homoeopathy is part and parcel of the history of its founder, so that it is impossible to treat each one separately".⁸ Gross's book, published in the same year (1834), bore the strange title *Homöopathie und Leben* (Homoeopathy and life).⁹ It followed almost the same historiographical pattern. The author, who was one of Hahnemann's most loyal followers, started with the biography of the great master and then gave a detailed account of the rise of the homoeopathic movement in Germany as well as in some European countries until the early 1830s.

According to the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the purposes of pragmatic history is to "monumentalize" history.¹⁰ Those nonconventional medical practitioners for whom life was a struggle and even a battle with their opponents looked in particular for great examples, for masters and heroes whose words and deeds in the past could bring comfort and strength in the present. By definition, this type of history has no inclination towards objectivity. An early example is Moritz Müller's attempt to present his view of the development of the homoeopathic movement and organizations.¹¹ Müller (1784–1849), the first director of the homoeopathic hospital at Leipzig, was Hahnemann's most important opponent within the movement. He was, for instance, very much involved in the controversy about "true" homoeopathy. In 1837 he published a book entitled *Zur Geschichte der Homöopathie* (On the history of homoeopathy) which claimed that the history of the association of homoeopathic doctors was not well known outside its headquarters (Leipzig) and that it had also been distorted ("*entstellt*") so that he felt obliged for the sake of "correction and amendment of prevalent opinions on persons and matters"¹² to publish his personal view. Müller presented, therefore, a subjective historical sketch of the development of homoeopathy up to his own time. The emphasis was on disputes in the homoeopathic camp. The aim was the clarification of Müller's own attitude and his role in this controversy. Müller's major concern was, however, his reputation as the first director of the Leipzig homoeopathic hospital. So he presented a biased account of its early struggles, its administrative and financial troubles, and its problems as a teaching hospital.¹³ Thus Müller's pamphlet falls into Nietzsche's third category of pragmatic history where mankind is in need of history as a "critical" tradition. This view is necessarily unjust, as the author's judgement on history does not derive from striving for the pure source of knowledge, but, according to Nietzsche, from the "dark driving forces of life which insatiably desires itself".¹⁴ Müller's history of homoeopathy was not,

⁸ Clemens von Bönninghausen, *Die Homöopathie, ein Lesebuch für das gebildete, nicht-ärztliche Publikum*, Münster, Coppenrath, 1834, p. 70.

⁹ Gustav Wilhelm Gross, *Homöopathie und Leben. Oder: Die Homöopathie nach ihrem gegenwärtigen Verhältnis zum Leben, und nach ihrem allseitigen, wohlthätigen Einfluß auf alle Lebensverhältnisse betrachtet*, Leipzig, Kollmann, 1834.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen, Zweites Stück (1873)', in Karl Schlechta (ed.), *Friedrich Nietzsche, Werke*, 6th ed.,

Munich, Ullstein, 1969, vol. 1, p. 229. Cf. Walter Pagel, 'Julius Pagel and Medical History', in *Bull. Hist. Med.*, 1951, 25: 207–25, on pp. 214ff.

¹¹ Moritz Müller, *Zur Geschichte der Homöopathie*, Leipzig, Reclam, 1837.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹³ On Müller's role in the controversy over the Leipzig Homoeopathic Hospital, see Heinz Eppenich, *Geschichte der deutschen homöopathischen Krankenhäuser von den Anfängen bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Heidelberg, K F Haug, 1995, pp. 38–40.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, note 10 above, p. 229.

however, the first example of the use of doxographical methods to describe the rise of nonconventional therapeutic systems in the early nineteenth century. It also should not cloud the fact that doxography (as was the case with conventional medicine) could nevertheless be bound to historical truth or at least to a chronology of the events.

The great name of Hahnemann also stimulated some purely biographical attempts during his lifetime and shortly after his death in 1843.¹⁵ The discrepancy between the scanty authentic biographical data and the fame of the “father of homoeopathy” was, however, the cause of many embellishments and novelistic fancies. In view of this, Hahnemann’s son-in-law gave him the following advice in a letter dated 18 August 1834: “People feel that it would be advisable for you to write your own biography, so that there might exist a correct life’s history of yourself; and then your portrait bound in the frontispiece would be quickly distributed”.¹⁶ And he concluded his wish with a heartfelt sigh, “How very much do the biographies of great men differ from another!” Despite this plea by a historical-minded member of his family, Hahnemann did not sit down to write his memoirs. At the age of eighty he was obviously still too busy with his medical practice and did not bother very much about posterity.¹⁷ What we have, however, is an early autobiography completed in 1791. But even regarding his youth and the beginnings of his medical career before he discovered the law of similars in 1796, this account is incomplete and unsatisfactory as it was written rather hastily from memories and sudden inspirations.¹⁸

In 1847, Constantin Hering, the “Father of American Homoeopathy”, published in a German-language homoeopathic periodical a short article entitled ‘Erfordernisse zur gerechten Beurtheilung Hahnemann’s’ (Requisites for a correct evaluation of Hahnemann). In it he argued that in order to judge correctly the character of this great historical figure, it would be necessary to describe the age in which Hahnemann lived, to depict his childhood in Meissen, and his life as student, young physician and prolific translator up to 1790, the year of the discovery of the new law of healing. Then: “The foundation being thus laid, and the man presented to us in his daily life, his thoughts and his labors, his time and his contemporaries, the second and most important part would be devoted to the consideration of his new opinions, and a statement of the original and gradual development, step by step, of Homoeopathy.”¹⁹ Hering was, of course, aware that not only legends and anecdotes about Hahnemann but also a partisan view could blur the truthfulness of a biography. He therefore postulated: “It will be necessary throughout not to pass judgment, or to give a mosaic pieced together of pros and cons, which would only

¹⁵ Friedrich Rummel, *Hinblick auf die Geschichte der Homöopathie im letzten Jahrzehend nebst einer kurzen Lebensbeschreibung des Herrn Hofrathes Dr. Mühlensbein*, Leipzig, Weigel, 1839; Franz Albrecht, *Dr. Samuel Hahnemann’s des Begründers der Homöopathie Leben und Wirken*, 2nd completely revised ed., Leipzig, Schwabe 1875 (1st edition: Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1851).

¹⁶ Richard Haehl, *Samuel Hahnemann: his life and work*, transl. by Marie L. Wheeler and W H R Grundy, 2 vols, London, Homoeopathic Publishing Company [1927], vol. 1, p. xii.

¹⁷ In 1829 he wrote to his pupil Dr Friedrich

Rummel: “Let me go down to posterity only as the image of my inner self which can easily be discerned in my writings. My vanity goes no farther than this”, quoted in Haehl, op. cit., note 16 above, vol. 2, p. 1.

¹⁸ See Haehl, op. cit., note 16 above, vol. 1, pp. 10ff.

¹⁹ Constantin Hering, ‘Erfordernisse zur gerechten Beurtheilung Hahnemanns’, *Hygea*, 1847, 22: pp. 296–300, on p. 298, English translation from Thomas Lindsley Bradford, *Life and letters of Dr Samuel Hahnemann*, Philadelphia, Boericke & Tafel, 1895, p. v.

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satisfy the superficial reader. Causes must be given in their original form, progress and growth must be demonstrated without any reference to possible errors.”²⁰ It was not the historian’s task to pass judgement, the readers should judge for themselves, or in Hering’s flowery words: “Then let the estimate follow, not penned by the laborious biographer, but formed in the inmost soul of him who shall have read and weighed the whole.”²¹

Hahnemann, rightly or wrongly, has been acclaimed as the founder of a new principle of healing, the keen observer and humane physician. Nineteenth-century biographical accounts of his life and works have either enthusiastically upheld this picture or tried to debunk his halo. For the medical orthodoxy Hahnemann personified all that was bad and ridiculous in homoeopathic therapeutics. Early historians of nineteenth-century conventional medicine, such as C A Wunderlich (1815–1877), included a chapter on homoeopathy and on Hahnemann in their histories of medicine in order to evaluate this therapeutic system for the “truth” it contained. “By showing the genesis of certain theories, medical maxims, and assumptions, thoughtlessly accepted”, Wunderlich claims, “their hollowness could be demonstrated.”²² In Wunderlich’s history of medicine, based upon lectures he gave at the University of Leipzig in 1858, a short outline of Hahnemann’s life and works is followed by a detailed discussion of the tenets of this medical system. The treatment is not only chronological but also shows the clash of opinions. It does not present, however, Wunderlich’s own judgement. He believed that this kind of historical study, presenting just the “facts”, would be sufficient to convince the attentive reader: “A critique of Hahnemann’s teachings seems to be unnecessary. The straight-forward, unvarnished representation of the doctrine takes the man himself to task, so that there is no need for sharp criticism”.²³ Or as Charles Webster once put it: “Wunderlich exhibited no patience with historical figures departing from what he regarded as the progressive line.”²⁴

Heinrich Haeser (1811–1884), whose handbook first appeared in 1845 and was revised and expanded twice, also lent himself to party purposes.²⁵ His was, however, the first history of medicine to be fully documented. His historical writing manifests that he was a partisan of Röschlaub, Schönlein and other leading figures of the natural history school of German medicine. Haeser dealt with homoeopathy in eleven pages. He cited as his authority for Hahnemann’s life and work Franz Albrecht’s *Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann: ein biographisches Denkmal* and Anton Ferdinand Franz Karsch’s *Die Wunder der Homöopathie*.²⁶ He even had words of praise for his major biographical source although it was compiled by one of Hahnemann’s followers, stating that “it is distinguished by its efforts

²⁰ Hering, op. cit., note 19 above, p. 298–9, English translation from Haehl, op. cit., note 16 above, vol. 1, p. ix.

²¹ Ibid., p. 300, English translation from Bradford, op. cit., note 19 above, p. vi.

²² English translation by Owsei Temkin, ‘The historiography of ideas in medicine’, in Edwin Clarke (ed.), *Modern methods in the history of medicine*, London, Athlone Press, 1971, pp. 1–21, on p. 4.

²³ Carl August Wunderlich, *Geschichte der Medicin. Vorlesungen gehalten zu Leipzig im*

Sommersemester 1858, Stuttgart, Ebner & Seubert, 1859, p. 279.

²⁴ Webster, op. cit., note 7 above, p. 34.

²⁵ Heinrich Haeser, *Lehrbuch der Medicin und der Volkskrankheiten*, 1st ed., Jena, F Mauke, 1845. The abridged version entitled *Grundriss der Geschichte der Medicin*, Jena, Fischer, 1884, contains seven pages on the history of homoeopathy.

²⁶ Franz Albrecht, *Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann*, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1851; Anton F F Karsch, *Die Wunder der Homöopathie*, Sonderhausen, Neuse, 1862.

to be impartial".²⁷ Despite his frequent references to historical works written or published by people in favour of homoeopathy, Haeser's bias and inaccuracy of description was criticized by the homoeopathic physician Wilhelm Ameke (1847–1886), who himself wrote a detailed history of homoeopathy but from a "non hostile point of view".²⁸ Ameke even reminded Haeser of his famous predecessor, the medical historian Kurt Sprengel (1766–1833), who purposely avoided writing his history of medicine in a strongly partisan spirit.

The interesting thing is that the revised and enlarged edition of Kurt Sprengel's *Versuch einer pragmatischen Geschichte der Heilkunst* (An essay on a pragmatic history of the art of healing), one of the great textbooks of the history of medicine of the late eighteenth century, also contains a chapter on homoeopathy which contradicts Ameke's favourable comparison. Unlike Sprengel, the person in charge of the second edition, Burkard Eble, did not confine himself to presenting a history of medicine with much information about the lives and works of the authors mentioned. He also commented on the truth or falsity of their opinions. He claimed, for example, that homoeopathy was based upon tenets which were either false and blown up or already well known in medicine. The only positive word he had to say about this new art of healing was that it was useful for stirring up medical opinion, thus serving as kind of "ferment in a viscous leaven".²⁹

In contrast to the history of homoeopathy, it seems that for a long time hydropathy was not a subject worth treating in mainstream medical historiography. The water cure movement was nevertheless the second nonconventional therapeutic system to flourish during the first half of the nineteenth century. It appealed to many who had grown suspicious of heroic medicine. The popular appeal of hydropathy may be gauged further from early accounts of the lives of the protagonists of the water cure, mainly Vincenz Priessnitz (1799–1851). The function of these biographies was to endorse admiration and to do historical justice to a man who had been decried as a charlatan, money-grubber and impostor.³⁰

The biographical accounts which were published before Priessnitz' death are part of more general (mostly favourable) descriptions of the famous water cure establishment in the Silesian town of Gräfenberg founded in the late 1820s. A typical example of this kind of hagiographic literature is Ernst von Held-Ritt's book entitled *Priessnitz in Gräfenberg*, of which we even have a modern edition.³¹ The first account of Priessnitz, which claimed in its title to be a "biography", was written by the director of the Austrian Oriental Academy, Dr J E M Selinger.³² He published his book one year after Priessnitz' death. At that time the vogue for this hydropathic system had already swept across the Continent and on to Great Britain and the United States. In his preface Selinger referred to his sources, mainly his personal acquaintance with the founder of the modern water cure, but also documents and various eye-witness accounts. He justified his endeavours by claiming that Priessnitz, notwithstanding his non-professional background, belonged to the leading

²⁷ Quoted in Wilhelm Ameke, *History of homoeopathy: its origin, its conflicts*, transl. Alfred E Drysdale, ed. R E Dudgeon, London, E Gould & Son, 1885, p. 344.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xi. For his criticism of Haeser see p. 345.

²⁹ Quoted in *Allgemeine Homöopathische Zeitung*, 1841, 20: 138.

³⁰ Robin Price, 'Hydropathy in England,

1840–70', *Med. Hist.*, 1981, 25: 269–80.

³¹ Ernst von Held-Ritt, *Prißnitz auf Gräfenberg oder treue Darstellung seines Heilverfahrens mit kaltem Wasser . . .* (1836), modern edition with an introduction by Christian Andree, Würzburg, Bergstadtverlag, 1988.

³² E M Selinger, *Vincenz Priessnitz. Eine Lebensbeschreibung*, Vienna, Gerold, 1852.

figures in medicine with a historical mission (“*Sendung*”). He praised Priessnitz for being the “clear-sighted founder of a new therapy, a world-famous doctor, a happy husband . . . a well-esteemed citizen, and a noble humanitarian”.³³

Lastly, among the various forms of historical writing in the 1830s, one can recognize the beginnings of the doxographical approach to the history of the water cure. As early as 1835 one of the most fervent advocates and propagandists of hydropathy, a grammar school teacher by the name of Eucharius Oertel (1765–1850), published a book called *Die Geschichte der Wasserheilkunde von Moses bis auf unsere Zeiten* (The history of the water cure from Moses to our present times), which is basically a collection of opinions of physicians recommending the use of water for the treatment of disease and, more significantly, for preventing its occurrence.³⁴ This book explored the water cure over two thousand years, from the ancient Mediterranean to nineteenth-century Germany. Oertel demonstrated that antiquity and the Renaissance possessed a great faith in the wholesome and health-giving powers of water. Oertel’s work has all the shortcomings of pragmatic history. It cites and analyses the opinions of medical authors so that by agreement and analogies Oertel could elucidate his own position.

Even a fellow-advocate of hydropathy such as C A W Richter felt a bit uneasy about Oertel’s method of scraping together indiscriminately all Priessnitz’ predecessors from Moses to the Austrian physician Johann Sigmund Hahn (1696–1773), who developed an entire therapeutic system based on bathing and drinking cold water. Richter, who published a book on the water cure in 1838, especially disliked Oertel’s blind rage, which in his opinion found expression in a style which reminded him of Luther’s crude language.³⁵

Pragmatic History Versus the Exigencies of Scientific History

It was a long time before the history of nonconventional medicine “in its own right”, as opposed to pragmatic history useful to followers and critics, finally made its appearance in the first half of the twentieth century. Following in the historiographical tradition of the early nineteenth century, the later works written in the 1880s pursued what R E Dugdeon called the “indictment of the medical profession”.³⁶ At about the same time, general interest in the history of nonconventional medicine could also be seen in other countries (e.g., the United States), being reflected in historical surveys of various medical sects (homoeopathy,³⁷ osteopathy,³⁸ naturopathy,³⁹ etc.), but the major impetus for the development of this branch of medical historiography was to remain in Germany.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

³⁴ Eucharius Oertel, *Die Geschichte der Wasserheilkunde von Moses bis auf unsere Zeiten*, Leipzig, Heinrich Franke, 1835.

³⁵ C A W Richter, *Versuch zur wissenschaftlichen Begründung der Wasserkuren*, Friedland, Barnewitz 1838, p. 126.

³⁶ Editor’s preface to Ameke, *op. cit.*, note 27 above, p. iii.

³⁷ Cf., for example, Thomas Lindsley Bradford, *History of the Homoeopathic Medical College of Pennsylvania; The Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital of Philadelphia*, Philadelphia, Boericke &

Tafel, 1898. William Harvey King (ed.), *The History of homoeopathy and its institutions in America: their founders, benefactors, faculties . . . , with a record of achievement of its representatives in the world of medicine*, vols. 1–4, New York and Chicago, Lewis Publications, 1905.

³⁸ Emmons Rutledge Booth, *History of osteopathy and twentieth-century medical practice*, Cincinnati, Jennings & Graham, 1905.

³⁹ Richard Metcalfe, *The life of Vincent Priessnitz, founder of hydropathy*, Richmond Hill, Surrey, Metcalfe’s London Hydro., Ltd., 1898.

The most comprehensive history of a nonconventional therapeutic system with a few references to other medical “sects”, written at the end of the nineteenth century, is the book by the homoeopathic physician Wilhelm Ameke. His study exhibited significant differences from the earlier histories: the balance was shifted decisively away from the biographical account of Hahnemann’s life to “the methods used in combating the new doctrine”.⁴⁰ The traditional outline of the life of the great master was replaced by discussion of a school of thought in which there was a more realistic appreciation of the strained relationship between regulars, derisively dubbed “allopaths” by their antagonists, and homoeopathic physicians, who were looked upon with disdain and even ridiculed by their professional brethren, for advocating and practising Hahnemann’s “Art of Healing”. The third part of the book was a short sketch of the condition of medicine at the German university in the 1880s. Ameke concluded his “non hostile-view” of homoeopathy with a look into the not-too-distant future: “History will then recall the remarkable circumstance that the truth in therapeutics was discovered by medical practitioners who received no State support, and that the universities which were established in order to search out truth trampled upon this truth for many years . . .”.⁴¹

Ameke had little competition from fellow “sectarians” in the composition of historical surveys, although—at the more biographical level—a few works on the history of hydropathy written by German authors at the turn of the century deserve to be mentioned in this context. An outstanding example is Philo vom Walde’s comprehensive historical account of the life and works of Vincenz Priessnitz published in 1898.⁴² For this late nineteenth-century propagandist of the water cure, Priessnitz’ views were still a matter of vital concern and not only of historical interest. The same can be said in a way about Alfred Baumgarten, a spa-doctor and medical practitioner in Wörishofen who compared the biographies and careers of the two luminaries of the hydropathic movement in Germany, Sebastian Kneipp and Vincenz Priessnitz. Baumgarten advocated, however, a more “scientific” history of hydropathy, because he was convinced that this special branch of therapeutics still suffered from what he called “formation of myths”.⁴³ He also complained about the abuse of copying historical works without giving the source. Perhaps the most original feature of Baumgarten’s book was the substantial section he devoted to comparing Priessnitz and Kneipp. His comparative biography was also the first history of nonconventional medicine to be exhaustively documented, aiming at an objective examination of the whole truth (“Die objektive Geschichtsschreibung verlangt jedoch Wahrheit”—“Objective historical research demands truth”⁴⁴).

At the turn of the century many historically-minded adherents or practitioners of nonconventional medicine became more alert to the need to relate it to other branches of history, not only medical history but also general history. The shortcomings of pragmatic history when faced with the exigencies of scientific history were felt for the first time. The only solution was to aim at “objectivity” but this was difficult as long as “history serves life and is dominated by the urge of life” to use Nietzsche’s words.⁴⁵ Emphasizing the need for

⁴⁰ Ameke, op. cit., note 27 above, p. xi

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 431.

⁴² Philo vom Walde, *Vincenz Priessnitz. Sein Leben und Wirken. Zur Gedenkfeier seines hundertsten Geburtstages*, Berlin, Möller, 1898.

⁴³ Alfred Baumgarten, *Ein Fortschritt des*

Wasserheilverfahrens. Untersuchungen zur Kritik der Systeme Priessnitz und Kneipp, Wörishofen, Buchdruckerei Wörishofen, 1901, p. xii.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. xii.

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, op. cit., note 10 above, p. 227.

a pragmatic history of medicine must not necessarily lead to a distortion of factual truth. The true historian will be the critic who allows the reader to make his own judgement.

In Germany the first attempt to write a history of a branch of nonconventional medicine from an objective rather than a subjective point of view is Richard Haehl's (1873–1932) seminal study of Hahnemann's life and work published in 1922. It is still the best documented biography of the founder of homoeopathy. The author, a homoeopathic physician from Stuttgart, not only claimed in the preface that he had refrained from expressing his own opinions, he also stressed that he was "anxious to give an actual representation of Hahnemann's own development and of his therapeutic reform, and to allow the facts to speak for themselves".⁴⁶ Haehl made it quite clear that his monumental historical study was not "intended to be a manual of homoeopathic therapeutics".⁴⁷ Among his readers, the more practical-minded homoeopath would get what, according to Haehl, he most probably needed, namely "reliable and clearly outlined information regarding the nature of homoeopathy as a therapeutic reform, about its origin, development and ultimate form, and in addition the intimate connection with, and accurate description of the life of Hahnemann".⁴⁸ Haehl's biography, which consists of two volumes, one containing the text, the other the documents, represents therefore a landmark in the historiography of homoeopathy. During Haehl's lifetime it had no sequel in other branches of nonconventional medicine.

The first attempt at a general history of nonconventional medicine with a strong emphasis on naturopathy, which was merely a collection of biographies, was Alfred Brauchle's (1898–1964) *Naturheilkunde in Lebensbildern* (Biographical sketches of naturopathy) published in 1937. The author stated its novelty in the preface: "This book constitutes something completely new. Although we do not lack works on the history of medicine, there is none in which naturopathy is dealt with extensively."⁴⁹ Brauchle, who was at that time senior physician at the Rudolf-Hess-Krankenhaus in Dresden, was far from advocating a "history in its own right".⁵⁰ He was convinced that his book was useful to the modern student of medicine and science as well as to the general public. He hoped to exert a salutary influence upon people's conduct, and thus inspire them with a desire to take care of their own health, using simple, natural and popular means for healing and prevention. The function of the biographies of the founding fathers of quite a number of nonconventional therapeutic systems (hydropathy, naturopathy, homoeopathy, vegetarianism, medical gymnastics, mesmerism and others) was, therefore, to set an example, to invite love and admiration and, thereby, imitation. In this way, his book, which had a substantial bibliography but no footnotes, was supposed to serve as an instrument of education of the masses. Although this encyclopaedic work had obviously been compiled with scientific accuracy though not in full accordance with scholarly principles, it appealed not only to a small circle of medical historians, but also became a very popular book, now available in a fourth edition (1971). An abridged version appeared in 1944 despite the shortage of printing-paper in Germany at the end of World War II.

⁴⁶ Haehl, op. cit., note 16 above, vol. 1, p. xiv.

⁴⁷ Ibid., vol. 1, p. xv.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Alfred Brauchle, *Naturheilkunde in Lebensbildern*, Leipzig, Reclam, 1937, p. 7.

⁵⁰ On Brauchle's biography, see Friedhelm Kirchfeld, Wade Boyle, *Pioneers in naturopathic medicine*, Portland/Oregon, Medicina Biologica, 1994, pp. 173–82.

The interest in a more “scientific” history of nonconventional medicine reached its zenith in the years 1933 to 1945, when the National Socialists encouraged research in what they labelled *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde* (new German medicine). In 1939 Rudolf Tischner (1879–1961), for example, published the final part of his seminal work on the history of homoeopathy.⁵¹ In the preface he refrained, astonishingly enough, from paying tribute to the *Zeitgeist*. Only from casual remarks do we learn that he was rather gratified that times had changed for nonconventional medicine, but he never explicitly referred to the open support that the Nazi regime gave to folk medicine, homoeopathy and other branches of natural healing.⁵² Being a historian as well as a physician, he remained sceptical about how long this favourable climate would last. Tischner also gave expression to his satisfaction about the increased interest in the history of homoeopathy. He himself had written on the history of other medical “sects” such as mesmerism⁵³ and parapsychology⁵⁴ before he wrote a comprehensive historical account of homoeopathy from its beginnings to the 1930s, including factual chapters on the spread of the homoeopathic movement in various countries.

It does not come as a surprise that a number of prominent figures in homoeopathic medicine as well as in the nature cure movement were attracted to National Socialism. Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy, was the most prominent and powerful advocate of the *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*, a “synthesis of so far one-sided orthodox medicine with the nature cure method”.⁵⁵ Slogans often used by the various movements for nonconventional medicine, for example, the famous “Return to Nature”, combined with the condemnation of the ills of civilization, industrialization, and modernization could easily be made use of and distorted to fit the infamous “blood and soil” ideology of the Nazis and its concomitant social Darwinism, while on the other hand nature cure’s traditional cultivation of strong, healthy bodies could be perverted in support of the inhumane eugenic and racial measures implemented by Nazi doctors, who were generally rather conventional physicians and medical experts.

It is therefore not purely accidental that the history of nonconventional medicine as an academic subject for professional medical historians became effective in the 1930s when Paul Diepgen (1878–1966), the incumbent of the chair in medical history at the University of Berlin, gradually became interested in folk medicine.⁵⁶ His main interest was the relationship between scientific medicine and folk medicine both in the past and in the present. From 1928 onwards he published a number of short articles on this subject in which he advocated the acceptance of the history of folk-medicine as a respectable and

⁵¹ Rudolf Tischner, *Geschichte der Homöopathie*, Leipzig, Schwabe, 1939.

⁵² On naturopathy and National Socialism, see Lars Endrik Sievert, *Naturheilkunde und Medizinethik im Nationalsozialismus*, Frankfurt/Main, Mabuse-Verlag, 1996.

⁵³ Rudolf Tischner, *Franz Anton Mesmer. Leben, Werk und Wirkungen*, Munich, Verlag der Münchner Drucke, 1928.

⁵⁴ *Geschichte der Parapsychologie von August Ludwig* (1922), revised by Rudolf Tischner, Tittmonig, Pustet, 1960.

⁵⁵ Brauchle, op. cit., note 49 above.

⁵⁶ For Diepgen’s life and work, see Thomas Jaehn, ‘Der Medizinhistoriker Paul Diepgen (1878–1966)’, Medical dissertation, Humboldt-Universität, Berlin, 1991. Cf. also Werner Friedrich Kümmel, ‘Im Dienst “nationalpolitischer Erziehung”? Die Medizingeschichte im Dritten Reich’, in Christoph Meinel, Peter Voswinckel (eds), *Medizin, Naturwissenschaft, Technik und Nationalsozialismus. Kontinuitäten und Diskontinuitäten*, Stuttgart, Verlag für Geschichte der Naturwissenschaften und Technik, 1994, pp. 295–319.

rewarding topic which would engage the attention of both medical historians and practitioners.⁵⁷ The result of his own research was a book entitled *Deutsche Volksmedizin, wissenschaftliche Heilkunde und Kultur* (German folk medicine, scientific medicine and culture),⁵⁸ which appeared in 1935.

From a very early stage in his academic career Diepgen also showed a scholarly interest in the history of homoeopathy. In 1926 he published the first book written by a professional medical historian on Hahnemann. In his introduction he praised Richard Haehl for his painstaking archival studies of Hahnemann's life and works, claiming that this seminal biography was on the whole accurate although the author did not, in his opinion, always succeed in balancing "light and shade".⁵⁹ Diepgen therefore justified his attempt at a new biography by the need to do everything in one's power to achieve an "objective picture" of this controversial medical reformer. One of Diepgen's research assistants and collaborators, Bernward Joseph Gottlieb, followed in the footsteps of his teacher and published in 1943 a comparative study on the concept of vital force in the work of Georg Ernst Stahl, Samuel Hahnemann and Rudolf Virchow. In his conclusion he made his point of view quite clear: a dualism between "Schulmedizin" (academic medicine) and "Naturheilkunde" (naturopathy) never existed, "The historical shifts have always been gradual".⁶⁰

Another milestone was the appointment of the young and promising medical historian Karl-Eduard Rothschiuh (1908–1984) as chairman of the workshop on the history and theory of naturopathy under the auspices of the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft für naturgemäße Lebens- und Heilweise. The developments that led up to his appointment are recounted in a recent book on the role which the influential medical journal *Hippokrates* (founded in 1928) played in the establishment of the *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde* in the 1930s.⁶¹ The association itself was founded by a group of physicians with the official backing of the Nazi government and the upper echelons of the German Ministry of Health. One of the founders and leading activists of this highly motivated group of young physicians interested in nonconventional medicine was Ernst-Günther Schenck (born 1904), a student in Heidelberg of the prominent German physician Ludolf von Krehl (1861–1937). Schenck was affiliated to the Hauptamt für Volksgesundheit der NSDAP and later became chief nutrition expert of the Waffen-SS. He was convinced that historical studies would help to extend the physician's professional skills and to develop an understanding of current problems within the medical system. He co-authored a pioneering book on fasting cures which also contained a substantial chapter on the history

⁵⁷ Paul Diepgen, 'Volksmedizin und wissenschaftliche Medizin', in *Die Volkskunde und ihre Beziehungen zu Recht, Medizin, Vorgeschichte*, Berlin, H. Stubenrauch, 1928, pp. 26–40; *idem*, 'Volksmedizin und wissenschaftliche Heilkunde in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart', *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, 1930, 57: 38–44; *idem*, 'Volksmedizin und wissenschaftliche Heilkunde. Ihre geschichtlichen Beziehungen. in Volk und Volkstum', *Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 1937, 2: 37–53.

⁵⁸ Paul Diepgen, *Deutsche Volksmedizin, wissenschaftliche Heilkunde und Kultur*, Stuttgart, Enke, 1935.

⁵⁹ Paul Diepgen, *Hahnemann und die Homöopathie: historischer Beitrag zur Kritik der Lehre*, Freiburg/Brsgr., Speyer & Kaerner, 1926, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Bernward Joseph Gottlieb, *Das Problem des Lebendigen im ärztlichen Weltbild: G. E. Stahl, Hahnemann und Virchow*, Leipzig, Barth, 1943, p. 64.

⁶¹ Detlef Bothe, *Neue Deutsche Heilkunde 1933–1945. Dargestellt anhand der Zeitschrift "Hippokrates" und der Entwicklung der volksheilkundlichen Laienbewegung*, Husum, Matthiesen Verlag, 1991, pp. 183–91.

of this controversial medical treatment, starting with Hippocrates (c. 460–370 BC) and Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179), and ending with recent advocates of the hunger cure like Otto Buchinger (1878–1966) and others.⁶² Schenck contributed to contemporary medical history, too. In 1943 he published a survey on the development of naturopathy in Germany from when Hitler came to power.⁶³ Needless to say, Schenck did not give up his strong interest in medical history after the war. He wrote, for example, a book on Hitler as patient, based on first-hand historical evidence and archival research.⁶⁴

Throughout the Third Reich and up to the end of World War II, Schenck and the chief historian in his group of physicians, Karl-Eduard Roths Schuh, conducted a campaign to popularize the history of nonconventional medicine as a subject to be represented in medical schools by teaching and research, and cultivated to some degree by all practitioners of nonconventional medicine. Roths Schuh, who was a member of the NS-Studentenbund and who unmistakably sympathized with the health policy of the new regime,⁶⁵ published a paper with the significant title ‘Contribution of a theory and history of medicine toward the clarification of questions of our time’, in which he advocated further research on naturopathy for a better understanding of more recent developments.⁶⁶ However, the ambitious research programmes envisaged by Schenck and Roths Schuh did not materialize because the outbreak of World War II thwarted all their plans.

Issues and Themes in the Historiography of Nonconventional Medicine in Germany since 1945

After the War, research in the history of nonconventional medicine became gradually more institutionalized. The professionalization in medical historiography in this field owes much to research which was undertaken with private money. In 1956 the private Robert Bosch Hospital in Stuttgart established a unique research centre for the history of homoeopathy.⁶⁷ In the same year Dr Heinz Henne (1923–1988), a homoeopathic physician, assumed his duty at the newly opened research institute and immediately began to impart his own interest in history to medical students and to associates interested in the history of homoeopathy. Henne was not a professional historian, but medical history was not merely a hobby for him. From 1956 it was first an extra job and later it became a full-time post in 1967. The research institute changed its name several times during his directorship, which lasted from 1956 to 1978. Henne completed the Hahnemann Archives and its special book collection. He also edited three of Hahnemann’s medical case journals and published a number of books and articles on the history of homoeopathy.⁶⁸ In 1979

⁶² Ernst Günther Schenck, H E Meyer, *Das Fasten*, Stuttgart, Hippokrates-Verlag, 1938, pp. 262ff.

⁶³ Ernst Günther Schenck, ‘Naturheilkunde und biologische Medizin seit 1933. Ein Stück Medizingeschichte’, *Hippokrates*, 1943, 14: 217–21, 235–8.

⁶⁴ Ernst Günther Schenck, *Patient Hitler. Eine medizinische Biographie*, Düsseldorf, Droste, 1989.

⁶⁵ See, Kümmel, op. cit., note 56 above, p. 303.

⁶⁶ Karl-Eduard Roths Schuh, ‘Beiträge der “Theorie und Geschichte der Medizin” zur Klärung von

Zeitfragen der Heilkunde’, *Hippokrates*, 1940, 11: 264–9.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, Heinz Henne, ‘Das Hahnemann-Archiv im Robert-Bosch-Krankenhaus in Stuttgart’, *Sudhoffs Archiv*, 1968, 52: 166; Renate Wittern, ‘The Robert Bosch Foundation and the establishment of the Institute for the History of Medicine’, in *Clio Medica* 1980/81, 15: 89–91.

⁶⁸ See, for example, Heinz Henne, *Hahnemann, A physician at the dawn of a new era*, Stuttgart, Hippokrates Verlag, 1977.

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the Trustees of the Robert Bosch Foundation, Germany's second largest charitable foundation, decided to reorganize the former *Medizinhistorische Forschungsstelle* (Research Unit for Medical History) as a fully-fledged institute for the history of medicine headed by a professional medical historian. At present, historical research undertaken by the Institute concentrates on two main areas, both of which have yet to become established at German universities.⁶⁹ These are the history of homoeopathy and the social history of medicine. To help to promote the history of homoeopathy and establish it as an area of research, the Institute regularly organizes training seminars, workshops and international conferences dealing with various aspects of the history of homoeopathy,⁷⁰ thus playing a similar role in establishing a new direction in medico-historical research as the Wellcome Units for the History of Medicine did in Britain for the social history of medicine. Since 1994 the Institute has also co-ordinated an international network for the history of homoeopathy within the network programme of the European Association for the History of Medicine and Health. The Institute produces its own medico-historical journal, *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte*, which has a special section on the history of nonconventional medicine in general and the history of homoeopathy in particular. In 1996 the Institute co-organized the bicentennial exhibition on the history of homoeopathy, which was shown at the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum in Dresden and was seen by more than eighty thousand visitors.⁷¹

In Germany, where the history of medicine remained a small but well-established and independent discipline within the medical faculties, a growing number of professors of medical history have become interested in the history of unconventional medicine and even before the 1980s they were supervising doctoral dissertations in this neglected field of medico-historical research. The tradition which Diepgen helped to establish and Rothschuh to cultivate became a moving force for the establishment of historical research on nonconventional medicine within the medical establishment, i.e., the medical faculties. Effective consolidation of a broader conception of medical history (including nonconventional medicine) was particularly associated with the Institut für Geschichte und Theorie der Medizin (Institute for the Theory and History of Medicine) at the University of Münster, headed after World War II first by Rothschuh and later by Richard Toellner. But also other institutes of medical history (e.g., Düsseldorf, Freiburg/Breisgau, Mainz, Bonn, Erlangen, Munich and Heidelberg) should be mentioned in this context.⁷²

Rothschuh, who was a great teacher and prolific author of textbooks on medical history, was the first professional medical historian to publish, in 1983, a book on the history of alternative medicine covering a variety of nonconventional therapeutic systems

⁶⁹ See Robert Jütte, 'The Institute for the History of Medicine of the Robert Bosch Foundation', *Homoeopathy*, 1995, 45 (2): 42–3.

⁷⁰ Some of the conference proceedings have been published: Martin Dinges (ed.), *Weltgeschichte der Homöopathie*, Munich, C H Beck, 1996; Robert Jütte, Günter B Risse, John Woodward (eds), *Culture, knowledge and healing: historical perspectives of homoeopathic medicine in Europe and North America*, Sheffield, EAHMH Publications, 1998.

⁷¹ Sigrid Heinze (ed.), *Homöopathie 1796–1996. Eine Heilkunde und ihre Geschichte*, Berlin, Edition Lit. Europe, 1996.

⁷² For an extensive but incomplete list of doctoral dissertations on this topic, see the index in the three volumes compiled by Gerhard Fichtner (ed.), *Index wissenschaftshistorischer Dissertationen*, Tübingen, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin, 1981–1992.

(naturopaths, hydropaths, vegetarians, nudists and life-style reformers). In his concluding remarks, Rothschuh, by that time the doyen of German medical historians, made clear how unusual it had been for someone like him to express interest in the history of nonconventional medicine. And he continued by stating that thanks to the influence of his teacher Louis Grote (1886–1960), chief clinician at the Rudolf-Hess-Krankenhaus in Dresden, he had avoided the intellectual blinkers which gave medical practitioners as well as medical historians tunnel vision.⁷³

The history of nonconventional medicine as the subject of modern and interdisciplinary research did not begin in Germany until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Its origins, along with those of the social history of medicine, can be attributed mainly to transformational stirrings within the profession.⁷⁴ The history of medical unorthodoxy branched out into many areas of the humanities. Scholars in a variety of fields turned, for example, towards the history of professionalization, focusing on the functioning of health care systems before the medical profession had risen to its position of ascendancy following the mid-nineteenth century. Others looked at the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the first two decades of the twentieth, analysing the rise of modern, scientific medicine and its battle with “quackery” in the wake of the liberalization of the medical marketplace following the 1869 Act on the Freedom of Trades, which turned medicine into a free profession. German social historians such as Cornelia Regin⁷⁵ and Thomas Faltin,⁷⁶ who wrote on *Kurpfuscherei* (quackery) in the second half of the nineteenth century and first part of the twentieth, describe how the immediate economic threat from homoeopaths, naturopaths, mesmerists and other healers was eventually stemmed by a number of legal and organizational measures taken by the developing medical establishment. These included a ban on professional contact with those healers and the strategic use of professional control over university appointments, medical education, and medical journals. “Secret remedies”, which were sold in high numbers in order to deal with all kinds of illnesses, also became an interesting subject of historical study for some historians of pharmacy and for economic historians.⁷⁷ This list could easily be enlarged by many examples from other disciplines (folk studies, sociology, ethnology) making use of medico-historical data and analysis. At the same time there are number of recent case-studies on unconventional medicine by non-professional medical historians, i.e.,

⁷³ See Karl-Eduard Rothschuh, *Naturheilbewegung, Reformbewegung, Alternativbewegung*, Stuttgart, Hippokrates Verlag, 1983, p. 143.

⁷⁴ Cf. Robert Jütte, ‘Sozialgeschichte der Medizin: Inhalte—Methoden—Ziele’, *Medizin, Gesellschaft und Geschichte*, 1990 [1992], 9: 149–64.

⁷⁵ Cornelia Regin, *Selbsthilfe und Gesundheitspolitik. Die Naturheilbewegung im Kaiserreich (1889 bis 1914)*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1995.

⁷⁶ Thomas Faltin, “‘Ich will Erlösung bringen, der Menschheit überall’”, *Studien zur Ideengeschichte des Antimodernismus und zur Sozialgeschichte der Alternativen Medizin im Kaiserreich am Beispiel von Eugen Wenz (1856–1945)*, PhD thesis, University of Stuttgart, 1996.

⁷⁷ Cf., for instance, Elmar Ernst, *Das “industrielle” Geheimmittel und seine Werbung. Arzneifertigwaren in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland*, Würzburg, Jal-Verlag, 1975.

physicians and healers interested in the history of homoeopathy,⁷⁸ naturopathy,⁷⁹ acupuncture,⁸⁰ anthroposophical medicine,⁸¹ and other such topics.

Whether the ascendancy of philological over medical training has been altogether profitable to the history of nonconventional medicine is a moot question not to be decided here. On the other hand it is certainly true that the scholarly work of professional and non-professional medical historians should not be underestimated. The firm assurance of medical history rests on the assumption that the history of medical doctrines (including unconventional medicine) is useful. The question of the social and political implications of these ideas, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has by now become a very acute one, and has reached the level of scholarly studies.⁸²

As pointed out in the introduction, a problem which the history of nonconventional medicine has always faced, relates to its blurred and shifting boundaries. Interpreted in the broadest sense, it encompasses everything that has been labelled “deviant” by the medical establishment. Therefore it comes as no surprise that in Germany as well as in other countries historical investigations in this field did not begin with large projects but with small ones, studies, for example, of the history of homoeopathy since Hahnemann’s time, or of the rise of the various branches of naturopathy in the second half of the nineteenth century. There is, however, still a need to redress the balance in this area of growing academic interest to medical historians and general historians by drawing together these fragmented histories of nonconventional therapeutic systems in the German context or even in a comparative perspective. In my recent textbook on the history of alternative medicine published in 1996 I argued that it is, of course, advantageous for the historian to define more specifically a limited area of study, but that one should not lose sight of these idiosyncratic nonconventional therapies as a corporate movement, looking for the common denominators as well as for the driving social and political forces behind them.⁸³ I also pointed out that the changing positions over time of a wide range of unconventional therapies—spanning from homoeopathy, naturopathy, and herbalism to anthroposophical medicine, spiritual healing, Ayurveda and acupuncture—cannot be fully understood without reference to the social-political developments which had a major impact on both the conceptual boundaries and the various historical vogues of unconventional medicine in Germany during the last two centuries.

The history of nonconventional medicine is no longer treated as a stepchild, at least in Germany. The same can be said more or less about other western countries (e.g., the United States, Britain, France, Italy). Such study does not and perhaps never should

⁷⁸ Cf., for example, Reinhard Hickmann, *Das Psorische Leiden der Antonie Volkmann. Edition und Kommentar einer Krankengeschichte aus Hahnemanns Krankenjournalen von 1819–1831*, Heidelberg, K F Haug, 1996.

⁷⁹ Cf., for example, Gerhard Hüfner, *Die Wissenschaftlichen Vereinigungen im Deutschen Heilbäderwesen 1878–1994*, Gütersloh, Flöttmann Verlag, 1994; Edzard Ernst, ‘Naturheilkunde im Dritten Reich’, *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, 1995, 92: 800–4.

⁸⁰ Hans-Jürgen Arnold, *Die Geschichte der Akupunktur in Deutschland*, Heidelberg, K F Haug, 1976.

⁸¹ Madeleine P van Deventer, *Die anthroposophisch-medizinische Bewegung in den verschiedenen Etappen ihrer Entwicklung*, Arlesheim, Ed. Natura Verlag, 1992.

⁸² Cf., for example, Wolfgang R Krabbe, *Gesellschaftsveränderung durch Lebensreform. Strukturmerkmale einer sozialreformerischen Bewegung in Deutschland der Industrialisierungsperiode*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974.

⁸³ Robert Jütte, *Geschichte der Alternativen Medizin*, Munich, C H Beck, 1996.

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constitute an autonomous branch of historical research because it is inseparably linked with the mother subject, namely medical history. It is, however, a young and developing branch of learning and interdisciplinary studies, partly due to the fact that at the turn of the twenty-first century nonconventional therapies have assumed an importance which they had hardly ever possessed before.