

Laudatio SBPA Award, November 19th, 2006

Dear Guests and Friends

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to introduce this year's recipient of the SBPA Award in Applied Psychology, Dr. med and Dr. psych. Evelin Gerda Lindner.

By mentioning both doctoral titles I intend to stress not only her double academic commitment but also to illustrate the unusually broad academic biography.

A biography which I can only do justice in a very limited way by focusing on a few main points.

My hidden motivation is clear - I would like to encourage you to explore the widespread academic activities of Mrs Lindner. You can do so by visiting the following website www.humiliationstudies.org.

At the same time this gives you a chance to find points not mentioned in my speech due to the short time allotted for this introduction.

Awards, as a rule, are given in appreciation of scientific or practical achievement and therefore often to older recipients. Usually the speeches start with a discussion of this achievement. Here, we have a slightly different starting point - Evelin Lindner is a personality whose career has not reached its culmination - no final assessment can be made. The event is therefore more an expression of fervent hope that her endeavours may continue to prosper.

It is therefore an tribute to the general development rather than a final statement.

In order to continue these lines of thought, let me give you a short outline of Mrs Lindner's development.

Born in Germany, Mrs Lindner began her studies with a semester of the 'studium generale' with her majors law, psychology and sinology. She then continued full time studying psychology. In 1978 she got her degree in clinical psychology.

She continued studying medicine in Heidelberg, Hamburg and Newzealand.

The multicultural orientation as a personal as well as scientific trait can be seen by following her further studies. Just to mention a few:

Rehabilitation Center for disabled children in Jerusalem, Psychiatric Hospital in Oslo, Paolo Memorial Hospital in Bangkok, Gynecology and Obstetric Ward in Kuala Lumpur, Health Center in Dallas. All these stations were linked by private anthropological research in the respective cultures.

Her evaluation of the significance of the medical profession, illness in general and health care in various cultures, is based on interviews with ca 100 medical doctors in Thailand, USA, Newzealand, Australia, Singapore, Norway and Germany.

As the first resident Western psychological advisor and psychotherapist in Cairo she started projects dealing with quality of intercultural life and communication up until 1991.

Among her first sociopolitical activities were the foundation of the Society for Global Understanding, the organisation of the 'Hamburger Ideenkette zum Thema der globalen Verantwortung' (Hamburg Chain of Ideas Regarding Global Responsibility) in 1993 and in 1994 her standing for the European Parliament.

In 1995 we find the first expression of the term with which we now closely relate to Mrs Lindner: Humiliation Research. 'The Feeling of being Humiliated' is the title of a project financed by the Norwegian Foreign Ministry which was undertaken by the author in the war zones of Somalia and Rwanada/Burundi.

Many publications and lectures as well the the founding of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies Program (initiated by the Columbia University in New York) now connected through a worldwide network, testify to the commitment to the cause.

All these are testimonials and objective milestones to a researcher's commitment.

Behind it all, however, there is a personal connection, an emotional drive caused by early conditioning which explains the main points and direction of Gerda Lindner's research.

Personal remarks allow me to describe Mrs Lindner's background. She was born into a refugee family. Her parents were traumatised by war and fleeing from the enemy. Within this family she shared dreams and yearnings for a fatherland lost. To some extent she experienced a feeling of having to be in a wrong place; of having to be 'at home' where you were not wanted. Through her relations with her parents she incorporated the uprooting of a whole generation and made it a psychological issue.

Her cry for 'Never again War, never again Expulsion and never again Murder and Eradication of whole Peoples!' became an internalised and intellectualised testimonial - a personal and political contribution to reparation.

This issue is not treated in a peace-activist sort of way. It is dealt with in the context of a scientific and researching procedure. The starting point was the study of human beings with various cultural backgrounds in

order to find how love, hatred, war and aggression are experienced and dealt with. Out of this the main question arose:

What is the strongest power preventing humans, cultures and societies to cooperate.

The answer is: Indignity, Debasement, Humiliation.

The scientific success consists in shaping this expression, interdisciplinarily defining and conceptualising it, thus having created an actual and genuine area of research.

The current focus of Mrs Lindner's scientific labours consists of clarifying the psychological factors in international relations and conflicts and laying a basis to transcultural solutions.

As the world stands, we all feel touched by such comments as 'Researching Humiliation suggests that it might be more rewarding to concentrate on the boundaries between moderate and extremist and to try to establish an alliance between the more moderate exponents on either side aiming at reducing feelings of humiliation within the more extremist groupmembers, at the same time avoiding humiliating situations of the masses in order to minimise the possibility for extremist leaders to instrumentalise feelings of humiliation and frustration.

The third priority must be given to the treatment of feelings of humiliation in both parties of a conflict - unless this can be done successfully, a mediation in violent conflicts is impossible.'

To us psychological experts humiliation, violation of human rights, variations of reactions to hurt pride, injured and infringed honour are known as reasons for interindividual processes and disturbances. Most probably, all of us could talk about so called Wars of the Roses.

Through this insight Mrs Lindner was able to disengage herself from the individual case and come to see the global and political importance of the principle of humiliation.

Her deeply rooted feeling for global responsibility enabled her to move this perception from the ivory tower into the political awareness of people.

This is action in the best sense of applied psychology committed to enhance the quality of human life.

The SBAP award is given to Evelin Gerda Linder as a tribute for this commitment. In anticipation that this commitment be able to bear fruit in the form of a Global Village where all humanity can live in dignity and in hope that this commitment will reach people in the corridors of power.

29.8.2006

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