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**The evolution of mental representation of the mentally disabled children and adults - in
the light of institutions promoting separation or healing and development - from the
beginnings to the end of the 19th century**

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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1. The subject of the thesis and the research on which it is based

The main topic of the research on which the dissertation is based is the mental representation formed by the society about the mentally handicapped children and adults in Hungary, in other words the history of the "mental retardation-image". Reconstruction was carried out from the antiquity until the end of the 19th century and it was done on the basis of available literature in consideration with the points of view provided by the history of mental state representation and that of the children. After the analysis and interpretation of primary and secondary sources found during the research, our aim was to provide a synthesized analysis on the different forms of representations of mental disabilities that could both coexist in an era and vary by the change of historic times.

Going through the history of childhood and mentality the social and institutional context made it necessary to expand our research to the history of the formation and differentiation of institutions with the purpose of separation, healing, and development of those with mental disabilities and stigmatized by society in other ways. Reconstruction of the historical background was carried out from the beginnings (from the first appearance of the asylums established to lock away people classified as „fools”) to the end of the 19th century. By that time the establishment of institutions that hosted and helped in the development of people with mental disabilities has begun.

2. The interpretation of the representation of people with mental disability in historical context

Increasing number of authors draw attention to the fact that considerable progress has been made concerning the research themes, theoretical background and applied methods in both international and hungarian researches of pedagogy-history in the last decades (Tenorth, 1997, Nemeth, 2011). The changes in research and theoretical paradigms have visible consequences: the increasing distance from classic historical perspectives and the increasing proximity to interdisciplinary approaches. This change can be well perceived in the awareness-raising effect of social history, cultural history and historiography of post-modern on education-history writing (Nemeth, 2011, 149-150.). Childhood-history writing based on mentality-history was introduced by Philippe Aries (1960), whose classic theses are now the subject of debate, but his science-forming and awareness-raising importance is unquestionable.

According to childhood-history authors of recent decades childhood is a social construct born of a given time period and social-cultural environment (Hawes and Hiner, 2000, Szabolcs, 2011, Jencks, 1996, Hendrick, 2000). Part of this childhood constructed in a specific socio-historical environment is the image of the child, in other words the abstract mental representation of the child. The image of the child is a mental construction that is derived from the opinions, theories, concepts, narratives, and expectations of people of a given era and culture organizing the construction into tighter or looser mental structures.

Accordingly we interpret the perception of the mentally handicapped children and adults as a mental construct that reflects the thoughts, beliefs, theories, concepts (and preconceptions), prejudices and other narratives of a particular era and culture.

Therefore the perception of the mentally handicapped children and adults in a given era and culture can not be considered as a homogeneous unit. Discourse between different mental constructs based on different beliefs and ideological foundations can be found in different

historical eras and cultures. Nowadays coexistent, „argumentative” children-images also can be found even in the majority of childhood-history publications about healthy children. (See, for example Golnhofer and Szabolcs, 2005. Szabolcs, 2011.)

3. The interdisciplinary nature of the research

When following the changes in perception of the mentally handicapped children and adults we relied heavily on the results of the general childhood-history, its theories, scientific concepts, and research methods.

Because of our topics uniquely interdisciplinary nature, for creating the background of the research we used the results of related disciplines, such as special education, special education-history, disability-science, disability-history, psychology-history, history of medicine. We also took into account the results of young disciplines such as the history of mentality and the history and psychohistory of everyday life belonging to the framework of new history.

3. Methods used during the research and models aiding the interpretation of results

1. During research according to the nature and content of available sources we used the classic investigative, analysing, and interpretive methods. After the critical analysis and comparative interpretation of the primary and secondary source texts we gave a synthesized summary about the disability-image in the examined eras and cultures.

2. The reconstruction of the image of mentally handicapped children and adults made it necessary to explore the institutional background in which the image of the mentally handicapped most strongly manifested in each of the eras. Therefore, we analyzed - among other things – the development of institutions first separating then curing and developing people with mental disabilities in Europe. In the focus of our investigation were the French, English, German and Hungarian institutions. This way the historical research was completed with the reconstruction of institutional history.

3. Among the applied methods were the analysis and interpretation of contemporary professional discourses (medical, psychiatric, educational) about mental disabilities and mental health problems that were relevant to our topic. Such relevant discourse took place in the 18th century and the early decades of the 19th century amongst French and German medical-psychiatric circles about the differential diagnosis of mental retardation. To refer to this discourse the name „idiocy talk” is used.

The processing and interpretation of contemporary (German, French, English and Hungarian) source texts confronted us with an unsolved research methodology problem that originates from the significant differences between the scientific terms used at the time - covered by the research - and today.

Historians Miklós Kőszeghy and Szabolcs Parragh call attention to the fact that "... there were no disabled people in history", that is until the 19-20. century there were no sufficient terms with which the social situation of people with disabilities and their relationship with the majority could have been described. "In a sense, it comes to it again - the authors wrote - that we ask the wrong questions when we are looking at the situation of disabled people of the past. Because in fact, the unified social rejection or acceptance are such conditions that were

unknown institutionally - and therefore linguistically - until the late modern age" (Kőszeghy and Parragh in: Zászkaliczky and Verdes, 2010. 532). Thus, we stayed away from searching for concepts of the current special education and disability-science in old texts, and projecting the modern concepts, expectations, or professional attitudes to the past. However, "the lack of understanding of the present inevitably arises from the lack of knowledge of the past." (Jacques Le Goff cites the words of Marc Bloch, 2005, 16). We believe that the researcher's "presence in the present" ("Sitz im Sein") and up-to-date knowledge can contribute to a sufficiently differentiated and humble analytical approach to the examined historical periods.

The outlined theoretical-methodological considerations and problems have also contributed to the fact that when determining our topic we narrowed down our discussion to the perception of the mentally handicapped children and adults in history instead of the perception of all forms of disability.

To illustrate the relationship between the facts that the research of the primary source texts revealed we used the theoretical modeling of social sciences. The sociological model - according to our interpretation - is a mental construction, in which we highlight the important elements of an examined socio-historical reality and connect them with each other in order to find interpretive-explanatory principles to describe the system as a whole. In our research the disability-science model was applied presented by György Könczei and Ilona Hernádi in several publications (Könczei and Hernádi, 2011.). This model also has a historical-chronological dimension and the following are its components distinguished by the authors: 1. moral model, 2. medical model, 3. social model, 4. human rights model. In our dissertation we chose to differentiate and re-interpret the first two elements (moral and medical) of this model on the basis of historical sources.

4. Research questions

After processing the secondary literature on the subject, the following research questions arose:

1. Can theoretical modeling be used for reconstruction of the mental representation of disabilities or must we settle only for the concrete analysis of the „mental retardation image” in specific texts?
2. The subject of our research is the institutionalization of the „mental retardation image” and the development of the institutional background supporting this image. We seek the answer to the question whether the mentally disabled children and adults stood out in their „isolation" (Foucault) among the other outcasts carrying a wide variety of stigmas, from the late Middle Ages until the 19th century. In other words: were the people with mental disabilities „visible” among the crowd of other people shut in asylums?
3. While examining the historical development of the „mental retardation image” in our research we focus on the contemporary intellectual, philosophical and pedagogical trends, that were critical in shaping the scientific and layman's point of view at the time. We believe that the Enlightenment has paramount importance among these trends. The question arises whether during the Enlightenment the optimistic pedagogical trend with its intentions for perfection can also be detected in cases of people with mental disabilities.
4. Childhood-history and theories of history research results had shown that during the Enlightenment most educational trends in the 18-19th century considered even the healthy child - at least compared to the ideal of human wholeness - disabled to some degree who has the

potential to become a valuable person through education (Pukánszky, 2005). The question is that how the widespread educational ambitions - that had practically no boundaries - materialized in the life of people with mental disabilities during the centuries of the Enlightenment. Did the medical or the pedagogical approach dominated, or did they form some sort of synthesis of the two perspectives?

5. Reconstruction of the „mental retardation image” of different historical periods

According to the reconstructed image of mental retardation in antiquity the term "disability" did not exist in the modern sense in those cultures, therefore no single attitude has formed in the mentality of the people. The image of people living with disabilities differed even within a certain culture. General feature of this era is that most people viewed diseases and disabilities (mental disability as well) as the punishment of angry gods or other supernatural powers. However, despite the stigma of punishment the image and social situation of the people with different types of disabilities still varied (Braddock and Parish, 2001. 14.).

Accordingly, the image of mentally handicapped people of different cultures in the antiquity could not be organized into a single model, we can only talk about separate narratives in historical-cultural context. The interpretation of disabilities (mental disability as well) as god's punishment and the stigmatization of disabled people, however, can not be detected consistently in these cultures.

During the European Middle Ages we can find elements that have outlined a more paradigmatic image. The „mental retardation image” was somewhat more consistent than in ancient times, even if we know that the medieval mindset, mentality showed many differences, depending on the people's different cultural, social status and personal experience. The general rule of charity led to helping gestures toward the fallen, people in need, and people with disabilities. In this environment were the first hosting institutions, shelters, and asylums established for the people in need, the fallen, and people with disabilities.

It is also apparent that next to the social attitudes of charity and aid, at the end of the Middle Ages the intention for stigmatization, segregation and banishment of people belonging to a minority also arose. In literature the mysterious ark, the Ship of Fools becomes a metaphor for exile, a floating prison drifting towards the afterlife with its passengers on the body of water symbolizing purification.

To sum up we believe that the model of "charity against segregation" could describe the best the „mental retardation image” of the medieval times.

At the end of the Middle Ages, during the Renaissance and the Reformation greater changes can be witnessed in mentality and public opinion. The church has a significantly smaller role in helping children with disabilities and their institutionalization, the residents of introverted and isolated monasteries took less and less part in charity work. The term "fool" was established as a collective term under which everyone belonged whose behavior was confusing or different from the conventional, who did not fit into the expected secular and religious norms.

The evolution of the image of fools was driven by fear of the unfamiliar, the strange, the unusual. Probably this xenophobia motivated the classification of the mentally disabled children and adults as creatures who represent a danger for the majority. Fear often became mass hysteria and led to witch hunts and manifested in inquisition.

However we also found that people with certain kinds of mental retardation were spared the hostility of the public. Portraying young people with Down's Syndrome on Renaissance paintings – where they are not stigmatized but are in a par with the normal people - seems to confirm this exceptional situation (Levitas and Reid, 2003, Starbuck, 2011, Leach, 2013a and 2013b). "Madness" takes a kind of stylized, objectified form in contemporary theatrical works (farce-comedies) and visual arts (stone-cut theme). It is considered to be a „contaminating, destructive substance” similar to sin, which is according to the common medieval beliefs is to be "washed off and destroyed" (Huizinga, n.d. 2008). Insanity can be removed, excised from the intact body just like undesirable, stigmatized people can be removed from society.

Based on these attitudes towards fools during the Renaissance and the Reformation we believe the model of "increasing stigmatization and segregation" provides the best description.

We can say as a conclusion that during the Enlightenment, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, up until the beginning of the 19th century, in the Western European societies the situation of people with mental disabilities intertwined with the fate of the "fools". The majority of people saw them as confusing, different from the social norms, and considered them "abnormal". Initially they stigmatized, segregated or locked away them. Later people with mental disabilities were subjected to medical treatment that expressed the pedagogical optimism of the Enlightenment about character formation, "normalization", and "perfectionism".

The "big" segregation-type institution, the "classic" asylum - in the sense of Foucault (Foucault, 2004) - fulfilled a dual form at the end of the 18th century. On the one hand it crowned, but did not close the period of the Enlightenment's moral development. The development and normalization of people with mental disabilities, "fools", and psychiatric patients with educational tools continued in institutions of subsequent eras. On the other hand, the major segregation-type institutions at the top of their evolution, at the turn of the 18-19. century opened the way to a new era. By this time, the difference is more and more pronounced in the institutional system between the "healing asylums" and the "hosting institutions".

In the 19th century this institutional differentiation became more definite:

a.) Segregation-type, hosting, and care institutions were established only for people with mental disabilities who fell into the „idiotcy” category and were diagnosed incurable by the contemporary terminology (primarily from German and French medical authors).

b.) A new type of so-called "healing asylums" (institutions for curing the mind) were established for psychiatric patients, which were home to the development of healing, correcting, personality-education (medico-pedagogical) features. In exceptional situations mentally disabled people could get into such institutions and were allowed to stay.

In the healing asylums during the 19th century still remained the practice of „moral treatment” - that can be traced back to the 18th century - accompanied by medical treatments and therapies. The so-called "moral treatment" (traitement moral) appeared in the last decades of the 1700s among the methods used in the asylums which displaced the tie-down, physical abuse, and physical coercion of people with mental disabilities. The purpose of the treatment was to observe the spiritual life of inmates, influencing their behavior with psychological and pedagogical methods, and forming their way of thinking and moral habits.

Later in the century the medical nature of the treatments became more pronounced. This process is well demonstrated by the results of the discourse of "romantic" psychiatry (of

German origins) (eg. Reil and Heinroth) – dominant in the early 19th century - and "somatic" trends (eg. Jacobi and Griesinger) that led to the advance of the latter.

During the 19th century a particular duality appeared in the professional discourse about mental illness and idiocy:

On the one hand people with mental health problems have become more and more "visible" in the 19th century in the developing western societies and cultures. The value of their status - as a result of the positive acceptance of their somatic disease, their "sick role" - increased (see Porter, 2002). Mental illness was believed to be curable with medico-pedagogical methods.

On the other hand, the mentally disabled children and adults - in the first half of the 19th century – remained almost completely "invisible". They remained hidden in their families, villages, communities, in the care institutions or healing asylums.

This situation changed slightly only when in the early 19th century a special „endemic disease” attracted the public attention, the cretinism.

During the century an intensified medical professional discourse began about cretinism, about children and adults living with cretinism. Efforts were made to explore the cause, prevention, and possible cure of diseases and to help people living with cretinism.

To give a summary of the era we can say that the „retardation image” of the previous periods divided into two branches during the 19th century.

1. The status of psychiatric patients became more appreciated, the public sees them as people in need of healing (Porter, 2002).

2. People with mental disabilities become visible only in a process moving forward slowly.

In their case, the cretinism discourse, the reformer special-education teachers work, and healing-development institutions’ openness (eg. Guggenbühl’s "Abendberg" - institution) slowly transformed the public opinion. As a result, the healing and development of people with cretinism and people with mental disabilities became more and more a public issue during the century.

6. Response to the research questions

1. The research confirmed our belief that creating a model works well for highlighting the major relationships of individual methods during different ages and cultures to reconstruct the image of mental disability. We refrained from drawing overly general conclusions based on the source material that was often highly deficient. In the society of different eras’ "cultural subsystems" many different „mental retardation images” coexisted - as the healthy child image also shows diversity if we look at it more carefully. We can only limit ourselves to determine what features of a specific era became dominant in the specific culture among the other existing mental disability images.

2. Based on the experience of our research we can state that people with mental disabilities were visible only very slightly in the examined period. They merged with the stigmatized and excluded people in the big "segregation institutions " (if they were brought in there at all), and thus remained almost unnoticed. They became visible only from the time when the idiocy-discourse intensified during the early 19th century, when mental disability gradually became a

more pronounced independent category within the medical and psychiatric literature. Or when specific authors and medical practitioners listed them as incurable patients separating them from the curable psychiatric patients and "expelled" them from the healing asylums (Reil, 1803, D'Ester, 1842, Shorter, 1997, Porter, 2002).

3. During our research we clearly sensed the manifestation of optimistic educational-perfectionism during the Enlightenment, the therapeutic intentions regarding psychiatric patients in healing asylums of the 19th century, and that of physicians, teachers, and special teachers directing healing, developing, and teaching institutions.

4. Our research provided an interesting finding: the intention of perfection, improvement of people had an impact not only in the field of practical education, theoretical science of education, and on the increasingly organized school systems, but also on the contemporary medical science and practical medicine. Our results confirmed that the competency-boundaries of medical science and practical medicine were more flexible and permeable. According to contemporary medical authors' works of pedagogical subjects show that they were also strongly concerned with the improvement and education of people (Heinroth, 1823, Heinroth, 1825, Reil, 1803).

To describe the medical, pedagogical, and andragogical developing ambitions' complex effects during the Enlightenment and the character of asylums in that period we believe that the term of "medico-education" used by Charles-Olivier Doron is the most expressive (Doron, 2015). By incorporating this concept we propose the completion of the traditional terminology of (medical) education history and disability-history.

7. Further research perspectives

During the research and the completion of the dissertation methodological and substantive questions were raised that require further investigation. The processing of the source material also introduced new subjects and new interdisciplinary approaches. Further research is necessary in order to grasp the changes of the 20th-21th centuries. The examination of the two other paradigmatic principles of social and human rights models in the context of childhood-disability history and disability-image history.

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