

Bay Area History of Medicine Club

Date: November 12, 2008
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Laurel Heights
Room 376

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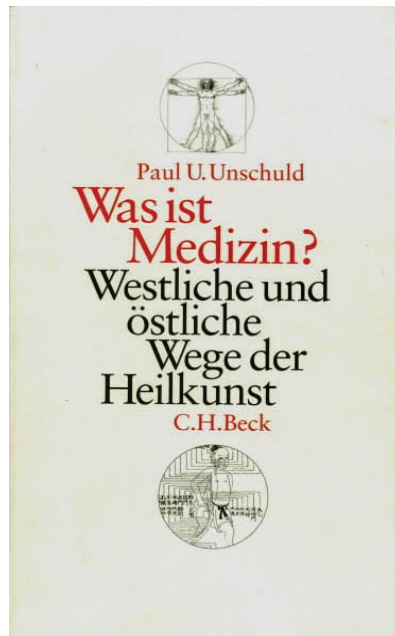
MEDICAL HUMANITIES

What is Medicine? A comparative history of Chinese and European medicine

Prof. Paul U. Unschuld

Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin

Founding Director of the Horst-Goertz-Institute for the Theory, History, and Ethics of Chinese Life Sciences



This talk focuses on three hypotheses:

- 1) Basic theories on physiology and pathology are not stimulated by clinical experience and dissection, they are accepted because of their plausibility.
- 2) The image of the body/organism has its model image outside of the body/organism. Two examples from the history of medicine in China and Europe will serve to test this hypothesis: First, the emergence of ancient Chinese medicine. Second, the different notions of blood circulation in Europe as brought forward by Harvey, Descartes, and German physiologists.
- 3) A conclusion to be drawn from a comparative analysis of Chinese and European theory building is: Medical

theories reflect subconscious notions of order. The social order reflected in basic medical theories may be real or ideal. It may reflect what it is, or what people yearn for. Changes in real or hoped for order of the social organism cause changes in basic notions of the "order" and "disorder" of the human organism. If in a society groups with different notions of order coexist, they will have different notions of health and disease and of health care.

Open to the public.

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