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The Local World of Beliefs about Transplantation.

In View of Medical Anthropology

(summary)

The goal of my research and dissertation is to learn the image of transplantation in the popular sector of health care system on the example of laypeople's beliefs. I conducted research in Wola Krzysztoporska, Poland, from April 2014 to September 2016. I collected a lot of ethnographic data but in the end I put under analysis 35 ethnographic interviews full of cultural meanings that contrast to biomedical assumptions. Doctors from Uniwersytecki Szpital Kliniczny im. Norberta Barlickiego w Łodzi (one of the biggest hospitals in Łódź, Poland) asked me to answer the great question: Why laypeople worry about transplantation? I not only centre on social and cultural strands of dread of transplantation, but also inform health professionals (doctors) about **how traditional and religious beliefs conflict with biomedical assumptions.**

My doctoral dissertation consists of two parts. In the first part named *Anthropology toward Medical Contexts (Antropologia i konteksty medyczne)* I summarise the roots and specificity of medical anthropology as a young subdiscipline of social and cultural anthropology. I set out main assumptions, theoretical and methodological approaches of medical anthropology, its crucial issues and notions, objects of study and main branches in order to characterize the subdiscipline and to indicate my vision of medical

anthropology that I embodied in my research and dissertation. To provide with details – I see medical anthropology as a channel of mediation between representatives of biomedicine (doctors) and laypeople (patients).

The second part named *The Local World of Beliefs about Transplantation* (*Świat lokalnych wyobrażeń o przeszczepach*) I not only present the ethnographic data collected during my research in Wola Krzysztoporska, Poland, but also I analyse and interpret them (attitudes toward transplantation in the popular sector of health care system) through the prism of some anthropological and religious analytical categories. This part consists of four chapters:

- The first one concerns symbolic strands of transplantation as a **'gift'** (according to Marcel Mauss and Maurice Godelier). I try to answer the questions: Who is the best and the worst organ donor?, Who is the best and the worst organ recipient?, How to repay such a gift correspondingly?, Is there anything that ties the organ donor and recipient together?
- The second one is dedicated to popular beliefs about the graft itself. The notion I use to analyse the attitudes toward the grafts is **'sensationalist non-discernability'**.
- In the third one I analyse the beliefs about xenotransplantation through the prism of **'dirt'** (according to Mary Douglas).
- The fourth one concerns **thanatological and eschatological beliefs** that influence attitudes toward transplantation.

The key outcome of my research and dissertation is that the popular sector of health care system is truly syncretic and **laypeople's beliefs about transplantation are inextricably linked with contexts of faith and religious convictions**. I do not mean catholic orthodoxy but peculiar religious syncretism.

Sebastian Lech