

S05-02 - Transcultural perspectives of medicine

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The psy fields are predicated on the cartesian notion of a mind-body dualism. Suffering is understood to stem either from problems of mind or from problems of physiology. A related dualism is that of the “biological” and that of “cultural”. Recent commentators have worked at great length to collapse this dualism in day to day work with patients. At the same time, it clearly forms a fundamental part of medical epistemology. From a transcultural perspective, it is increasingly clear that there exists the possibility for considerable difference in the four “Es”: Experience, expression, explanation and expectations related to suffering. This variation is in large part related to the epistemic structure underlying any given culture, and, taken as such, can present a considerable challenge to consultation-liason psychiatry. A patient may experience suffering that is expressed in the form of strange sensations in a specific parts of the body. This is then explained as a consequence of a certain process that is culturally syntonc, and then expects a certain course of suffering as well as treatment. Given that we tend to take our epistemic perspectives for granted as representative of the “world as it is”. The C-L psychiatrist who does not take these variations into consideration could all to easily arrive at a misdiagnosis and as such erroeneous treatment.