

Introduction

In recent years, single observations collected over several decades and a number of hypotheses and partial models of the aetiology and the course of schizophrenia have been aggregated into a few comprehensive socio-psycho-biological theories.

However, in the course of this process, it has become clear that investigating additional pathogenetic factors, further identifying performance deficits, or calculating additional correlations will no longer result in significant progress, as we have reached the barrier set up by Newton's scientific paradigm of linear causality. What has already become a matter of fact in physics, climatology, and ecology must also become inherent in psychiatry – a systemic approach taking into account circular, recurrent effects. Schizophrenia research has to proceed from linear chains of cause and effect to circular models, though these will be difficult to verify without the use of partially reductionist approaches.

To promote this kind of strategy, the two editors organised the Second International Symposium on Schizophrenia at the University Psychiatric Clinic of Bern from 10 to 12 September, 1987. Its topic was *The Role of Mediating Processes in Understanding and Treating Schizophrenia*. The processes referred to were those which play a mediating role between the biological, psychological, and social factors that are relevant for schizophrenia, and in particular the so far mainly uninvestigated dynamic interactions between various pathogenetic, pathoplastic, disintegrating, but also restitutive influences. The contributors were asked to interpret from their particular points of view the interactions of the many factors that are currently considered important either in the development of schizophrenia or in the process of coping with it.

This volume represents a continuation of the

report on the First International Symposium on Schizophrenia, Bern, published in 1987. The topic on that occasion was the *Psychosocial Treatment of Schizophrenia*.

Here again, reports of new comprehensive theories of schizophrenia provide an interactional access to the subject, and are followed by papers presenting in detail the special aspects of genetics, neurobiology, pharmacotherapy, individual psychology, person–environment relationships, self-help, and work with relatives.

We would like to thank the authors for their contributions and for considering our suggestions and wishes in writing them. A German edition of this book has been published by Hans Huber Publishers, Bern.

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We hope that this collection will be widely read and that it will promote even greater interest in the interplay of new concepts about schizophrenia and in the promising possibilities of a future treatment strategy that can be based on a systemic approach.

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