** "PRETUBERCULOID," "SUBTUBERCULOID," "FRUSTE"

In one of his Havana Congress papers Dr. Hervé Floch [Memoria, p. 569; The Journal 16 (1948) 291, abstract], discussing the histopathology of leprosy, remarked:

La terme tuberculoïde précoce ou celui de prétuberculoïde souvent employés, semblent indiquier une tendence evolutive des lésions alors que nous avons trouvé cet aspect, et non rarement, dans de vielles lésions tuberculoïdes. Si l'on tient compte du fait que ces structures, si elles peuvent être destinées à devenir tuberculoïdes, peuvent l'être aussi à subsister telles quelles, ou à disparaître pour faire place à des lésions du type indifférencié ou à des lésions cicatricielles, il semble que le terme de tuberculoïde fruste serait plus judicieux que ceux de tuberculoïde précoce ou prétuberculoïde. Il ne présage en dien de l'évolution future des lésions.

In a series of reports on the skin lesions of neural-type leprosy published by Wade and associates more than a decade ago the term "subtuberculoid" was applied to small focal groups of epithelioid cells which, since then, others have often called "pretuberculoid." The purpose was to avoid implication about the evolution of the condition, whether progressive toward definite tuberculoid or regression from that status (which might be called "posttuberculoid"). The term was defined [The Journal 5 (1937) 453 and 459] as meaning "the presence of foci too small or too undifferentiated to be called definitely tuberculoid," the changes representing "either incompletely differentiated tuberculoid foci or residual remnants."

In a letter to Dr. Floch it was agreed that such foci may be encountered in simple macular lesions established at an intermediate level of activity (i.e., histologically between straight round-cell infiltration and definite tuberculoid focalization), and also in retrogressive lesions which previously were more marked, definitely tuberculoid, but which have become perhaps residual in clinical appearance although histologically not yet at that level; and he was asked if, from the point of view from which he criticized the term "pretuberculoid," the noncommittal term "subtuberculoid" would be acceptable instead of "tuberculoid fruste." The latter one would usually be understood, at least by many English-speaking readers, as signifying a condition which has been thwarted, prevented from attaining full development. That being so, it would not be appropriate for a condition which is actually retrogressive from a higher level.

Dr. Floch's reply bore entirely on the meaning of the word "fruste."

"La discussion pour les termes 'sub-tuberculoides' et 'tuberculoide fruste' est plus délicate à conduire, comme vous me le dite vous même, par lettre. Le terme 'fruste' n'indique pas à mon avis q'il ne peut s'agir d'une lésion que rétrograde. Etymologiquement ce serait même plûtot au contraire. Voici d'ailleurs sa définition dans un dictionnaire classique:

"FRUSTE: Se dit d'une médaille ou d'une sculpture usée par le temps. Presque effacé: le souvenir fruste. (Par un curieux renversement de sens, ce mot est employé aujourd'hui dans le sens opposé de rude, grossier: des manières frustes. Fig. style fruste, style rude, non poli)

"Pathologie: Se dit d'une maladie don't les symptômes sont peu marqués."

Enfin la question est a voir.

The term *fruste* as used in pathology is not found in any reference available in this office. In one of the ordinary vocabulary-dictionaries at hand it is defined as "worn, defaced, corroded (of coins; medals, sculpture, etc.)," the noun *le fruste* being a "defaced effigy, etc." which—if it were appropriate for such use—would be in keeping with the idea of residual foci in a retrogressive lesion or part of lesion. In another such dictionary the meaning is given as "illegible, imperfect, defective," which could perhaps be allied to the idea of an unfinished process in a progressive lesion.

The idea of a process or lesion stopped in its course before completion or maturity, which at least an English-speaking person reads into a term such as "lèpre fruste" as it is used, naturally brings to mind the idea of "frustration"; but, according to Dr. Floch:

Le mot "frustrer" est absolument different de "fruste." Je pense qu'il est inutile d'en parler ici; [?] serait vraiment une erreur tres [?] de les confondre; c'est du même order que "vieille" (old) et "vielle" (hurdygurdy), ou "three" et "tree"!

Because of the different meanings and usages of "fruste," it was suggested to him that there is still need of a strictly non-committal word, one without implication to anyone whether English-speaking or otherwise as to whether the histologic picture referred to has or has not been more developed previously. He replied:

La discussion du term "fruste" aurait été si facile de vive voix! Croyez bien que je n'y mets aucum acharmement déplacé, mais vraiment cette fois vous me convainquez de son excellence. Vous demandez, si je comprends bien, un terme qui puisse représenter à la fois et sans distinction:

1°) des lésions qui n'ont pas encore évolué et ne se sont pas bien developées (or typiquement dévelopées); et

2°) des lésions qui ont été plus "typiques" mais ont rétrogradé. Justement "fruste" a ces deux sens: le premier sens d'emploi actuel, plus particulier en médecine ("maladie fruste"), le deuxieme sens etymologique. Dans ces conditions combien trouver mieux? D'autant plus que même médicalement parlant, des symptômes actuellement frustes peuvent très bien avoir été plus typiques. Le terme ne préjuge en rien de l'évolution antérieure ou future. N'est-ce pas la très exactement vos desiderata?

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