

A Celebration of Horst Seidler on His Sixtieth Birthday

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Horst Seidler's curriculum vitae reminds the anthropologist of the early descriptions of human evolution, or, better, it is like the classic »hero myth«. The brave warrior sets out on his journey, seeks and faces and masters challenges along the way, and triumphs at the end. The heroic saga is a parable for Seidler's scientific career that touches on several aspects of his personality: a deep emotional involvement with his aims, enthusiasm and an almost frightening thirst for action, an outstanding drive to realize his ideas in his own way, and, above all, a great, courageous heart. We authors, his former students, were initially ensnared by an additional quality of his: the incomparable rhetoric. Despite the fact that he lectures mornings at 7, preferably on Saturdays, even the largest lecture hall is full. These purely personal characteristics underlie all of Seidler's national and international achievements. Let us explain.

Born July 26, 1944, in Vienna, Horst Seidler studied at the University of Vienna in four areas — anthropology, medicine, psychology, and statistics – to which

he remains devoted and all of which he has promoted over the course of his career. He received his Ph.D. on *Sexual dimorphism in isolated os coxae* in 1972, was appointed reader (*venia legendi*) for human biology with a Habilitation on *Social anthropological investigations of remedial pupils* in 1979, and became full professor and head of the Institute for Anthropology at the University of Vienna in July 1984 (so this year of his sixtieth birthday is also the twentieth anniversary of that appointment).

From 1974 to 1990 Seidler collaborated with the late Andreas Rett, professor of childhood and adolescent psychiatry at the Neurology Hospital Rosenhügel in Vienna, focusing on diagnosis and the installation of a genetic laboratory and editing the journal *Infans Cerebropathicus*. Outside the clinical context, these two powerful men stood up for tolerance for the disabled and energetically condemned the bitter residual of racism dogging anthropology ever since the National Socialist era^{1,2}. Their work, pioneering in its scope, had significant impact on Austrian public understanding of race. Horst

Seidler remains committed to these concerns^{3,4} and promotes them in many ways: for instance, organizing statements on the inadequacy of the race concept⁵, or perpetuating lectures on disability in the anthropological curriculum at Vienna. In this volume, Alois Soritsch's essay bears witness to this strong bond, while Maria Teschler-Nicola's demonstrates that the process of »working through our anthropological past« is not yet complete.

The Tyrolean Iceman, that spectacular find of 1991, opened a radically new direction for Seidler. Instantly realizing how »Oetzi« could serve as an unprecedented opportunity for Austrian anthropology, he invested immense energies in strenuously organizing others into a continuing series of significant international interdisciplinary projects. One of these combined this fabulous 5300-year-old mummy with other specimens underlying a multidisciplinary mummy research network⁶ spanning South America, Europe, and Siberia. In work with Sonia Guillen (this volume) on pre-Inca and Inca mummies in Peru, Seidler extended his activity to museum development and ecology⁷. On the other side of the planet, in Novosibirsk, Anatoli Derevianko and Seidler focus on Siberian Scythian mummies and on Neanderthal remains from Siberia and (lately) Uzbekistan.

In collaboration with Innsbruck radiologists Dieter zur Nedden and Wolfgang Recheis, Seidler instigated a separate revolution in anthropological research when he produced a 3D »print-out« of the Iceman's inaccessible skull. This was the first time that a stereolithographic model had ever been used in anthropology⁸. These studies resulted in a high-tech toolkit for extracting previously inaccessible anatomical information likewise from living subjects and from fossils^{9,10}. The new tools, which continue to ramify, benefit many fields, such as clinical pulmonology (Recheis and zur Nedden, this volume),

electronic publication of fossil hominids^{11,12}, electronic »cleaning« of encrustations¹³, and the endocasts that permit us to study the capacity and morphology of the hominoid braincase^{14,15}. Today Vienna is known for its unique CT archive of fossil hominid images and for its expertise in Virtual Anthropology¹⁶, the manipulation of these precious forms by computer instead of by hand.

To Horst Seidler, these questions of hominid evolution have always been the most fascinating. A range of contemporary thought in this area is assembled in this volume in the contributions of Crawford et al., Falk, Schrenk et al., Schwartz, and Tattersall. Any anthropologist wants to do field research. For the young Seidler, this involved Mycenaean princely graves in Greece. But in the course of scanning fossils for the digital archive, he realized perhaps his deepest dream of all: field research in Africa. This began only in the year 2000, in the Somali region of Ethiopia, and succeeded in its very first year in unearthing a new hominid find (see Macchiarelli et al., this volume). Since then, this international and interdisciplinary group, one of only a very few from Europe, has been to the field many times to uncover further remains, and an application for another three years of access has just been submitted to the Ethiopian authorities.

Seidler's career, which began with studies of living humans, has never left that topic. The chapters in this volume by De Stefano and Hauser on malnutrition, and by Kirchengast on reproduction, do not deal with the past but instead with the actual situation of African people — a topic that is always on Seidler's mind as he tries to help whenever and wherever he can. In a quite different sort of promotion, a decade ago he offered to house the newly founded Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Urban Ethology at the Institute for Anthropology. Under Karl Grammer,

this is now one of the world's main centers of research into human perception of human behavior (see Grammer, this volume). Another world center of scholarship was invited here as well: the recent history of morphometrics (see Bookstein et al., this volume) turns on another astonishing coup of Seidler's, who in 2000 attracted the central figure of the field from the US to his Institute. The new research group further leverages Seidler's own unstoppable energy, applying and extending morphometric tools for anthropologists while planning for extensions into medicine and bioengineering as well.

Seidler's honorary doctorates and professorships are legion, likewise the awards he has won (e.g. corresponding member of Austrian Academy of Science in 1992; nomination President of the Eismannkommission in Bozen, Italy, by the South-Tyrolean regional government, and awarding of the Honorary Medal of the European Spine Society in 1998; awarding of the Gorjanović Kramberger Medal in 1999; and awarding the Austrian Golden Cross of Honor for Science and Art in

2001). He has also served in countless roles across his beloved Universität Wien: head of the Institute for Anthropology from 1984 to 1999, chairman of the Subject-specific commission of biological sciences and chairman of the Curia of Science Faculty of the University of Vienna from 1987 to 1999, chairman of the Union of University Professors in Vienna since 1997, Dean of Studies, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics from 2000 to 2002, in the advisory board of the newly founded Medical University of Vienna since 2003 and Vice-Dean of the even more recently founded Faculty of Life Sciences, University of Vienna.

Prediction is difficult, they say, especially of the future. Yet we are sure of one prediction: Horst Seidler will continue to fascinate us, to challenge us, and to surprise us all in every aspects of his scientific and intellectual imagination. It is to this remarkable colleague, teacher, and friend, on this anniversary of his birth, his professorship, and his directorship, that the following essays are dedicated.

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