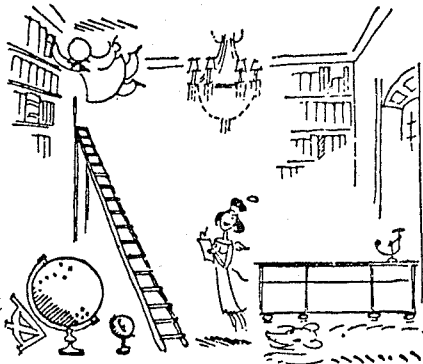


On Omniscience, Grooms . . . and Health for All

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Knowing what
thou knowest not
is in a rime
omniscience,



(Omniscience, A grook by Piet Hein)

No, I am not putting a claim to omniscience but rather apologising to Piet Hein for never having had the remotest idea of what a grook is.

I never knew what I was missing until last Christmastime when I received a handsome red pocket book.

At first I was confused at the word 'Grooms' but when I went over the contents, -short rhymed epigrammes with a message, both pertinent, witty and wise accompanied by Hein's own illustrations. I was intrigued by these short aphoristic statements that appear self-evident as soon as they have been formulated.

Piet Hein — a full blown, developed genius

But, who is Piet Hein, you may well ask. Piet Hein is a Danish Scientist and writer who studied and worked at the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen.

But as he felt that science could be for one or two things, a university career on technology, Hein entered the field of invention, based on scientific knowledge; during the occupation of Denmark in 1940, he went underground and invented the short, aphoristic poem — the grook. He has now written over seven thousand of these grooks which are related to the old Nordic Havamal poem (AD 850-1050).

For many years he was in correspondence with Albert Einstein, who, intrigued by Piet Hein's mathematically based but eventually simple puzzles, spread the word to universities and from there on to the general public. Indeed, his unorthodox probings have intrigued some of the outstanding minds of our time. His grooks often open a small window on a large world.

A Grook about Health

Some weeks ago, I was reading 'The Times' and there in front of my incredulous eyes, I saw the title to a short article 'A Grook about Health'. Then these grooks are really not for the chosen few, I said to myself. Indeed Piet Hein being deeply concerned about the importance of health for human development has written a grook to mark the 40th Anniversary of the World Health Organisation (WHO) which will be celebrated on April 7, 1988.

The birthday gift to WHO, entitled 'Health for All' reads as follows:

Mankind's true
Health must come
With the new Millenium,
Heed the call
For common wealth:
Health for All
All for Health

Piet Hein has agreed that his poem be freely used for non-commercial purposes and WHO will provide translations into its official languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

World Health Day — 7th April 1988

World Health Day — April 7, 1988 is an occasion to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of WHO. The general theme decided upon by the Director General Dr. Halfden Mahler is "Health for All — All for Health".

The implication of this slogan is that although an optimum state of health is a human right we all have individual and collective responsibilities for maintaining health through healthy lifestyles, the maintenance of a healthy environment and the judicious use of appropriate health technologies available to all.

Efforts will be made **throughout 1988** to promote a deeper understanding for the need for health development, for equity in health and for the vital role of WHO in international health. In the words of Dr. Mahler, the anniversary should, "bring people together in a gigantic manifestation of worldwide solidarity". The celebration of the anniversary should not be a one-

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time "party" to which people are invited, but a year-long national mobilization for health development.

Suggested possibilities for action include debates in parliament, radio and television programmes, information and discussion in the press, the issue of special stamps, exhibitions, activities by municipalities, local and provincial authorities, non-governmental organisations, professional associations, universities and schools, competitions and sports events of all kinds.

A number of countries have already set up national committees to prepare for the WHO anniversary.

The grook by Piet Hein is available as a source of inspiration and to help seed up worldwide action for health.

References:

Hein, Piet, Grooks (1966) 2nd Edition, Borgen's Pocket books 85 (Borgens Forlag, Denmark).

A Grook for Health, the Times, 4th Jan. 1988, p. 6.