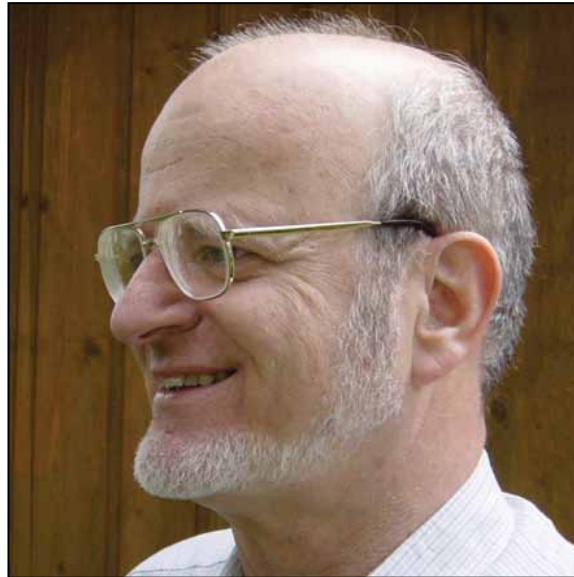


## Opening Lecture



### Circular Reasoning on Hair Loss in Circles: Alopecia Areata and Irrationalism

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The etiology of alopecia areata (AA) is so far unknown. Both patients and physicians, however, want to know the cause or the “meaning” of the disorder, which is why many irrational concepts have been proposed in otherwise well-respected academic journals.

**Psychiatric explanations:** In 1955, the psychiatrist Greenberg reported in the Archives of Dermatology that 93% of AA patients are mentally ill. In a psychiatric journal, Cohen and Lichtenberg (1967) interpreted AA as a manifestation of a conflict between *id* and *super-ego*. In 1968, Hommes and Prick applied C.G. Jung’s theory of archetypes and argued that AA reflects an “existential regression to the lowest rungs of life”. According to Egle and Tauschke (1987), AA may symbolize a pathological grieving reaction.

**Neurological concepts:** Haas and Lehnert (1971) found that in 70% of AA cases the encephalogram showed a disturbed cerebral function. Somogyi (1977) found that 100% of AA patients show a rejection of primary colors in Lüscher’s 8-color

test, reflecting a regulatory dysfunction of the mid-brain.

**Ophthalmological explanations:** In 1949, Haynes and Perry wrote in the Archives of Dermatology that 100% of AA patients show refractive errors of the lens, and that wearing of glasses results in prompt hair regrowth. Langhof and Lemke (1962) reported that 82% of AA patients suffer from Horner syndrome, indicating a developmental inferiority of diencephalic functions.

**Dermatological concepts:** Hatzis *et al* (1988) found that the presence of a nuchal salmon patch heralds a severe course of AA. In a monograph on natural healing of skin disorders, the dermatologist Augustin (2002) recommended acupuncture, Bach flower remedies, and autohemotherapy.

**Conclusion:** When we consider the irrational approaches as developed by various medical specialties, we should realize that it is an important task to protect our AA patients from such bizarre etiological and therapeutic concepts that, nowadays, still prevail especially in the fields of psychotherapy and “alternative” medicine. In patients with AA, the encroachments of irrational reasoning may give rise to emotional distress and may, in addition, cause considerable costs.