What does Good mean by the “objects” of medicine? Why do objects need to be ‘constructed’? What is particular about how biomedicine constructs its objects?

The research conducted by Good examines the comparisons of the experiences of students within the New Pathway, the "Classic" curriculum, and the Health Science Technology program. The chapter examines the practices and experiences common to students in all three curricula, many of which are viewed as myopic or inconsequential. Good uses the term "objects” in regards to the medical field to focus on the distinctive processes to which medical knowledge refers. Objects need to be constructed to educate on the medical anthropological experience that is experienced by doctors and patients. Objects of medical care are constructed so that patients can be treated medically. Objects are present for the ill and their families, as an underlying assumption of doctors, physicians, and their patients confronting life-threatening conditions, present within the routine practices through which objects of medical care are constructed. Medicine formulates our perception of the human body and our image of diseases through a cultural lens.

Good argues that culture is very much influenced by biology and vice versa. He explains how both practices and ideas are intertwined and codependent. He furthers his point by discussing how clinical medicine constructs the perception of a patient, doctor, medical treatment, disease, or human physiology. Medical education will most likely undergo a dynamic change, as diseases are seen in molecular terms. This redefinition of disease categories and physiological processes points to a change in the perception of medicine as Good describes, “almost as radical as the change Foucault documented for French medicine between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”. Good’s interest is thus in exploring how the objects of medical attention are constituted in contemporary American clinical practice. Good then examines data from the medical school study to discuss how medicine formulates sickness in strikingly materialist terms. He suggests that despite this materialist shaping of illness by clinical medicine, moral ideals and those referring to suffering and salvation are fused with biomedicine and is the cornerstone of medical practice. Good also introduces the idea of medicine as a symbolic form through which reality is formulated and organized in a distinctive manner.

Good focuses on the generative processes, elucidating the formative practices through which illness and other facets of medical reality are formulated. The notion of illness is exemplified as an amalgamation of the physical and existential dimensions, bodily infirmity, and human suffering. This can be interpreted as someone believing that they have a specific illness that they do not have, such as a hypochondriac. Good may have also been referring to the idea of mental illness or the ability to induce one’s self into sickness.

What questions were you left with? *Note: these can be actual questions about things you didn’t understand, or questions for further thought/discussion.*

I don’t have any questions about the reading. In terms of further discussion, I would have liked to see the comparison between the practices of biomedicine in both Western and Eastern medical practices.