

HUMANISM AND MEDICINE IN THE EARLY MODERN ERA

20-22 SEPTEMBER 2006

UNIVERSITY CLUB SEMINAR ROOM 1

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CONVENORS:

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR YASMIN HASKELL, UWA

DR SUSAN BROOMHALL, UWA

This symposium explores the complex, and sometimes troubled, relationship between humanism and medicine from the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries. The father of humanism, Francesco Petrarca, famously attacked the medical profession in *Against a Doctor* (1352). Humanism spoke a new language – theoretically a natural, classical Latin, as opposed to the ‘barbaric’ scholastic idiom of the philosophers and the Galenist gobbledegook of the doctors. But the cultures of humanism and medicine inevitably enriched one another: doctors and humanists shared a professional interest in the ancient texts (from Dioscorides to Lucretius), and a vested interest in preserving Latin as a professional argot. Humanism had its own healing pretensions through poetry and moral philosophy. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, doctor and humanist sometimes co-existed in the same person such as Girolamo Fracastoro, Girolamo Cardano, Julius Caesar Scaliger, François Rabelais, and Pierre Petit.

Keynote speakers include Professor Ian Maclean (All Souls College, Oxford) and Professor Vivian Nutton (Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine, University College, London).



Woodcut

Titlepage of Bartholomeo Eustachi's *Tabulae Anatomicae* (Rome, 1783)

Image courtesy of the History of Medicine Division of the National Library of Medicine (USA)

PROGRAM

Wednesday 20 September

10.30am		3pm	Discussion
-2.30pm	Prof. Ian Maclean (All Souls College, Oxford) IAS/NEER Masterclass on Early Modern Philosophy in Europe <small>See last page for more information</small>	3.30pm	Coffee
3pm	Registration at University Club	4-5pm	ARC Network for Early European Research Lecture Prof. Ian Maclean (All Souls College, Oxford) <i>The Medical Republic of Letters in Europe before the Thirty Years War</i>
3.15pm	Symposium Welcome <i>First Session: Analogies</i>		Free time
3.30pm	Dr Christopher Allen (National Art School Sydney) <i>Caravaggio's Complexion</i>	7pm	Symposium Dinner at Matilda Bay Restaurant
4pm	Prof. Randall Albury (University of New England, Armidale) <i>Vernacular Humanism, Medicine and Political Philosophy in The Book of the Courtier</i>		
4.30pm	Discussion		
5pm	Break		
6pm	Annual Cassamarca Lecture Prof. Vivian Nutton (University College, London) <i>"It's the patient's fault": Simone Simoni and the Plague</i>		
7.30pm	Opening Reception, at the Formal Dining Room University Club		

Thursday 21 September

	<i>Second Session: Anatomies</i>	10.30am	Discussion
9am	Prof. Manfred Horstmannhoff (University of Leiden) <i>Analogy versus Anatomy: Petrus Petitus' De Lacrymis In Context</i>	11am	Coffee
9.30am	Ms Baige Smith (University of Western Australia) <i>Humanists, Doctors and Dissection</i>		<i>Sixth Session: Boundaries</i>
10am	Dr Nicole Sully (University of Queensland) <i>Architecture and the Anatomy of Memory</i>	11.30am	Dr Karen Jillings (Massey University, NZ) <i>Humanism and Medicine in Sixteenth Century Aberdeen</i>
10.30am	Discussion	12pm	Prof. Michael Bennett (University of Tasmania) <i>Grafting the Old onto the New: Smallpox Inoculation and Classicism in the Long Eighteenth Century</i>
11am	Coffee		<i>12.30pm Discussion</i>
	<i>Third Session: Continuities</i>	1pm	Lunch
11.30am	Prof. George Weisz (University of New South Wales) <i>Medico-Artistic Phenomena: Humanism and Medicine in the Renaissance and in the Twentieth Century</i>	2pm	<i>Seventh Session: Anomalies</i> Jenny Spinks (University of Melbourne) <i>Monstrous Births and Demonic Offspring in the 1550s: The Case of the Zurich Physician Jacob Rueff</i>
12pm	Prof. Sergio Starkstein (University of Western Australia) Treating Tyche with the Tetrapharmakon	2.30pm	Dr Cathy McClive (University of Durham) <i>The Moons of Pregnancy: Measuring Legitimacy in Sixteenth-Century France</i>
12.30pm	Discussion	3pm	Discussion
1pm	Lunch	3.30pm	Conference Close
	<i>Fourth Session: Comedies</i>		
2pm	Dr Ursula Potter (University of Sydney) <i>Greensickness, Physicians and Chastity in Early Modern Drama</i>		
2.30pm	Dr Susan Broomhall (University of Western Australia) <i>Humanism, Medicine, God and Mother Nature: Medicine through the Lens of Early Modern French Comic Drama</i>		

ABSTRACTS

Randall Albury

Classics, History and Religion, University of New England

Vernacular Humanism, Medicine and Political Philosophy in

The Book of the Courtier

The Book of the Courtier (Il libro del cortegiano, 1528), by Baldessar Castiglione, was one of the most widely translated and frequently republished books of the Renaissance. Drawing explicitly on the models of Plato, Xenophon and Cicero, the book presents the discussions of a group of cultivated gentlemen and ladies at the Court of Urbino who, over four evenings, seek to describe the perfect courtier and the perfect court lady. While Castiglione's work is usually regarded as a conduct manual for courtly behaviour, or as escapist literature celebrating in idealised form a court environment that had already disappeared forever by the time the book was published, I propose to treat it as a political document. More specifically, I shall argue that it articulates, under the cover of its eloquent speeches and witty repartee, a version of classical political philosophy adapted for the new political circumstances developing in western Europe during Castiglione's lifetime. I shall also argue that a key to our understanding of Castiglione's political teaching is his use of the ancient philosophical analogy between medicine and statecraft. In humanist circles this analogy was of course a rhetorical commonplace. But my contention will be that in *The Book of the Courtier* it plays more than just an ornamental role. When understood in the specific historical context of the Duchy of Urbino, and when taken together with the other apparently unrelated references to medicine and physicians scattered throughout Castiglione's book, the analogy between medicine and statecraft ceases to be merely a conventional oratorical formula and becomes instead the basis of a political doctrine that is both normative and realistic – charting a middle course between the moralising idealism of Erasmus (*The Education of a Christian Prince*, 1516) and the amoral pragmatism of Machiavelli (*The Prince*, 1532).

Christopher Allen

History and Theory, National Art School, Sydney

Caravaggio's Complexion

Artists are often characterized, in the rich biographical literature of the early modern period, in terms that either explicitly or implicitly allude to the doctrine of humours. This paper will concentrate on the case of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610), and will consider the biographies of the artist by Baglione (1642) and Bellori (1672) as well as some other contemporary documents. Bellori's more extensive life is particularly suggestive for the way it deals with the relationship between Caravaggio's personality, his physical appearance, his behaviour and even the painterly style for which he became so famous, or in the eyes of his critics, notorious.

Michael Bennett

History and Classics, University of Tasmania

Grafting the Old onto the New:

Smallpox Inoculation and Classicism in the Long Eighteenth Century

The new virulence of smallpox in the seventeenth century and the rise of inoculation (first variolation and then vaccination) as a prophylactic in the eighteenth century served to increase the gulf opening up between the ancient and modern worlds of medicine. Smallpox was unknown to the ancients, and presented challenges to learned medicine. Inoculation had no other warrant than folklore and empirical observation. This paper seeks to explore the manner in which a number of physicians nonetheless sought to give smallpox a classical history, and the promoters of inoculation, especially in continental Europe, sought to invest the practice with the cultural authority of the classical world through the use of Latin, classical myth and history, the writing of poetry and the manipulation of symbols.

Susan Broomhall

History, University of Western Australia

Humanism, Medicine, God and Mother Nature:

Medicine Through the Lens of Early Modern French Comic Drama

This paper examines the distinct influence of humanism in the treatment of medicine in early modern drama. It compares Marguerite de Navarre's play *Le*

Malade, composed between 1530 and 1543, with Molire's comedy-ballet *Le Malade imaginaire*, first performed in 1673. On the surface these plays both treat the theme of the hypochondriac whose female servant critiques the value of university medicine and helps to reveal other paths to health. However, these initial similarities belie marked differences in the playwrights' perceptions of learned medicine and its alternatives. Read in the light of Molire's play, what did the sixteenth-century playwright Marguerite de Navarre, embued with the spirit of Christian humanism, make of medicine? How had the dividing lines between popular and learned medical theory and practice changed over the course of almost 150 years between humanism and a rising sense of enlightenment values, as they are played out by Marguerite and Molire?

Monica Calabritto

Romance Languages, City University of New York

Girolamo Mercuriale's Consilium on "Melancholic Humors"

between medical and legal traditions

The manuscript document compiled and signed by Girolamo Mercuriale, Gaspare Tagliacozzi and Ludovico Lodi for a Bolognese murder trial in 1588 exemplifies a hybrid text: its structure resembles a medical consultation, but its goal is to describe in medical terms for a criminal trial the pathological condition of Paolo Barbieri, a wealthy Bolognese who killed his wife in an apparent fit of madness which the three physicians claimed was caused by "melancholic humors." Thus, this medical opinion represents a collaboration between medical and legal traditions, even though it did not affect the legal outcome of the trial, resulting in a death sentence for Barbieri. The murderer's state of "unreason," firmly established by the medical authorities, was not taken into consideration by the legal authority. The purpose of this paper is twofold: I will use the handwritten consultation to analyze the role physicians like Mercuriale, surgeons like Tagliacozzi and general doctors like Lodi played in defining madness in a criminal trial. I will also compare the medical language used in this document with the legal language used in the proceedings of the criminal trial against Barbieri in order to represent his madness.

Yasmin Haskell

Classics and Ancient History, University of Western Australia

Psychosomatic illness in early modern Italy: humanists and hypochondriacs

In the course of their long Latin poems on fishing and chocolate, both published in 1689, two Neapolitan Jesuits lamented a devastating recent plague of 'hypochondria'. The poetic plagues of Giannettasio and Strozzi have literary precedents in Lucretius, Virgil, and Fracastoro, of course, but it will be argued in this paper that they also have a real, contemporary significance. 'Hypochondria' was usually considered a serious illness at this time, with symptoms ranging from the gastric to the psychotic. Intriguingly, our Jesuit poets claim to have suffered from it themselves – but so too did prominent members of the 'Accademia degl'Investiganti', a scientific society in Naples which was at odds with both religious and medical establishments. Medicine was a relatively unusual topic for Jesuit poetry -- Ignatius had proscribed the practice of medicine by his priests -- but the Neapolitans seem to have gone in for it more than most. Were they more prone to hypochondria than their contemporaries elsewhere in the peninsula, or do the poems of Strozzi and Giannettasio open the window on a more widespread 'epidemic' of psychosomatic illness in seventeenth-century Italy?

H.F.J. (Manfred) Horstmanshoff

Classics, University of Leiden

Analogy versus Anatomy: Petrus Petitus' De lacrymis in context

In 1661 the French physician, philosopher and poet Petrus Petitus (Pierre Petit 1617-1687) published a Neo-Latin treatise, *De lacrymis*. In book 1 he treated systematically according to Aristotelian rules the *causa materialis* of tears; in book 2 the *causae efficientes (tristitia-gaudium)* and *causa finalis*, whereas book 3 deals with separate problemata. His work is a cornucopia of erudition, collected from Greek and Latin sources, Hippocrates and Galen included. It may serve very well to reconstruct an ancient theory of tears and weeping. In the same period, however, Thomas Warton and Nicolaus Steno discovered the system of glands that explained the physiology of weeping. Two explanatory models, one by analogy, the other based on anatomical observation and experiment, stood side by side. I. After some introductory remarks on early, pre-scientific ideas on human physiology, with respect to tears and weeping, I will present ancient testimonia on tears and weeping in ancient medical literature, observed as symptoms, using Petitus as 'Fundgrube'. I will conclude this section by giving an overview of the most common 'physiological' theories of tears and weeping in ancient medicine, based on analogy. II. After discussing ancient anatomical knowledge of the eye, I will try to put the discovery of the functioning of the lachrymal glands in the 17th century, in context, followed by the invention of Bowman's probe and Weber's knife ca. 1860, as the starting point of modern dacryology. My aim is to highlight Petitus' *On Tears* as a culminating point of ancient analogical thinking, next to the emerging science of anatomy, based on observation and experiment.

Karen Jillings

History, Philosophy and Politics, Massey University, New Zealand

Humanism and Medicine in Sixteenth-Century Aberdeen

The rise of humanism played a significant role in the founding of Scotland's third university, King's College, at Aberdeen in 1495. The establishment there two years later of a Chair of Medicine - celebrated as the earliest post of its kind in the British Isles - meant that Aberdeen became, in theory at least, a centre of humanistic medical education. This paper will discuss the careers of the incumbents during the century after the establishment of the Chair and evaluate the extent to which humanist thought influenced medical theory and practice both at the university and in the wider community. This influence found expression in the city government's control of plague and in the production by the third medical professor at King's of the first vernacular medical treatise to be printed in Scotland.

Ian Maclean

History, All Souls, Oxford

The Medical Republic of Letters in Europe before the Thirty Years War

After a brief history of the Republic of Letters as a concept and a practice in the Early Modern Period, I shall turn to one intellectual group in particular, the learned medical profession, and concentrate on one manner of transmitting knowledge which it actively developed between about 1500 and 1630: the published collection of medical letters. I shall investigate their importance by asking the following questions: how self-aware and self-critical was the world of learned doctors? how did it regulate itself? how free was it? how open? how universal? how collaborative? Finally, how 'scientific' was its approach to nature?

Cathy McClive

History, University of Durham, UK

The Moons of Pregnancy: Measuring Legitimacy in Sixteenth-Century France

In 1535 François Rabelais' tale of Gargamelle's gargantuan eleven-month pregnancy enabled him to highlight an important contemporary debate concerning the possible minimum and maximum limits to the length of pregnancy. Michael Screech has convincingly unpicked Rabelais' borrowings from his friend and fellow jurist André Tiraqueau on this matter and demonstrates Rabelais' use of the topic to draw attention to the corruption of ancient texts by medieval glossators and translators and the very real threat to the patri-line caused by the lack of agreed limits, allowing for usurpation, infant substitution and general fornication. As Screech amply shows this was very much a Renaissance debate drawing on natural philosophy, jurisprudence and medical disciplines. But, it was also, and perhaps above all, a question of medical

uncertainty underpinned by an ambiguous understanding of reproduction and the link between the menstrual cycle and pregnancy. During the sixteenth century French physicians and jurists attempted to fix 'normal' limits to the term of pregnancy. They did this with recourse to ancient texts and judicial precedents from antiquity, but also using a case-by-case approach which attempted to harness female biological time to their understandings of socio-cultural time. Close observation of individual menstrual cycles and pregnancies was advocated, although this was complicated by the multitude of available ways of measuring time and particularly 'months'. Jurists and physicians negotiated the limits of legitimacy according to the moral and humoral habits of an individual woman and tried to reconcile this with the constraints of a particular socio-cultural context. Theory and practice coincided as physicians and jurists were called to pronounce judgement in life and death situations. As a result legitimacy was often open to interpretation and appears more flexible than has previously been recognised by historians. In this paper I will draw upon medical texts, the literature of jurisprudence, printed judicial memoranda, literature and archival records, to chart the evolution of the medical and judicial quandary surrounding eleven-month pregnancies in sixteenth-century France.

Vivian Nutton

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History of Medicine

University College London

"It's the patient's fault": Simone Simoni and the Plague

Physician, philosopher, moralist, and spy, Simone Simoni of Lucca (1532-1602) spent most of his life in exile as a doctor in Northern Europe. In 1575, when plague broke out in Leipzig, he was the personal physician of the Elector of Saxony, involved also in the medical life of the town and its university. His *'Artificiosa curandae pestis methodus'*, 1576, not only defends his, far from creditable, role in the outbreak, but develops in unusual ways the theories put forward in 1546 by Girolamo Fracastoro to explain contagion and contagious diseases. Simoni's treatise introduces to Northern Europe new Italian ideas, while at the same time revealing many of the tensions, both public and private, that were caused by the arrival of plague.

Ursula Potter

English, University of Sydney

Greensickness, Physicians and Chastity in Early Modern Drama

In 1554 a German physician, Johann Lange, published a case history in the form of a letter of advice to a father concerned at his daughter's sickness. Lange identified her condition as the disease of virgins, citing a short treatise by Hippocrates, *On the Disease of Virgins*, as his precedent. Lange's diagnosis set in motion a wave of greensickness diagnoses (or chlorosis as it became known) in England. The cause was thought to be the virgin's thickened blood and the first stirrings of the womb at menarche, and the symptoms were many and ill-defined. Treatment involved either controlling the unruly womb with purges, bloodletting, fasting and herbal remedies, or rushing the patient into marriage. Greensickness reached epidemic proportions in following centuries, and then disappeared from medical records early in the 1900s almost as rapidly as it had first appeared. In Helen King's recent study of the history of greensickness (*The Disease of Virgins*, Routledge 2004), she queries whether the condition ever truly existed, or whether it was a concept initially embraced by the medical profession and parents alike to explain puberty and regulate sexuality in girls. There is some evidence in early modern drama to support this hypothesis. A disease afflicting virgins and which is cured by male virility, lends itself so well to satire that it is hard to find any serious treatment, but greensickness also acts as a vehicle for the satirical treatment of physicians, and suggests a widespread mistrust by the public of their diagnostic skills and the authority they exert as family physician. Where the drama and the medical treatises concur however, is in the high levels of fear generated over the onset of puberty in girls. One of the most influential voices in this debate was that of Juan Luis Vives, prominent humanist and colleague of Erasmus. Vives's popular treatise, *The Instruction of a Christian Woman*, may have been a contributory factor in the rise in greensickness, with its rigorous focus on containing a daughter's sexuality through diet, fasting, pious instruction, and isolation, and its obsession with the preservation of chastity at all costs. This paper will provide an overview of the dramatic treatment of greensickness in several early Jacobean plays, together with the accompanying representation of physicians, and will compare attitudes to chastity by Vives with those of Shakespeare.

Baige Smith

Fine Arts, University of Western Australia

Humanists, Doctors and Dissection

The professional interests of doctors and humanists frequently overlapped during the early modern era. One of the most important points of intersection was the human body. Scholars of the medical sciences and the humanities were fascinated with the human subject, and especially the 'anatomical body' which was increasingly visible due to the emergence of public anatomy theatres and illustrated anatomical books. For physicians, anatomy enabled the advancement of medical knowledge, whilst for humanists it was crucial to the development of humanist philosophies. This paper will address the intersection of medical and humanist concerns through the example of anatomical activities within Holland in the seventeenth century. Holland had become a centre for anatomical investigation at this time, and the dissection theatres at the universities of Amsterdam and Leiden attracted many prominent intellectuals, including the great humanist philosopher René Descartes. Throughout the 1630s Descartes attended these theatres and performed private dissections, and these investigations were instrumental in the development of what is now considered one of the most important theories of western humanism – the theory of mind-body dualism, first published in the *Meditationes* of 1641. Another famous figure associated with the Dutch anatomy theatres was the painter Rembrandt van Rijn. Rembrandt produced two paintings of anatomy lessons – *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) and *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Joan Deyman* (1658) – and this paper will use both images as a reference point to discuss the "culture of dissection" which proliferated in Holland at this time.

Jane Southwood

French, University of New England, Armidale

Why Galen's Teeth Fell Out:

Shifting Medical Attitudes Among Nicolas Baudin's Doctors

The five-man medical team appointed to the Baudin expedition of 1800-1804, sent by Napoléon to explore the terres australes (the southlands) or New Holland, embodies some of the key differences in attitudes towards disease and its treatment prevailing in pre- and post-Revolution France. Educated in the last decade of the ancien régime, the two oldest members represent a tradition dating back to the ancient Greeks. The youngest member of the team, who received his training after the Revolution in the newly-constituted Ecole de Médecine in Paris, exemplifies the new emphasis on empirical medicine, what Michel Foucault has called the birth of the clinic. The divergence between this newer approach based on empirical observation and the older approach informed by a tradition built on the authority of classical texts is evidenced in the respective post-expedition writings of these men. By focussing on the theme of melancholia, a recognised symptom of scurvy, and the place melancholic states held for Baudin's doctors in their beliefs about the causation and cure of this and other diseases, the paper hopes to illuminate the transition between the old and the new world of medical thinking.

Jenny Spinks

History, University of Melbourne

Monstrous Births and Demonic Offspring in the 1550s:

The Case of the Zurich Physician Jacob Rueff

In 1554 the Zurich physician Jacob Rueff published a book concerned with pregnancy and birth, titled *Ein schon lustig Trostbüchle von den empfengnüssen vnd geburten der menschen*. In the same year, a Latin translation of the text appeared under the title *De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis*. These were richly illustrated volumes that covered many aspects of conception, birth, and fertility, as well as notorious cases of monstrous births and an examination of the likelihood of the devil taking on human form in order to engender children. These last two topics distinguish Rueff from his most important roughly contemporary source, the 1513 *Der Swangern Frauen und hebammen Resegarten* by the Worms physician Eucharius Rößlin. The Rosegarten was a short and very successful book aimed at midwives. Rueff evidently hoped for a wider market, as both the simultaneous Latin and German editions, as well as the subject matter, attest. This paper will examine Rueff's interest in the abnormal, and in particular monstrous births and demonic offspring. It will situate Rueff in relation to other publications, best described as books of wonders, that appeared in the 1550s and

also took a special interest in both monstrous births and the workings of the devil in the world. These were the Zurich humanist Konrad Lycosthenes' *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* of 1557 (simultaneously published in German until the title Wunderwerck), and the Jena physician Job Fincel's *Wunderzeichen*, the first volume of which was published in 1556. This paper will examine the connections between humanist and medical thought in these publications, and the significance of the fractured religious climate in which they appeared. It will suggest that monstrous births and demonic activity took on a new significance in this environment, and one reflected most strongly in a distinctive wave of publishing activity.

Sergio E. Starkstein

Psychiatry, University of Western Australia

Treating Tyche with the Tetrabpharmakon

The *Tetrabpharmakon* of Epicurus included the following ingredients: "God is not to be feared, death is nothing to us, good is easily acquired, pain is easy to endure". The *Tetrabpharmakon* was aimed at treating fear, and above else, the fear of death. The Stoics suggested that the only way to achieve tranquility was the full acceptance of Fortune ("A man is like a dog tied to a cart. If he does not walk, he will be pulled"). The Hellenistic Schools of philosophy coined a variety of terms to refer to the state of emotional indifference (or happiness) (e.g., apatheia, ataraxia, euthumia, akataplexia, adiaphoria), and Epicurus exalted the galena, the smooth calm amid the disturbing gales of the storm. The alternative to Greek philosophy was oriental religion. To appease their fears, Greeks erected in the Agora at Athens a temple to Tyche (or Goddess Fortune). Tyche was considered to be even more powerful than Zeus. Euripides wrote that "he is a foolish mortal who thinks his luck secure and so rejoices; for Fortune, like a madman in her moods, springs towards this man, then towards that". Tyche's realm included beauty, good reputation, health, wealth, power, good marriage and lovely children. Tyche became associated with medicine through her Egyptian version, Isis, and her male companion, Sarapsis. The latter presided over the Alexandrian medical school, and was regarded a healer similar to Apollo and Asclepius. In medieval ages fear was commonly associated with epidemics, and religion replaced philosophy as the main therapy of the soul. During the past 30 years most developed countries witnessed a marked improvement in public health standards, and yet satisfaction with health at the personal level is declining. Could the Epicurean *Tetrabpharmakon* be an answer to the current state of dissatisfaction?

REGISTRATION FORM/TAX INVOICE

Nicole Sully

Architecture and Fine Arts, University of Western Australia

Architecture and the Anatomy of Memory

During the Renaissance, artists such as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo explored their fascination with medical understandings of anatomy, which were essentially related to their engagement with humanist ideals. This fascination with medical understandings of the body was also represented in architecture. The centrality of the human being in humanist philosophy found literal expression in the drawings of Renaissance architect Francisco di Giorgio. Exploring the analogous relationship between body and building, di Giorgio's drawings often depicted the body as a generator of architectural form, and subsequently a bearer of moral and aesthetic meaning. Medical understandings of the body and mind were also implicit in less literal ways in the architectural forms which were associated with humanist memory theatres. During classical times, ancient orators adopted a method, now known as the art of memory, which was essentially a techne to extend the natural capacity of memory by mentally associating things one wished to remember (as images) with memory loci – (most often architecture). To recollect, for example, an argument, speech or poem, the mnemotechnician would mentally travel through this space and collect the ideas they had 'placed' within the loci in the form of associative images. This techne saw memory as implicitly linked to architecture and the experience of place. The theatre of memory (as they were often called) represented an externalisation of the faculty of memory and a poetic interplay between interiority (mind) and exteriority (architecture). Such ancient systems for enhancing recollection were in many ways reflections of the medical and philosophical understandings of memory at the time they were practiced. During the Renaissance the art of memory underwent a radical transformation in relation to humanist philosophy. This paper will examine humanism and medicine through the manifestation of understandings of the body and the mind, particularly memory, in Renaissance architecture.

George M. Weisz

History and Philosophy of Science, University of New South Wales

Medico-Artistic Phenomena: Humanism and Medicine in the Renaissance and in the Twentieth Century

In the Renaissance the impact of recent epidemics of devastating diseases created the conditions for a medical awakening. Experiences such as repeated plague epidemics and the outbreak of syphilis showed that traditional medical theories and procedures were inadequate. At the same time there was an intense interest in the study of medical classics, with the aim of purifying them from Arabic and Scholastic misinterpretations. These circumstances led to a medical revolution based on new approaches to the study of human anatomy, physiology and pathology. The Renaissance also saw an unprecedented flourishing of artistic creativity, both in literature and in the visual arts, with the medical community being well-represented in this activity. Similarly, the conditions of the twentieth century produced extraordinary medical progress, and a parallel medico-artistic phenomenon with an outburst of literary and other aesthetic activity by medically trained artists. The list of late twentieth century medical artists is long, and deserves further analysis. It involves physicians from all parts of the globe, from all specialties of medicine, in all stages of their careers, and with various personal reasons for their artistic interests. None of these factors can explain the high levels of artistic activity by physicians, which is unique among the professions. Involvement in aesthetic activity, which is fundamental to human experience, helps keep alive the humane side of medicine at times of rapid scientific progress. In addition, the physician's elation at the recovery of a patient is akin to the artist's elation at the successful completion of a creative work. This feeling was confirmed by 27 out of 37 medico-artists surveyed in Sydney. It is postulated, therefore, that just as the cultural phenomenon of Humanism stimulated medico-artistic activity in the Renaissance, so too the legacy of Renaissance Humanism does so in modern medicine.

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