

**A PRIMITIVE ANATOMY:
JOHANN PEYLIIGK'S "COMPENDIOSA DECLARATIO"**

by

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Librarian of the College

THE COLLEGE LIBRARY has lately bought a copy of a rare Anatomy printed at Leipzig in 1513. This book, whose Latin title may be rendered: "A Compendious Declaration of the Physical Chapter showing the Forms of the Principal Organs of the Human Body", provides a summary of the meagre information available in Northern Europe at that time about the contents of the skull, thorax, and abdomen. Yet this was only a generation before Vesalius displayed the complete knowledge of morphology to which surgeons and artists had attained in Italy.

The great medical historian Karl Sudhoff called this book "highly scientific for its time", because he showed that its author Johann Peyligk was the first man to prepare a series of engraved figures of the bodily organs for printing. Peyligk's illustrations, conventional though they are, "disclosed to his knowledge-hungry contemporaries" a tradition of anatomical drawings which had come down in manuscripts from the famous French surgeon Henri de Mondeville (1260-1320), for the knowledge discovered in the 13th century's "little renaissance" was repeated by rote through 200 years.

The author and his book

Johann Peyligk of Zeitz (1474-1512) was a council-member of the Faculty of Arts in the University of Leipzig when he published a commentary on Aristotle's medical treatises. This *Philosophie naturalis Compendium* was printed at Leipzig by Melchior Lotter in 1499, in a handsome folio volume of 98 leaves. The last seven printed leaves comprise the "Physical Chapter", the illustrated summary of Anatomy. The text is purely scholastic, based on Thomas Aquinas and other mediaeval commentators, but the 11 illustrations are the first series of anatomical figures specially prepared for a printed book. They were eagerly welcomed, being promptly copied by another Leipzig professor, Magnus Hundt, for his medical treatise *Antropologium*, 1501 (British Museum: IA 22560.1; 124 leaves, 4°). Subsequently these copied blocks were used again by Hundt's printer Wolfgang Stöckel with Peyligk's text excerpted from his large book. It is one of the exceedingly rare separate editions of this "Physical Chapter" which we have now fortunately acquired. Three such separate editions (1510, 1513 and 1516) were found by Sudhoff, each surviving in only one copy as far as he could trace at the beginning of the century, though a few more copies have since come to light. All three printed by Stöckel, they are independent re-settings of the text, suggesting that the stock of each was quickly sold. Earlier bibliographers mentioned

further editions of 1503, 1509, 1515 and 1518, but Sudhoff traced no copy of these and I have not found any of them in more recent catalogues of medical libraries.

Title and colophon

Peyligk's name, which appears at the beginning of his larger book, was not included in the caption-title before his "Physical Chapter"; Stöckel therefore had some excuse for omitting the author's name from his editions of this separate chapter. The chapter title (Fig. 1) may be translated: "A Compendious Declaration of the Physical Chapter, clearly showing

**Compendiosa Capituli phisici declaratio:
principalium humani corporis membrorum fi-
guras liquido ostendens, philosophie aliu-
nis admodum profutura.**

Epigramma ad Spectatorem.

**Qui sint humani spectator corporis artus
Illis que virtus officiumque simul
Et quos sint propriis quevis descripta figuris
Hic dare offendes, intueare modo**

1. Title and Epigram to the Beholder.

the forms of the Principal Organs of the Human Body, very profitable for students of philosophy." This is followed by an

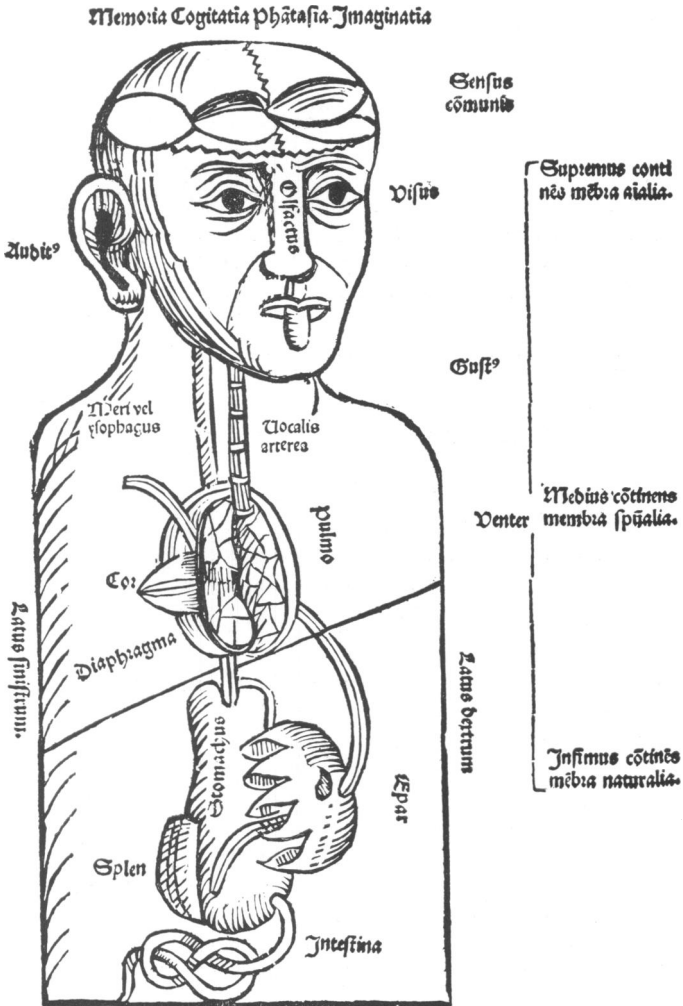
Inscription to the Beholder
Would'st know the human body's every part,
Its uses and its properties, by book?
Each in its natural form described by art
Here shalt thou clearly find. Beholder, look!

(These verses preceded the title in the original edition of 1499.)

The title is expanded in the printer's colophon, which Stöckel took word for word from Lotter, only substituting his own name and correcting the date: "And so much for the animal organs and in consequence for the anatomy of the entire human body and its principal parts. Of the others not here described, let the earnest scholar enquire more earnestly the explanation of physicians. This work was printed in the famous town of Leipzig by the skill and care of Wolfgang Stöckel in the year of the salvation-bringing Incarnation 1513".

Text and illustrations

Peyligk introduces his Anatomy by saying that, having surveyed all the powers of the human organs in the earlier part of his book, he provides “ a succinct and very brief declaration of the physical chapter, that novices



2. Torso-schema: the transposed version.

to philosophy may have some knowledge of these organs”. (This introduction was repeated verbatim when the chapter was printed by itself.) He then describes the three cavities of the body, which are clearly shown in a whole-page diagram of the human torso, lettered to indicate the organs.

By careless oversight, when this diagram was copied for Stöckel's editions the engraver cut his wood-block direct from the print in Lotter's edition, so that his new print is transposed into a mirror-image, with the heart and spleen on the right and the liver on the left (Fig. 2). The small illustrations in the text were also re-engraved, but fortunately without reversing them. It is clear, however, from their appearance and from his text, that Peyligk had never made an autopsy. The torso diagram was not used in Hundt's *Antropologium*, which has several somewhat similar plates of its own, but several of its copies of Peyligk's ten small illustrations were printed sideways or upside down.

Peyligk's text begins with the "natural organs": the intestines and stomach, shown in his first small figure with the oesophagus; next, the spleen and liver, each with its illustration; then the kidneys and ureters and the bladder illustrated together. Secondly the "spiritual organs": the heart, drawn with the surrounding great vessels; the lungs, shown with the trachea, which is described in the next paragraph with the oesophagus, though that had been portrayed already with the stomach. Finally, the "animal organs", introduced with a diagram of the cranium showing the sagittal and lambdoid sutures. The dura mater and the pia mater are first described, then the cerebrum, with a diagram of the four brain-ventricles, followed by the "cerebral lacuna", illustrated by a scheme of the brain-ventricles, infundibulum and hypophysis. The last illustration is of a conventionalized eye, which appears to have two pupils—the posterior pupil probably representing the retina. The text on the eyes is followed by sections on the ears, nose, mouth and tongue.

The quality of Peyligk's science may be judged from his first sentences about the heart: "The Heart which is the source of life is concealed by the wings of the lung. And this is so that it may be cooled by the air which it draws from the lung. And that the heat and spirit which are generated in it may both be modified. Its position and place is clear, because it is in the midst between front and back and right and left. As to its point it goes down towards the left, that by its heat the coldness of the left part may be modified. Its form is plain, for it is of pine-cone or pyramid form, that is to say it is oblong in the form of a pear tending to a point. And this is that the action of the natural heat tending into the cone may be rendered stronger."

Our copy of Peyligk's book has been fully annotated by an early owner, who has filled the margins with Latin comments in a characteristic 16th century script. Sudhoff recorded that his copy was similarly annotated, though the paragraphs he transcribed show that the two series of notes are independent. Our annotator wrote at the top of the title-page a tabulation of the senses, which I abbreviate slightly in translating:

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Five senses	{	Sight Hearing Taste Smell Touch	{	Colour Sound Savour Odour Tangibles	{	Eye Drum Tongue Two caruncles Nerve
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while the lower part of the same page contains a long note beginning: " Since knowledge of the whole thesis is most difficult and most important, it is necessary and urgent that each show himself most studious . . . " Above the figure of the kidneys the scribe wrote: " Note Nature made two kidneys and not one." On the final page he wrote out another tabulation, which begins:

		Brain Heart Liver Testicles		Nerves Arteries Veins Seminal vessels		
Spirits	{	Vital Natural Animal	{	Heart Liver Brain	{	Arteries Veins Nerves

From these quotations it will be seen that the study of anatomy was still highly theoretical. Yet the presence of Peyligk's illustrations and the fact that the successive editions were so quickly and completely used up imply that there was an eager demand, more adequately met by the next generation of experimental anatomists, such as Berengar, Estienne and Vesalius.

Bibliographical description

COMPENDIOSA DECLARATIO (Peyligk) 1513

Title: Compendiosa Capitis phisici declaratio:/ principalium humani corporis membrorum fi-/guras liquido ostendens. philosophie alum-/nis admodum profutura.

Colophon: . . . in insigni/ oppido Lipzensi opera et solertia Vuolfgangi Stöckels Anno/ . . . Millesimo quingentesimo tredecimo.

Collation: f°: A₈, the leaves unnumbered. Height 29.5 cm.

Contents: 1a, Title and " Epigramma ad Spectatorem "; 1b, schema of torso: 2a-8a, text, beginning: " quia in superioribus omnes potentie et vegetative . . . "; 8a, colophon; 8b, blank.

Illustrations: 1b, Torso; 3b, Oesophagus stomach intestines; 4a, Spleen; 4b, Liver with vena chylis and vena portae; 5a, Kidneys ureters bladder; 5b, Heart and great vessels; 6a, Lungs and trachea; 6b, Cranium with sutures; 7a, (i) Brain ventricles, (ii) Ventricles infundibulum hypophysis; 7b, Eye.

Copies: Leipzig, Institute of the History of Medicine (Sudhoff *Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 1916, 9, 309); Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale (Rés. Ta 9. 399); Uppsala University Library (Erik Waller collection, no 7363); Royal College of Surgeons of England (from E. Weil's Catalogue 30, no. 110).

Note: This is a separate edition of the final chapter from Johann Peyligk *Philosophie naturalis Compendium* Leipzig, Melchior Lotter, 12 August 1499, f°: 98 leaves; the torso schema is at Q₁b and the text, preceded by the " Epigramma " and Title, occupies Q₂a—7b; Q₈ is blank. (Klebs *Incunabula scientifica et medica* 754.1; British Museum IB 12115.3).