

Introduzione/Introduction

FRENCH AND ITALIAN MEDICINE IN HISTORICAL AND
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

The shadow of Galileo Galilei looms large over the essays collected in this special issue on the history of medical and public health research in Italy and France in the Twentieth Century. Not that the Tuscan astronomer and mathematician ever claimed any insight into the transformations of modern medicine and the rise of biomedicine. Rather was his name borrowed by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Italian Ministry of University Research for their joint program for collaborative scientific research. Thanks to Galileo's support, the Centre de Recherche Médecine, Science, Santé et Société (CERMES¹) and the Istituto di Storia della Medicina² joined together to organize two conferences in June and December 2005, respectively in Rome and Paris. The contributions published here were first presented during these two encounters between French and Italian scholars, and greatly benefited from the many discussions that sprang in both occasions³.

Our program had two complementary aims. First, we intended to compare the national trajectories of two Western European countries and the way they negotiated the major transformations in the approach to disease and health that punctuated the last century, from the vogue of social medicine to the coming of age of biomedicine. Many of the contributors provide precious insights into the networks that connected the French and the Italian medical scientists to their European and North-American counterparts at different times, and help putting the two scientific communities into international context. Second, we took the opportunity of this scientific collaboration to

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bridge two national historiographic traditions that did not know each other very well. Indeed, the collection of essays published in this special issue opens and ends up with readings of two classics in the history and the philosophy of medicine: Ludwick Fleck, central to both Ilana Lowy's and Jean-Paul Gaudillière's articles, and Mirko Grmek, whose thesis is re-examined by Gilberto Corbellini and Chiara Preti. Altogether, the essays collected draw attention to the wide range of objects that populate the history of modern medicine and to their relationship. Style of thoughts, instruments, international networks: they all feature prominently in Stefano Canali's articles on genetics and thalassemia research in Italy. Whereas Fabio De Sio's and Mauro Capocci's account of the birth of Italian genetics focuses much more on the role of institutions in this process, interweaving local and international dimensions. Does this emphasis on collective actors and abstractions mean that medical men and women have vanished from the scene altogether? Not quite. Though by no way hagiographic, three of the articles published in this special issue address the individual dimension of elite medicine. Whereas Luc Berlivet reflects on the centrality of the biographical genre to the history of medicine and science, Lion Murard and Alberto Oliverio analyse the role of Jacques Parisot and Daniel Bovet in the development of social medicine and psychobiology, respectively. Though, for obvious reasons, many of these articles focus on developments that took place on either side of the Alps (with Bovet acting as a go-between, having started his career at the Institut Pasteur before moving to Rome), we could not just ignore the many research undertaken by French and Italian scholars on foreign experiences. Hence the two contributions by Patrick Zylberman and Francesco Cassata, who explore different uses of eugenics in Scandinavia and the United States, respectively, after the Second World War. Ultimately, the diversity of focus and approach provides us with a broad picture of the historiography of modern medicine, biomed-

cine and public health in France and Italy. Are there such things as a French and an Italian traditions in the historiography of medicine, some kind of national styles in other words? The answer has to be negative, for no single style or tradition manages to encompass the variety exhibited by the papers collected. Hopefully, it is a symptom of vitality, and it will surely make it easier for both communities of scholars to contribute even more effectively to international research on the history of medicine in the future.

The great pleasure we took in editing this collection of essays was however tarnished by the loss of our colleague Christiane Sinding. From the very beginning, Christiane had been enthusiastic about the project. She took part to both conferences, in Rome and Paris, despite her serious condition, contributing an insightful presentation on the impact of Georges Canguilhem's and Michel Foucault's philosophies of knowledge on the history of medicine. We all looked forward to seeing it published in this issue. Unfortunately, Christiane passed away on 19 April 2008. This volume is dedicated to her memory.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY AND NOTES

1. CERMES is a joint research centre of the Paris based Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, and two national institutes: the CNRS and INSERM (specialised in biomedical and health studies).
2. The Istituto di Storia della Medicina is part of the Department of Experimental Medicine, "La Sapienza" University, Rome.
3. We wish to thank Maria Conforti (Istituto di Storia della Medicina), who also took part in the organization of the research program, and gave an interesting presentation on the birth of the Italian historiography of medicine at the con-

ference organized in Rome. Alberto Oliverio, who had not attended any of the two conferences, kindly joined our project at a later stage and contributed an article to this special issue.