



Mechanism, Experiment, Disease: Marcello Malpighi and Seventeenth-Century Anatomy

Domenico Bertoloni Meli

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A leading early modern anatomist and physician, Marcello Malpighi often compared himself to that period's other great mind?Galileo. Domenico Bertoloni Meli here explores Malpighi's work and places it in the context of seventeenth-century intellectual life.

Malpighi's interests were wide and varied. As a professor at the University of Bologna, he confirmed William Harvey's theory of the circulation of blood; published groundbreaking studies of human organs; made important discoveries about the anatomy of silkworms; and examined the properties of plants. He sought to apply his findings to medical practice. By analyzing Malpighi's work, the author provides novel perspectives not only on the history of anatomy but also on the histories of science, philosophy, and medicine. Through the lens of Malpighi and his work, Bertoloni Meli investigates a range of important themes, from sense perception to the meaning of Galenism in the seventeenth century.

Bertoloni Meli contends that to study science and medicine in the seventeenth century one needs to understand how scholars and ideas crossed disciplinary boundaries. He examines Malpighi's work within this context, describing how anatomical knowledge was achieved and transmitted and how those processes interacted with the experimental and mechanical philosophies, natural history, and medical practice.

Malpighi was central in all of these developments, and his work helped redefine the intellectual horizon of the time. Bertoloni Meli's critical study of this key figure and the works of his contemporaries?including Borelli, Swammerdam, Redi, and Ruysch?opens a wonderful window onto the scientific and medical worlds of the seventeenth century.

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