CHAPTER 10

Medical Vices and Proverbial Expressions in Eighteenth-Century Medical Dissertations on Moderation, Patience, and Trust

Sari Kivistö

1 Introduction

Inept physicians and incompetent quacks were popular figures of fun in various humorous texts in the early modern period. Doctor stereotypes were suspected of a myriad of moral failures, including greed, money-making, an appetite for fame, plotting, poisoning, adultery, violence, superficial diagnostics, and the use of incomprehensible diagnostic language.[1] In the early modern textual sphere, various discursive traditions provided examples of doctors' suspicious work. I will illustrate this discourse of (distorted) professional ethics with the help of two interrelated textual forms that carried the tradition of medical vices as unchanged forward: medical proverbs and medical dissertations. The topic of medical vices was often discussed with the help of proverbs and aphoristic sayings that also appeared embedded in eighteenth-century medical dissertations which recycled sayings and examples of medical malpractice. Sometimes dissertations also consisted of medical proverbs and their explanations.[2]

Medical dissertations are good reference points for reconstructing contemporary thinking about medical vices and malpractice at a time when notions of physicians' responsibility were strongly developing. I will focus on three early eighteenth-century dissertations dealing with the intersubjective virtues of moderation (*temperantia*), patience (*patientia*), and trust (*fiducia*) needed in medical practice.[3] I will read them as representative examples of

1 For the stereotypic satirical portrayal of physicians, see Sari Kivistö, *Medical Analogy in Latin Satire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); for medical charlatans, see David Gentilcore, *Medical Charlatanism in Early Modern Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2 On the difference between medical proverbs and proverbs in medicine, see Larisa Fialkova, "Proverbs and Medicine: The Problem of Applied Folklore," *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, no. 46 (2010): 111–124.

3 Gottlieb Friderici (Pr.) and Ambrosius Fuchs (Resp.), *Dissertatio de fiducia aegri in medicum* (Leipzig: Litteris Schedianis, 1720); Johann Gottlob Hertel (Pr.) and Christian Jacobi (Resp.),

© SARI KIVISTÖ, 2026 | DOI:10.1163/9789004725058_011
This is an open access chapter distributed under the terms of the CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license.

eighteenth-century medical thinking, through which it is possible to reconstruct some wider lines about the contemporary understanding of medical vices and their recurring patterns. Their goal was to build the physicians' good reputation by encouraging doctors to possess virtues and good manners. The texts are normative in nature and explore how prudent doctors ought to behave and how people perceive their professional misconduct. Other relevant dissertations here would include writings that deal with the duties of the doctor, *de officio Medici*; numerous dissertations have appeared under this title. The dissertations are permeated by the language of established expressions underlining the importance of good medical behaviour, and medical virtues are negatively established by distinguishing them from medical vices.[4]

My purpose is to study the textual practices and narrative structures in which the timeless proverbial voices were embedded in medical discourse. I will first analyse the aphoristic method in early modern medicine and explore how textual authority was transmitted through learned quotations and other authoritative proverbial forms. I will then delve deeper into proverbial utterances and their smaller textual markers in dissertations to explore how medical vices were discursively mediated through multiple textual acts distinguishing between different speakers and aiming to reconcile traditional science and orally transmitted folk belief. I will analyze how longstanding proverbs are marked in the text and separated into their own universal crystallizations from the rest of the main text. By examining the rhetoric of proverbs, my chapter will explore how various contesting voices intermingle on the pages of medical

---

Dissertatio inauguralis de patientia medicorum (Altdorf: Iodocus Guilelmus Kohlesius, 1724); Georg Nicholas Stock, *Dissertatio inauguralis de temperantia medicorum* (Altdorf: Daniel Meyer, 1725).

4 The publication of disputations and dissertations in print flourished in later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Germany, when the printed dissertation was the predominant form of academic publication. In addition to Germany and some other countries in central Europe, dissertations were printed in Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea countries, and, to a lesser extent, south of the Alps. As Oskar Diethelm has noted, the printing of dissertations started in the latter part of the sixteenth century, but the Italian universities did not request the printing of dissertations until the eighteenth century. Their impact on medical literature in southern Europe was therefore smaller, whereas in northern Europe they were influential publications. See Oskar Diethelm, *Medical Dissertations of Psychiatric Interest Printed before 1750* (Basel: S. Karger, 1971), at 161–162. On disputations and dissertations, see, e.g. Sari Kivistö, *The Vices of Learning. Morality and Knowledge at Early Modern Universities* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), with further references; *Early Modern Disputations and Dissertations in an Interdisciplinary and European Context*, eds. Meelis Friedenthal, Hanspeter Marti, and Robert Seidel (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

dissertations carrying and recycling the idea of the vices of doctors from one century to another.

2 The Aphoristic Method

Collections of medical maxims have a long history from the Hippocratic canon and Celsus' sentences onwards. Commentaries on Hippocratic aphorisms were one key genre of medical literature.[5] Domenico Guglielmini from Bologna writes in his commentary on Hippocrates' aphorisms in 1748 that this genre – or method, as he calls it – is full of spirit and not tainted by any falsehood or desire for novelty. There is nothing superfluous in aphorisms, and nothing that is not within the realm of truth. Uselessness and linguistic vices such as loquacity or circumlocution are completely alien to aphoristic learning. Guglielmini maintained that the aphoristic method also had weaknesses, such as obscurity due to its brevity, the blind trust required of the reader in the truth of the saying, which was fundamentally alien to the scientific approach, and the way of gathering proverbs into collections without an organizing principle, which made it difficult to imprint them on the mind. The universality of sayings could also be problematic and challenged with counterexamples and exceptions. However, the great advantage of the aphoristic method lies in its epistemic virtue, clarity, and comprehensibility. The aphoristic presentation proceeds like a compendium, avoiding all the typical disadvantages of excessive wordiness. Guglielmini explains in detail the ethical benefits of the aphoristic method and describes the five criteria of aphorisms: they summarize the fundamental core ideas of science, are based on tested truth, move on a general level, can be applied in different contexts, and focus on essential, necessary, and useful issues. Guglielmini emphasizes that only a good doctor can understand and explain Hippocrates' aphorisms. Goodness here also means moral decency; Guglielmini lists prudence, tolerance, honesty, and mercy as

5 For the reception of Hippocrates' aphorisms in the early modern period, see, e.g. Ian Maclean, "The Reception of Hippocrates by Physicians at the End of the Seventeenth Century," in *The Worlds of Knowledge and the Classical Tradition in the Early Modern Age*, ed. Dmitri Levitin and Ian Maclean (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 217–274, at 236–250. For historical case studies on medical aphorisms and etiquette books discussing ethical principles in medicine in Italy, see Maurizio Rippa Bonati and Fabio Zampieri, "Historical Overview of Medical Liability," in *Malpractice and Medical Liability*, ed. S.D. Ferrara et al. (Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 13–49; Alberto Zanatta and Fabio Zampieri, "Medical Liability: Two Historical Cases from Padua," in *Introduction to Medical Humanities: Medicine and the Italian Artistic Heritage*, ed. Renzo Pegoraro et al. (Cham: Springer, 2022), 39–60.

virtues required of a doctor. Avoidable vices include avarice, unholiness, austerity, arrogance, dishonesty, etc.[6]

The genre of aphorism was considered an ethical form, which in its short wording was thought to prevent scholarly vices. When Archer Taylor mentions some collections of medical sayings in different countries, he notes that for some reason several dissertations on this subject were completed in eighteenth-century Altdorf, but he does not recognize Johann Jacob Baier's decisive role in collecting and publishing medical sayings there.[7] Baier, a local professor of medicine, who, along with proverbs, avidly collected portraits of scholars and fossils from the Nuremberg area, supervised several medical dissertations using the aphoristic method. In the series of dissertations titled *Adagiorum medicinalium centuria* (1718), Baier said that after accepting the professorship at Altdorf, he began to promote the interpretation of proverbs as part of his discipline.[8] Baier proposes that the sayings explained in his *Adagia* entertain the listeners with their variability while reminding them of important moments in medical history. In another dissertation titled *Regimen sanitatis literatorum, aphoristica methodo delineatum* (1705), Baier writes that the concise aphoristic style of writing pleased both Hippocrates and such later well-known doctors as Giorgio Baglivi in his *De praxi medica* (1696) or Georg Wolfgang Wedel in *Theoremata medica* (1677) for conveying medical instructions. He notes that the short aphoristic style is especially suitable for conveying guidance for the preservations of health because concise thoughts are easily absorbed and remembered for a long time. Baier suggests that the importance of the Salerno school was based on the aphoristic form of its well-known Latin handbook of medical lore. In his view, the aphoristic method represents a middle way, where not only physical health is taken care of, but health is also maintained through the mind by strengthening wisdom and virtues.[9] Erasmus'

6 Domenico Guglielmini, *Commentaria in primam Aphorismorum Hippocratis sectionem* (Bologna: ex Typographia S. Thomae Aquinatis, 1748), esp. at 19–22, 29.

7 Archer Taylor, *The Proverb and an Index to 'The Proverb'* (Bern: Lang, 1962), at 121–129. See also Helmut A. Seidl, *Medizinische Parömien im Englischen und Deutschen: ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Parömiologie* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1982). There is a rich literature on proverbs in general; see, e.g. *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*, ed. Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994).

8 Johann Jacob Baier, *Adagiorum medicinalium centuria* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Jodocus Guilelmus Kohlesius, 1718). The dissertations were originally defended between 1711 and 1717 by different respondents.

9 Johann Jacob Baier, *Regimen sanitatis literatorum, aphoristica methodo delineatum* (Altdorf: Henricus Meyer, 1705), at 3–8.

popular collection of *Adagia* was one of the key inspirations for Baier's medical collection.

Aphoristic expressions discussed ethical principles and served as a means for transmitting medical virtues and vices in early modern university medicine. They included wise sayings that promoted prudence and other virtuous behaviour but were also dedicated to the vices of medical doctors. Christian Lange, a professor of physiology at Leipzig and a dean of the medical faculty, discussed in his series of dissertations called medical miscellany, *Miscellanea curiosa medica* (1655–1660), the meanings of the common abusive proverb *mentiris ut medicus* ("you lie like a medical doctor"), which was about the unreliability of doctors but in Lange's interpretation expressed ingratitude. He argued that the saying only applies to unqualified healers and cunning quacks – not professional doctors – who hide their incompetence with loquacity and deceitful words. In the language of insults, the verb "mederi," meaning to heal, easily turned not only into lying ("mentiri"), but also into the form "you tear me apart" ("me teris"), criticizing the violent treatment methods of doctors.[10] Other popular and ironic sayings common in various collections of jokes, riddles, and anecdotes, such as *Nugae venales*, were the slightly modified Hippocratic aphorism *ars longa, vita brevis* ("art is long, life is short") and *recipe decipe* ("prescription, deception"), which associated prescriptions with deceiving through a phonetic likeness, as if through an incantation.[11] The collection referred to the profession's low esteem among the common people: doctors were called urine examiners and considered inferior to fortune-tellers, rat hunters, root diggers, and other uneducated folk healers.[12]

In Baier's *Adagia*, the first fourteen proverbs focus on the negative reputation of doctors including their violence, negligence, and other vices.[13] One of the first derisive sayings explained is *Medice cura te ipsum* ("Physician, heal

10 Christian Lange, *Miscellanea curiosa medica* (Leipzig: Thomas Matthias Götze, 1666), at §XXVI. The collection includes nine disputations defended by different respondents.

11 N.N., *Nugae venales, sive thesaurus ridendi & iocandi* (Prostant apud Neminem, sed tamen ubique, 1663), at 11. The collection was frequently reprinted in enlarged editions in the seventeenth century.

12 Ibid., 235.

13 Important mediators of the proverbial tradition are the writings of ancient comic writers, doctors, or compilers (Aristophanes, Hippocrates, Zenobius); great names of intellectual history (Petrarch, Erasmus); later compilers of proverbs (such as the fifteenth-century writer Michael Apostolius, who compiled paroemia in Greek, or Christian Lange's medical compilation); and authors who studied the vices of doctors. Religious polemical texts, such as Ahasver Fritsch, *Medicus peccans, sive tractatus de peccatis medicorum* (Nürnberg: Wolfgang Moritz Endter, 1684), dealt with the superstition of doctors. The core idea of Fritsch's critique was that a doctor sins if he "plays God."

thyself"), which pointed out how unbelievable and ironic it was, for example, for a doctor with a hard cough to try to cure a patient with lung disease. Baier attributed this saying to Christ (Luke 4:23), as if the primary source of medical knowledge were God. Other similar sayings conveying a negative perception of doctors included *Novus Medicus, novum coemeterium* ("new physician, new cemetery"), which referred to repeated failure in treatment, and *Hippocratis filiis similis* ("being like the sons of Hippocrates"), which suggested that Hippocrates' sons were frequently ridiculed as simple-minded in ancient comedy. One of the sayings, *Medicus ex commentariis* ("physician from books"), specifically criticizes doctors for relying on universal formulas found in books in their treatments without making a distinction between patients.[14] Aristophanes' saying *Merdivorus*, someone who eats excrement, indicates doctors who feed their patients jewels as medicine and then pocket these "drugs" after examining the patient's excrement. These negative proverbs highlight the capacity of the proverbial form to explore human greed, vanity, self-deception, and other vices. It is noteworthy that two of the dissertations discussed below were published at Altdorf, and many of the wise sayings explained by Baier were used in medical dissertations.

Baier's collection testifies to the longevity of proverbs: some of the medical proverbs originated from the Old Testament or other distant times. At the same time, Baier's constant effort is to reject the generalizable truth suggested by the sayings: for example, he proposes that the statement calling all doctors liars is itself false. Baier admits that doctors can, of course, sometimes lose their minds like other people. There are doctors who sniff body parts in public dissection shows or sip fluids from the bloody skull of the deceased, but more likely those doctors who lick sweat in the spa are probably only professionally curious about bodily fluids, just as veterinarians carefully examine horse manure to determine the animal's diseases.[15] Even such strange behaviour can indicate professional judgement, and, therefore, the sayings about doctors' madness are by no means suitable as a universal principle about the moral nature of the profession. Baier's approach to proverbs also reflects the

14 This proverb also reflected the polemics between rational and empirical medicine in early modern Europe; the empirical doctors typically relied on Hippocrates' aphorisms. See Rippa Bonati and Zampieri, "Historical Overview of Medical Liability," 38. Volker Hess has noted that the aphorism is a way of medical knowledge that "condenses empirical experiences to knowing of action-related maxims and rules." See Volker Hess, "Aphorismus als Wissenstechnik. Das Beispiel der 'meteorologischen Medizin' des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 55, no. 2 (2020): 102–131, at 103.

15 Baier, *Adagia*, 24 (s.v. "Merdivorus").

(sometimes) tense relationships between universal knowledge conveyed by proverbs and individual cases that challenge them.

3 Authoritative Sayings and the Rhetoric of Affirmation

Early modern medical treatises participated in the long tradition of warnings and ethical instruction addressed to the medical profession.[16] They were important means to craft a more positive self-presentation compared to the profession's traditional negative public image. To gain the trust of the patients, doctors actively sought to respond to such criticism that accused them of anti-religiousness, avarice, immorality, or bad manners by focusing on the pursuit of virtuous medical behaviour. When discussing the demands of the profession in his disputation on the blameless doctor, *De medico inculpato* (1710), the Leipzig physician Augustus Quirinus Rivinus noted that the faults of an individual physician should not be imputed to the art itself. He stressed that doctors are required to perform dutiful conduct and display piety, erudition, promptitude, diligence, humanity, patience, courage, and prudence. Correspondingly, the vices that a physician should avoid include avarice, loquacity, wantonness, wine-drinking, officiousness, thoughtlessness, and malice.[17] One of the central goals of medical performance was to build up confidence in the patients to secure their obedience and achieve better results in the cure.

One obvious narrative technique and important textual practice in the Latin dissertations was the frequent use of learned quotations from previous literature.[18] Quotations that often took the form of proverbs and sayings affirmed textual content in a memorable form.[19] Quintilian already noted the rhetorical usefulness of maxims and epigrammatic forms: "they strike the

16 Doctors actively sought to treat their patients in a more comprehensive way already in medieval university medicine. See Fernando Salmón, "The Physician as Cure in Medical Scholasticism," in *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, ed. Ildikó Csepregi and Charles Burnett (Firenze: Sismel, 2012), 193–215. In the Middle Ages, medical ethics were based on the combination of Hippocratic and Catholic ethics; see Rippa Bonati and Zampieri, "Historical Overview of Medical Liability," at 18.

17 Augustus Quirinus Rivinus, *Dissertationes medicae* (Leipzig: Philipp Wilhelm Stock, 1710), at 1–14.

18 For poetry citations in Swedish (medical and other) dissertations, see Anna Fredriksson, "Antika poesicitat i tidigmoderna svenska dissertationer," *Samlaren* 136 (2015): 38–79.

19 See Daniel Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen in der medizinischen Dissertation vor 1800," in *Medizinische Schreibweisen: Ausdifferenzierung und Transfer zwischen Medizin*

mind, they often knock it over by a single stroke, their very brevity makes them more memorable, and the pleasure they give makes them more persuasive."[20] However, Quintilian also warned against their use by pointing out that one should not imitate the *indocti* who use *sententiae* unwisely.[21] Dissertations dealing with the vices of learning warned against pedantry with name-dropping, and piling up citations was often seen as a vice that should be avoided, as the pursuit of authority turned parodic with excessive citation.[22]

Nevertheless, quotations and sayings were diligently cultivated in dissertations. Generally, master's dissertations of this period were conventional pieces of scholarship that summarized traditional knowledge and the scientific discussion of their day. Originality was not important. The dissertations were not intended to demonstrate novelty as much as they sought to display the extensive learnedness and book-learning of the respondent or the presider who had written the dissertation. Structurally, the texts contained concise definitions of terms, abundant citations, references, and numerous examples. Medical dissertations are particularly fruitful sources for the study of normative discourses on virtues and vices because they were embedded with authoritative forms and proverbial (often non-medical) textual content meant to prove some ethical principle.[23] Although this period also witnessed "a radical shift of episteme … from a textually based system of knowledge production to an empirically based natural philosophy,"[24] in university medicine textual authorities and their sayings were still very much used to construct models of learning and an image of the ideal physician.

---

und Literatur (*1600–1900*), ed. Nicolas Pethes and Sandra Richter (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2008), 131–145, at 139.

20 Quintilian, *Institutiones oratoriae*, 12.10.48, trans. Donald A. Russell.

21 Ibid., 2.12.7.

22 On pedantry and the use of quotations, see Kivistö, *The Vices of Learning*, 63–68, 244. See also Arnoud Visser's chapter in this volume.

23 The borders of different faculties and scientific fields were loose in universities: a theologian could deal with medical topics and a doctor could examine the diseases of the Bible, as the Danish seventeenth-century physician Thomas Bartholin did in his *De morbis biblicis miscellanea medica* (1672). Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen," 131; on Bartholin, see also Sari Kivistö, "G.F. von Franckenau's *Satyra sexta* (1674) on Male Menstruation and Female Testicles," in *The Trouble with Ribs. Women, Men and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anu Korhonen and Kate Lowe (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2007), 82–102, at 94–95.

24 Jane O. Newman, "Citational Science: Textuality and the Authority of the 'Scientific Fact' in Early Modern Central Europe (Lohenstein's *Cleopatra*, 1680)," in *The Construction of Textual Authority in German Literature of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. James F. Poag and Claire Baldwin (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 211–238, at 214.

As Daniel Schäfer points out, in the medical writings of the time, the reader's attention is first drawn to numerous quotations from authorities.[25] In general, the question of authority is complex in the genre of the written dissertation: the role of the *praeses* is unclear and often the professor who has supervised the dissertation is the actual author of the text. One dimension of this complexity and a traditional way of constructing authority and aligning with past knowledge is to refer to renowned authors and respected texts. These sayings are often borrowed from famous ancient thinkers (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero), Christian figures (St Paul, Augustine), or later scholars. As Olga Weijers has noted, "the earlier ones were known as *auctoritates*, authoritative authors recognised by everyone."[26] Authorities were often cited to reinforce one's statements and to "corroborate the author's own opinion."[27]

Good examples of this practice of building discursive authority are found in the inaugural dissertation on doctors' moderation and temperance by Georg Nicolaus Stock from Nuremberg, who claimed that doctors had to make themselves agreeable to the patients to succeed in their work. In the context of medical ethics, the good reputation of doctors was secured when they were equipped with good manners. Therefore, doctors had to govern their bodily pleasures and control their appetites for food, drink, and sex. When popular dietetic sayings warned the common people about the health hazards of young wives, wine, and tobacco, treatises examining the morality of doctors directed their words of warning specifically at medical practitioners. Late medieval and Renaissance etiquette manuals had already given similar rules for physicians.[28] Stock supported his views with authority figures, whose importance is emphasized by typographical means and printing their names in capital letters. Stock sets boundaries for the reader "with Plutarch,"[29] opens a paragraph with Plato's authoritative definition of virtue,[30] and closes the

25 Schäfer, Daniel. "*Exemplum historiae naturalis*: Zur Funktion von Beispielen für ein hohes Alter in der diätetischen Literatur der Renaissance und der frühen Neuzeit," in *Geschichte der Medizingeschichtsschreibung: Historiographie unter dem Diktat literarischer Gattungen von der Antike bis zur Aufklärung*, ed. Thomas Rütten (Remscheid: Gardez! Verlag, 2009), 265–293, at 266. On authorities, see also *Wissenstransfer und Auctoritas in der frühneuzeitlichen niederländischsprachigen Literatur*, ed. Bettina Noak (Göttingen: W & R unipress, 2014).

26 Olga Weijers, *In Search of the Truth: A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), at 280.

27 Ibid., 280.

28 Rippa Bonati and Zampieri, "Historical Overview of Medical Liability," 42.

29 "… iuste ac merito dilatare velim cum PLUTARCHO fines *temperantiae* in respectu ad Medicum," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §I.

30 "… quemadmodum PLATO explicat," in Ibid., §III.

same paragraph with St Paul's proverbial views about the limits of freedom.[31] Hippocrates is referred to as the traditional author of the field,[32] and the discussion is drawn together by quoting Seneca's proverbial consideration of the immeasurable value of life and health.[33] Some of the quotes are clearly separated on their own lines: the well-known phrase "they simulate the Curii and live Bacchanals"[34] quoted from Juvenal's satires already includes a history of a condemning tone. Such sayings are considered eternal truths that are valid in all circumstances and in every historical epoch; they form a perennial body of knowledge that can be applied in every situation.

The oral tradition of disputations left its mark on the text and its proverbial practices.[35] Sometimes the author uses a personal first-person singular or has recourse to metaphors and other rhetorical devices. The author can guide the reader by taking a stand on the accuracy of the claims and explicitly confirm the authoritative value of the source by such words as *recte inquit* or *eleganter affirmat*. The author can, for example, confirm Cicero's views concerning modesty by calling these views and definitions "wise."[36] Imperative expressions and normative exhortations were also very common in the dissertation. The author frequently tells his readers how doctors should behave and what they should avoid and beware of by using strong imperative, aphoristic expressions: "Above all they should avoid *filthy and squalid clothing*, especially *linen cloth*, the dirtiness of which all good-mannered people loathe."[37] The quote includes normative and instructive expressions including an exhortative form (*vitare decet*), setting the order of importance (*ante omnia*), italicizing the topic in question (dirty clothes), and referring to all (*omnes*) well-mannered people and their assumed collective views. The quote underlines that the good reputation of the doctor was also built by dressing in a dignified manner and avoiding all dirt.

---

31 "… quo sensu D. *Apostolus* PAULUS (c) pronunciauit, *omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt; omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia aedificant*," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §III; 1 Corinthians 10:23: "'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything,' you say – but not everything is constructive."

32 "Iam dudum HIPPOCRATES (d) notavit …," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §IV.

33 "… SENECA iudice …," in Ibid., §XXI.

34 "… *qui Curios simulant, et bacchanalia vivunt*," in Ibid., §II; cf. Juvenal, *Saturae*, 2.3.

35 Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen," 135. Oral disputations in which the student defended a proposed thesis were solemn events attended by students, professors, and faculty members, as well as high status guests from society.

36 "… definiente sapienter TULLIO," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §IX.

37 "Ante omnia autem vitare decet *sordidum squalidumque vestitum*, praesertim *linteum*, cuius spurcitiam omnes bene morati homines abominantur," in Ibid., §V.

Similarly, in his preface to Christian Jacobi of Falkenburg's inaugural dissertation on patience, the presider Johann Gottlob Hertel noted the common aversion of the people towards medical doctors, but in the view of Jacobi and Hertel, this could be helped by developing the virtue of patience that was an important time-sensitive emotion required in good medical practice. The dissertation suggested that there were at least three specific occasions in which the physicians' patience manifested itself and these circumstances were related to the nature of the disease, the patients' behaviour, and the relatives and other people surrounding the medical staff. The authors open their dissertation by saying that it is reasonable to define the virtue of patience by quoting Cicero's appropriate words about the topic.[38] Hertel and Jacobi frequently enhance the truthfulness of their own account first by introducing a proverbial citation of the sources and then confirming the validity of their statements: in their view, Gregory the Great "was right" about impatience[39] and Hippocrates' advice about rationality was "healthy."[40] As an intersubjective virtue, patience was formed in the doctor-patient relationship. Relying on the common saying, originally attributed to Cicero's epistles to Atticus, "As long as there is life there is hope," the authors noted that the doctor should always nurse the patient's hope and acknowledge that impatience could harmfully disturb the healing process.[41]

4 The Present Tense of Proverbial Forms

Along with one-liners quoted from previous authorities, other proverbial expressions were also common in medical dissertations and their interest was often in moral observations. Gary Saul Morson, who uses the term "aphorism" to refer to various short forms of fiction, has noted that an apothegm, especially its mystical form, is an aphoristic saying that leaves intact or increases the mystery of the world. The statement remains ambiguous, and the riddle is not solved. The apothegm form is typical of oracles and the thoughts of the gods that do not unfold to humans; the speaker just conveys words from the outside to the people. According to Morson, Asian wisdom, for example, favours such open sayings, as does ancient tragedy. These phrases do not offer

38 Cicero, *De inventione*, 2.163.

39 "… recte pronunciavit *Gregorius Magnus*," in Hertel and Jacobi, *De patientia medicorum*, §IV.

40 "… iuxta salutare Hippocratis (e) monitum," in Ibid., §V.

41 Ibid., §VIII.

clear recipes or rules for a better life because they remain ambiguous and unresolved. This kind of saying differs, for example, from the riddle, which has a solution (e.g. Oedipus solves the riddle presented by the sphinx).[42]

Open-ended aphoristic forms are less often used in dissertations. Instead, the dissertations prefer the use of the *dictum*, which can be defined as a form of conclusion: the dictum seeks to solve the riddle of the world and suggests that it includes the decisive truth. The dictum form is frequently met in medical discourse: "they should adopt universally the *apostolic* dictum of the Physician. ..."[43] The author here gives instructions to the doctor about what kind of rhetorical speech is suitable for building trust in patients. The quotation implies a universal view, and the author uses an imperative form, emphasizes the important position of the physician with a capital letter, and highlights the apostolic authority of St Paul, quoting in italics his words about the proper way of speaking (Col. 4:6). According to Morson, the dictum sheds light on what was previously seen as complicated and offers a simple and total solution that applies always and everywhere. Therefore, the tense of the dictum is the present: it is valid not only now, but always.[44] The dictum is rewarding for the reader because it provides certainty and removes doubt. By going from dark to light, it is an epistemological turning point and presents its conclusions as unquestionable.

In addition to the dictum, another proverbial form used in early modern dissertations was the *monitum*, which can be translated as a warning or reminder: "let me transcribe two distinct reminders by ARNOLD DE VILLA NOVA: let the physician be decent in the bedroom, and let the fire of his lust go into hiding."[45] The verb "transscribere" suggests that the author copies and transfers some knowledge in writing from past authorities to the current readers. The name of the authority, a famous Spanish medieval physician Arnald of Villanova, to whom has been attributed the early ethical guide to the practice of medicine providing cautions to doctors, *De cautelis medicorum*, is again written in block capitals, and the quotation is given in italics and formulated as

42 Gary Saul Morson, *The Long and Short of It. From Aphorism to Novel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), esp. Chap. 2.

43 "In universum sibi putent dictum Medici *istud Apostolicum ...*" in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §VIII.

44 Morson, *The Long and Short of It*, 38.

45 "... liceat mihi transscribere ARNOLDI VILLANOVANI duo distincta monita: *Medicus sit honestus in thalamis, delitescat in eo flamma libidinis ...*" in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XI.

an exhortation. Sometimes the advice is called vulgar and common ("vulgare monitum"),[46] deriving its authority from the fact that it is well-known.

Proverbs are statements expressing an accepted truth learned through experience and that has come into general (especially oral) use. Steven Shapin argues that proverbs invoke situations of judgement and action and are strategies for dealing with "type situations,"[47] whereas Walter Benjamin claimed in his fragment on proverbs that "the proverb speaks a *noli me tangere* of experience."[48] While it "proclaims its ability to transform experience into tradition," it "cannot be applied to situations."[49] Benjamin argues that proverbs magically transform the situation and take possession of an individual's particular experience (perhaps by "creating situations through naming them," as Shapin mentioned).[50] Benjamin writes that "it turns the lesson that has been experienced into a wave in the living chain of innumerable lessons that flow down from eternity."[51] *Noli me tangere* has a biblical origin (John 20:17), but, interestingly, according to Baier it was originally a medical proverb and refers to the fact that it is not good to touch open wounds with bare hands.[52] To give some examples of such type situations, the well-known formula "a full belly does not like studying"[53] is associated with a learning situation evoked by referring to young boys who are mentioned as objects of instruction. The quoted formula is "frequently used" which means that it is confirmed by its long use against gluttony in the convent schools of Germany.[54] The proverb is often confirmed as ancient and therefore truthful: for example, the ancient proverb "the dry soul is the wisest"[55] (*Anima sicca sapientissima*) consists in

46 Ibid., §XX.

47 Steven Shapin, "Proverbial Economies: How an Understanding of Some Linguistic and Social Features of Common Sense Can Throw Light on More Prestigious Bodies of Knowledge, Science For Example," *Social Studies of Science* 31, no. 5 (2001): 731–769, at 743, 739, and 753.

48 Walter Benjamin, "On Proverbs," *Selected Writings*, 2:2, 1931–1934, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), at 582.

49 Benjamin, "On Proverbs," 582.

50 Shapin, "Proverbial Economies," 740.

51 Benjamin, "On Proverbs," 582.

52 Baier, *Adagia*, 169.

53 "*Plenus venter non studet libenter*, pueris etiam frequentata formula," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XIII; Bremser, *Medizinische Parömien*, 26–30.

54 The phrase and its different versions were explained in Baier, *Adagia*, 109.

55 "… maiorem tribuens fidem antiquo proverbio: *Anima sicca sapientissima*," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XIV.

Latin of three words, which is typical of effective sayings. Baier attributes this saying via Galen to Heraclitus.[56]

Other proverbial terms frequently met in the dissertations include the *consilium*; the readers are given advice borrowed, for example, from Celsus, a traditional medical authority, and they are advised to follow Celsus' wise orders if they wish to become good doctors – a very straightforward educational tone.[57] Sometimes the advice is confirmed by calling it wise.[58] Further proverbial forms include the *axioma* (principle), such as the popular and somewhat "unrefined" phrase "you are what you eat,"[59] or the *dicterium* or witticism, such as "as long as there is life, there is hope," which is used as an ancient saying containing vulgar knowledge.[60]

These uses of proverbs are united by a multiple confirmation of their authority and an appeal to their longevity. Proverbs are generalizations which circulated undeformed, and their temporal dimension is particularly strong. Their preferred tense is the present or imperative, the universal tense of eternity, which is even more highlighted if the proverb was presented in Latin in a vernacular context. Dissertations also have other discursive practices that utilize the voice of history in dealing with medical vices. Exemplarity is generally extremely important for the topic of transmission and an important small form in the dissertations.[61] Mythical or biblical *exempla* were short narrative passages that were used in the dissertations to clarify a statement, provide unchanging and normative models for human conduct, or just for entertainment. Often, a mere personal name was enough to evoke an appropriate association in the reader; as Schäfer has pointed out, for example, in dissertations dealing with old age, *exempla* often referred to longevity.[62] *Exempla* typically refer to old times and Greek or Roman examples, which are given as a warning and meant to help readers avoid similar mistakes in their own medical

56 Baier, *Adagia*, 110.

57 "… consilium CELSI sequetur," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XV.

58 "Notum est axioma sapiensque consilium: *Noli negotiis irasci, non moventur!*" in Hertel and Jacobi, *De patientia medicorum*, §IV.

59 "… siquidem populare, tametsi subrusticum est axioma, vel dicterium; wie du frist, so bist du," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XVI. The "somewhat unrefined" German saying is printed using a different font, a Fraktur script.

60 "Perantiquo enim et vulgari dicterio, *dum anima aegroto est, spes esse dicitur*," Hertel and Jacobi, *De patientia medicorum*, §VIII.

61 Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen," 131, 140; Schäfer, "*Exemplum historiae naturalis*."

62 Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen," 140, notes that Nestor was typically mentioned for longevity.

interventions. Authoritative examples can also be placed at the end of the paragraphs, thus giving them the last word.

5 The Vernacular They-Voice of the People

Since the doctor's virtues were formed in interaction with the patients, the medical dissertations produced not only the enduring voice of authority transmitted through learned quotations, but also the voice of the collective public opinion. When studied in closer detail it turns out that medical dissertations are complex textual structures embedded with type situations of doctor-patient encounters and form – at least seemingly – polyphonic layers of utterances producing an experiential perspective of a collective subject that can be interpreted as the group voice of the patients and other lay people.[63] Vernacular proverbs and quotations are easily discerned in dissertations because they were often printed in italics or by using different fonts (if they were in German, Swedish, Greek, etc.). In Latin proverbs, the acoustic-rhetorical style such as rhymes, alliteration, and etymological patterns gave them rhetorical force.[64]

Good examples of this textual practice can be found in the Leipzig physician Gottlieb Friderici's dissertation on *fiducia*, which emphasized the value of trust when dealing with patients and illustrated people's mistrust with abundant quotations. Superstition and suspicion were thought to be typical of the people, who assumed that excessive confidence or self-assurance can turn into hubris and produce an undesirable outcome. Doubt or mistrust, on the other hand, was always a safer option. Therefore, trust was among the medical emotions considered important in healing encounters and crucially related to the doctor's behaviour. The characteristics of a good doctor, which created legitimate trust in the patient, included good manners, sobriety, learning, patience, silence, good humour, and honesty, whereas certain reprehensible habits, such as loquacity and bragging, fuelled mistrust towards medicine and doctors. Incorrect ways of building trust included expensive drugs and persuasive drug names, such as *Der Königin Christinä alterations- und Lebens-Pulver*, *unvergleichliche Gold-Tinctur*, *Indianisches Wunder-Mehl, Wunder-thätiges Saltz*, or

63 Mikhail Bakhtin has argued that truly polyphonic writings, such as Dostoevsky's novels, did not include proverbial sayings that would retain their impersonal meanings in different contexts. Such separate thoughts were common in monologic novels, but in Bakhtin's view, Dostoevsky did not appreciate impersonal truths and aphoristic thinking appears in his novels only as banal witticisms. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), at 140–141.

64 Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen," 135–136.

Gottes Wunder-Güte, which only puffed up the importance of the physician.[65] The dissertation quotes sayings summarizing people's distrust, such as the epigrammatic saying that "a sick person will never get better if there are many doctors treating the same fever."[66] The verse form makes the saying easier to remember and circulate. The poetic lines about doctors arguing with each other are attributed to the Welshman John Owen, one of the most famous epigrammatic poets of the early seventeenth century, who published ten books of short satirical epigrams.[67] Proverbs are also affirmed by highlighting that they are ancient and accepted by later authorities, like the saying "the doctor most people trust heals many patients."[68] Friderici's dissertation ends with a series of dicta clearly delineating the different responsibilities of the patient and the doctor to instill confidence in the medical process.

One notable narrative feature in the use of sayings is that the author usually separates himself from the collective group and the patients: the expressions recording the group statements are not in the first-person plural that would also include the speaker but in the third-person plural that can, instead of being an inclusive and coherence-producing we-voice, be called the they-voice that implies separate groupings and expresses difference. In early modern dissertations, the third-person plural appears frequently prefacing a proverbial utterance. According to the narratological scholar Brian Richardson, the they-form usually signals a distance between the speaker and others: the speaker makes a distinction between himself and the crowd, and, instead of merging, separates himself from the collective subject.[69] Quotations and isolated speeches introduced by using a third-person plural account and plural verbs are marked forms that are placed in the mouth of the collective and distinguish the voice of the people from the rest of the authorial text. These popular utterances reflect the oral tradition located outside the traditional cultures of learning.

---

65 Friderici, *Dissertatio de fiducia*, §XXX. For the performance of medical charlatans, including various oratorical skills, tricks, and amusements, see Gentilcore, *Medical Charlatanism*, Chap. 9.

66 "Numquam crede mihi, a morbo curabitur aeger, / Si multis Medicis creditur una febris," in Friderici, *Dissertatio de fiducia*, §XVI.

67 *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*, eds. Jozef IJsewijn and Dirk Sacré, vol. 2 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), at 113.

68 "Antiquum est proverbium, Recentioribus quoque approbatum: *Sanat plurimos, cui plurimi confidunt*" in Friderici, *Dissertatio de fiducia*, §XVIII.

69 Brian Richardson, "Representing Social Minds: 'We' and 'They' Narratives, Natural and Unnatural," *Narrative* 23, no. 2 (2015): 200–212.

The concrete voice of the people is often emphasized in the rough-sounding German language. Vernacular and German proverbs, which became fashionable by 1700, were thought to serve lay readers, and their function was to reinforce knowledge in an easily understandable form and in the language of the laity.[70] For example, the German proverbs "a new doctor, a new cemetery" and "it is best to rely on an old doctor and a young lawyer" refer to people's prejudices against young doctors.[71] According to Friderici, a more experienced doctor is not always better than a young one, because it can be more difficult for an old doctor to renew his practice. Baier explains that the sayings talk about the inexperience or arrogance of young doctors, which Baier tries to dismantle with counterexamples.[72] The collision of the Latin and German languages brings a competition of different voices to the text: German appears in the middle of Latin as if it were a rougher language, implying the uneducated vulgar local crowd of the marketplace. Removable sayings put in people's mouths and circulating around emphasize how public opinion is created and spread by repeating worn-out expressions that carry with them traditional knowledge, collective ignorance, and prejudices, which science should try to combat and change. These are not individual experiences that would be differentiated in the text; instead, they echo what most people think about the doctors and convey the univocal collective voice of the (German-speaking) patients depicted in plural form. At the same time, they are subordinated to the unified point of view of the author.

Medical dissertations thus give voice to common beliefs, bringing together different voices of the community. There are diverse textual and narrative ways to create the wider scope and impression of plurality. Typography, for example, supports this distinction as the people's views are separated from the scientific representation by using a different font. Often the quotations stand out from the text as single quotations, which further emphasizes the limited space and isolation.[73] Moreover, the quotes presented in the name of the people are similar in content and often express strong attitudes or emotional reactions: the quotations designate the common people's holistic suspicion towards doctors

70 Schäfer, "Literarische Kleinformen," 135–136.

71 "Ein neuer Doctor ein neuer Kirch-hoff, it. Ein alter Medicus und ein junger Advocat sind am besten zu gebrauchen," in Friderici, *Dissertatio de fiducia*, §XXVI; see also Bremser, *Medizinische Parömien*, 173–175.

72 Baier, *Adagia*, 7–10.

73 Quotation marks acted as another distinguishing factor, but only later in the eighteenth century: with them, the group voice is limited to its own enclosure in the text so that it does not mix with the authorized voice of science.

and record reproachful tones, which reflect the people's supposed collective prejudices. These linguistic solutions thus bring different layers of information and their sources into collision. This structure of the text reflects an effort to reconcile science with folk beliefs or the supposed prejudice of the people.

It is possible to delve into smaller textual markers such as plural forms and consider how they help in distinguishing between the voice of science/the authoritative textual tradition, on the one hand, and that of the common people/the collective subject, on the other. The community's voice is quoted as if directly by introducing a quotation with such *verba dicendi* as *inquiunt* ("people say"), which implies activity or stance-taking in the plural. It is as if the narrator combines the similar experiences of many patients into one concise statement. Smaller grammatical markers designating a group include a noun plural, such as "the Germans," which can preface a German quotation.[74] Similar devices include collective terms ("patients"), plural personal nouns ("they"), and such linguistic quantifiers are "all," "the majority of," or "most of." For example, when referring to what most patients think about doctors, the dissertation on temperance notes how a fat and well-fed doctor arouses suspicion "in most patients."[75] The author illustrates the public mistrust by quoting brief segments of the German words representing the patients' collective criticism of the chubby doctor. In another passage emphasising sensory aspects, it is noted that the doctors' smell of tobacco may disturb more sensitive patients, who call them stinking "Tobacks-Bruder."[76] The plural verbs (*movent, conquerantur*) emphasize the common complaint of the patients. The German voice of the people is again italicized, except for the Latin word for doctor, which is separated from the text by printing it without italics.

The choice of a particular grammatical form can thus play a role in the discursive practices. It is also typical that collective groups occupy here a secondary or background role:[77] they are subordinate to the perspective of science represented by the author. Thus, the quotations are not exactly verbatim quotations, but representations of the stances, opinions, and views that the common crowd may have – something that the narratologist Uri Margolin would

74 For expressions designating plurality, see Uri Margolin, "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar into Ideology," *Poetics Today* 21, no. 3 (2000): 591–618, at 593.

75 "… plerisque opem eius requirentibus suspectus sit ac molestus, quin et abominandus videatur: der Doctor sey fast allezeit wie voll, oder doch übermässig satt, und daher faul und träge unzusehen," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XIII.

76 "… et fastidium delicatioribus aegrotis movent, ut vel aperte conquerantur, *der* Doctor *sey ein rechter Tobacks-Bruder, und stincke immer, als wenn er aus einer* Corps de garde *käme*," in Ibid., §VI.

77 Margolin, "Telling in the Plural," 592.

describe as "a condensation of numerous expressions, an image of collective inner speech, projected or invented by the narrator."[78]

One oft-repeated expression refers specifically to the complaints heard from the public ("loquentes audias") and constituting collective attitudes performed by the group.[79] The authors cite the reprimanding voice of the collective ("audiuntur querelae"), a complaint directed at the doctor's manners that creates mistrust among patients.[80] The accentuation of the verb 'hearing' (*audias*) is also related to the educational and normative goal of the text: it indirectly encourages the reader of the dissertation to listen to the instructions given by the text. As the verb is inflected in the second-person singular, which is a common form in didactic narratives, it directly addresses the reader and implies instructive speech. Imperatives aimed at the reader are also common in this context. The collective voice of the patients represented in the text serves a certain persuasive function: the purpose of the quotations is to teach the doctors to distinguish themselves from quacks and other suspicious healers, and to avoid the traditional behaviours frowned upon by the people. This mode of presentation reflects the goal of medical dissertations to try to get the public to trust the medical staff and the treatment measures they propose.

By using expressions designating plurality, medical dissertations give voice to the common beliefs and gossip of the lay community. As Shapin has noted, proverbs were common linguistic forms and "brief descriptive and prescriptive generalizations that the common people were known to value and to employ."[81] Although Shapin argues that the proverbs were usually considered inferior to learned knowledge and expertise, in the dissertations, folk beliefs are not rejected directly as wrong or mistaken. Instead of condemning the proverbial wisdom of common sense as vulgar irrationality, proverbial generalizations in their typical pungency and harshness are used to teach medical virtues. In his dissertation on moderation, Stock represents patients' opinions of doctors' drunkenness, smoking, and other everyday vices such as playing with clothes or wearing precious rings to demonstrate how the medical staff was traditionally experienced among the people. When he refers to the wailing voices heard from the crowd,[82] he confirms their complaint and notes that it is not without reason – that is, he does not just neutrally convey the people's

78 Ibid., 606.

79 Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XVII.

80 Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XIV.

81 Shapin, "Proverbial Economies," 732.

82 "Unde non iniustae interdum audiuntur querimoniae," in Stock, *De temperantia medicorum*, §XV.

opinions or condemn their voices as unreliable; on the contrary, he supports their authenticity and justification. Such references to the gossiping of the people are usually followed by a short quote in German, one or two sentences long, in which the shared voice disapproves of the doctor's conduct. These statements and complaints indicate that the medical profession was publicly judged, and the people's voices are quoted so that the doctors would learn how the collective opinion saw them and their vices. The authors present abundant evidence of orally transmitted knowledge attributed to the anonymous collective that itself constitutes an authoritative position in the discourse. Authority is drawn from a sense of community and its (fictitious) communal voice that often also echoes from the distant past.[83]

6 Persistent Forms

Dissertations and collections of medical maxims shared the common task of trying to overturn the traditional negative perception of the medical profession. They emphasized that the self-presentation of doctors was important in patient encounters, and doctors indeed had to heal themselves by building patients' trust in their actions. In this didactic task, sayings describing the vices of doctors were used, whose longevity guaranteed their authority. Longstanding proverbs and aphorisms include vertical temporal depth suggesting the long age of individual sayings, but aphorisms are also horizontally durable as collections that spread over a long time continuum in different cultures. One could call them historical petrified forms or literary fossils around which all the context was worn away and only the hard parts of the text were passed on in sayings and traditions.

Mikhail Bakhtin has a concept that reminds one of the ability of sayings and aphorisms to carry over the ages: genre memory.[84] Using the concept of genre memory, Bakhtin suggests that a literary genre always has a touch of eternity: it carries with it immortal archaic elements that depend on constant renewal. A genre that lives in the present never forgets its past or its starting point, which are reborn in new works and situations. The memory mechanism and life of the genre is based on this creative memory that does not rely on an individual writer's knowledge but is included in the genre itself. According to

83 For the idea of "communal voice" sharing narrative authority in modern fiction, see Susan Lanser, *Fictions of Authority. Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).

84 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 106.

Bakhtin, the archaism preserved in the genre is not dead, but eternally alive. Medical sayings embody this idea most succinctly: the continuity of discourse on medical vices was constructed through these forms of eternity that condensed experiences and values to pass on.

The durability of sayings also coincides with Benjamin's claim that what is essential in literature is the constant separation of distant works from their historical background. The creation of the works is not the most important stage in their historical chronology, but the fates of the works, their reception, and the aftermath grow a whole microcosm within them. In order to describe this process, Benjamin creates the concept of "microeon," meaning some kind of micro-sized, longest imaginable geochronological time, a unit of eternity.[85] An individual work, and perhaps a proverbial expression in particular, is such a time capsule that contains both traces of its prehistory and the conditions of its birth, as well as its future life as a source of new creativity. For Benjamin, the works of the past are constantly evolving forms of eternity that are linked to the passage of time. Understood in this way, literary history, including proverbial forms, remains open and does not only look to the past, but always to the future as well.

I have analysed the role of sayings in conveying medical vices both as independent forms and embedded in eighteenth-century medical dissertations, but what happens to medical proverbs after that period? What was the future of medical sayings? Numerous collections of medical proverbs were still compiled on health-promoting instructions in the early modern period. Medical proverbs were circulated in collections of vernacular sayings that included mainly health advice and dietetic instructions, such as Johann Gottfried Bremser's *Medizinische Parömien* (1806)[86] or Wilhelm Ahlers' (under the pseudonym Q. Ofellus jun.) *Philosophie des Magens* (1886).[87] According to Bremser, familiar sayings were constantly on the tip of the tongue, but they were often misunderstood and therefore needed explanations. Bremser translated Latin proverbs into German and hoped that his book would also entertain the reader.[88] The rules of etiquette for physicians flourished again

85 Walter Benjamin, "Literary History and the Study of Literature," *Selected Writings*, 2:2, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999 [orig. 1931–1934]), 459–465, at 464.

86 Johann Gottfried Bremser, *Medizinische Parömien, oder Erklärung medizinisch-diätetischer Sprüchwörter nebst der Nutzanwendung* (Wien: Schaumburg und Compagnie, 1806).

87 Wilhelm Ahlers (Q. Ofellus jun.), *Philosophie des Magens in Sprüchen aus alter und neuer Zeit* (Leipzig–Reudnitz: Schmidt, 1886).

88 Bremser, *Medizinische Parömien*, 17.

between the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when medicine became a public scientific profession and there was increasing pressure from the public to judge the physician's work.[89] Medical aphorisms and rules for refining one's conduct were circulated among the doctors for ethical reasons, but the aphoristic form was also conducive to medical precision. In the *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, Fielding H. Garrison wrote in 1928 that the middle of the nineteenth century was still remarkable for its aphoristic wisdom when such famous doctors as Rudolf Virchow, Hermann von Helmholtz, Claude Bernard, and Thomas Huxley developed scientific medicine with luminous sentences and extraordinary, aphoristic precision.[90] Furthermore, it seems that the proper use of medical maxims became a morally significant art. Garrison noted that "in the practice of medicine, a single uttered word may suffice to blast a reputation or to poison the peace of a lifetime."[91]

The attitude towards the use of maxims in medicine has produced proverb-like, meta-level crystallizations in modern medicine as well. While discussing the usefulness of maxims in medicine, Bursztajn and Hamm condense their views in sayings that greatly resemble proverbial wisdom: "One cannot learn a maxim for every situation," "for the wise clinician neither data nor maxims are a substitute for judgment," or "maxims that begin with probability, rather than with certainty, are more faithful to the wisdom of the experienced clinician."[92] Bursztajn and Hamm remind their readers that maxims are simplified models of the world that can help in making decisions since they illustrate causal laws, but there is no maxim for every situation. The physician must still exercise careful judgement. Thus, maxims must be used flexibly in the light of a paradigm of probability, not mechanistically and rigidly as if they contained absolute truth.

Proverbial utterances are emphatic linguistic crystallizations that summarize timeless wisdom, experiences, or prejudices from a long period of history. Their origins are shrouded in obscurity, but the authorless text has been strengthened by countless over-writings and collective acceptance. It is safe to argue that although today proverbial invectives against doctors are no longer that popular because the medical profession is generally well respected, medical maxims and brainy quotes continue to circulate to eliminate uncertainty or

89 Rippa Bonati and Zampieri, "Historical Overview of Medical Liability," 37.

90 Fielding H. Garrison, "Editorial: Medical Proverbs, Aphorisms, and Epigrams," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 4, no. 10 (1928): 979–1005, at 993.

91 Ibid., 1005.

92 Harold Bursztajn and Robert M. Hamm, "Medical Maxims: Two Views of Science," *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 52 (1979): 483–486, at 484–485.

describe probabilities, at least among the medical students for whom the early modern aphoristic wisdom was also ideally addressed. Proverbial utterances are also commonly used in folk medicine[93] and larger health belief systems, in alternative medicine and medical self-help literature, and in clinical psychiatric work. They circulate as updated, expanded, or reprints of the medical classics, including warnings about bad lifestyles and focusing on diet management and health advice rather than professional ethical behaviour.

Bibliography

Ahlers, Wilhelm (Q. Ofellus jun.). *Philosophie des Magens in Sprüchen aus alter und neuer Zeit*. Leipzig-Reudnitz: Schmidt, 1886.

Baier, Johann Jacob. *Adagiorum medicinalium centuria*. Frankfurt and Leipzig: Jodocus Guilelmus Kohlesius, 1718.

Baier, Johann Jacob. *Regimen sanitatis literatorum, aphoristica methodo delineatum*. Altdorf: Henricus Meyer, 1705.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Benjamin, Walter. *Selected Writings*, 2:2, translated by Rodney Livingstone and others, edited by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999 [orig. 1931–1934].

Bremser, Johann Gottfried. *Medizinische Parömien, oder Erklärung medizinisch-diätetischer Sprüchwörter nebst der Nutzanwendung*. Wien: Schaumburg und Compagnie, 1806.

Bursztajn, Harold, and Robert M. Hamm. "Medical Maxims: Two Views of Science." *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 52 (1979): 483–486.

Diethelm, Oskar. *Medical Dissertations of Psychiatric Interest Printed before 1750*. Basel: S. Karger, 1971.

Fialkova, Larisa. "Proverbs and Medicine: The Problem of Applied Folklore." *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore*, no. 46 (2010): 111–124.

Fredriksson, Anna. "Antika poesicitat i tidigmoderna svenska dissertationer." *Samlaren* 136 (2015): 38–79.

Friderici, Gottlieb (Pr.) and Ambrosius Fuchs (Resp.). *Dissertatio de fiducia aegri in medicum*. Leipzig: Litteris Schedianis, 1720.

93 See David J. Hufford, "Folklore and Medicine," in *Putting Folklore to Use*, ed. Michael Owen Jones (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 117–135.

Friedenthal, Meelis, Hanspeter Marti, and Robert Seidel (eds.). *Early Modern Disputations and Dissertations in an Interdisciplinary and European Context*. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

Fritsch, Ahasver. *Medicus peccans, sive tractatus de peccatis medicorum*. Nürnberg: Wolfgang Moritz Endter, 1684.

Garrison, F.H. "Editorial: Medical Proverbs, Aphorisms, and Epigrams." *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 4, no. 10 (1928): 979–1005.

Gentilcore, David. *Medical Charlatanism in Early Modern Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Guglielmini, Domenico. *Commentaria in primam Aphorismorum Hippocratis sectionem*. Bologna: ex Typographia S. Thomae Aquinatis, 1748.

Hertel, Johann Gottlob (Pr.) and Christian Jacobi (Resp.). *Dissertatio inauguralis de patientia medicorum*. Altdorf: Iodocus Guilelmus Kohlesius, 1724.

Hess, Volker. "Aphorismus als Wissenstechnik: Das Beispiel der 'meteorologischen Medizin' des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts." *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 55, no. 2 (2020): 102–131.

Hufford, David J. "Folklore and Medicine." In *Putting Folklore to Use*, edited by Michael Owen Jones, 117–135. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1994.

IJsewijn, Jozef, and Dirk Sacré (eds.). *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*, vol. 2. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998.

Kivistö, Sari. "G.F. von Franckenau's *Satyra sexta* (1674) on Male Menstruation and Female Testicles." In *The Trouble with Ribs: Women, Men and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Anu Korhonen and Kate Lowe, 82–102. Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, 2007.

Kivistö, Sari. *Medical Analogy in Latin Satire*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Kivistö, Sari. *The Vices of Learning: Morality and Knowledge at Early Modern Universities*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.

Lange, Christian. *Miscellanea curiosa medica*. Leipzig: Thomas Matthias Götze, 1666.

Lanser, Susan. *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992.

Maclean, Ian. "The Reception of Hippocrates by Physicians at the End of the Seventeenth Century." In *The Worlds of Knowledge and the Classical Tradition in the Early Modern Age*, edited by Dmitri Levitin and Ian Maclean, 217–274. Leiden: Brill, 2021.

Margolin, Uri. "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology." *Poetics Today* 21, no. 3 (2000): 591–618.

Mieder, Wolfgang, and Alan Dundes (eds.). *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.

Morson, Gary Saul. *The Long and Short of It: From Aphorism to Novel*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Newman, Jane O. "Citational Science: Textuality and the Authority of the 'Scientific Fact' in Early Modern Central Europe (Lohenstein's *Cleopatra*, 1680)." In *The*

Construction of Textual Authority in German Literature of the Medieval and Early Modern Periods, edited by James F. Poag and Claire Baldwin, 211–238. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

N.N. *Nugae venales, sive thesaurus ridendi & iocandi* (Prostant apud Neminem, sed tamen ubique, 1663).

Noak, Bettina (ed.). *Wissenstransfer und Auctoritas in der frühneuzeitlichen niederländischsprachigen Literatur*. Göttingen: W & R unipress, 2014.

Richardson, Brian. "Representing Social Minds: 'We' and 'They' Narratives, Natural and Unnatural." *Narrative* 23, no. 2 (2015): 200–212.

Rippa Bonati, Maurizio, and Fabio Zampieri. "Historical Overview of Medical Liability." In *Malpractice and Medical Liability*, edited by S.D. Ferrara et al., 13–49. Heidelberg: Springer, 2013.

Rivinus, Augustus Quirinus. *Dissertationes medicae*. Leipzig: Philipp Wilhelm Stock, 1710.

Salmón, Fernando. "The Physician as Cure in Medical Scholasticism," in *Ritual Healing: Magic, Ritual and Medical Therapy from Antiquity until the Early Modern Period*, edited by Ildikó Csepregi and Charles Burnett, 193–215. Firenze: Sismel, 2012.

Schäfer, Daniel. "*Exemplum historiae naturalis*: Zur Funktion von Beispielen für ein hohes Alter in der diätetischen Literatur der Renaissance und der frühen Neuzeit." In *Geschichte der Medizingeschichtsschreibung: Historiographie unter dem Diktat literarischer Gattungen von der Antike bis zur Aufklärung*, edited by Thomas Rütten, 265–293. Remscheid: Gardez! Verlag, 2009.

Schäfer, Daniel. "Literarische Kleinformen in der medizinischen Dissertation vor 1800." In *Medizinische Schreibweisen: Ausdifferenzierung und Transfer zwischen Medizin und Literatur (1600–1900)*, edited by Nicolas Pethes and Sandra Richter, 131–145. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2008.

Seidl, Helmut A. *Medizinische Parömien im Englischen und Deutschen: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Parömiologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1982.

Shapin, Steven. "Proverbial Economies: How an Understanding of Some Linguistic and Social Features of Common Sense Can Throw Light on More Prestigious Bodies of Knowledge, Science For Example," *Social Studies of Science* 31, no. 5 (2001): 731–769.

Stock, Georg Nicholas. *Dissertatio inauguralis de temperantia medicorum*. Altdorf: Daniel Meyer, 1725.

Taylor, Archer. *The Proverb and an Index to "The Proverb."* Bern: Peter Lang, 1962.

Weijers, Olga. *In Search of the Truth: A History of Disputation Techniques from Antiquity to Early Modern Times*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013.

Zanatta, Alberto, and Fabio Zampieri. "Medical Liability: Two Historical Cases from Padua." In *Introduction to Medical Humanities: Medicine and the Italian Artistic Heritage*, edited by Renzo Pegoraro et al., 39–60. Cham: Springer, 2022.