

BOOK REVIEW: HUMANISM IN MEDICINE AND ART (UMANISMUL IN MEDICINA SI ARTA) – BY IOAN ZĂGREANU

Pro Cultura Bucuresti, 2016

239 pages

ISBN 978-606-94265-0-0

This is one of the most beautiful books I read in the recent months and a landmark for those interested in the interferences between medicine and art.

The book is a posthumous collection of press papers published by Professor Ioan Zăgreanu 20-30 years ago.

The author was a famous cardiologist in Cluj-Napoca, the pioneer of the cardiac catheterization and author of seminal books on heart auscultation and electrocardiography. He retired from the position of chair of the 5th Medical Department of the University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Cluj-Napoca. He was of a rare nature, combining professional rigor and even rigidity with an outstanding interest in humanities, mainly fine arts. He was not only the friend and physician of many writers and visual artists, but also the host of many cultural events in the foyer of his department. Thus, he organized periodical exhibitions and invited to attend well-known cultural personalities of the city and of the country. Besides, he possessed a rich art collection, part of it being displayed in his large office. He had maybe the most beautiful office I have seen as young doctor.

The preoccupation with arts led Professor Zăgreanu to write every month in the cultural journal *Steaua* (The Star) a series of articles dedicated to medical issues in art, as an expression of his humanistic approach of the disease and mankind. The family made the effort to collect after so many years all his writings on arts, also from other periodicals like *Tribuna* and *Contemporanul*, to offer us an excellent anthology of these unique texts.

The book has a foreword by famous poet Ana

Blandiana, who renders tribute to the personality of the author. The content of the book includes many articles dedicated to medical aspects present in art works. The chapters are following in this order:

Medical humanism reflected in fine arts (an introduction); anatomy and analogy; the eye in fine arts; maternity in fine arts; painting and medical assistance; Children by the painter Nicolae Tonitza; the hypochondriac woman; Doctor Macarie; Smokers; Gout; the Jester Calabazas; medical condition of Niccolo Paganini, William Harvey demonstration in front of King Charles I; Uroscopy; Stone extraction; Teeth extraction; Tuberculosis; Malaria, The pest; digitalis; insomnia etc. Authors of the masterpieces correlated with medicine are Durer, Velasquez, Daumier, Rembrandt etc.

One can observe the complexity of this work and the erudition of the author. He found and investigated the works of art in times when no internet was available and when multiplication methods were rudimentary. Around these masterpieces he created medical texts to be understood also by lay persons. The reader of this volume will be rewarded by the interesting content and beautiful illustration.

Printing such a book is not easy: many wonderful full page illustrations are provided, for which the author asked the permission of the museums. The printing is excellent, good paper, excellent art reproduction; hardcover with jacket. A book to keep on the shelves.

Dan Dumitrascu