News and Activities

Prof. Dr. Marcel H. Bickel zum 80. Geburtstag

Am 14. Oktober 2007 beging Prof. Dr. phil. nat. Marcel Henry Bickel seinen 80. Geburtstag.

1993 als Ordinarius für Pharmakologie an der Universität Bern emeritiert, übernahm Marcel Bickel sogleich die Chefredaktion der Zeitschrift *Gesnerus*. Im Berner Institut für Medizingeschichte, dessen Existenz ganz wesentlich seinem langjährigen Einsatz in der Fakultät zu verdanken ist, bezog er einen bescheidenen Arbeitsplatz. Von hier aus leitete er bis Ende 2001 die Geschicke der Zeitschrift, der er 1995 im Verlag Schwabe & Co. AG Basel in erneuerter Gestalt eine verlässliche Zukunftsperspektive gab. Eigene Forschungsinteressen verfolgte er in der Studie zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte der Pharmakologie, deren Ergebnisse er im Jahr 2000 als Monographie veröffentlichte.

Von Jugend auf durch seinen Onkel Henry E. Sigerist (1891–1957) mit der Medizingeschichte als Fach und idealer Lebensaufgabe vertraut, wandte sich Marcel Bickel in den letzten Jahren vermehrt dieser Thematik zu. So untersuchte er – angeregt durch Projekte des Berner Instituts – die Rezeption von Hallers Werk in der medizinhistorischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts. Im Druck befindet sich als Beitrag zur medizinischen Historiographie ein umfangreiches Werk über die Lehrbücher und Gesamtdarstellungen der Geschichte der Medizin (1696–2000) (Schwabe 2007). Zurzeit bereitet Marcel Bickel mit voller Energie die Edition der weitverzweigten Korrespondenz Henry E. Sigerists vor. Der erste Band, der Briefwechsel mit Schweizer Medizinhistorikern und damit eine wichtige Quelle für die Institutionalisierung des Fachs, befindet sich ebenfalls im Druck.

Im Berner Institut sind wir glücklich und dankbar, in Marcel Bickel seit langem einen vielseitig erfahrenen Ratgeber und Helfer, einen verlässlichen, grosszügigen Kollegen zur Seite zu haben. Wir gratulieren und wünschen alles Gute.

Urs Boschung und Hubert Steinke

Call for Papers

The practice of knowledge and the figure of the savant in the 18th century

International Congress on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of Albrecht von Haller's birth (1708–1777)

Bern, Tuesday, October 14, 2008 – Friday, October 17, 2008

Hosted by the *Institute of History* and the *Institute of History of Medicine of the University of Bern*, in cooperation with the *Swiss Society for 18th-Century Studies*, the *Swiss Society for the History of Medicine and Natural Sciences*, the *Naturforschende Gesellschaft in Bern* and the *Swiss Academy of Sciences*.

The Theme

Knowledge has become a central category in describing modern society. The development of knowledge is interdependent with changes in society, economy and culture. In this development, it is not only the substance matter of knowledge that is revised and recreated; it is entire cultures of knowledge that change. Traditional ways of organising thought are joined by new ideologies and methods. The production of knowledge takes place within a wide range of diverse institutional, social and political contexts.

This congress addresses the complexities of the culture of knowledge, focussing on the scholar or savant as its main actors. It asks how, and to what end, savants in the 18th century collated, produced, critiqued, propagated, diffused and applied knowledge. What is the role of scholars, what is the self-image they communicate, and how are they perceived by others?

Being at the same time a poet and a savant, a collector, experimenter, encyclopaedist, researcher, university professor, magistrate, guild president, correspondent, distinguished author, feared reviewer, modern scientist and orthodox Christian, Haller can be seen as paradigmatic with respect to the developments and problem areas of the culture of knowledge of the 18th century. The Bernese polymath will thus be of special interest to the symposium, yet he is not its central topic: rather, it is the 300th anniversary of his birth that is taken as an occasion to engage with the practice of knowledge and the figure of the scholar at the time.

The symposium will focus on the following six issues:

1. *Rising and advancing*: the social topography of savants – who they are, where they are, their careers, prestige, success, patrons and servants in the Republic of Letters, etc.
2. *Reading and judging*: ways of reading and acquiring knowledge, the savant as a critical authority, scholarly reviewing, etc.
3. *Printing and communicating*: strategies of imparting and propagating knowledge, the exchange of knowledge within and outside the academic world, etc.
4. *Observing and experimenting*: practical research, compilation, theory and experiment, working in laboratories, the academic world, the scholar's chamber, etc.

5. *Advising and serving*: the savant in service to the state, as consultant and as civil servant, as citizen and as magistrate, etc.

6. *Perceiving and reacting*: the savant's interactions with the tendencies of his time (pietism, enlightenment, patriotism/republicanism, etc.) – which of those does he perceive, which does he blank out, how does he become involved, etc.

For a detailed programme see www.haller300.ch.

The papers should be a maximum of 25 minutes and must relate to one of these six topics. They can be based on an individual scholar, but rather than looking at this scholar in isolation they need to situate him or her in a broader context and address a more general question. The organisers bear the costs for travel, board and lodging of the invited speakers. The congress languages are German, French and English.

Please submit your abstracts (max. 2 pages) by January 31, 2008 to hubert.steinke@mhi.unibe.ch. The definite programme of the symposium will be finalised by March 2008.

Organisers: André Holenstein, Hubert Steinke, Martin Stuber

On the inventory of Antonio Vallisneri's correspondence

The Italian physician and naturalist Antonio Vallisneri (1661–1730) was at the centre of an impressive intellectual and scientific network. Thanks to his correspondence, this network can be investigated in detail, to a degree which is rarely achievable in studies on modern science history. On the one hand, Vallisneri was one of the favourite correspondents of several celebrated Italian and European naturalists; on the other, his correspondence formed a space within which members of different professions and social origins could come into contact and interact. These included physicians, surgeons and apothecaries, but also a wide variety of relatively unknown figures, of the sort not usually of interest to historians of science. However, for Vallisneri, they were a steady source of medical cases, naturalistic news and information, books and specimens. We can thus consider Vallisneri's correspondence (over 12 000 letters from around 800 correspondents) as an ideal tool for passing from the philosophical study of the development of scientific ideas to a history of science that considers not only the genesis of theories but also the practical procedures followed, the various places where scientists came into contact and the forms their relationships took.

In 1979, the “Centro di studi del pensiero filosofico del ‘500 e del ‘600 in relazione ai problemi della scienza” of the Milan CNR, founded by Mario Dal Pra (now ISPF-CNR, Milan, Italy) started up a project aiming to identify, collect and publish Vallisneri's letters, as one of its lines of research. With the foundation of the “Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Antonio Vallisneri” (8th March 2000), the aim of the project was broadened and a critical edition of the whole correspondence is now foreseen. This is a necessary step for the historical and statistical study of Vallisneri's network of contacts, which will, in turn, enhance our knowledge of modern scientific scholarship, together with the means utilised and the environments producing it, its social features and its true influence on both learned and popular culture.

The correspondence having already been published in book form (Milan, Angeli, 1991; 1998) and electronic format (Florence, Olschki, 2005), in May 2005 we shifted our focus to completing the inventory of these writings, which is a prerequisite for

their publication. A central archive with reproductions (microfilms, paper copies or digital images) of each letter is being made up in Milan, where the documents are first alphabetically and then chronologically sorted by sender. Although this archive will not be complete before late 2007, it can already be accessed on-line at the following website: www.vallisneri.it/inventario.shtml (in Italian). About 10 000 out of 12 000 letters from 800 correspondents have already been catalogued; transcriptions are added as they become available.

The effort involved in completing the search for the letters, then collecting and sorting them, has been enormous, particularly considering the problem of systematically cataloguing those Vallisneri received. Although Vallisneri had carefully collected his letters, most of which are still preserved in a few archives and libraries, they could not completely escape the common fate of most contemporary correspondence. Sales, casual losses and findings have led to the dispersion of a number of letters; figuring out their various paths is often a difficult, and sometimes an impossible task.

In order to complete the inventory we genuinely need the active contribution of the scholarly community as a whole. In other words, we are urging you to adopt a Baconian approach to scientific work – which would actually have rather appealed to Vallisneri. We would thus be very grateful to anyone who would like to send us information concerning any still unknown collection of Vallisneri's letters, be it large or small. The inventory is regularly updated and can be found at the above-mentioned website.

Information should be sent to – or requested from – the inventory manager, Ivano Dal Prete (eldalpre@tiscali.it), or the scientific director of the National Edition, Dario Generali (dario.general@tiscalinet.it).

Ivano Dal Prete and Dario Generali