Spotlight on Medieval Medicine.

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Aristotle (d. 322 BC) probably received training in biology and medicine from his father who was court physician to the King of Macedonia. Experimentation and observation were the cornerstones of his science.

His most important contribution to the theory of Greek medicine was his doctrine of the four basic elements: hot, cold, wet, and dry. Later philosopher-physicians applied these qualities to characterize the four humours and temperaments.


First edition. 294 x 214 mm, 95 leaves.
Aristotle’s philosophy was empirical and experimental, trusting the senses as primary source of knowledge.

The variety of subjects in this early printed edition of texts attributed to him – on medicine, meteorology, wine, botany, etc. – resulted in various ways the book was put to use by physicians at universities and courts.

In fact, the book contains a compilation of texts from different sources, in which genuine Aristotelian texts have been mixed with later work.


First edition. 294 x 214 mm, 95 leaves.
Mckell Medical Almanack, manuscript in German and some Latin, illuminated in the workshop of Diebold Lauber, Alsace, Hagenau, c. 1445.

206 x 155 mm, 12 leaves, vellum.

Next to a calendar of the year, these leaves contain information on events and phenomena, such as the phases of the moon and astronomical or meteorological prognostics and their influence on the health of man. Such almanacs are extremely rare as they were often consulted but later discarded.
Almanacs offer fascinating insights in medieval life and expectations but rarely were illuminated so lavishly as this manuscript from the Alsace.

As the sun, moon, and signs of the zodiac were thought to influence health, this uniquely illuminated manuscript includes half-page depictions of astronomers looking upward to heaven for explanations.

*Mckell Medical Almanack in German and some Latin, illuminated in the workshop of Diebold Lauber, Alsace, Hagenau, c. 1445.*

206 x 155 mm, 12 leaves of vellum.
Predictions on what will happen in the year depended on which day of the week the 1st day of January would fall (if on a Friday ‘many will have sore eyes’). It advises in January against bleeding but to drink strong wine with ginger. In February, one should ‘apply bleeding only through the thumb’ and in March ‘often bathe, this is healthy’, with further notes on certain medicinal herbs, or advice ‘not to go often to women’.

Mckell Medical Almanack illuminated in the workshop of Diebold Lauber, Alsace, Hagenau, c. 1445.
February: ‘in this month you should be careful when it is freezing..., and you should eat milk and honey... Eat warm food and drink warm wine... and if you want to take sweat baths, keep warm afterwards’

Mckell Medical Almanack illuminated in the workshop of Diebold Lauber, Alsace, Hagenau, c. 1445.

206 x 155 mm, 12 leaves, vellum.
The man known in the West as Johannitius was a Christian named Hunayn ibn Ishaq (808-873). He was born near Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate and centre of scholarship of the Islamic world, where he studied medicine.

Being well versed in Syriac, Arabic, Latin, and Greek, Johannitius became one of the most important translators of Greek works into Syriac and Arabic.

His translations included works by Hippocrates and Galen. His *Articella* (literally: small art) was a collection of short medical treatises that became one of the earliest European textbooks on medicine. At its core was Johannitius’ translation and commentary on Galen’s *Ars medicinalis*.
When the Crown of Aragon had amalgamated Catalans and Aragonese – including Majorca, Montpellier, Sicily, Naples, etc. – a fruitful exchange in the Mediterranean world between Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities developed. This also allowed the practice of medicine in vernacular communication to grow.


290 x 205 mm, 26 leaves, paper.
Presented here is a translation in Catalan, the language spoken from the Roussillon to Valencia, including Mallorca and with famous medical schools in Montpellier and Lleida.

Even though the text stems from a tradition that is centuries old, only four medieval manuscripts of this Catalan text have survived.

It is therefore a prime witness of the history of medicine and medical knowledge on the Iberian Peninsula.


290 x 205 mm, 26 leaves, paper.
The main text is divided into seven particulas, or sections, on:

1st Elements of the body (blood, phlegm, choler, or bile, etc.).
2nd Four different ages.
3rd Exterior influences on the body (air, seasons, stars, wind, exercise, idleness, bathing).
4th Interior influences (meat, drink, accidents).
5th On fevers.
6th On abscesses.
7th On diseases and their causes.

This corpus is followed by a text on urine attributed to Galen.


290 x 205 mm, 26 leaves, paper.
Added recipes in Catalan.

Catalonia, Barcelona (?), c. 1475.*

290 x 205 mm, 26 leaves, paper.
Lo Cavall. Tractat de Manescalia. – Libre dels cavayls que compòs Ypocras. – Recipes. – Text manuscript in Catalan followed by 80 drawings of bits for horses. Catalonia, Barcelona?, 1450.

A book on equine medicine shows the value of the horse for mankind: as a workforce, in war, in agriculture, and for status. The manuscript comprises an unrecorded and untitled treatise by an anonymous author on the ‘government’ of horses and the treatment of their illnesses in the tradition of Giordano Ruffo’s *De medicina equorum*.

The second text is an anonymous translation of the *Practica equorum* by Teodorico de' Borgononi, followed by 80 designs of bits for horses of various sizes and temperament.

Dated 1450 in the circles to find the golden number and the position of the moon.

286 x 210 mm, 80 leaves, vellum and paper.
Here is included a diagram to help find the best days, hours, and proper spots for bloodletting.


286 x 210 mm, 80 leaves, vellum and paper.

Horses were held in high esteem and the money spent for their safekeeping, maintenance, and equipment reflected their value. At a time when the professions of blacksmith and veterinarian were often confounded, this manuscript also adds to the vocabulary of medieval Catalan. The more so as it is dated 1450. Catalan manuscripts seldom come to the market.

286 x 210 mm, 80 leaves, vellum and paper.
Lo Cavall. Tractat de Manescalia. – Libre dels cavayls que compòs Ypocras. – Recipes. – Manuscript in Catalan followed by 80 drawings of bits for horses. Catalonia, Barcelona?, 1450.

This manuscript deals with the anatomy and physiology of the horse, the qualities that must be present for breeding, etc. It also describes a number of diseases, with remedies and recipes for healing, bits to be used, and more.

The methodical work is of great clarity, and offers a lively view of the state of veterinarian medicine around the middle of the 15th century.

The translator, or compiler-author, of the texts presumably had several veterinary works at his disposal. The present manuscript is written by one and the same hand dating around 1450.

286 x 210 mm, 80 leaves, vellum and paper.
Lo Cavall. Tractat de Manescalia. – followed by: Libre dels cavayls que compòs Ypocras. – Recipes.
– Text manuscript in Catalan followed by 80 drawings of bits for horses.
Catalonia, Barcelona?, 1450.

The 80 drawings of bits are linked to the temperament of different horses, as the brief captions explain. Presumably based on Giordano Ruffo’s Llibre de menescalia de cavalls.

286 x 210 mm, 80 leaves, vellum and paper.

Printed more than 100 years after the previous manuscript: A splendid book on horse equipment, particularly on bits and bridles - one of the earliest printed books on this subject and one of the largest of its kind.
Hans Kreutzberger, *Warhafftige und Eygentliche Contrafactur und Formen, der Zeümung und gebisz, zu allerley mängeln und unnd undterrichtung der Pferdt. .... Augsburg, 1562.

First edition, 306 x 210 mm, 210 + 24 blank leaves, 400 full-page + 12 double-page woodcut illustrations.

Hans Kreutzberger identifies himself on the title-page as a spur-maker and citizen of Augsburg.

This first edition was published without text apart from the author’s dedication to the Hapsburg Archduke and future Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian II (1527-76).

Following this publication, the emperor called Kreutzberger to Vienna and appointed him ‘imperial court spur-maker’.
Hans Kreutzberger, *Warhaftige und Eygentliche Contrafactur und Formen, der Zeümung und gebisz, zu allerley mängeln unnd undterrichtung der Pferdt. ....Augsburg, 1562*. First edition. 306 x 210 mm, 400 full-page + 12 double-page woodcut illustrations with contemporary manuscript captions in ink.

The copy is all the more interesting for its contemporary manuscript captions that make it unique. The book is very rare in commerce.
Arnaldus de Villa Nova, *Ain loblicher Tractat von beraytung und brauchung der wein zu gesunthayd der menschen*. *De vinis* translated by Wilhelm von Hirnkofen, first illustrated edition in German printed in Ulm by Johann Zainer, Jr., 1499. The Catalan Arnau de Vilanova (d. 1311) had a great reputation as a doctor but not all the works attributed to him were by his hand.

*De Vinis* is an important compilation dealing with the preservation and preparation of wine and its medical use, including many recipes for remedies. It had a lasting influence on medical practice and writing.

180 x 134 mm, 18 leaves, 4 large woodcut illustrations.
Arnau de Vilanova taught medicine in Montpellier and Lleida and required medical students to have knowledge of several Greco-Arabic treatises, including work by Galen and Avicenna.

He was the physician of several kings and popes, and of the smiling queen depicted here in this woodcut!

Accused of heresy, Arnau had to seek refuge several times and was condemned after his death in 1311.

Arnaldus de Villa Nova, *Ain loblicher Tractat von beraytung und brauchung der wein zu gesunthayd der menschen*. 180 x 134 mm, 18 leaves, paper, 4 large woodcut illustrations.

First scientific book printed in German. Megenberg (d. 1374) in the first section of the book describes the anatomy and physiology of man. He also discusses the medicinal value of herbs, plants, stones, etc. Such a book on nature would also include astronomy, meteorology, and disasters, to continue with animals, bird, fish, reptiles, and insects.

Conrad’s book was highly esteemed long into the 16th century.

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The compiler of the *Hortus sanitatis* is thought to have been Peter von Viersen, a physician and professor of medicine at Mainz University. His book is the most extensive 15th-century work on natural history and medicine, first published by Jacob Meydenbach in Mainz in 1491.

According to the preface, the author used Avicenna, Hippocrates, Galen, and a volume dealing with the virtues of herbs (Schöffer’s *Herbarius*).

He also found it essential to include plants that grew in foreign regions referring to a certain ‘nobilis dominus’ presumably Bernhard of Breydenbach) who made a journey to Jerusalem, when he gathered specimens and information.

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The book is divided into six parts, including De herbis to De lapidibus, followed by a tract De urinis.

The majority of woodcuts in this lavishly illustrated book were reused from Grüninger’s Gart der Gesundtheit, 1484/1485.

The human skeleton added by Prüss is made after the woodcut by Richard Helain, Nuremberg 1493 and is thought to be one of the best depictions before Vesalius in 1543.

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Manuscript in Latin and French illuminated by the Masters of Raphael de Mercatellis, made for the Ghent abbot of the same name. Flanders, Ghent - Bruges, ‘dated’ 1484. With texts on stones and palmistry.

Including an initial with the coat of arms of Raphael de Mercatellis (d. 1508), and 4 illuminated initials with part borders, 21 coloured drawings of hands, the full-page ‘L.Y.S.’ motto of Mercatellis and 4 full-page miniatures added.

363 x 267 mm, 137 leaves, vellum.
Raphael de Mercatellis (d. 1508) – a bastard son of the duke of Burgundy – was one of the most important Renaissance bibliophiles of the Low Countries. The first text on gems, their making, and their uses titled *Tresorier ... des pierres precieuses* survives in only two other copies. It is a primordial witness to the history of the Mosan region, of Liège, city of origin of the author, Jean d’Outremeuse. The second text on Chiromancy is hand-copied after a (rare) Italian incunable.

Presumably, the Ghent abbot who suffered from bad health wished to know more about his future?

This codex contributes to the cultural history of the Southern Netherlands and that of European book culture in general.

Jean d’Outremeuse (1338-99), *Le Tresorier de Philosophie Naturelle des Pierres Precieuses*. – Ex divina philosophorum achademia secundum nature vires ad extra chyromanticie diligentissime collectum. – added: four large miniatures. 363 x 267 mm, 137 leaves, vellum.

Lapidaries, like this manuscript’s first text, are not pure mineralogical treatises but often also describe fabulous materials, symbolic values, and astrological associations of certain gems.

Among the many philosophers the author cites are not only Aristotle and Albertus Magnus (his *De Mineralibus* was the author’s main source), but also Hermes and Averroes.

As a matter of course, the author refers to sorcerers or necromancers and mentions occult or medicinal characteristics of certain gems.

363 x 267 mm, 137 leaves, vellum.
Jean d’Outremeuse (1338-99), Le Tresorier de Philosophie Naturelle des Pierres Precieuses. – Ex divina philosophorum achademia secundum nature vires ad extra chyromanticie diligentissime collectum. – added: four large miniatures.
Made for Raphael de Mercatellis.
Flanders, Ghent - Bruges, ‘dated’ 1484.

The text on ‘chiromancy according to the powers of nature’ and ‘ad laudem dei’ pretends to have been carefully gathered from a ‘divine academy’ of philosophers.

The ‘science’ of chiromancy claims, through the study of the palm of the hand, to be able to characterize the person to whom the hand belongs and to foretell his future, a practice found all over the world, even today, with numerous variations. In some manuscripts the text is tentatively attributed to Michael Scotus (1175-c. 1234), but here, as well as in incunable editions, it is anonymous.
Jean d’Outremeuse (1338-99), *Le Tresorier de Philosophie Naturelle des Pierres Precieuses.* – *Ex divina philosophorum achademia secundum nature vires ad extra chyromanticie diligentissime collectum;* – added: four large miniatures.
Flanders, Ghent - Bruges, ‘dated’ 1484.

The text on ‘chiromancy’ is illustrated with 21 hands. Some have lines and other markings with explanations added in, as well as accompanying captions and texts, which facilitate the reader’s making the connection between physical signs and their significance for man’s destiny.

Also one could compare one’s own hands to the illustrated figures.

363 x 267 mm, 137 leaves, vellum.

After a period of disrepute when the Church disapproved of the practice of palmistry as superstition and when chiromancy was a forbidden magical art, hand-reading flourished again during the Renaissance. As such, Leonardo da Vinci is known to have had a chiromancy text in his library.

In the later 15th century several printed editions appeared, of which Johann Hartlieb’s blockbook edition (1448, surviving in only one copy) became the best known.

Scholars suggest that by the end of the 15th century it had become a ‘mainstream’ work of university instruction and was a part of the corpus of texts that were deemed useful to natural philosophers and aspiring doctors in arts and medicine.

363 x 267 mm, 137 leaves, vellum.
Guido de Cauliaco, *Die cyrurgie warachtich ende nootsakelijk allen den ghenen die wercken willen in die conste van cyrurgien*. Antwerp, Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1507.

First complete edition in Dutch, 288 x 212 mm, 246 leaves, with large title + 22 small woodcuts.

Guy de Chauliac studied in Toulouse, Montpellier, Bologna, and Paris and became a Master of medicine and surgery. He practised medicine at Lyon and was later appointed physician to Pope Clement VI in Avignon and to his successors, Innocent VI and Urban V.

In Avignon, he survived an epidemic of the plague (1348-50) despite being infected. He was one of the first to describe two different types of plague, bubonic and pneumonic.
Guido de Cauliaco, *Die cyrgie warachtich ende nootsakelijc allen den ghenen die wercken willen in die conste van cyrgien*. Antwerp, Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1507.

First complete edition in Dutch, 288 x 212 mm, 246 leaves, with large title + 22 small woodcuts.

Chauliac compiled his major work *Inventarium sive chirurgia magna* in 1363 based on the writings of older medical authorities and his own experiences.

Seven chapters describe the anatomy of man, diseases, antidotes and treatments. Discussed are, for instance, hernia, cataract, cancer, anthrax and ulcers, but also dentistry. This was considered a most scholarly book that remained authoritative until the 17th century.

Small woodcuts depict various surgical instruments. The almost full-page anatomical woodcut on the title-page shows a figure with wounds spread over his body with the weaponry that caused them.
Guido de Cauliaco, *Die cyurgie warachtich ende nootsakelijc allen den ghenen die wercken willen in die conste van cyurgieng. Antwerp, Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1507.*

First complete edition in Dutch, 288 x 212 mm, 246 leaves, with large title + 22 small woodcuts.

Originally written in Latin, the *Chirurgia* was later translated into various European languages and went through many editions.

Interestingly, several medical texts were translated at an early stage into Middle Dutch before other vernaculars. Presumably Latin was better understood elsewhere in Europe than in this north-western part of the *Latinitas*?

The book shows traces of use left by early owners, all in the Eastern Netherlands or bordering Rhineland.
Guido de Cauliaco, Die cyrurgie warachtich ende nootsakelijc allen den ghenen die wercken willen in die conste van cyrurgien. Antwerp: Henrick Eckert van Homberch, 1507. First complete edition in Dutch, 288 x 212 mm, 246 leaves, with large title + 22 small woodcuts.

As in Albucasis’ Chirurgia, Chauliac also inserted into his chapters depictions of instruments used for operations, in Dutch: ‘Van die instrumenten daer die operatie ende dat werk mede gheschiet’. 

One of the most outstanding physicians of his time, Leonard Fuchs (d. 1566) is also called ‘the father of botany’, as he published the first systematic books on plants and their medicinal use.

A university professor in medicine already at the age of 25, Fuchs spent most of his years at Tübingen University from 1535 onwards. Here, he thoroughly reformed medical studies.

He dealt extensively with the writings of Hippocrates, Dioscorides, and Galen. One of his concerns was to curb the ‘fashionable’ Arab influences in pharmacy and medicine, striving for a renaissance of Greek medicine.

He strongly repudiated astrology and Avicenna’s theories as part of the medical field and insisted upon working with original texts of the ancient physicians and not with ‘mistranslations’.

In addition to describing plants for their medical uses, Fuchs also gives accurate botanical descriptions of more than 500 plants, including some first descriptions of recently discovered American plants, such as maize, pumpkin, chili pepper, and snap beans.

Even though Fuchs included large, unsurpassed, original woodcuts, neither the sales of the Latin edition of the *Historia stirpium* (1542), nor of those in Dutch and German covered his expenses. Smaller editions – nicknamed the ‘Small Fuchs’– were more profitable. For his supplement, however, the author could not find a printer. It is preserved in the autograph manuscript only.

The size and beauty of the woodcuts make this into a stunning book.

Beyond lifelike depictions and botanical accuracy, Fuchs and the artists strived for the memorable ‘ideal form’ of each plant.

Full recognition was given to the three men who created the illustrations, Füllmaurer (draughtsman), Meyer (drawer on the block), and Speckle (woodcutter), their portraits appearing at the end of the book - quite astonishing for those days and a tribute to their artisanship.

The *New Kreüterbuch* (‘New Herbal’) has basically the same content as the Latin first edition of the previous year. But as Fuchs stated in his preface, he had ‘dropped material which was neither helpful nor necessary to the knowledge of the ordinary man’.

He also improved his descriptions regarding plant morphology and added five more flowers. Fuchs coined the names of several species that are still current today. His name is honoured in the red-flowered *Fuchsia*, originally from South America.

First German edition with engravings, 392 x 295 mm. 80 leaves – Woodcut: Nuremberg arms on title, coloured and heightened with gold. With 40 etched anatomical plates. In publisher’s binding with decoration stamped in Zwischengold.

The stamp used in the corners and for the centres is known from Nuremberg bindings attributed to Christoph Heusler between 1550 and 1562.

Abridged version of the epoch-making anatomical treatise of Andreas Vesalius, De humani corporis fabrica libri septem (‘seven books on the structure of the human body’), one of the most influential works in the history of western medicine.

Vesalius (1514-64) was a Flemish anatomist and physician born in Brussels to a long line of physicians to Holy Roman Emperors. He studied medicine in Paris, Louvain, and Padua.
First German edition with engravings.

The German edition was by the hand of Jacob Baumann (1520-86), a physician from Nuremberg, who signed the introduction. Presumably it was unauthorized. An earlier German translation of the Epitome comprising only 17 leaves had been published in Basel in 1543. Possibly the increasing demand for a German version of the more extensive Fabrica induced Baumann to create this publication.
Andreas Vesalius. Anatomia Deudsch. Ein kurzer Auszug der beschreibung aller glieder menschlichs leybs aus den buchern des ... Andree Vesalii. (Edited by Jacob Baumann). Nuremberg, Julius Paul Fabricius, August 1551.

First German edition with engravings.

The original edition of the Fabrica was accompanied by detailed and finely drawn woodcut illustrations from the workshop of Titian. Unlike the original illustrations, the impressive anatomical figures in the German edition are copper engravings, not woodcuts. The plates show Adam and Eve, anatomical instruments, muscle groups and skeletons, veins and inner organs. They are recopied from another condensed version of Vesalius’ masterpiece, published by the engraver Thomas Geminus in his Compendiosa totius anatomeae delineatio, London 1545.
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