Making Medicine in Post-Tridentine Rome: 
Girolamo Mercuriale’s *De Arte Gymnastica*. 
A Different Reading of the Book.

Maria Kavvadia

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization of the European University Institute

Florence, September, 2015
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Western medical tradition, resting on Hippocrates and Galen, has been divided into two parts: hygiene (or dietetics) – the conservative/preventive part, and therapeutics – the curative part. Historians and sociologists of medicine have shown an unparalleled interest in the curative side of medicine, an interest that possibly reflects the focus of modern western medicine on curing disease. Conversely, the conservative side of medicine and prevention as a medical method and process has attracted far less scholarly attention in the studies in the history of medicine.

Nonetheless, in both the Hippocratic and Galenic works that dominated medical thought and practice until well into the seventeenth century, medicine was not only conceptualized as the art of curing disease but also as the art of preserving health – the art of wellbeing. The Renaissance in Italy saw the recovery and revival of the classical dietetic literature by the medical humanists, which had a profound impact on the organisation of academic medicine and brought developments in the preventive paradigm. During the sixteenth century the genre of preventive literature flourished, with numerous medical writings being published in both Latin and the vernacular. These medical writings (academic treatises, health manuals, ‘books of secrets’, etc.), which were shaped by historical events and socio-cultural parameters, reflect contemporary perceptions of and attitudes to health and disease.

In this historical background the present study examines the De arte gymnastica (Venice, 1569), a medical treatise by the humanist physician Girolamo Mercuriale of Forlì (1530-1606). In his De arte gymnastica Mercuriale promotes the ‘medical gymnastics’ as an ideal method for the conservation and/or obtainment of health based on the benefits of exercise in the maintenance of health and the treatment of disease. Providing a reading of Mercuriale’s work in terms of a medical discourse, the present study aims to throw additional light on the historical understanding of Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica as a sixteenth-century medical treatise and his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of preventive medical treatment, addressing Mercuriale’s claims regarding aspects of medical theory and practice. In this endeavour the present study identifies Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica as a ‘product’ of the sixteenth-century ‘Roman’ context, taking into consideration Mercuriale’s professional post as the personal physician of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520-
1589), a leading Churchman and one of the richest and most powerful patrons of his day. In this context the present study demonstrates how Mercuriales’ medical discourse as a court physician addressing the elite audience of Rome corresponded to contemporary medical needs, issues, debates but as well as to social-cultural demands and aspirations as these emerged in a time of religious and spiritual crisis that was marked by the Council of Trent.

The research for this thesis was conducted in Florence (Italy), between 2008 and 2014, under the supervision of Prof. Antonella Romano on behalf of the Department of History and Civilization at the European University Institute. The data for this research (primary sources and secondary bibliography) was collected in the library of the European University Institute, the Berenson Library of Villa I Tatti (The Harvard University Centre for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence), the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, the Istituto e Museo di Storie delle Scienze di Firenze, the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma (Rome, Italy), the Warburg Institute (London, UK) and the Wellcome Library (London, UK). The research project was funded by the Greek State Scholarship Foundation (IKY) and the European University Institute.
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Chapter 1. Girolamo Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica: a different reading of the book

1.1 The De arte gymnastica in recent historiography: between the ‘medical’ and the ‘non-medical’

The De arte gymnastica (‘On the art of gymnastics’) ⁴ is the medical treatise that granted the Italian humanist physician Girolamo Mercuriale of Forlì (1530-1606) considerable fame and eminence in his own time and for which he is mostly known today.² Mercuriale put together this work during his residence in Rome (in the years 1562-1569), where he served as the court physician of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520-1589). Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, the grandson of Pope Paul III, was one of the most powerful Churchmen in papal Rome at the time. Known as ‘il gran Cardinale’, Alessandro was one of the richest patrons of art, architecture and learning and held one of the largest and most lavish courts in mid-sixteenth century Rome. In the ‘Farnese circle’ we find at different times many important humanist scholars, artists, antiquarians, etc. while numerous works (historical, poetic, etc.) were dedicated to him.³ Mercuriale dedicated the first edition of the De arte gymnastica (Venice, 1569) to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese who was his patron at the time; the second and the following editions of the book were dedicated to the emperor Maximilian II, however, Mercuriale in the dedication letter-preface of the book recalls his former Roman patron who, as he marks, granted him with the necessary otium to

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¹ The full title of the first edition of the book (Venice, 1659) reads as follows: Artis gymnasticae apud antiquos celeberrima, nostris ignoraete, libri sex In quibus exercitationum omnium vetustarum genera, loca, modi, facultates et quicquid denique ad corporis humani exercitationes pertinet, diligenter explicatur. Opus non modo medicis, verum etiam omnibus antiquarum rerum cognoscentarum et valetudinis conservandae studiose admundum uile. Auctore Hieronymo Mercuriali Foroliviensi Medico et Philosopho. Venetiis (Venezia), Apud Iuntas, In officina Iuntarum, MDLXIX (1569). After its first publication the book was published with some alterations four times during Mercuriale’s lifetime: in 1573 (Venice), in 1577 (Paris), in 1587 (Venice), and in 1601 (Venice).


fulfil his task. In the dedication letter-preface of the second and the following editions of the book we read: ‘...to whom [Cardinal Alessandro Farnese], after God, I acknowledge I owe everything’.

In his *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale attempts to recover, to revive what he calls the ‘true’ art of gymnastics (or art of exercise). More in particular, among the three types of gymnastics (the ‘athletic’, the ‘military’ and the ‘medical’) as identified by the ancient authorities, Mercuriale identifies the ‘medical gymnastics’ as the ‘true’ gymnastics, and he promotes it as a medical art, part of hygiene or dietetics and a valuable method of medical treatment, based on the beneficial role of ‘exercise’ in the maintenance and/or obtainment of health. Early modern medicine was separated in two parts: hygiene or dietetics, which was the preventive/preservative part, and therapeutics or curative medicine. Since antiquity hygiene was considered an essential part of medicine and it was organized around the principle of the ‘six non-naturals’.

According to the Hippocratic-Galenic teachings there were three groups of factors that affected health: the ‘naturals’ (the things that constitute the body), the ‘contranaturals’ (disease, its causes and its consequences), and the ‘non-naturals’ (things that could benefit or harm health). The non-naturals comprised to the following six: i) air, ii) food and drink, iii) motion -or exercise- and rest, iv) sleep and walking, v) repletion and evacuation, vi) the accidents of the soul. The aim of hygiene was the proper use, management of the six non-naturals taking into consideration the patient’s ‘temperament’ or ‘complexion’, the patient’s idiosyncratic balance of the four bodily humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile or melancholy). The proper management of the six non-naturals helped the patient to obtain and/or maintain the balance of his/her humoral mixture, thus to obtain and/or maintain good health. The

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4 For details on the second and the following editions see Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit., pp. 864-872
improper management, use of the six non-naturals was considered the cause of ill health and disease.\textsuperscript{7}

Mercuriale’s \textit{De arte gymnastica} is based exactly on this part of medical theory according to which ‘exercise’ (from the pair ‘exercise and rest’) is an important factor in the maintenance and/or obtainment of health. In particular Mercuriale in his work attempts to recover the ancient Greco-Roman gymnastics, revolving this recovery around the examination of the medical nature, value, use, and efficacy of a series of exercises which he defines as ‘medical’ distinguishing them from the ‘athletic’ and the ‘military’ exercises. In this endeavour, the ‘orthodox’ ancient authorities of Galen and Aristotle emerge as the two prevailing textual sources Mercuriale draws from, particularly with regard to the medical and philosophical reasoning, and the topic of the treatise. Nonetheless, Mercuriale draws from numerous, various textual sources (medical, philosophical, historical writings, poetry, prose writers, the works of the Church Fathers, technical and reference works, etc.) classic (Greek and Latin) and ‘modern’, but as well as from a series of material, antiquarian sources (e.g. ancient ruins, objects, coins, engraved stones, inscriptions, etc.).

In these terms, the \textit{De arte gymnastica} emerged as an immense body of erudition which, according to Mercuriale’s words in the title of the book, addressed not only physicians and people who were interested in health and medical matters but as well as learned experts and curious readers with an interest in classical antiquity.\textsuperscript{8} The \textit{De arte gymnastica}, bringing together numerous branches of knowledge in the recovery of the Greco-Roman gymnastics, has an encyclopaedic nature and for this reason it emerged as an important reference work in Mercuriale’s time; today –especially in the field of the history of sports and athletics- it is still considered a ‘cornerstone’ among the early modern works that deal with the ancient Greek and Roman physical culture. Furthermore, much of the fame the \textit{De arte gymnastica} enjoys today is owed to the


\textsuperscript{8} See footnote 1
visual images of the book, courtesy—in their majority—of Pirro Ligorio (1534-1583).

Ligorio was a Neapolitan artist, architect and antiquarian. He arrived in Rome in 1534—before Mercuriale’s arrival in the city—and it is probably in Rome where the two men first met. Ligorio left the city in 1569 after gaining considerable fame as a papal architect for Pope Paul IV and Pius IV. Ligorio and Mercuriale shared the same enthusiasm and interest in antiquity and while they were residents in Rome they were both members of the Roman Accademia degli Sdegnati.

The *De arte gymnastica* saw many editions during Mercuriale’s lifetime, all in Latin and in quarto format (the standard format for academic monographs). Apart from one all the rest were published in Venice by the Giuntine press, one of the leading publishing houses in Venice. In Mercuriale’s era the book trade was dominated by Latin texts for the academic market, the legal and medical professions, and the clergy. The Venetian printers, edited and published numerous classical texts and the works of contemporary humanist writers, favouring the diffusion of humanist learning as Venice, one of the greatest centres of commerce and trade at the time, had one of the greatest distribution networks. All Venetian publishing houses published a little bit of everything, but the greater ones tended to specialize. The Giuntine press printed large numbers of breviaries, missals and other liturgical manuals, enabling the Venetian Press to lead in Europe’s production of canonical works. The flourishing of the Aristotelian studies in the University of Padua made Veneto the primary site for philological scholarship. During the sixteenth century a new wave of translations, commentaries, indices, etc. of Aristotelian texts were published in Venice as well as of lexicons, grammars, etc., all in the endeavour to elucidate the classical Greek and Latin publications.

The Giuntine press concentrated on publishing complete editions


11 See footnote 1

of Aristotle in Latin translation; furthermore it maintained an interest in academic writings in Latin with a medical focus (especially in dietetic writings) and in illustrated books.\footnote{See Paul F. Grendler, \textit{The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press. 1540-1605}, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977); Brian Richardson, \textit{Printers, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); A. Nuoveo and E. Sandal (eds.), \textit{Il libro nell'italia del Rinascimento}, (Brescia, Grafo, 1998), pp. 49-51}

After marking considerable success, the \textit{De arte gymnastica} was published for a second time in 1573, again in Venice by the Giuntine Press, however this time with considerable alterations: the title had been modified, it had a new dedicatee (the emperor Maximilian II), it reached 308 pages (from 240 in the first edition), it featured two ground plans (instead of one) and another twenty-two illustrations, as well as an appended general index and an index of authors.\footnote{For the additions, changes, and elaborations in the different editions of the book see \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition …op. cit., pp. 863-872} With this elaborated format and without any other fundamental changes from that point on, it was published another three times during Mercuriale’s lifetime.\footnote{See above footnote 1}

After leaving the city of Rome and the Cardinal’s court in 1569, Mercuriale was invited to teach medicine and he occupied illustrious and exceptionally highly paid professorial chairs successively at the universities of Padua (from 1569 to 1587), Bologna (from 1587 to 1592), and Pisa (from 1592 to 1604).\footnote{See Italo Paoletti, \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale e il suo tempo} (Lanciano, 1963), and Alessandro Simili, “Gerolamo Mercuriale lettore e medico a Bologna. Nota 1. La condotta di Gerolamo Mercuriale a Bologna,” \textit{Rivista di storia delle scienze mediche e naturali}, 6, 32 (1941), pp. 161-196} During his long and illustrious career as a physician (among Mercuriale’s patients we find at different times members of the Farnese family, the Emperor Maximilian II, and Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany) and professor of medicine, Mercuriale produced numerous medical writings (on the care of nursing infants, on diseases of the skin, on diseases of women and children, on diseases of the eyes, critical editions of the Hippocratic works, etc.).\footnote{For a complete list of Mercuriale’s writings see \textit{Bibliografia delle opere a stampa di Girolamo Mercuriale} a cura di Giancarlo Cerasoli ed Antonella Imolesi Pozzi} Among these works it is the \textit{De arte gymnastica} that so far has attracted the greatest scholarly interest. Nancy Siraisi has noted that what is exceptional in this work is not that Mercuriale looked back to antiquity; rather, it is the extend to which he combined the techniques of medical humanism (defined as a
mixture of philological and clinically-oriented critique of ancient medical texts) with much broader philological, historical, and antiquarian learning and interests.\textsuperscript{18}

Due to this exceptionality we come across references of the treatise in numerous - some related- fields of study: history of science and medicine, Renaissance humanism and antiquarianism, history of physical culture and physical education, history of sports and athletics, sports medicine, history of art (due to the illustrations featured in the book), etc.\textsuperscript{19} Mercuriale’s historical-antiquarian orientation as impressed in his \textit{De arte gymnastica} has been raised as a ‘problem’ in the historical examination of the work. Indicative of this problematization is the conference ‘\textit{Girolamo Mercuriale e lo spazio scientifico e culturale del Cinquecento}’ (Forli, 8-11 November 2006) that was held in the occasion of the conclusion of four hundred years of Mercuriale’s death.\textsuperscript{20} The intention of scholars in this conference was to rethink Girolamo Mercuriale and his scientific oeuvre examining aspects of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} in a context where scientific practices interact with and/or derive from the socio-cultural sphere as well as in its material aspects: Mercuriale’s uses of philosophical, medical and antiquarian sources in terms of medical epistemology, Mercuriale’s philosophical and moralistic views on the body as a physician and an antiquarian, Mercuriale’s antiquarianism as an important factor in shaping the architectural environment in the case of a seventeenth century papal villeggiatura, etc.

In similar ways, indicative of the ‘problematic’ nature of Mercuriae’s treatise is the remark made in the latest critical edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} that was published in 2008 with the occasion of the Olympic Games; the preface of this edition starts by marking ‘\textit{si dibatte ancora se il forlivese Girolamo Mercuriale meriti un posto tra i grandi della Storia della medicina […] o se il suo posto sia tra i grandi della Storia della cultura}’.\textsuperscript{21} In this regard, a remark by Nancy Siraisi is rather enlightening; discussing the antiquarian nature of Mercuriale’s treatise Siraisi marks that during the sixteenth century ‘\textit{antiquarians took as their province the laws, customs, and material

\textsuperscript{19}For an earlier bibliography on the \textit{De arte gymnastica} see \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale, Arte Ginnastica}, tradotta da Ippolito Galante, op. cit.; For a recent bibliography see \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit. p. xi
remains of the past, in short, everything that one might now call institutional, cultural, or economic history, or history of technology’, something which the reader of the De arte gymnastica realizes from the very first pages of the book.

Overall, the present study suggests that the particular remark in the 2008 critical edition of Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica poses a false dilemma, in the sense that early modern medicine in its wide and manifold range both as a scientific discipline and as an occupation is deeply embedded with various cultural and social patterns which are reflected in the medical writings and practices of the time. Nevertheless, this remark is useful in the framework of this study as it highlights what the present study sees as the prevailing tendency in the historical examination of Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica so far: the emphasis on the ‘non-medical’ element of the treatise, which is identified mainly with the historical-antiquarian content of the book.

Undoubtedly, the vast ‘non-medical’ content of the book called for a systematic investigation and, in this respect, scholars over the recent decades have offered valuable insights and analyses. Going through the studies on Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica we come across three editions of the original Latin text that feature a translation of the complete text or parts of it as well as a historical commentary. Ippolito Galante edited (offering a translation with a preface-commentary) the 1601 edition of the De arte gymnastica; Galante’s work coincided with the conduct of the Olympic Games in Rome in 1960. In the preface he offers some basic data on Mercuriale’s life and work, he addresses the cultural context in which the De arte gymnastica was produced, and he offers an overview of the content of the six books of the treatise. Galante identifies the value of the ‘discipline’ or ‘art’ of gymnastics in the maintenance and/or the obtainment of health as the subject matter of the treatise and he classifies the work as ‘medical’ noting that ‘il trattato De arte gymnastica è essenzialmente opera di medicina’.

Galante locates Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica in relation to the ‘scientific revolution’ of the seventeenth century, however in a Whiggish approach. In particular he addresses the personage of Girolamo Mercuriale as ‘the founder of the modern gymnastics […] the person who was the first to write a systematic essay on the

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22 Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine…’, op. cit. p. 22
23 Girolamo Mercuriale’s Arte gymnastica, tradotta da Ippolito Galante, op. cit.
24 idem, p. 393
subject’. Addressing Mercuriale’s intellectual viewpoint Galante marks that ‘the science of antiquity is at the same time both science and history of science; therefore, no cultured person interested in the scientific progress can avoid knowing it as a whole and in its global aspects, if he is to have adequate knowledge of the subject, without risking repetitions or mistakes’. Galante continues noting that ‘the reasoning which gains strength and acuteness utilizing the progress accomplished in every field, and the experience with which its trials opens doors to strengthen judgement, must always control scientific data: from their synthesis, constantly inculcated by Mercuriale, arise the principle of a new scientific orientation, which plans the way for the glorious XVII century and which will lead to the scientific conquests of the following centuries’.

Addressing the cultural climate in which Mercuriale as a personage and as a writer developed and functioned, Galante marks the uses of antiquarian and historical sources by Mercuriale. Describing Mercuriale’s era as an era of spiritual crisis and a related cultural disorder, Galante classifies Mercuriale among the intellectuals, the leaders of the Italian culture of the second half of the sixteenth century who held an intermediate position among the conservatives on one hand and the forerunners on the other. These intellectuals, notes Galante, were still under the influence of the Renaissance fervour and maintained that the ancient culture was a sure and unassailable starting point for progress.

Jean-Michele Agasse in 2006 provided an edition of the first book of the De arte gymnastica, which included a translation of the first book of the treatise and a broader commentary. In the introductory part of his work Agasse offers information on a series of issues regarding Mercuriale and his career: biographical information on Mercuriale, his ‘Roman years’ and his circle in the court of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, Mercuriale’s residence in Padua and his Paduan circle, his residence in Bologna and Pisa, the changes and the elaborations Mercuriale made in the following editions of the De arte gymnastica, the rest of Mercuriale’s scholarly production, the illustrations of the De arte gymnastica, and the structure of the book.

\[25 \text{idem, p. xix} \]

\[26 \text{idem, p. xxi} \]

\[27 \text{See Jean-Michel Agasse, Girolamo Mercuriale. L'Art de la Gymnastique, livre premier, édition, traduction, présentation et notes, Belles Lettres, coll. les Classiques de l'Humanisme, Paris, 2006} \]
Jean-Michel Agasse provided also the commentary of the 2008 Critical Edition of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica*. In this work Agasse examines the treatise in the context of Renaissance humanism and physical culture. He addresses it as a ‘medical’ book of which the originality lies in the fact that it looks for medical knowledge in a very diverse range of sources, while he highlights the antiquarian dimension in Mercuriale’s treatment of the ancient physical culture. Agasse offers a commentary on the *De arte gymnastica* that sustains a useful guide for going through the vast textual and material content of the book; the commentary tracks down the background of the genesis of the work providing information on its multiple editions and the changes in the book’s materiality, it identifies, classifies and explores the various sources Mercuriale used, it examines the antiquarian and philological aspects of the work, and it addresses issues that are raised in the *De arte gymnastica* directly or indirectly (e.g. issues regarding the body, morality, religion, philosophy, etc.) in the context of Renaissance humanist culture.

Apart from the above editing work, scholars so far have focused on the historical-antiquarian element of the *De arte gymnastica* and the varieties of historical evidence that Mercuriale employed, indicating several contexts for the historical analysis of the treatise: medical learning and practice, forms and uses of history in the medical milieu, sixteenth-century historical and antiquarian studies in Italy, etc. Exploring Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* in the framework of the history of ideas and sciences, Jacques Ulmann writing in the late 1960s offered a historical perspective seeing the treatise in relation to the philosophical doctrines and ideas that have offered the base for the organization of systems of physical activities from the ancient to modern times. Ulmann explores Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* in the framework of the recovery of Galenism in the sixteenth century, in the attempt to provide a historical overview of the organization of the Galenic medical gymnastics during the particular era (when Galenism was still the dominant medical system), so as to pass in the following –however in a somewhat Whiggish approach- to what he discusses as the ‘*nouvelle gymnastique médicale*’ that came with the gradual abolition of Galenism.

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29 Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine...’, op. cit., p. 233
from the seventeenth century onwards.\textsuperscript{31} Considering that ‘le profane que nous sommes se contentera d’avouer qu’aucun livre, sans en excepter de plus modernes, ne lui a donné l’impression d’avoir, mieux que le De arte gymnastica, approfondi tout ce qui touche à la pratique athlétique et médicale de la gymnastique des Anciens’, Ulmann, marking the extend to which Mercuriale investigated the classical gymnastics, notes that it is unnecessary to refer to works -shortly before or shortly after- devoted to the ancient gymnastics other than the De arte gymnastica.\textsuperscript{32}

Ulmann marks the twofold nature of Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica. Addressing Mercuriale’s claim that under particular circumstances as well as the other two kinds of gymnastics (the military gymnastics and the athletic) can be in use of the medical gymnastics for reasons of health, Ulmann notes that ‘on comprend, dans ces conditions, que Mercurialis ait à cœur de restituer les grands traits de cette gymnastique de l’Antiquité et que, par suite, son livre puisse aussi passer pour une reconstruction d’historien que pour un traité de médecine’.\textsuperscript{33} Ullman marks the strong interaction between the medical and the historical aspects of Mercuriale’s work noting that ‘l’auteur ne sait pas être historien sans être medecin, ni medecin sans être historien et il arrive au lecteur de se demander en quoi des descriptions si précises, des recherches si savantes peuvent render service à celui qui entend pratiquer la gymnastique dans le souci de conserver sa santé’.\textsuperscript{34}

Vivian Nutton, writing in the 1990s, suggested Renaissance Galenism (i.e. the interest of medical humanists in Galen’s writings and the general notion that for the renovation of contemporary medicine it was necessary to fully understand and apply all aspects of the ancient medial teaching) as one of the contexts in which the De arte gymnastica can be viewed.\textsuperscript{35} According to Nutton, it is not the idea of the medical gymnastics as the subject matter of the treatise that makes Mercuriale’s work exceptional; this idea was known long before Mercuriale, notes Nutton looking back at treatises which dealt with exercise and its medical value; rather, it is Mercuriale’s erudition that makes this treatise to stand out among the rest. According to Nutton,

\textsuperscript{31} idem, pp. 100-124
\textsuperscript{32} idem, p. 393; p. 100
\textsuperscript{33} idem, pp. 98-99
\textsuperscript{34} idem, p. 99
Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica*, along with other medical works of the Renaissance, recasts ideas that were inherited from the Middle Ages and interprets them with the help of information gleaned from the classical texts in a way that produces a work whose tone and approach is quite different from what was available before. Nutton marks the antiquarian and historical aspects of Mercuriale’s work and he notes that, whereas in the first edition of the book there was a balance between the medical and the historical material, in the second edition the historical material outweighs the medical and the former balance is never to be restored. Nutton, separating the antiquarian from the medical aspects of the *De arte gymnastica*, notes that in the following editions of the book ‘toutes les additions et les modifications consistent en apports sur des faits nouveaux, capables de recostituer la vie de l’Antiquité classique; très peu de modifications interveniennent dans plus strictement médicaux; aucune n’y est vraiment significative’. Nancy Siraisi looked into Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* in the framework of examining the uses of history and antiquarianism in Renaissance medicine. In her work Siraisi raises the problem of evaluating the historical and antiquarianizing aspects of Renaissance medical learning in relation to the standard accounts of the impact of humanism on the sciences, on the grounds –as she notes- that such aspects had little perceptible effect on medical practice and that they are seldom associated with scientific innovation. Nevertheless, Siraisi marks, the importance and the respect accorded to this type of medical learning in its own day casts light both on the uses of history and historical evidence in late Renaissance scientific culture and on the way in which medicine shared in broad intellectual currents of the time.

Nancy Siraisi describes the *De arte gymnastica* as the ‘most antiquarian’ of Mercuriale’s works and she indicates it as perhaps the most extensive treatment of the ancient physical culture, which was a subject of shared interest among Renaissance and early modern humanists, antiquarians, and physicians. Regarding the subject matter of the *De arte gymnastica*, Nancy Siraisi notes that in the *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale ‘set out to sketch the history of “gymnastica”, that is, to describe the

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36 *idem*, p. 297  
37 *idem*, p. 305  
38 *idem*, p. 306  
40 *idem*, p. 236
settings and equipment used in antiquity for structured physical exercise, together with the varieties of exercise practiced by the ancients, and to consider the effect of such exercise, on health. From the medical standpoint, Mercuriale presented exercise as an issue of timeless significance.\(^{41}\)

Siraisi addressed the treatise in relation to the sixteenth-century Roman interest in the ancient body and the Greco-Roman physical culture. She discusses Mercuriale’s interest in the Greco-Roman athletics and physical culture as yet another variety of investigation of the ancient body, considering the medical responses to historical ideas, arguments and investigation of the human body as a central subject of medicine.\(^{42}\) Nancy Siraisi, reflecting on how Renaissance learned physicians integrated medicine with natural historical, historical and antiquarian learning, notes that in the mid-sixteenth century the household of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (renown for his collection of antiquities and patronage of architecture and the arts) was a major centre of antiquarian activity and that Girolamo Mercuriale as the Cardinal’s physician profited from his association with antiquaries to compose a lengthy work on ‘ancient athletics’ as she says.\(^{43}\) Although, Siraisi notes, in the later sixteenth century some aspects of the study of the remains of pagan antiquity became increasingly problematic in the religious climate of Counter-Reformation Rome, the same climate fostered yet another specifically Roman form of antiquarianism.\(^{44}\)

Therefore, thus far in the historiographic background Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* has been explored mainly in two broad contexts: Renaissance antiquarianism and Renaissance Galenism. Renaissance antiquarianism (and in particular ‘Roman antiquarianism’) has served as the context to address Mercuriale’s uses of historical and antiquarian sources (textual and material) in sixteenth-century medical epistemology as well as Mercuriale’s interest in the Greco-Roman gymnastics; the *De arte gymnastica* is considered to be indicative of the shared - among the sixteenth century humanist scholars, antiquarians, artists, etc.- interest in the ancient physical culture. In parallel, Renaissance Galenism has served to address


\(^{42}\) *idem*, pp. 42-55

\(^{43}\) See Nancy Siraisi, ‘Historiae, Natural History, Roman Antiquity, and Some Roman Physicians’ in Gianna Pomata and Nancy Siraisi (eds.), *Historia, Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, 2005), p. 328

\(^{44}\) *ibid*.  

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Mercuriale’s medical advice, his selection and use of authoritative medical sources, especially since Mercuriale drew heavily from the Galenic writings (in particular Galen’s *De ingenio sanitatis* and the *Ad Thrasybulum*) as far as both the topic and the organization of his treatise are concerned.

In the same broad context of an established medical tradition (that went back to the middle ages and antiquity) and its revival during the sixteenth century by the medical humanists, scholars have addressed the *De arte gymnastica* in relation to sixteenth-century medical writings that stressed the value of exercise in the maintenance and/or obtainment of health, highlighting the extent of the antiquarian content in Mercuriale’s work. The Renaissance humanist doctrines and attitudes towards health and wellbeing have served as a platform for the historical investigation of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* in studies on early modern preventive medicine and health culture. The *De arte gymnastica* is addressed in relation to ancient (as well as medieval) medical and philosophical teachings on health and the value of exercise that were recovered by the humanists during the sixteenth century, and it is mentioned among sixteenth-century medical and other (e.g. moral, ecclesiastical, etc.), writings that advocated the beneficial role of exercise in the maintenance and/or obtainment of health (bodily and spiritual.

Overall Mercuriale’s treatise is seen as part of the Renaissance humanist dietetic medical-philosophical tradition. Studies on early modern preventive medicine tend to mark the continuity and the stability in the dietetic principles, beliefs and preventive medical advice from antiquity through the middle ages and up to the seventeenth century, especially in comparison to therapeutics.\(^{45}\) In these terms it has been suggested that Mercuriale’s treatise, like many other Renaissance writings on health, was not presenting any new ideas; rather, scholars have suggested, Mercuriale was following the prevailing medical tradition and humanist ideas on the care of the body and preservation of health that echoed the ancient authorities. In parallel, scholars have elaborated more on Mercuriale’s profound historical-antiquarian treatment of the topic of gymnastics, considering the historical-antiquarian element of the treatise as

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the ‘different’, ‘new’, ‘original’ contribution against the well-established dietetic tradition. In these terms, Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* has been presented as an ‘encyclopedia of classical dietetics’ that provided ‘a cultural history of gymnastics and sport’.

Last but not least, from the perspective of cultural history Alessandro Arcangeli has offered valuable insights for the investigation of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica*, however in the context of attitudes towards leisure and pastimes in late medieval and early modern Europe. Arcangeli marks that medicine provided the grounds for some of the most common justifications for leisure and recreation, suggesting that ‘exercise was by definition leisure’. Marking the proximity and overlapping between the recreational and the medical discourses, Arcangeli suggests that the consideration of both is compulsory in the effort to adequately understand the predominant cultural attitudes towards leisure. Highlighting the antiquarian element of the *De arte gymnastica*, Arcangeli discusses the treatise in relation to Renaissance antiquarianism; he sees the treatise as representative of sixteenth-century literature that was so firmly rooted in the classical tradition to the extent that it often borrowed examples of exercises that were ‘old-fashioned’, and he marks that the sixteenth-century medical humanism exhibited a detailed interest in classical gymnastics to such an extent that the earliest modern literature on physical exercise barely referred to contemporary practice; Arcangeli identifies Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* as ‘the protagonist of this revival’.

Nancy Siraisi has suggested additional contexts for the historical investigation of the *De arte gymnastica* associating it with the Renaissance interest in the organized or didactic presentation of all kinds of bodily culture, expressed in ways ranging from the advocacy of physical exercise by humanist educators to the production of treatises on such skills as horsemanship, swordsmanship and dancing, while at the same time references to the *De arte gymnastica* are found in studies on the history of ancient and early modern sport and athletics, owing to Mercuriale’s historical-antiquarian review.

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46 Klaus Bergdolt, *Wellbeing. A Cultural History…* op. cit., p. 182
48 *idem*, p. 20
49 *idem*, p. 18
50 Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine…’ op. cit., p. 237
However, it is important to bear in mind that exercise and gymnastics in the *De arte gymnastica* are health-related, rather than skill-related or leisure-related; in these terms, these studies are not of immediate interest to the present study, except to the extent they impinge on medicine. The present study suggests that Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’, since it is health-related, should be considered as a separate discursive formation. It should be seen separately to leisure-related, skill-related etc. exercise and Mercuriale himself emphasizes on the distinction between the three types of gymnastics: the medical, the athletic, and the military.

The present study does not disregard the scholarly work and the results of the systematic research on Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica*. Furthermore, it does not dismiss the various contexts in which scholars have addressed the *De arte gymnastica*, offering valuable insights in the historical understanding of the treatise. Similarly, it does not disregard the extent and the significance of the historical-antiquarian material of the *De arte gymnastica* and it does not suggest in any way that the one aspect— the ‘medical’ or the ‘non-medical’—of the treatise is more important or superior to the other. However, the present study suggests that there are aspects of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* as a treatise on preventive medicine and aspects of his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment and a medical art that have been ignored, or overlooked, or considered peripheral because of the scholarly focus on the antiquarian material of the treatise. Therefore, the present study suggests a different reading of the book; it follows Mercuriale’s medical discourse of the ‘medical gymnastics’, however not seeing it necessarily unified or consistent with other discourses that refer to the same object of discourse. In this respect we need to take into consideration that discourses of ‘exercise’ and ‘gymnastics’ can be linked to sets of statements that are concerned with ‘exercise’ and ‘gymnastics’ but nevertheless construct the particular object in a different manner. In this regard Michel Foucault explained that ‘the conditions necessary for the appearance of an

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object of discourse . . . are many and imposing. Which means that one cannot speak of anything at any time'^;^52 Foucault suggested that the objectification processes were the complex result of various social practices, historical conditions and social relations.

It is in these terms that the present study aims to examine the *De arte gymnastica* as Mercuriale’s medical discourse of the ‘medical gymnastics’. In particular the present study explores how Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ is shaped as a method of medical treatment and medical art (part of conservative medicine) in its own right, and to demonstrate at the same time the terms under which the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a product of court medicine addressed primarily an elite (clerical and lay) audience responding to aspects of contemporary medical ‘reality’ (as expressed through contemporary medical debates, issues, needs, etc.) and socio-cultural aspirations and values as these emerged in mid-sixteenth century Rome after the Council of Trent.

1.2 Sources, methodology, and the context of the present study

1.2.1 The text

The present study focuses exclusively on the *De arte gymnastica*, attempting to map it as Mercuriale’s medical discourse. The decision to focus exclusively on the *De arte gymnastica* as a primary source does not imply that the particular treatise has been examined in isolation to similar sixteenth-century medical writings, or that medical and other types (e.g. moral, ecclesiastical, etc.) of writings on exercise, gymnastics and the like, and the pertinent historiography have been ignored. On the contrary, it stems from the consideration that the *De arte gymnastica* has been viewed in relation to such writings in recent historiography but, as demonstrated in the previous part of this chapter, the analysis is focused on the antiquarian content of the treatise, whereas Mercuriale’s medical advice has been addressed only in general terms within the framework of a preventive ‘tradition’ and the, rather broad, historical context of Renaissance Galenism.

The present study considers that because of the emphasis on the historical-antiquarian content of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* in most -if not all- of the historical contexts and research frameworks, the particular treatise has been brought forward more as a historical-antiquarian and encyclopaedic review of the Greco-Roman gymnastics and physical culture, rather than for its medical content. Of course Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* has been acknowledged as a ‘medical’ treatise in historiography, but the scholarly analysis of the medical nature of the work has been limited in marking that Mercuriale follows the medical-philosophical principles of a dietetic tradition which, according to scholars, stands out for its continuity and stability throughout the centuries. Addressing the *De arte gymnastica* in the totality of such a continuous tradition has helped scholars to link Mercuriale’s treatise with similar medical writings around a solid organizing principle (‘exercise’ from the pair ‘exercise and rest’ of the six non-naturals). Also it has facilitated the isolation of the historical-antiquarian material of the *De arte gymnastica* in terms of ‘novelty’, and ‘originality’ against this background of continuity and permanence. However, viewing the treatise in this tradition in which Renaissance Galenism has emerged as an ‘ideology’, rounds the edges of Mercuriale’s medical advice and suggestions regarding medical theory and practice without taking into consideration the
particularities of the medical ‘reality’ in Mercuriale’s time and the social and cultural space of post-Tridentine Rome in which the treatise was originally produced.

The present study considers that the contextualization of the *De arte gymnastica* in terms of ‘traditions’ and intellectual ‘currents’ has deprived part of its historical significance which needs to be seen apart from -what Michel Foucault has called- ‘groups of phenomena that are both successive and identical (at least similar).’

While in historiography it has been claimed that hygiene has remained rather stable in its doctrines and principles until well into the nineteenth century (i.e. until Galenism as the prevailing medical system was abolished), nevertheless it should be marked that the early modern dietetic *regimina*, health books etc. could vary a lot in their content as well as intended audience(s). In particular, there are medical writings that focus on nutrition, others that go through the list of the six non-naturals providing a complete regimen, others that provide dietetic advice for longevity, others that focus on one (pair) of the six non-naturals (as was the case particularly in the latter half of the sixteenth century), while at the same time it is important to consider the growing and distinct focus of medical treatment on evacuation (e.g. through blood-letting, vomiting, sweating, etc.) in both preventive and curative treatment; in addition it is important to consider that the audience of these medical writings varied from individuals to social as well as occupational groups (Church and lay princes, scholars, students, etc.).

In other words in the dietetic medical writings ‘*le rapport entre production et consommation n’est pas univoque et statique*’; in each case we need to ask who was writing, for whom, and for what purpose, what did they demonstrate to their audience.

Similarly, it would be useful to consider Renaissance Galenism reduced to its various facets. In particular, it would be useful to note that the *De arte gymnastica* was produced at a time when, after the recovery and the assimilation of the classic dietetic writings by the medical humanists in the first part of the sixteenth century, questions

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were raised in the writings of the learned physicians regarding the organization of medicine (how medicine ought to be divided so as to cover all areas of the discipline, which of its parts is the primary one, etc.) as well as regarding the organization of the recovered preventive part of medicine and its status within the field of medicine and in relation to the medical studies in the University. Scholars have suggested that claims that ‘questioned’ the status of hygiene have played a marginal role in early modern ‘developments’. Nonetheless, in his *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale addresses such as well as other pertinent issues (e.g. whether ‘gymnastics’ belongs to medicine at all) that were raised in the circles of learned physicians and this is something we cannot overlook or neglect, regardless of the fate of such claims in relation to early modern developments.

The present study does not dismiss the dietetic ‘tradition’ or other historical ‘groupings’ and ‘divisions’ in which Mercuriale’s treatise has been addressed in recent historiography through the use of notions such as ‘development’, ‘influence’, etc. however it tries to see them as ‘constructions’, following in this regard Michel Foucault’s suggestion that ‘we must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outside; we must oust these forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of the other; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign. And instead of according them unqualified, spontaneous value, we must accept in the name of methodological rigour, that, in the first instance, they concern only a population of dispersed events’. The present study follows Foucault’s remark that ‘discourse must not be seen in the distant presence of origin, but treated as and when it occurs’. In these terms, in the attempt to map the *De arte gymnastica* as Mercuriale’s medical discourse the present study suggests what scholars have recently presented as the ‘Roman context’ as the above ‘as and when’.

The importance of the antiquarian remains in sixteenth century Rome and the ‘Farnese circle’ for the *De arte gymnastica* have been marked by scholars in relation to Mercuriale’s broader inspiration behind the treatise and its compilation in terms of

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57 Alessandro Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance*…op. cit., p. 19
58 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*…op. cit., p. 24
59 *idem*, p. 28
sources (particularly the material sources). Nancy Siraisi has marked that neither antiquarianism nor the interest of physicians in history was either confined to Italy or new in Mercuriale's lifetime; nevertheless, she notes, Mercuriale’s use of the ancient past was shaped by a specifically Italian situation: the enthusiasm for the study of the Roman past and the way of life inspired among antiquarians, artists, architects, and humanists by the extensive presence of the physical remains of antiquity, especially in Rome itself.\(^{60}\) Jean-Michel Agasse referring to the scholars in Mercuriale’s Roman circle marks how the years that Mercuriale spent at the Cardinal’s court were rich for him as not only did that period allow him to make contacts and acquaintances with some of the most brilliant minds of Italy and the whole Europe, but also to engage himself in putting together the *De arte gymnastica*.\(^{61}\) However, Mercuriale’s medical treatise as a product of court patronage has not been addressed in relation to the idiosyncrasies of the sixteenth-century Roman society, culture, and politics that make up the ‘Roman context’.

In the endeavour therefore to treat Mercuriale’s medical discourse as and when the present study draws from the recent scholarly work conducted in the framework of the research programme entitled *Genèse de la culture scientifique européenne: Rome de la Contre-Réforme à la Révolution (XVI-XVIIIe siècles)*, a research programme which was conceptualized and conducted by a team of distinguished French and Italian scholars.\(^{62}\) These scholars exploring the duality of Rome as both a religious and political centre of the Catholic world and the particular social and political structures of the city, addressed new questions regarding the place, the role of sciences and scientific practices in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Rome and the shaping of a particular scientific culture, introducing in the historiography of the history of science and medicine the idea of the *Roman context*. Addressing the city of Rome as a capital centre of scientific culture, a space of *savoirs et pratiques scientifiques* in its own right, these scholars have shifted the historiographic paradigm which, for a series of

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\(^{60}\) Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine..’, op. cit., p. 233

\(^{61}\) Jean-Michel Agasse, *Girolamo Mercuriale, L’art de la gymnastique*...op. cit., p. xvi

\(^{62}\) The group of scholars, coordinated by Antonella Romano, was composed by the following scholars: Jean-Marc Besse, Andrea Carlino, Antonio Clericuzio, Maria Conforti, Silvia De Renzi, Luiza Dolza, Maria Pia Donato, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny, Federica Favino, Luce Giard, Laurent Pinon, Gionavvi Pizzorusso.
reasons, until recently had not considered Urbs as a legitimate field for the study of the history of sciences.\textsuperscript{63}

In this research framework medicine in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Rome has attracted anew a growing scholarly interest\textsuperscript{64}—particularly court medicine because of the idiosyncratic nature that it took up in the city of Rome—opening in this way a field of historical research as court physicians in early modern Rome is a topic that has been generally neglected in both studies of the history of medicine and the history of European courts. It was Vivian Nutton and Bruce T. Moran who a couple of decades ago set off with their work a new historical interest devoted to court-medicine in early modern Rome; their work sustains a cornerstone in the direction of the historical investigation of court physicians in early modern Rome.\textsuperscript{65} In this direction the work of Mario Biagioli, who demonstrated how the workings of court-patronage (as a centre of power) and its complex system of wealth, prestige and credibility had an impact on early modern science, has been of great importance.\textsuperscript{66}

In the recent years scholarly research on court medicine in early modern Rome has indicated physicians as ‘intellectuals’ trespassing the boundaries of their own discipline, moving between different centres of scientific culture (courts, academies, colleges, etc.) and assuming multiple identities, participating actively in the contemporary political and cultural scene, and negotiating between the demands of social groups and the imperatives of the papacy and the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{67} In this framework the medical pratiques et savoirs in sixteenth-century Rome have been reconsidered in historical terms as scholars addressed the particularities of the medical culture and the activities of the court physicians in relation to the idiosyncrasies of the Roman context. In the light of these studies the present study attempts to examine

\textsuperscript{63} See Rome et la Science Moderne, Entre Renaissance et Lumières, Études reunites par Antonella Romano (École Française de Rome, 2008)

\textsuperscript{64} See M. Piccialutti (ed.), La sanita a Roma in eta moderna, (RMC, 13, 2005, 1); I. Fosi (ed.), La peste a Roma (1565-1675), (RMC, 14, 2006, 1-3); S. Cavallo and David Gentilcore (eds.), Space, objects and Identities in Early Modern Italian Medicine, (Renaissance Studies, 21, 2007); Nancy G. Siraisi, History, Medicine and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning, (Ann Arbor, 2007); Elisa Andretta, Roma Medica. Anatomie d’un system médical au XVI Siècle, (École Française de Rome, 2011)


\textsuperscript{66} Mario Biagioli, Galileo courtier: the practice of science in the culture of absolutism, (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1993)

\textsuperscript{67} See Rome et la Science Moderne...op. cit.; also see Maria Pia Donato and Jill Kraye (eds.), Conflicting Duties: Science, Medicine and Religion in Rome, 1550-1750, (Warburg Institute Colloquia, 2009),
Mercuriale’s medical discourse within the Roman context, taking into consideration the particularities of this historical context and Mercuriale’s multiple ‘identities’ (as the court physician of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, as a member of the broader ‘Farnese’ circle, as a member of the Accademia degli Sdegnati). Chapter 2 of the present study attempts to bring under the title of this thesis these parameters: the role of the Cardinals and their courts in sixteenth-century Rome, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court patronage and the Farnese, issues that were raised in sixteenth-century vita aulica with regard to medical practice, etc.

Furthermore, the present study considers that in recent historiography a ‘dichotomy’ has been established in relation to the content of the De arte gymnastica. The content of the book has been separated between the ‘medical’, which has been defined in relation to the medical value of exercise according to the dietetic doctrine and principles, and the ‘non-medical’ content, which has been defined mostly in relation to the historical-antiquarian sources Mercuriale drew from. This dichotomy is rather false in the sense that to a certain extent it has been imposed by scholars in their endeavour to edit and manage the historical-antiquarian material of the treatise and to address in historical this rich ‘non-medical’ content in relation to sixteenth-century medical thinking and writings. Nevertheless, it seems that this ‘dichotomy’ in the book’s content has pertained research questions as well; scholars have sought to evaluate which aspect (the ‘medical’ or the ‘non-medical’) of the book was more important, to address the practical use and value of Mercuriale’s medical advice and to assess whether, and if so, how the historical-antiquarian element affected sixteenth-century medical practice, often concluding that such an ‘old-fashioned’ treatment of exercise and gymnastics had little to do with the actual sixteenth-century medical practice.

For instance Vivian Nutton, emphasizing the value of Mercuriale’s treatise for its antiquarian rather for its medical content, compares the De arte gymnastica with the treatise De Thermis (Rome, 1571) the work of the physician Andrea Bacci (1524-1600) who was Mercuriale’s contemporary and acquaintance. Bacci came to Rome around 1550 where, among other things, he obtained the patronage of Cardinal Ascanio Colona and finally the position of the personal physician of pope Sixtus V.

68 On Andrea Bacci see Nancy Siraisi, History, Medicine, and the Traditions…op. cit., pp. 168-193
his *De Thermis* Bacci wrote on the ancient Roman baths just as Mercuriale did in his *De arte gymnastica*. Bacci, like others in Rome at the time, must have had access to the *De arte gymnastica* before its publication, and he acknowledged (explicitly or implicitly) that for this part of his work he was inspired by Mercuriale’s work. In particular, Bacci examined the properties, uses and locations of different kinds of waters, rivers, baths and springs; two books of his treatise focus on the medicinal uses of different waters taken internally or used externally, and one book on the baths of ancient Rome. Bacci maintained that frequent washing and exercise in the baths promoted health and the strengthening of the body.\(^{69}\) Nutton marks that Bacci approved of Mercuriale’s erudition nevertheless, Nutton notes, he found that Mercuriale’s work was of little importance on the medical point of view. On the contrary, Nutton notes, ‘les antiquaires, quant à eux, qualifient Mercurialis d’eruditissimus, et citent son ouvrage comme l’abrégé admirable d’un sujet trop peu connu’.\(^{70}\)

However, as noted previously, it is important to take into consideration that discourses which refer to the same phenomenon should not be considered as necessarily unified or consistent; there are distinct aspects in Mercuriale’s medical discourse that have been overlooked in the framework of such comparisons. It should be noted that Mercuriale in the second edition of his *De arte gymnastica* refers to Andrea Bacci noting that “*Since Andrea Bacci of S. Elpidio, a widely-read man of considerable erudition has already dealt in enormous detail with everything to do with baths in a work that appeared after the first edition of this book, in order to provide a slighter fuller knowledge of the baths situated in gymnasia, we shall only examine first what baths were and what places were designed for them; secondly what vessels and copper objects were used in bathing; thirdly for what purpose they took baths; fourth, who took baths and why.*”\(^{71}\) Mercuriale acknowledges Bacci’s erudition on the topic, however he marks that Bacci’s work was produced only after his, marking in this way his own authority on the topic.

\(^{69}\) Andrea Bacci, *De Thermis*, 1571, 7.12, p. 459: ‘De ritibus vero in eis, atque ordine se exercentium, ac lavationum, haud mirum est haec instituta semper maiorem habuisse progressum; si considereremus non solum hinc vitae elegantiam eos servare consuevisse, sanitatem, et robur corporis; sed quod maius est in republica emolumentum’

\(^{70}\) Vivian Nutton, ‘Les exercises et la santé…’, op. cit. p. 306

\(^{71}\) Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 87
Furthermore, and most importantly, Mercuriale’s aim and interest in his *De arte gymnastica* is to examine baths as a space that made part of the physical space of the gymnasium and bathing as a gymnastic ‘practice’, ‘custom’ in the context of the Greco-Roman physical culture and not as a ‘medical exercise’ *per se*. More in particular, while Bacci in his *De Thermis* stressed that he was interested in the medicinal and sanitary uses of baths, Mercuriale notes that “there was more than one reason why people bathed” (for health, to clean the body after exercise and before eating, for pleasure, etc.) and he makes clear that in his own work the interest lies elsewhere: “I am talking about the healthy, and the gymnasium lovers; for the context does not require a discourse on bathing for the ill and the convalescent.” Therefore, it is not that Mercuriale ‘fails’ on the medical point of view but that his interest in baths and bathing within his medical discourse is different to Bacci’s.

In similar ways Alessandro Arcangeli has suggested that “tutto sommato, nonostante la fortuna antiquaria dell’opera e i riconoscimenti che la fanno immediatamente accogliere come opera di riferimento, il suo utilizzo pratico da parte della cultura medica del tempo risulta limitato”. However, the present study considers that it would be precarious to draw such conclusions regarding the ‘practical use’ of the *De arte gymnastica* in Mercuriale’s time, as it would be for the most part of early modern dietetic medical writings. In comparison to early modern dietetic medical writings, treatises in which physicians explored, for instance, diseases and methods of treatment, or treatise of anatomy and surgery reflect aspects of the early modern medical culture that, today, in our understanding appear to be more ‘comprehensible’ and ‘obvious’. For instance, we have a more ‘objectified’ image of how a treatise on therapeutics that prescribed the use of medicines that had tangible effects to the patient’s physiology affected early modern medical culture, whereas the historical assessment of the ‘practical’ use and value of the long-term and often personalized medical advice regarding diet and other factors of a patient’s lifestyle and environment can prove to be a more complicated and less obvious process.

Overall, with regard to sixteenth-century antiquarianism scholars working on the Roman context have suggested that when dealing with the history of science and medicine in early modern Rome we come across complexities and contradictions. For

72 *idem*, p. 101
73 Girolamo Mercuriale. *Medicina e Cultura Nell’Europa del Cinquecento*…op. cit., p. 125
example, although Roman antiquarianism offered the opportunity for various practices, disciplines (such as engineering and architecture) etc. and their actors to be legitimized as ‘learned’, it often took such an approach that in the quest for legitimacy the actors appeared to be losing touch with contemporary ‘science’.\textsuperscript{74} In similar ways, in a city such as Rome where in the name of utility the ‘new’ chemical drugs met with considerable success with the ‘new’ (e.g chemical, mechanical, etc.) knowledge and practices circulating swiftly around aided by the large presence of people from many different national and cultural backgrounds,\textsuperscript{75} Mercuriale’s antiquarianizing ‘medical gymnastics’ appears to be outdated. In these terms, addressing the extent of Mercuriale’s antiquarianism in the \textit{De arte gymnastica}, scholars have marked its value as a ‘work of reference’ in Mercuriale’s time as well as through out time,\textsuperscript{76} while at the same time they have indicated a limited practical utility of the treatise and application of Mercuriale’s medical advice, suggesting also the lack of evidence indicating that the \textit{De arte gymnastica} had an influence on medical advice in the sixteenth or seventeenth century medical practice.\textsuperscript{77}

Rather than seeking to assess whether it was the ‘medical’ or the ‘non-medical’ content of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} that proved to be more important or useful, or to assess the medical value and use of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ in terms of sixteenth century medical practice, or trace its ‘influence’ in early modern medical culture, the present study poses a different question. By mapping the \textit{De arte gymnastica} as a medical discourse the present study seeks to bring forward how Mercuriale shaped his ‘medical gymnastics’ as the ‘true’ art of gymnastics, promoting it as a legitimate part of hygiene, and how, in what terms he shaped the medical nature, value, efficacy, and use of his ‘medical gymnastics’ trying to convince his elite audience on the superiority of this method of medical treatment within the plurality of methods of medical treatment available in the period. In the framework of this research question the ‘non-medical’ content of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} is

\textsuperscript{74} See Maria Pia Donato and Jill Kraye (eds.), \textit{Conflicting Duties...} op. cit., p. 8
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{idem}, p. 6
\textsuperscript{76} The value of Girolamo Mercuriale’s \textit{De arte gymnastica} as a book of reference on the Greco-Roman athletics and physical culture follows the book as well as in our time. Indicative of this fact are the numerous references made to the book in studies on the history of ancient and early modern sport, athletics and bodily culture, while characteristic is the fact that the book’s publication in 1960 and 2008 coincided with celebration of the Olympic Games. See above footnote 51.
considered in the present study as a component, an element of Mercuriale’s medical discourse, of the practice that systematically formed the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a legitimate medical art and valuable method of medical treatment, rather than a separate component of the content of the book. After all it is important to bear in mind that the ‘utility’, ‘influence’, ‘efficacy’ etc. of early modern methods of medical treatment (preventive and curative) were closely connected with the patients’ expectations regarding methods of medical treatment and that the patients’ expectations were often socially and culturally constructed, as were contemporary perceptions of ‘disease’.78

Furthermore, in the historiography of early modern preventive medicine scholars often address medical advice in terms of what Michel Foucault has suggested as the ‘care of the self’, approaching the practice of regimen (or diet) as ‘a whole art of living’;79 in particular according to Foucault ‘it [regimen] was a whole manner of forming oneself as a subject who had the proper, necessary, and sufficient concern for his body. A concern that permeated everyday life, making the major or common activities of existence a matter both of health and of ethics. It defined a circumstantial strategy involving the body and the elements that surrounded it; and finally it proposed to equip the individual himself for a rational mode of behaviour’.80 Marilyn Nicoud noting that regimen can appear as a ‘lieu de tension’ between the medical savoirs and the personal awareness that each individual may have of themselves, between the rules of life that are imposed or suggested and the free will of the recipient marks the dietetic literature joined ‘le domaine plus vaste des outils mis en oeuvre pour la surveillance et la régulation des pratiques corporelles et donne à lire la médiation medicale qu’induit le régime dans le rapport de soi au corps et plus largement à l’environnement’.81 Nonetheless, it is important to point out that in Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica we are not dealing with diet, regimen as a whole but

80 ibid.
81 Marilyn Nicoud, Les régimes de santé…op. cit., p. 25
we are dealing particularly with ‘exercise’, a fact that could direct to an additional Foucauldian analysis: from techniques of the self to techniques of domination and/or their interaction.  

This remark does not mean that in the framework of regimen the practice of ‘exercise’ did not share the above concerns, however, when exploring the *De arte gymnastica* in terms of a medical discourse we need to consider that discourse ‘*is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but it is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized*’. In these terms ‘exercise’ raises a set of implications in its own right. In particular, looking into health-related ‘exercise’ we are entering a particular theoretical realm in which we come across a series of concepts (such as ‘exercise’, ‘medical exercise’, etc.) that call for a rarefaction. The question that is raised is whether Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ emerges as a disciplinary technique and, thus, part of a medical discourse that aims to subject individual bodies to dominant power relations. Towards this aim, Chapter 4 of the present study looks into how Mercuriale puts together medical knowledge and practice, how he shapes the medical art of ‘medical gymnastics’, its medical function, value, and efficacy, exploring in the following a series of ‘medical exercises’ which were fashionable in sixteenth century elite courts and circles and are considered paradigmatic in historiography as their nature and practice raised a series of implications (moral, social, etc.) particularly in the Counter-Reformation era.

This approach in the historical investigation of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* becomes pertinent taking into consideration the particularities of the Roman context as scholarly research has indicated them: i) the popularity of competing powers within the papal Curia, itself surrounded by the courts of cardinals and ambassadors, and the complex dynamics of patronage due, among other factors, to the elective nature of the papacy; ii) the presence of (and competition among) numerous religious orders, all supranational in their organization and composition but each with its own traditions and culture; iii) the role of ecclesiastical censorship which the Holy Office and

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Congregation of the Index attempted to impose throughout the catholic world and its impact on intellectual life in Rome and on the relations between its cultivated elite and the ‘Republic of Letters’.\textsuperscript{85} We are dealing therefore with an environment with many centres of power in which medicine, due its practical utility, interacted in dynamic ways with religion especially within the Counter-Reformation context; the functions and uses of medicine were expanded in the catholic society, thus making papal patronage of medicine unlimited.\textsuperscript{86}

In these terms, the ‘different’ reading of the book consists in that the present study tries “[…] to define within the documentary material itself, unités, totalités, series, relations”.\textsuperscript{87} The present study does not look to break down the content of the book (e.g. by identifying, classifying the sources Mercuriale deployed, addressing historically various issues that come up in the text, etc.) as has been the case in the commentaries of the critical editions of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} so far. Rather, it looks into the structure of the text and it suggests a different organization of the document: it selects elements, aspects, parts, etc. of the treatise and attempts to group them and to make them relevant, as well as to bring forward the shaping of particular concepts and notions (such as ‘health’, ‘disease’, ‘exercise’, ‘gymnastics’, ‘medical exercise’, etc.) rather than accept them as already defined unities and syntheses. In this attempt, the present study (as it will be demonstrated in the following part of this chapter) considering the visual imagery of the book as an important source that reflects Mercuriale’s strategy to convey the intended meaning(s) to his elite audience, examines also the images of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} in terms of ‘medical images’ trying to address their use, role and function within and/or in relation to Mercuriale’s medical discourse.

One element in the text of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} that the present study has located as pivotal in Mercuriale’s medical discourse is Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the rise and the proliferation of the “new diseases”. More in particular, in Book I of the \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Chapter I, \textit{De principiis medicinae}, (‘The origins of medicine’), Mercuriale suggests the rise and the proliferation of “new diseases” and he provides a list of outbreaks of “new diseases” with the outbreak of the so-called ‘French Disease’

\textsuperscript{85} Maria Pia Donato and Jill Kraye (eds.), \textit{Conflicting Duties…op. cit.}, p. 5
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{idem}, p. 6
\textsuperscript{87} Michel Foucault (1969), \textit{The Archaeology of Knowledge…op. cit.}, p. 7
(morbus gallicus, or mal francese, or gallica lues as Mercuriale names it in the text) as the latest one to occur. The outbreak of the French Disease in the Italian ground in the closure of the fifteenth century raised the crucial issue of the possibility of the existence of “new diseases”. This issue was debated among medical circles at the time, challenging strongly the prevailing medical system of the time as well as the professional status of the University trained physicians and it persisted throughout the sixteenth century bearing important social, cultural and moral implications. Mercuriale insists on the issue of the “new diseases” also in the following editions of the De art gymnastica; it should be marked that in the preface-dedication letter of the second edition of the book Mercuriale, addressing the emperor Maximilian II, notes: ‘so many kinds of diseases now infests us which, it is reasonable to suppose, were unknown to the ancients because of the habit of physical exercise’. References to the beneficial role of ‘exercise’ in the treatment and/or the prevention of the French Disease are to be found as well as in other sixteenth century medical writings.

Scholars have marked Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the “new diseases”, however the suggestion has not been addressed in relation to his ‘medical gymnastics’ and the role of this crucial suggestion in Mercuriale’s medical discourse has not been considered. Scholars, in the broader research framework on the issue of “new diseases”, have mentioned Girolamo Mercuriale as one of the sixteenth-century physicians that supported the radical idea that “new diseases” existed. In the 2008 critical edition of the De arte gymnastica Jean-Michel Agasse addressed Mercuriale’s suggestion in relation to Mirko Grmek’s analysis regarding ‘novelty’ in the broader framework of the issues of “new diseases”, but overall Mercuriale’s suggestion has remained in the fringes of the historical analysis of the De arte gymnastica seen merely as part of the type of introduction (referring to the proliferation of diseases as the result of the fall of man) that according to scholars is ‘traditionally’ found in early

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88 The apparently new disease was named ‘French’ as its appearance was associated with the invasion of King Charles VIII of France in the kingdom of Naples in 1494. For the multiple names attributed to the disease see: Alfred W. Crosby Jr., ‘The Early History of Syphilis: A Reappraisal’, pp. 218-227, American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 71, No. 2 (April, 1969)
89 For a complete review on the historiography on the “French Disease” and the issues it raised during the sixteenth century see Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox. The French Disease in Renaissance Europe, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997)
91 idem, p. 5
92 Klaus Bergdolt, Wellbeing, A Cultural History…op. cit., p. 167
93 See Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 268
modern treatises of preventive medicine.\textsuperscript{94} Nancy Siraisi has marked Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the “new disease”, however from a different perspective pointing out the uses of history in medicine.\textsuperscript{95}

Chapter 3 of the present study looks into Mercuriale’s list of the outbreaks of the “new diseases” and explores Mercuriale’s notion of ‘new’ and ‘disease’, his perception of “new disease”, his understanding of the French Disease as a “new disease”, the issues that are raised directly or indirectly by Mercuriale’s suggestion, and finally the role of the particular suggestion in his medical discourse. The present study considers that the particular suggestion is far more revealing regarding the content of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} as a treatise of preventive medicine and as far as the value, use, and efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ are concerned. The present study considers that both the content of the suggestion of the “new diseases” and its strategic placement in the text raise a series of interconnected issues that refer to contemporary medical knowledge and practice but as well as to moral and cultural concerns that were pertinent with aspects of the court lifestyle of Mercuriale’s audience and which occupied the Roman Catholic Church in the framework of the endeavour for spiritual reform towards the Catholic revival.

Regarding Mercuriale’s medical discourse Nancy Siraisi and Jean-Michelle Agasse, looking into the alterations and modifications introduced in the second and the following editions of the book, have suggested the lack of the discursive unity. Siraisi has suggested that the changes that Mercuriale introduced in the second edition of the book seem likely to have directed the attention of readers away from the medical and towards other aspects of the work. In particular Siraisi, looking into the dedication-preface of the second edition, suggests that Mercuriale as he addresses the emperor Maximilian II urging him to construct gymnasia and revive the ancient gymnastics according to the example of victorious rulers of antiquity, is shifting the emphasis from preservation of health (as was the case in the first edition of the book dedicated to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese) to the preparation for war.\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{94} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., pp. 1050-1052
\textsuperscript{95} See Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine.’ op. cit., pp. 231-251, Siraisi, \textit{History, Medicine, and the Traditions…}\textsuperscript{op. cit., p.}
\textsuperscript{96} Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism, and Medicine…’, op. cit., p. 245
Similarly Jean-Michel Agasse, discussing the preface-dedication letter of the first and the second edition of the book, has raised two points. First, in the second edition of the *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale, addressing the emperor Maximilian II, is favouring the military gymnastics. Secondly, Mercuriale suggests that the art of exercise is to be recovered by the emperor following the example of illustrious kings of the past who, through the art of gymnastics, achieved the maintenance of their health and the obtainment of strength while at the same time they also set themselves as an example for others to follow. In these terms, Agasse identifies, as he says, a significant transition: ‘*du corps de prélat au corps du prince, du corps religieux au corps profane*’; thus, Agasse suggests, in the second edition of the *De arte gymnastica* we have a change of ‘*discours*’.  

In these terms, it is fair to ask whether the new dedicatee and the words of Mercuriale in the preface-dedication letter of second edition of the *De arte gymnastica* really suggest a change of discourse. The present study suggests that there is no change of discourse; the discourse remains medical and Mercuriale continues to emphasize the value of the ‘medical gymnastics’. It is important to take into consideration that the dedicatee in the preface-dedication letter of early modern medical books represented both a mecen and a patient, whose virtue is celebrated for his ability to grant medicine, the cultural as well as the scientific -in a broader sense- practices with value; what is being discussed in such dedication letters is the material of the text, while what is being addressed is the legitimacy of medicine (in general) or that of the particular topic.

As a result, the present study suggests that Mercuriale’s reference to the military training as well as to athletics serves as a way to compliment the value of the medical gymnastics as well as to ‘legitimize’ it with Mercuriale acknowledging that he is addressing an emperor; however, this does not change the discourse. Mercuriale in the preface-dedication letter of the second edition identifies the value of the other arts (among which he names the military training as well) but he highlights the supremacy of the art of medicine. Discussing primarily the value of the ‘art of medicine’,

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Mercuriale passes to the ‘art of gymnastics’ noting that it is ‘the way to a sound and happy life […] that brought health to both the body and the soul’, so as to continue in the following with the remark that ‘this is the art’ (that is the gymnastic art which has a great medical value) through which the kings of the past excelled in warfare, health and physical strength. Furthermore, both the body of the ‘prelate’ (Cardinal Alessandro Farnese) and that of the ‘prince’ (Maximilian II) are ‘princely’, and in addition, in both the editions of the book Mercuriale calls his patrons to set the example by practicing gymnastics, so as to be healthy and thus successful in their duties, guaranteeing in this way the prosperity of people.

In addition, in relation to Nancy Siraisi’ remark regarding Mercuriale urging the emperor towards the construction of gymnasia and thus war, the present study suggests that the construction of gymnasia makes part of Mercuriale’s broader use of architecture in the *De arte gymnastica*. It does not shift the emphasis from health to war; on the contrary, we should consider that the use of architecture in the framework of health-related ‘exercise’ raises the issue of the employment of architecture as one element of disciplinary control of an individual’s body. Indicative of the techniques of disciplinary control is Mercuriale’s reference to athletic gymnastics in the preface-dedication letter; addressing Maximilain II, Mercuriale asks: ‘who does not know it was the aid of this [gymnastic] art that the early governors of kingdoms and provinces prudently introduced shows with athletes and gladiators with the express purpose of keeping their subjects in their dutiful place?’ 99 Such a remark directs us to what Foucault has described as the transition from the ancient and medieval public violent spectacles as forms of control to the emergence of disciplinary power, a form of power focused on the control and discipline of bodies, which was practiced through means of surveillance; 100 exercise is one such form of control of the body. In these terms, the present study suggests that there is no change of discourse; on the contrary there are elements that indicate the continuity of Mercuriale’s medical discourse through out the numerous editions of the book and which could further reveal the intended nature, value, use, efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment and subsequently aspects of the broader social role of

sixteenth century medicine as made in the context of post-Tridentine Rome. The visual images of the *De arte gymnastica* could be another such element.

### 1.2.2 The images

Chapter 5 of the present study examines the visual imagery of the *De arte gymnastica*, considering them an important historical source and suggesting that they play an important role in Mercuriale’s medical discourse. The images that the treatise features can be briefly categorized thematically in the following groups: i) ground plans of the ancient gymnasium (palaestra), ii) physical activities/practices, iii) bathing scenes, iv) mealtime scenes, v) objects connected to the *palaestra*, bathing, etc. The majority of the engravings for the illustrations have been ascribed to the painter, architect and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio, ten of them explicitly by Mercuriale himself.\(^{101}\) In the preface-dedication letter of the second edition of his *De arte gymnastica* that was dedicated to the emperor Maximilian II, Mercuriale marks that the addition of the illustrations is one of the changes that helped the book’s improvement. Mercuriale marks that the ‘*illustrations of some exercises taken from ancient monuments*’ make the book appear ‘*more acceptable and give even greater pleasure*’ and that the new version of the book is thus ‘*more accomplished, more complete and more handsome*’.\(^{102}\)

Visual images create a particular relation between the writer and his audience, and the –presumed- use (educational, aesthetic, etc.) of the images. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that images are often used also for scientific purposes even when they were originally created to serve aesthetic and artistic ends. In this regard David Topper, implying the unclear boundaries between art and science, science and art, has noted that works of art are transformed into works of science and the other way round. Marking the plasticity of visual images, Topper notes that any visual

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\(^{102}\) Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 7
scribble is a potential scientific image and, conversely, scientific artifacts are potential works of art; it is all a question of media, style and context.103

The question of the demarcation between art and science has been central in the marginalization of illustrations in historical and philosophical studies of science,104 however since the 1970s the study of the visual representations in science, medicine and technology has started to gain considerable ground and it has become a point where different fields of studies (history of science and medicine, philosophy of science, art history, history of the book, etc.) meet. A series of issues, ranging from the production and circulation of images in science, medicine, and technology, to techniques and cultures of visual representation and its use in the making and the communication of scientific knowledge, have been raised over the recent decades and scholars have offered valuable analyses and insights.

Regarding the visual imagery in the history of medicine in particular, in the 1990s Sander Gilman, setting off from the debate raised among cultural historians and art historians regarding how and why historians use visual images, reflected on the status of ‘cultural’ in the field of the history of medicine in relation to medical imagery. Disagreeing with the art historian Francis Haskell who had suggested that historians of medicine are not physicians and similarly they are not cultural historians to engage with images, Gilman maintained that ‘it is precisely that historians of medicine are cultural historians and that the culture of medicine is as heavily involved with visual culture as any other aspect of modern cultural history, that makes the anxiety about the use of the visual image in the history of medicine into a meaningful problem’.105 Highlighting the importance of medical imagery as a form of source for the historian, Gilman noted that medical images should be examined as ‘documents that show a self-contained visual language or iconography concerning health and illness that exist in specific traditions of visual representation and as objects to access cultural fantasies about health, disease, and the body’.106

104 ibid.
106 idem, p. 11
But what is a ‘medical’ image? According to Martin Kemp an image connected in some way with the history of medicine is by definition ‘medical’, even not in the sense that we normally mean or understand (e.g. the educative role of an image, from specialist instruction to public information).\footnote{See ‘Foreword’ by Martin Kemp in Julie V. Hansen and Suzanne Porter (eds.), The Physician’s Art. Representations of Art and Medicine, (Durham: Duke University Medical Centre Library and Duke University Museum of Art, 1999), p. 11} So far scholars have discussed the visual imagery of the De arte gymnastica in terms of ‘antiquarian images’, ‘visual representations of athletics’, as illustrations of ancient ‘sports’, ‘gymnastics’, ‘athletics’, ‘games’ and other forms of ‘physical exercise’, but not as ‘medical images’ or as images of ‘medical exercises’ or ‘medical gymnastics’. In the case of the visual images of Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica it is the antiquarian style and origin of the pictures that remain central in the scholarly research for the most part.

In particular, Ginette Vagenheim has investigated systematically the background of the genesis of the images of the De arte gymnastica in the context of Renaissance antiquarianism and erudition. Examining closely a number of images in the second edition of the book in juxtaposition to Pirro Liogorio’s original sketches, Vagenheim has shown the antiquarian origin of these images connecting them with Ligorio’s research activities as the major antiquarian of the Accademia degli Sdegnati. Vageneheim notes that among the members of this not so widely known -as she notes- Roman academy we find antiquarians like Pirro Ligorio, scholars of the Farnese circle who were also Mercuriale’s acquaintances, as well as Mercuriale as the Cardinal’s personal physician. Vagenheim suggests that one part (the second part in particular) of the programme of the Academia Vitruviana on the antiquitates of Rome was brought to its conclusion by the ‘accademici sdegnati’, and that the results were gathered under the title Antichità romane, which was the work of Pirro Ligorio.\footnote{See Ginette Vagenheim, ‘Some Newly-Discovered Works’…op. cit., p. 128} It is in the framework of the activities of the Accademia degli Sdegnati, Vageneheim suggests, that the idea of the images for the De arte gymnastica was initially born and elaborated, leading later to the addition of the images in the second edition of the book in 1573.\footnote{idem, p. 157. Also see Ginette Vagenheim, ‘La dessin de L’essercitio gladiatorio de Pirro Ligorio et le De arte gymnastica de Girolamo Mercuriale. De la recherché antiquaire a la propagande de la Contre-Reforme: l’exemple du corps au combat’, Ludica, 3, 1997; Vagenheim, ‘Some Newly-Discovered Works’…op. cit., pp. 242-244}
In the same context of Renaissance antiquarianism, Nancy Siraisi has discussed the visual imagery of the *De arte gymnastica* in terms of ‘the visualization of Roman physical culture on a celebrated series of illustrations showing Roman athletes in action –wrestling, swimming, throwing balls, lifting weights, and so on’. Siraisi addressed the images of the treatise as a form of material evidence that was mediated to Mercuriale by other antiquarians and by his humanist acquaintances. In this framework she discusses the unreliability of Ligorio’s evidence, marking that both early and more recent critics have noted a large role of imaginative reconstruction shading off into outright invention in his representations of archaeological findings and the Roman past. Ligorio’s contemporaries complained of his lack of classical learning; however, Mercuriale was aware that Ligorio’s drawings were imaginative, composite, and selective reconstructions. According to Ligorio such illustrations were appropriate for the *De arte gymnastica* because the goal was not to provide a precise record of archaeological findings but to recreate a lost world. Mercuriale’s own awareness of the difference between an interpretative reconstruction and a drawing of an ancient object in the condition in which it was found, emerge in his commentary on particular illustrations.

Alessandro Arcangeli, from the viewpoint of cultural history, makes two remarks regarding the images of the book. First, showing the overlapping between medicine and the world of leisure, he marks the similarity between the ‘visual representations of athletics’ in the *De arte gymnastica* provided to Mercuriale by Pirro Ligorio and the frescoes in a cycle of games that Ligorio had created for the decoration of the ‘Salone dei giuochi’ of the Este Castle, the principal residence of the ruling family in Ferrara. Drawing on scholarly research on these frescoes Arcangeli notes that, apart from testifying the passion for antiquity (a characteristic Renaissance taste he marks), the iconographic programme in the Este Castle displayed and embodied a complex project of renewal in which play and a specific Renaissance philosophy of time played the central role.

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110 Nancy Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions…* op. cit., p. 47
111 *idem*, pp. 47-50
113 Nancy Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions…* op. cit., p. 49
114 Alessandro Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance…* op. cit., p. 25
Secondly, Arcangeli focuses on the illustrated ‘light’ exercise of a woman with a swing, discussing it in juxtaposition to the muscular, male exercising bodies depicted in the rest of the illustrations of the book. According to early modern medical theory, Arcangeli explains, the exercise with a swing was considered a suitable exercise for delicate complexions –thus suitable for women–, while the fact that the particular exercise is depicted as a woman’s thing could only be addressed in relation to Ligorio’s intention to represent the particular exercise historically, according to the ancient manners of its practice. According to Arcangeli this picture ‘adds an aura of purity that would be spoiled by sexual promiscuity’.  

Peter Kühnst, from the perspective of cultural history too, exploring visual arts as resources examines the history of ‘sports’ and ‘sport-like’ physical activities as figurations, expressive forms that range from warfare to embodiments in sports-like sexuality. In this framework he discusses also Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica; Kühnst discusses the book’s ‘antiquarian images’ in terms of illustrations of ‘gymnastics’, ‘sports’, ‘games’, and ‘athletes’ in the context of the Renaissance humanism that longed for the recovery of the Greco-Roman antiquity, which sustained a model for admiration on behalf of the humanist princes, scholars and the artists alike. The interest in the Greek concept of ‘gymnastics’ was an aspect of this consensus, he marks.  

From the perspective of art history, exploring the aesthetic signification of vivezza in the Renaissance Frederica Jacobs has suggested that the antiquarian images of the De arte gymnastica visualize the paradigm of the classic and heroic beauty in juxtaposition to the flap anatomies and anatomical fugitive sheets of mid-sixteenth century that, stripping away the body’s outer appearance, revealed the inner organs and bones. Jacobs suggests that the engravings of the De arte gymnastica, based on or inspired by ancient figurative forms, comment on man’s self-image reflecting the composition and potential ideality of the human form.

115 ibid.
118 idem, pp. 32-33
In this research background and taking into consideration that ‘the medical imagery throws light into the nature and meaning of the physician’s world’, the present study attempts the examination of the images in the De arte gymnastica in terms of ‘medical images’, aiming to look into their role, use, and function in relation to the text of the treatise. The present study suggests that the visual imagery in Mercuriale’s medical discourse reflects his strategy to convey the intended meaning(s) to his elite audience in Rome by further shaping the knowledge transmitted in the social-cultural space of post-Tridentine Rome. Jean-Michel Agasse has examined the use of the images of the De arte gymnastica however in terms of ‘antiquarian’ images and in the framework of the assessment of Mercuriale as an antiquarian and philologist in the context of Renaissance antiquarianism. In this context, Agasse addresses the relation between the text of the treatise, the antiquarian remains, and the images and, drawing from Michel Pastureau, he attributes three powers to the image: to teach, to elicit emotion, and to set dreaming; Agasse suggests that the images in the De arte gymnastica fulfil these three roles.

The present study attempts a different approach. Acknowledging the images of the treatise as ‘medical’ it asks an essential, however not obvious, question: what is ‘medical’ about an image from the history of medicine? This question refers to exploring and mapping the medical ‘function’ of the images, rather than the ‘functional’ element in them. Martin Kemp has marked that it is crucial not to confuse ‘function’ with ‘functional’. The term ‘functional’ refers to the medical utility of what is being visualized each time; for instance, the suggestion that the images in the second edition of the De arte gymnastica recast a text ‘about the physiological benefits of exercise’ has to do with the ‘functional’ element in the images, the medical utility of exercise. Whereas, ‘function’, according to Martin Kemp, refers to aspects (such as ‘style’, ‘decorative’ aspects, etc.) of an image or of what is being visualized, that sustain integral parts of the total field within which the role of what is visualized can be acceptably performed; Kemp marks that, for their part, these aspects sustain vital components in the transaction between those who claim access to powers...

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119 Julie Hansen and Suzanne Porter (eds.), The Physician’s Art. Representations of Art and Medicine, (Durham: Duke University Medical Centre Library and Dike University Museum of Art, 1999), p. 24
120 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...cit, pp. 1015-1037
121 ‘Foreword’ by Martin Kemp in The Physician’s Art...op. cit., p. 13
122 Jacobs (2005), p. 32
of healing and those who believe in the efficacy of those powers.\textsuperscript{123} It is in this framework that the present study aims to address (as well as) the antiquarian element of the images of the \textit{De arte gymnastica}, as an essential aspect of the medical function of the images, and it is in the same framework that Ligorio’s drawings as ‘selective reconstructions’ rather than ‘precise records’ of the past make sense.

The task of exploring the medical function of the visual imagery in the \textit{De arte gymnastica} has a particular importance considering that in the history of science and medicine we come across various (disciplinary, social, cultural) sorts of visual representation and appropriation. For instance, medical images often sustain narrative compositions (depicting the essentials of the diagnostic, prognostic, etc. procedure, the necessary equipment and paraphernalia, the promised result, etc.) that are enhanced with social and cultural rhetoric and are intended to be seen within a broader context of meaning.\textsuperscript{124} In early modern preventive medical writings we find pictures concerning, for instance, diet (e.g. tables with the qualities and the medicinal uses of different foods), bathing, people engaging in ‘exercises’ (such as horse riding and dancing) etc. In these terms the use of an architectural plan in a medical treatise – as in the case of the \textit{De arte gymnastica}- should be problematized. Therefore, it would be useful to look into the visual images of Mercuriale’s treatise in terms of medical images and in this framework address subsequently their antiquarian element as a sort of visual representation and appropriation in relation to a broader context of meaning after we identify the latter; this is the reason why the images are being examined last in this study.

Similarly, the visual images of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} are rather distinct in comparison to the compelling naturalistic illustrations of the great sixteenth-century anatomical, botanical, and surgical works. The present study does not imply that the naturalistic artistic style is more ‘scientific’ in the sense that it denotes direct observation and the actual existence of an object; after all scholars have demonstrated that this is not the case.\textsuperscript{125} Rather, the present study suggests that it would be useful to explore how the antiquarian artistic style of a medical image could function as a

\textsuperscript{123} ‘Foreword’ by Martin Kemp in \textit{The Physician’s Art…}, op. cit., p. 13
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{idem}, p. 15
manner, as a strategy of persuasion regarding direct observation and the actual existence of the object studied and/or depicted. To put it in other words the image in early modern medical and scientific writings makes a ‘claim’ that is being supported by both the form and the content of the image within a particular context.\textsuperscript{126}

The understanding of the claims of the images in early modern scientific and medical writings is the direction towards which scholarly research has orientated over the recent years, suggesting that in the early modern period images in scientific and medical writings sustain a ‘vehicle’ in the shaping and the transmission of knowledge, reflecting the interaction between the content of knowledge and its context(s). Over the recent years scholars have demonstrated that words and images interact and that this interaction bears important consequences for the knowledge transmitted.\textsuperscript{127} As Martin Kemp notes ‘\textit{looking and representing are inevitably directed and selective processes}’, and therefore the analysis of the medical imagery in relation to how medical knowledge arises, how it is broadcasted and used, and how different kinds of medical knowledge function in different ways and in different social situations, must be subtle.\textsuperscript{128} In these terms, the present study suggests that it is important to examine the medical imagery of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} in relation to Mercuriale’s medical discourse so as to understand the claims that the images make as part of Mercuriale’s medical and broader intellectual agenda addressing the Roman elite in the ‘Roman’ context.


\textsuperscript{127} See above footnote 126

\textsuperscript{128} ‘Foreword’ by Martin Kemp in \textit{The Physician’s Art...op. cit.,} p. 14
Chapter 2. The court and court patronage of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in the Roman context

Introduction

Scholars have marked that the *De arte gymnastica* is indicative of Mercuriale’s interest in antiquity and ancient physical culture, an interest that was shared by his patron and the members of the Farnese circle. However, Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* has not been addressed as a ‘product’ of court patronage in the context of sixteenth-century Rome. Exploring a medical treatise in terms of court patronage has its own significance in the historical understanding of early modern scientific writings and the role of court patronage as an ‘institution’ of scientific culture. Scholars have addressed court patronage as an institution of scientific culture in the sense that it constituted a nucleus of social relationships characterised by collective norms of behaviour and an organisation of information in the framework of which legitimacy is bestowed, experience is classified, and identity is conferred.129

Mario Biagioli has aptly described patronage as ‘an institution without walls’.130 Biagioli, examining the dynamics between the space of the court and scientists in the early modern period, has suggested that the space of the court offered a legitimization of science by providing venues for the social legitimization of its practitioners; this, in turn, boosted the epistemological status of their discipline.131 Biagioli suggests that the social status gained in the space of the court had an instrumental role in securing the epistemological status of a discipline (and the methods applied) whose legitimacy was undermined by the existing disciplinary hierarchy.132 In these terms the fact that the *De arte gymnastica* was put together under the court patronage of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in post-Tridentine Rome has its own implications in the historical understanding of Mercuriale’s work because of the idiosyncrasies of court-patronage in the Roman context.

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131 Mario Biagioli, *Galileo courtier: the practice of science...op.op. cit.*

132 *idem*, p. 24
Recent scholarly research on sixteenth-century Rome has demonstrated that a Cardinal’s court constituted a centre of power and an intellectual space in its own right; however a Cardinal’s court was only one among the many other courts, centres of power, and intellectual spaces in sixteenth century Rome. Rome was characterised by a polycentric culture and organisation of powers and scholars have indicated a whole ‘cultural and intellectual infrastructure’ consisting of centres of power and spaces of intellectual activity such as the nobility’s (cleric and lay) courts, the University, the publishing press, the College of Physicians, the hospital, etc.

In this polycentric culture and organisation of powers in sixteenth-century Rome, the physician had a special role. On the one hand when it came to individuals this polycentrism implied that in the Cardinals’ court no action and no production (literary, artistic, scientific, etc.) was possible in an autonomous way: the individual depended on the protection of his patron. On the other hand the fact that a physician could be in the service of a patron as a member of his familia (household) did not mean that he was cut off from the wider life of the city. Indeed, many of the intellectuals in the Cardinals’ courts were members of the Roman academies, taught at the University of Rome, and offered services to other noblemen of the city which was itself characterised by a great mobility and flux. According to Vivian Nutton the court physician was a ‘middleman’: he moved somewhere between the court, the university, and other centres and spaces without belonging fully to one or the other; however, it was precisely owing to this position and role that the physician could develop links with the wider world. Thus the court-physician could discover, promote, and spread the ideas generated by others within or outside the familia of his patron – whether these ideas referred to medicine or to another field of knowledge (e.g. botany, antiquarianism, etc.).

Precisely due to the court-physician’s location at the centre of a network of contacts, which were not necessarily or only medical, the ‘Roman’ medical literature has the

133 Marian Caffiero, Maria Pia Donato et Antonella Romano, Naples, Rome, Florence…op. cit., pp. 178-192
135 Marian Caffiero, Maria Pia Donato et Antonella Romano, Naples, Rome, Florence… op. cit., p. 193
137 ‘Roman’ medical literature is constituted in the works of physicians that worked in Rome and that were published in Rome or Venice. See Elisa Andretta, Roma medica…op. cit., p. 190
advantage of providing information regarding the forms of interaction between the physicians and the *pouvoirs* in the Roman space; the political and the social structure of the city made possible, even necessary, the multiple patronages and routes of diversified careers (as court-physicians, professors in the University, members of the College of physicians, etc.) of the ‘Roman’ (i.e. operating in Rome) physicians.\(^{138}\)

The Roman medical literature can reveal both the multiplicity of powers and the professional opportunities that opened up to a court physician, particularly in a place such as sixteenth-century Rome where patronage offered many career opportunities.\(^ {139}\) Therefore it is important to address the *De arte gymnastica* in these terms, taking into consideration that Alessandro was not just *any* Cardinal but one of the most powerful Churchmen and richest patrons in sixteenth-century Rome.

In the light of the recent studies on sixteenth-century Rome there was also a change in the historical approach of the Roman Cardinals and their courts: whereas in earlier studies scholars addressed Cardinals’ courts independently from the papal curia seeing them only as centres of artistic and literary patronage through ethico-historical perspectives, recent studies place the Cardinals and their court in the broader Roman context (political, religious, cultural, as well as economic). Gigliola Fragnito, in the light of the recent scholarly research on the Roman context, has noted the inadequacies of earlier studies: ‘*studies of individual courts, considered as independent organisms detached from the broader "Roman" context within which they developed and, above all, "exhibited themselves," give only a partial and fragmentary image, and they fail to provide a systematic overview of the evolution and significance of Renaissance courts*’.\(^ {140}\) In this framework what makes Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court patronage all the more significant is his position at the heart of the administration of the Roman Catholic Church in combination with the fact

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\(^{138}\) Elisa Andretta, *Roma Medica*... op. cit., pp. 191-192

\(^{139}\) Vivian Nutton (ed.), *Medicine at the Courts*... op. cit., pp. 9-10

that a part of his career overlapped with the change in patronage patterns and tastes associated with the Counter-Reformation.

Furthermore, the Roman medical literature constitutes also a sample of the medical practice in the city. We should consider the preventive character of the *De arte gymnastica* in relation to the fact that in sixteenth-century Rome, due to the existence of numerous courts, there was a specific demand for preventive medical writings (health regimens that provided rules, guidance for the maintenance of health and the prolongation of life); therefore the space of the court should also be seen as a space of medical practice. To the preventive genre of the Roman medical literature we should also add the medical treatises on diseases of ancient and new origin: the plague and the French Disease.\(^\text{141}\) These treatises were commissioned by diverse authorities of the city and they reflect a new awareness for the public welfare, thus granting a new place for medicine; some of these works take into consideration and participate in medical debates –local or international- on various issues (e.g. prognostics, the use of thermal baths in therapy, and anatomy particular from the second half of the sixteenth century).\(^\text{142}\) Up to 1570 a considerable number of such medical works were dedicated mainly to the *cardinali-principi* the members of dynasties (older and newer) such as the Gonzaga, the Farnese, the Medici, and the Colonna.\(^\text{143}\) The relationship between the court physician and his patron-patient is crucial in the historical understanding of the Roman medical literature, particularly when the patron was a ‘prince’ of the Church; the corporeality of a prince of the Church bore a series of implications regarding the content and the nature of medical practice.

The present chapter draws form recent scholarly work wishing to bring the above parameters into the historical investigation of Mercuriale’s medical discourse. For this task the present chapter looks into the crucial role of Cardinals’ court patronage within the broader papal agenda and in this framework it also looks into Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court and patronage commissions. The aim is to highlight Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court as a space of intellectual and cultural activity and a centre of political and religious power in its own right that was connected to the broader papal agenda and the city of Rome (in physical terms as well as in terms of the

\(\text{141}\) Elisa Andretta, *Roma medica…* op. cit., p. 191
\(\text{142}\) *ibid.*
\(\text{143}\) *idem*, p. 194
polycentric culture and organisation of powers in the city) through the Cardinal’s patronage commissions and the intellectual activities of the members of the Cardinal’s \textit{familia}. In the following the present chapter, looking into the court as a space of medical practice and Cardinal Alessandro Farnese as Mercuriale’s patient, goes through a number of issues that were raised in the framework of sixteenth century court-medicine, highlighting the connections with the \textit{De arte gymnastica}. Overall, this chapter aims to show that aspects of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court patronage -seen within the Roman context- were decisive in the shaping of Mercuriale’s medical discourse and that the \textit{De arte gymnastica}, as a sample of ‘Roman’ medical treatise, is indicative of the medical concerns in the city and the interactions between the ‘Roman’ physicians and the city’s centres of culture and power.
2.1 Cardinals and court patronage in the Roman context

The history of the Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church has not been linear over the centuries. This part of the chapter locates a series of aspects in the history of the Cardinalate that highlight what was a Cardinal, how the Cardinals and their courts were connected to the papal court and the city of Rome, and the significance of this connection within the Roman context so as to place Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court-patronage in a broader historical setting.

According to Carol Richardson a Cardinal’s role was not defined in theory, rather, it was shaped through his relationship with the pope: the Cardinals were the pope’s advisors, electors, and occasionally his enemies. In the framework of an increasingly complex administration of the Roman Church the Cardinals often asserted that they were in equal partnership with the pope when it came to the exercise of the papal imperium and they often signed official documents alongside or in place of the pope. However, Cardinals were careful to distinguish between the individual who was the pope at the time and the office of the papacy, which, in any case could never be questioned.144

Making an enlightening comparison between the popes of Avignon, Rome and Pisa, Richardson notes that when it came to the popes in Rome the issue at stake was to retain the ‘true’ path that was to be traced back through the apostolic succession to St. Peter. In this framework the city of Rome was a major defining component of the pope’s claim to universal sovereignty. Apart from the ambitions of the popes for political and secular power and the arrangements of their relations with foreign powers in their endeavour to protect the papal interests, one of the most important workings of the Roman papacy was the practical and symbolic reintegration of the papacy and the city of Rome. The papacy needed and strove for its physical, historical, and symbolic links with the city to which it owed its identity, administration, laws and universal authority; the restoration of the city (also in

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physical terms) was regarded as a way to accomplish this claim of universal authority.\textsuperscript{145}

In the papal programme for reclaiming and restoring the city of Rome the Cardinals played an important role and they constituted a major force in the development of the city in practical and symbolic terms. The city of Rome was meant to entail and represent the popes’ claim to universal authority over Christendom and the Cardinals were an inseparable part of this agenda as the pope’s delegates; the popes styled themselves as the successors of the Roman emperors assuming the adage of pontifex maximus and the Cardinals were modelled as the senators.\textsuperscript{146} Even if their activities as patrons were more localized and focused on the churches, residences, and palaces to which they were attached, the Cardinals combined enjoyed at least the same spending power as the popes, if not more.\textsuperscript{147}

Here it would be useful to make two points regarding the papal agenda. First, the principle valued above all and which defined this agenda was ‘continuity’ rather than ‘change’. Indicative of this is the fact that even new building projects were seen in terms of ‘restoration’.\textsuperscript{148} This principle was central in all of the efforts to maintain the relationship between the city, the Church, and the papacy. Second, this agenda indicated not only the moral and spiritual but also the intellectual and physical engagement of the clergy and the papal court with the city of Rome. According to Richardson in the ‘triptych’ of Rome-papacy-cardinalate there are three concepts that must be considered as key-terms: continuity, tradition, and reconsolidation; these were realised through the patronage commissions of both the Pope and the Cardinals.\textsuperscript{149}

Two fields in which the above essential prerequisites of the papal agenda met were architecture and antiquarianism. The Cardinals along with the prelates and the officials of the curia invested wealth (coming for the most part from the ecclesiastical benefices and curial offices) in the physical restoration of Rome through the (re)construction of churches, palaces, houses, and suburban villas; this was a way to contribute to the renovatio Urbi that served the political prestige of the papacy. The

\textsuperscript{145} Carol M. Richardson, Reclaiming Rome…op. cit., pp. 8-9
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{idem}, p. 10
\textsuperscript{147} \textit{idem}, pp. 161-162
\textsuperscript{148} \textit{idem}, p. 161
\textsuperscript{149} \textit{ibid.}
physical remains of the city were evaluated in similar ways; for example in Flavio Biondo’s (1392-1462) *Roma instaurata*, which was dedicated to pope Eugenius IV, the ancient sites were linked with the Christian sites emphasising the continuity with the ancient past. In the framework of Roman antiquarianism the ancient remains and classical culture were not only to be recovered but they were to be treated as something that was to be recycled and incorporated.\(^{150}\) The notion of identity or continuity with the ancient Roman forebears continued to find expression well into the sixteenth century. For the humanists in Rome both the physical remains and the institutions and customs of the ancient city were of special interest, while at the same time the sixteenth-century attempts to perpetuate or re-create ancient Roman traditions reveal a strong sense of identity with the city’s ancient past.\(^{151}\) The physical restoration of the city through architecture and building projects involved also a strong spiritual element, particularly in the era right after the council of Trent; buildings were restored to strengthen the sense of religious devotion as well as the ecclesiastical administration of Rome. In the following section of this chapter we will see how both architecture projects and antiquarian studies constituted an essential part of Cardinal Alessandro’s Farnese patronage.

The Cardinals came along with their courts, which represented the papal court’s corollaries or extensions. In the history of the Cardinalate we come across crucial developments in the College of the Cardinals and the Cardinal’s courts that must be seen in the light of the politico-institutional evolution of the papal monarchy and the vicissitudes of the papal state and the Church between 1460 (when the bull *Execrabilis* of Pius II dealt a severe blow to conciliarist theories) and 1586 (when the Sacred College was restructured and reorganised under the constitution *Postquam verus* bull, promulgated by Sixtus V).\(^{152}\) Paolo Prodi has suggested that as the Renaissance popes tried to exercise greater control over the lands of the Church, the image of the papacy was adjusted to fit its dual spiritual and temporal role. According to Prodi the expression of this new ideology of papal power is detected in the increasingly frequent uses of Old Testament figures and themes in art, and in the increasingly rigid and solemn liturgy and ceremony, reflecting the popes’ growing

\(^{150}\) *idem*, pp. 175-176  
\(^{151}\) Nancy Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions*…op. cit. p. 171  
 detachment from their pastoral duties as bishops of Rome. Prodi argues that the expansion of the papal court, as a crucial instrument for the consolidation of consensus, was also connected to the increasing importance of the papal state.

It is in this framework of the growing strength of the papal monarchy that scholars studying sixteenth and seventeenth-century Rome as a centre of scientific culture have pointed to the interplay between science and religion in the Urbs that varied over time depending also on the scientific discipline. Scholars have suggested that in the case of medicine, precisely because of its practical utility as well as its institutional and economic autonomy, this interaction was very dynamic. Particularly in the framework of post-Tridentine attitudes the functions and uses of medicine within the Catholic society were expanded and papal patronage of medicine was virtually unlimited.

The present study suggests that Mercuriale’s medical discourse should be viewed under the light of these religious-political-institutional developments as shaped during the post-Tridentine period. As will shall see in the following chapters of this study the promotion of ‘medical gymnastics’ (carrying its own set of values and principles as a method of medical treatment) and the use of architecture and antiquarianism within a medical discourse shaped in the space of a Cardinal’s court patronage, is indicative of aspects of the broader socio-cultural role that medicine -as both a scientific discipline and an occupation- was called to take up under the newly shaped historical circumstances.

It is against this background of the long-term process of the transformation of the papacy into an absolute monarchy that the increasing worldliness of the College of Cardinals must be seen, and which was soon to be reflected in the style of courts and court-life. This process was by no means linear and its various stages have yet to be fully analyzed. Still, it began hesitantly during the pontificate of Pius II (Pope from 1458 to 1464) and it can be said to have reached its conclusion by the time of Pius V (Pope from 1566 to 1572). Although the papal monarchy had deprived the consistory of its powers, nevertheless it had asked the Cardinals to provide a backdrop for its own growing splendor to be ‘idols in appearance’. The Cardinal’s familia had

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153 idem, p. 29
155 Maria Pia Donato and Jill Kraye (eds.), *Conflicting Duties...* op. cit., p. 6
156 Gigliola Fragnito, ‘Cardinals’ Courts in Sixteenth Century Rome’...op. cit., p. 35
become one of the indispensable elements of that ‘appearance’. The *magnificenza* and the *grandezza* that were required from the Cardinals must be seen as a part of a coherent, long-term programme to bring the image of Rome in line with its new function as the capital of the Papal State as well as the capital of Christendom. This endeavour also involved the physical aspect of the city. In the context of what Paolo Prodi has called "the intense encouragement of Rome's role as capital" the popes launched an intensive building programme to give the city a solemn majesty that would manifest its new importance within the State of the Church,\(^{157}\) and the Cardinals participated actively in this programme as patrons. In this respect Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, maintaining one of the most illustrious courts at the time and commissioning large scale public and private projects, was very active as we will see in the following.

However, it is important to note that not all Cardinals could maintain such a *magnificenza*; there was a gap (which was later widened) between the ‘rich’ and the ‘poor’ Cardinals and there was a difference in the sizes of the *familia* of the Cardinals that were present in the Roman curia by comparison to the rest. The elaborate lifestyle was more a demand for the Cardinals residing in Rome, for those who went there for a time, or who were entrusted with a delegation, rather than for all Cardinals.\(^{158}\) However, there is no doubt that the Cardinals who belonged to great dynastic families (like the Gonzaga, the Este, the Medici, and the Farnese) or to the old feudal aristocracy made a point of maintaining a large household to add luster to their lineage, rather than to merely enhance their dignity as Cardinals.\(^{159}\)

Cardinal Alessandro Farnese was a powerful Churchman and one of the wealthiest patrons in the city maintaining one of the largest *familiae* and most lavish courts as he was fortunate enough to be the grandson of Pope Paul III (Pope from 1534 until 1549) who was one of the most dedicated nepotists in the history of the papacy. At the age of fifteen Alessandro was promoted to the life-office of Vice-Chancellor of the Roman Church, which meant that he was second only to the Pope in the Church hierarchy. Pope Paul III showered his grandson with lucrative benefices and much of this income Alessandro dedicated to his commissions of works of art and architecture,

\(^{157}\) Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince...* op. cit., p. 108

\(^{158}\) Gigliola Fragnito, ‘Cardinals’ Courts in Sixteenth Century Rome’...op. cit., p. 42

\(^{159}\) idem, p. 40
while the court that he kept at the Cancelleria (the residence of the Vice-Chancellor of the Roman Church) was renowned for its grandezza. Pomp and magnificence were necessities to which a large portion of the College of Cardinals were merely resigned, while a far smaller number of Cardinals displayed magnificenza with conviction. Overall, the Cardinals’ magnificence was more a ‘duty’ than it was a ‘pleasure’.  

Although the papal subsidies alleviated the financial problems of the less wealthy Cardinals and permitted them a dignified life-style, their growing numbers eventually changed the concepts of magnificence and splendor that had been attached to the Cardinal's role during the Renaissance. The character of the Sacred College had changed profoundly since Pope Paul III in order to face the crisis initiated by the Protestant Reformation, giving ample weight to moral and intellectual qualities when selecting its candidates. Although an illustrious lifestyle continued to be expected from those who owed their entry into the College to the privilege of birth, others were expected to enhance the cardinalate with doctrine, virtues, and merit acquired through a brilliant career.

At the same time a more fully articulated conception of the grandezza of the Cardinal was developing: it was no longer linked to the splendor of his court alone but also to his patronage of sacred works of art and his charitable activities. Rome had responded to the Protestant Reformation by trying to improve the moral and intellectual quality of the members of the Sacred College. However, in accordance with a political and religious vision of the Church Triumphant, it refused the evangelic model of an unadorned church stripped bare to the essentials; the splendor and magnificence of the Roman courts was connected to that vision as well as to economic necessities. In relation to the requirements regarding the Cardinals’ lifestyle and courts, Clare Robertson drawing the parallels between Paolo Cortesi’s De Cardinalatu (1510) and the lifestyle of Alessandro suggests that Cortesi would

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161 Gigliola Fragnito, ‘Cardinals’ Courts in Sixteenth Century Rome’…op. cit., pp. 44-45

162 idem, p. 50

163 Paolo Cortesi’s De Cardinalatu was the humanist handbook of conduct, mode of life, political and ecclesiastical duties, etc. for the high established Ecclesiastics and aspiring prelate, which aimed to define the cardinal in humanistic terms and present him above all as a major patron of culture, rather than merely in terms of canon law and theology as most of the other fifteenth century writings on
have approved of the manner in which Alessandro lived, long before notions of austerity and spirituality had come to dominate the Roman curia. Robertson suggests that Alessandro in following Paolo Cortesi’s precepts appeared to be adhering to the ideals of an earlier generation and to be somewhat out of step with the prevailing attitudes of his own day.\footnote{Clare Robertson, \textit{Il Gran Cardinale. Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts}, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 14}

After discussing how Cardinals, their courts, and their patronage commissions were connected to the papal agenda and were meant to follow particular prerequisites pertinent to the papal politico-religious policy, we will look into Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court patronage and \textit{familia}, bringing in the historical examination of Mercuriale’s \textit{De arte gymnastica} Alessandro’s role as a Church ‘prince’ and patron.
2.2 Cardinal Alessandro Farnese as a patron: the changing patterns of his patronage and the Farnese familia

This part of the chapter attempts to place Alessandro’s court patronage and familia in the broader Roman context. It looks into the content of his patronage and its connection to the broader papal agenda as well as the connection of the Farnese court with other centres of intellectual activity in the city, through Alessandro’s patronage commissions and through the activities of the members of his familia. This part of the chapter tries to highlight the principal ideals, values, interests, motives (intellectual, moral, political and other) which defined Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s cultural-political agenda as a patron and which were shared by his familia; in this framework, it then draws the connections between Alessandro’s agenda and the *De arte gymnastica*.

Scholarly research has indicated a change in the pattern of Alessandro’s patronage identifying two distinct periods: before the Council of Trent and after its completion, that is before the 1550’s-1560’s and after the 1560s.\(^{165}\) This section of the chapter goes through both periods of Alessandro’s patronage so as to trace continuities and discontinuities in the transition from the first period to the second and to place the *De arte gymnastica* in the broader framework of Alessandro’s patronage. For this task the present study draws mainly from the work of Clare Robertson\(^ {166}\) as there is a historiographic gap regarding the historical investigation of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s patronage. Although Alessandro has been acknowledged in historiography as one of the greatest patrons of his time, his patronage has received limited treatment; only a number of his projects have been examined, however usually in isolation and not in the context of sixteenth-century Roman court patronage.

Clare Robertson approaches the artistic and architectural patronage of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in terms of ‘mecnatismo’ rather than ‘clientelismo’, as she notes, identifying Alessandro as one of the most magnificent and influential patrons in sixteenth-century Rome.\(^ {167}\) Even though Robertson’s work is not a complete account of Alessandro’s political, religious and diplomatic activities, as she admits,
nonetheless it offers an overview of the events of the Cardinal’s life and ecclesiastical career which had a significant bearing on his patronage. In these terms Robertson’s work offers valuable insights for the purposes of the present study. One crucial event was the Council of Trent which, causing a change in the patronage patterns in Rome, also bore implications for Alessandro’s patronage.

Before the 1560s Alessandro’s Counter-Reformation concerns were conversion, the overthrow of idolatry, and the return to the Golden Age as the major iconographic programmes –part of his public commissions- show, thus indicating a thematic continuity with the religious aspirations of Pope Paul III’s pontificate. This continuity is reinforced by the inspiration of these commissions by classical sources, which as a taste was far from the rigid, severe, attitudes of religious iconography expressed by some theologians who at the time insisted, for instance, on the use of the Bible as a source of iconography.168 Immediately after the Council of Trent the pattern of Alessandro’s patronage was marked by a sudden increase in the number of commissions for sacred works.

In the course of the 1560’s he initiated an impressive programme of ecclesiastical construction, renovation, and decoration; it is important to note that the restoration of the old churches and the building of new ones was an important part of the papal agenda in the post-Tridentine period. After the 1560s Alessandro’s contribution to the reform sought by the Roman Catholic Church was mainly through the embellishment of the churches he restored or built *di novo* and through his direct or indirect contribution to their building/restoration. After the 1560s the pattern of Alessandro’s commissions for sacred works (e.g the building or restoration of churches) manifests in the extensive ornamentation and restoration in combination with spiritual reform.169 The shift in Alessandro’s patronage pattern was accompanied, as his contemporaries observed, by an almost ostentatious increase in his piety.170 On some occasions it is apparent that he was performing his duty, partly at least, as the result of papal pressure.171

168 *idem*, p. 152
169 *idem*, p. 170
170 *idem*, p. 158
171 *idem*, p. 160
Overall according to Robertson Alessandro’s intentions as a patron appear in many respects to conform to those of the generation in pre-Sack Rome, and these ideals were evidently developed during his long ‘apprenticeship’ under his grandfather Pope Paul III. Robertson notes that there was a strong classical element in Alessandro’s education, which was to have a lasting effect throughout his life and which was a significant factor in forming a predominantly secular -and more specifically antique-orientation in much of his patronage.\textsuperscript{172} During the fifty years of Alessandro’s ecclesiastical career, his wealth allowed him to commission projects ranging from public and private buildings (such as the Farnese Villa at Caprarola and the church of the Gesù in Rome), to paintings of the highest quality from almost all the major artists that were active in Rome at the time. Furthermore, Alessandro maintained a library that included many valuable and rare manuscripts, a renowned \textit{studiolo} (a collection of miniatures, engraved gems, medals, coins, and other antique objects), and a notable collection of antique sculptures.\textsuperscript{173} Regarding his private artistic commissions Robertson notes that Alessandro was not particularly concerned whether the imagery, for instance, should be theologically correct; for him it was more important that the imagery revealed erudition.\textsuperscript{174}

The environment in which Alessandro grew up looked back to the ‘Golden Age’ before the sack of Rome and was very much one in which great men should be seen to be encouraging the arts, both for the public good and for personal \textit{magnificenza}.\textsuperscript{175} The concept of \textit{magnificenza} had long been important for Italian patrons and it justified their vast and conspicuous expenditure. Alessandro took over commissions for the sake of appearances or to enhance his own and his family’s magnificence or simply, as Robertson notes, because such a thing was expected from a man of his position. The great scale of these commissions recalls much the Cardinals of the earlier part of the sixteenth century and it very much accorded with Cortesi’s \textit{De cardinalatu}.\textsuperscript{176}

Over the long course of Alessandro’s ecclesiastic career the religious climate as well as the Cardinalate itself changed dramatically in response to the Protestant

\begin{footnotes}
\item[172] \textit{idem}, p. 10
\item[173] \textit{idem}, p. 2
\item[174] \textit{idem}, p. 158
\item[175] \textit{idem}, pp. 241-243
\item[176] \textit{idem}, p. 235
\end{footnotes}
Reformation, with the appointed reformers of the Roman Church stamping out the abuses (such as the pluralism of benefice holding by Churchmen) that had been severely criticised by the Protestants. Contemporary treatises on the Cardinalate consulted Cardinals to refrain from splendour and lavish lifestyle, and they reflect the new stricter and more austere attitudes that expressed concerns about the Cardinals’ religious and pastoral duties. However, Robertson notes, Alessandro’s power was such that he openly continued to hold multiple benefices and he managed to maintain his large court. Robertson suggests that the austerity imposed by the atmosphere of Counter-Reformation Rome must have been difficult for Alessandro to assume but by his unconstrained patronage he was able to promote his *magnificenza* in the style of the patrons to whom he looked back and to anticipate the extravagance of the early seventeenth-century popes.

The court of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese resembling the rest of sixteenth-century Roman courts constituted a centre of intellectual and cultural activity. In the framework of the politico-cultural agenda of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, as expressed through his patronage commissions, the humanist intellectuals that were members of his *familia* and his broader court played a crucial role. Scholars have shown that the strategies developed by some Cardinals (particularly those of the great families such as the Farnese) to attract erudite scholars, antiquaries, bibliophiles, librarians, artists, etc. to their courts, refer not only to a series of noble values; by attracting scholars the courts developed into centres of learning and culture and as such they made part of the Cardinals’ broader cultural and political programme.

In this regard, it is important to note that the erudite scholars in the Cardinals’ courts had secretarial, administrative duties, and they were also the Cardinals’ *consiglieri* (advisors, delegates) as well as the experts in organizing and supervising the programmes of the commissions ordered by the Cardinal. In these terms the Cardinal’s *consiglieri* played a crucial role in shaping the final outcome of the patronage commissions, sharing and conveying the Cardinal’s ideas, interests, values and tastes. These humanist intellectuals as experts in various fields of knowledge (such as history and antiquarianism) which served as sources for artistic and

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177 *idem*, pp. 10-11
178 *idem*, p. 243
179 Jean Boutier, Marin Brigitte Marin et Antonella Romano (eds.), *Naples, Rome, Florence...* op. cit., p. 193
architectural commissions, would supervise the work of the artists, architects, etc. who were employed by the patron, as it was of principal importance to make sure that the works were executed in the most ‘correct’ way as possible in terms of following all indications provided by the sources that were deployed for inspiration. These sources were classical authors, works of early medieval mythographers, encyclopaedias, antiquarian objects, etc. It was entirely possible and common that the artists would turn to humanist scholars for advice and that on certain occasions they would even collaborate with them in the framework of such artistic programmes. In this Cardinal Alessandro Farnese acted no differently from the other patrons of his time. In the collaborations for the drawing of the iconographic programmes and generally in the supervision of the commissions we can locate contemporary ruling criteria for the evaluation of the artistic and architecture works and the principles and values (artistic, moral and cultural) that these works meant to convey.180

At the Farnese court at all times we find renowned humanist scholars (notably historians and antiquarians) and several artists and architects. In the Farnese circle we find the poet Annibale Caro (1507-1566), the poet, orator and antiquarian Bernardino Maffei (1514-1549), the historian Paolo Giovio (1483-1552), the scholar, philologist, literary critic, and poet Claudio Tolomei (1492-1556), the antiquarian, bibliophile and epigrapher Fulvio Orsini (1529-1600), and other erudite scholars. The Cardinal always encouraged writers and antiquarian scholars; Onofrio Panvinio (1530-1568) distinguished above all as an ecclesiastical historian, antiquarian and epigrapher, was given a monthly stipend as well as an artist and servants to support his archaeological work. Alessandro had also employed Pirro Ligorio for his antiquarian skills, and in 1567 he bought Ligorio’s collection of books and medals. These scholars were highly educated and erudite men, particularly qualified for their artistic tasks, for their interest in the visual arts, and for their connections with notable artists and architects. In a similar way it was Mercuriale’s erudition and scholarly repute that initially brought him to Rome and later into Alessandro’s familia. Apart from providing his medical service to the Cardinal, Mercuriale was also a supplier of codices for the Cardinal and his delegates.181

180 See Clare Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale…cit, p. 208
181 See Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, edizione critica…op. cit., p. 885
Alessandro’s commissions before and after Trent

Overall, the first period (until the 1550s-1560s) of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s patronage was characterised by its highly secular and antiquarian propensities, contrasting with the more severe, reforming, qualities of many members of the papal court. More in particular, in the period before the council of Trent, Alessandro’s religious commissions were remarkably few in number. By contrast, he was commissioning numerous decorative works and monumental secular works. During the 1530’s and the 1540’s Alessandro was involved primarily with the political rather than the doctrinal aspects of the Counter-Reformation.

According to Clare Robertson the most influential figures in Alessandro’s career as a patron were Paolo Giovio, Annibale Caro, Onofrio Panvinio, and Fulvio Orsini who was also one of Mercuriale’s closest acquaintances in Rome. Each of the periods of Alessandro’s patronage had different styles, coinciding more or less with the tastes and interests of the advisors that controlled them: Annibale Caro and Fulvio Orsini are the two crucial figures of the Farnese familia that marked the two distinct periods of Alessandro’s career as a patron. According to P. Hurtubise “souci, très répandu chez des grandes personnages de l’époque, de traiter leurs familiers comme ils s’étaient une extension d’eux-mêmes, un prolongement de leur propre famille selon le sang”.

In these terms, it would be useful to go through the work of the most important of the Alessandro’s consiglieri, members of his familia, so as to have an image on the principles, values, strategies, and sources behind the patronage commissions in which the consiglieri were involved, and then highlight the relevant connections with Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica.

In the iconographic programmes of Paolo Giovio we find that preference was given to historical subjects that reflected the historical, emblematic, and literary interests expressed also in Giovio’s writings. The topics were derived from and rested on ‘correct’ interpretations of the ancient world through the study of its textual and its physical remains. The insistence on the superiority of the written word and the synergy between image and word were raised as additional concerns for the iconographers.

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182 Clare Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale…op. cit., p. 216
183 idem, p. 151
This is why Giovio was usually reluctant to allow the visual image to stand on its own, insisting that it should be accompanied by a text; thus in his iconographic programmes we find paintings that were accompanied by inscriptions.185 From Paolo Giovio we pass to Annibale Caro. Caro’s involvement in the Cardinal’s projects shows that he was inspired in his programme by the classical era, while his sources were not only the classical authors but also collections of myths and antiquarian objects. Caro emphasized particularly the importance of research to ensure that the depictions were classically ‘correct’ and that they contributed to a coherent scheme without repetitions; on particular occasions he rejected suggestions because he considered them to be ambiguous and open to misinterpretation.186

According to Clare Robertson, the Council of Trent, among other external historical circumstances, had a considerable impact on the patterns and types of Alessandro’s patronage commissions. Robertson notes that the second period of the Cardinal’s patronage is marked by a change, due to his effort to respond to the post-Tridentine demands and attitudes. Interestingly, Robertson notes, the real expansion in his secular commissions coincided with the even greater burgeoning of his public religious patronage. In the latter case the patronage pattern seems to be governed by a much more delicate politico-religious programme, which was entirely absent from the secular commissions of the previous phase of his patronage that were largely devoted to the construction of places of pleasure and leisure decorated with erudite all’antica imagery.187

The council of Trent coincided with the transfer of the control over Alessandro’s commissions from Caro to Orsini.188 Mercuriale arrived in Rome in 1562 and in around 1565 Caro retired from the Farnese court; Fulvio Orsini took over his duties as the Cardinal’s chief artistic mentor. Orsini was a distinguished epigrapher and bibliophile, also interested in classical portraiture and iconography, as well as a numismatics expert like Caro. Orsini gave particular attention to classical detail and antique visual precedents. It appears that he followed fairly standard practices in devising iconographic programmes deploying recherché myths (mostly moralizing myths conveying some kind of exemplum), devising as well combinations of rare

185 Clare Robertson, Il Gran Cardinale… op. cit., pp. 213-214
186 idem, p. 218
187 idem, p. 148
188 idem, pp. 215-216
mythological subjects based on a rather obvious concetto (concept) that was chosen for the sake of decorum.\textsuperscript{189}

From the mid 1550’s Alessandro began to build on a spectacular scale perhaps feeling the need to reassert both his family’s and moreover his own position. Initially his commissions were largely secular. Vast sums of money were poured into the building and decoration of the Farnese villa at Caprarola, and into gardens, castles and villas, all acquired as places of leisure. Meanwhile Alessandro continued to collect miniatures, gems and goldsmiths’ work. However, in around 1560 the religious climate of Rome changed considerably; a systematic reform had been initiated by Paul IV (1555-9) and was energetically taken over by his successor Pius IV (1559-65) and later by Pius V (1566-1572). Under the circumstances as shaped particularly after the end of the Council of Trent ostentatious display through artistic and architectural patronage on behalf of the spiritual leaders of the Church was considered less appropriate than during the early years of the sixteenth century.

In these terms Cardinal Alessandro Farnese too had to adapt to the new demands; Pope Pius V clearly felt that Alessandro, having such a prominent position, should set an example for the rest of the Cardinals.\textsuperscript{190} Alessandro’s adaptation to the religious and spiritual crisis was expressed through a change in his public commissions, which in this period became predominantly religious with the building of new churches and the restoration of the city’s old churches.\textsuperscript{191} From the 1560’s onwards under the Counter-Reformation pressure, and perhaps also motivated by his increased desire for the papal tiara, Alessandro started to emerge as a patron of religious buildings and paintings. From this point until the end of his life his patronage grew in scale and ambition with secular projects (e.g. the Farnese Gardens and the completion of the family palace) commissioned along the ever increasing number of commissions of sacred works.\textsuperscript{192}

However, Alessandro had not lost his interest in antiquity, which found a way of expression in the renovation of medieval churches, anticipating in some respect the

\textsuperscript{189} \textit{idem}, pp. 228-229
\textsuperscript{190} \textit{idem}, p. 160
\textsuperscript{191} \textit{idem}, p. 235
\textsuperscript{192} \textit{idem}, p. 234
interest in the early Christian Church. This was an aspect of late sixteenth-century Roman antiquarianism that was fostered in the religious climate of the Counter-Reformation; as the remains of pagan antiquity became increasingly incompatible with the religious climate of Counter-Reformation Rome the focus shifted in the intensive investigation and description of the physical remains of early Christian Rome, the vitae of early Roman saints and martyrs, and the narrative of early Roman ecclesiastical history.

The renovation of the churches was a part of Pope Pius IV’s agenda; with the election of Pius in 1559 Cardinal Vicar of Rome Giacomo Savelli after receiving new powers initiated visits to the city’s churches in order to supervise their physical and spiritual repair: the administration, restoration, and performance of divine worship. Two years later the Pope had accomplished extensive restoration to numerous churches and he urged the Cardinals to do the same with their titular churches. From about 1563, when the council of Trent was close to its ending, Alessandro was making changes to the churches over which he had jurisdiction and he repeatedly referred to the need to implement the decrees of Trent and to be seen as setting an example. He ordered all the churches and the religious foundations under his jurisdiction to be inspected and many reports testify to the numerous ‘disorders’ found. His instructions to his agents demonstrate his anxiety not only to implement the decrees of Trent but also to avoid any sort of scandal and to resolve the abuses in the light of the Council of Trent. Among the agents employed by Alessandro for the supervision of the spiritual welfare of the churches and monasteries under his jurisdiction we find many Jesuits.

In 1564, after some thirty years as a Cardinal in minor orders, Alessandro was ordained as a priest and at the same time he was consecrated as a bishop. This new piety coincides with the development of a close relationship with the Jesuit Order. In fact, the Farnese family had been encouraging the Society of Jesus since 1539 when Paul III had authorised his benefices in Rome and elsewhere. In 1564 he played an instrumental role in the founding of a Jesuit college at Avignon, of which he was an Archbishop. Alessandro’s support of the Jesuit Order is most conspicuously

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193 *idem*, p. 170
194 Nancy Siraisi, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions*…op. cit., p. 171
demonstrated by his building for the Order the largest church to be built in Rome since the sack, the Gesù. His association with the Jesuits continued until his death.\textsuperscript{196}

In the climate of the flourishing of the sacred art and the renewal of religious patronage which had grown out of the demands for reform and were culminated in the recommendations of the council of Trent that engendered a new spirituality throughout Italy, the church of the Gesù was considered to embody all the features that are regarded as characteristic of a Counter-Reformation Church, providing a model for future churches and a pattern for Jesuits’ churches all over the world.\textsuperscript{197}

Such characteristics include the architectural design, which emphasizes the liturgical functions of the different spaces, and the large number of side chapels provided so that many masses can be celebrated at the same time, implying the Tridentine emphasis on the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{198} The architecture of the Gesù also indicates Alessandro’s architectural taste during this period: austere and simple, but also imposing and grandiose.\textsuperscript{199}

This change in Alessandro’s patronage pattern, which was noted by his contemporaries who expressed their surprise at the Cardinal’s newfound piety, should encourage us to examine the general context of post-Tridentine Rome and Alessandro’s motives as a patron. In this respect Clare Robertson suggests that the enthusiastic promotion of Counter-Reformation values was only one of Alessandro’s several priorities: she suggests that his quest for the papal tiara was of greater importance, that it was the result of the pressure from the reigning pope to perform his duties, and a desire for conspicuous display.\textsuperscript{200} Nonetheless, Robertson notes that quite apart from the external influences Alessandro himself gives the impression of having become more pious around this time, although, the extent to which this was a public façade rather than a genuine upturn in his spirituality is open to question. Robertson suggests that regardless of whether we are convinced by Alessandro’s -

\textsuperscript{196} Clare Robertson, \textit{Il Gran Cardinale…} op. cit., pp. 161-162; on the Church of the Gesù also see Clare Robertson, ‘Two Farnese Cardinals and the question of the Jesuit Taste’ in John W. O’Malley, S.J. Gauvin Alexander Bailey, Steven J. Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy (eds.), \textit{The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773}, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999)

\textsuperscript{197} Clare Robertson, \textit{Il Gran Cardinale…} op. cit. p. 181

\textsuperscript{198} \textit{idem}, p. 181

\textsuperscript{199} \textit{idem}, p. 194

\textsuperscript{200} \textit{idem}, p. 151
almost overnight- conversion in 1564, during the last decade of his career there is
evidence supporting his genuine spirituality.\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{201} idem, p. 162
2.3 The De arte gymnastica as a product of Alessandro’s court-patronage

2.3.1 Mercuriale’s medical discourse within Alessandro’s familia

The cardinals’ courts were unique centres of cultural aggregation and scientific exchange. Being a member of the patron’s familia gave the court-physician the advantage to be actively engaged in the cultural, intellectual, and scientific pursuits of the court. The court-physician was part of the ‘fixed’ members of the patron’s familia and had a more intimate and direct contact with the patron because of the specific features of the doctor-patient relationship. In addition, the court-physician also had access to his patron’s personal library, collections of manuscripts, antiques, etc. In these terms being a member of a patron’s familia was an advantage that could contribute decisively in the composition of the court-physician’s writings. The present study suggests that in Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica we find that the cultural and intellectual tastes and motives of the first period (that is before the Council of Trent) of Alessandro’s patronage are combined with the religious and moral aspirations, concerns, and demands that emerged in the second period (after the Council of Trent) of Alessandro’s patronage. For now, this section of the chapter briefly points out aspects of the De arte gymnastica that show that Mercuriale’s medical discourse was shaped according to the principles, values, and concerns of his patron’s cultural and political-religious programme as previously discussed.

Looking into both periods of Alessandro’s patronage we can mark a series of features that were common to his most significant advisors in terms of their interests and concerns in the range of their duties: the insistence on the use of historical subjects, the use of historical and antiquarian sources, the emphasis on the ‘correct’ interpretation of the ancient world, the attention paid to matters of decorum. The frequent use of historical subjects and antiquarian objects in the commissions of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese was not only a way to merely record past exploits but also to provide moral exempla, resembling in this way the use of ancient history in many of the Cinquecento fresco cycles. At the same time historical storie and antiquarian knowledge were used as the means to ensure the historical accuracy in the

202 Elisa Andreta, Roma medica…op. cit., p. 203; P. Hurtubise, ‘Familiarité’…op. cit., p. 341
203 idem, p. 206
As far as *decorum* is concerned, according to Robertson, it was the standard principle around which a humanist’s iconographic programme was meant to be organized. Robertson gives two examples that indicate the pertinence of this issue in Alessandro’s commissions: first, the incidence when Paolo Giovio prevented Vasari from painting the personification of the Vatican completely nude, after the negative reaction of Alessandro’s *majordomo*, Curzio Frangipane; second, the incidence when suggesting suitable personifications for the tomb of Paul III, Annibale Caro rejected a number of proposals on grounds of *decorum*, judging them to be ‘neither ecclesiastical nor moral’. Furthermore, the texts that have survived from Caro’s programmes for two rooms at villa Caprarola demonstrate how the *concetto* had been chosen according to the principle of *decorum* in terms of reflecting the appropriate function of the room: images regarding sleep were chosen for the bedroom and contemplative solitude for the study room.

As already noted Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and his *familia* shared a passion for antiquity and antiquarian studies. However the religious climate of the mid sixteenth-century, particularly in the reigns of Paul IV (pope from 1555 until 1559) and Pius V (pope from 1566 until 1572), was less favourable to humanistic studies of classical antiquity in Rome. The collections of pagan antiquities by churchmen -notably by Cardinals- engendered severe criticism and Pius V appeared keen to remove all the pagan deities that he thought were defiling the Vatican palaces. Unlike some of his contemporaries who considered some kinds of interest in antiquity unacceptable in the papal city, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese continued to collect antique sculptures on a grand scale and maintained his passion for antiquity throughout his life and ecclesiastical career.

Orsini was an impassioned collector and scholar of antiquities and in the service of Alessandro he also took over the curatorship of his antiquities collection after the retirement of Caro. Orsini’s interests were more narrowly antiquarian than Caro’s and he was particularly keen on the minor arts, a taste that accorded well with that of his patron. Robertson notes that partly as a result of Orsini’s influence we find

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204 Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*...op. cit., p. 213
205 *idem*, p. 23
206 *idem*, p. 212
207 *idem*, p. 217
208 *idem*, p. 218
209 *idem*, p. 204
Alessandro collecting considerably older authors and antiquities, although not at the expense of new commissions.\textsuperscript{210} Orsini was greatly concerned with the ordering of the Cardinal’s \textit{studiolo} in which small objects were displayed. The creation of an \textit{antiquario} in the Palazzo Farnese was planned in 1566 most likely at Orsini’s behest. In the \textit{antiquario} the Cardinal desired to have his collection arranged in such a way that it could be accessible to visiting scholars, as a ‘\textit{scuola publica}’.\textsuperscript{211} It has been suggested that behind some changes that rendered visiting scholars’ access to some private collections in Rome more selective, systematic, and controlled there was the desire to counter criticism against the interest in antiquity.\textsuperscript{212} Last but not least a useful point to make is that Orsini had common interests with Pirro Ligorio and he recommended Ligorio strongly to Alessandro Farnese as the successor to his architect Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola (1507-1573). However, Orsini was not successful in this and at the time of Ligorio’s departure from the city of Rome he lamented ‘\textit{if we lose Pirro from Rome, little more will remain there}’; Orsini claimed that antiquarian studies in Rome would come to an end if Ligorio should leave and that the old Farnese coterie of antiquarians would certainly wither through death, dispersal, and inactivity.\textsuperscript{213}

The intellectual interests, concerns, motives, and methods of Mercuriale’s fellow-humanists in the Farnese \textit{familia} and the \textit{academici sdegnati} are evident in the \textit{De arte gymnastica} as they make part of Mercuriale’s medical epistemology; at the same time it appears that he also shared the intellectual motives and concerns that were raised in the Farnese circle. In particular, Mercuriale’s principal aim and motive in the \textit{De arte gymnastica} is the ‘correct’ interpretation of the ancient world through the study of both its textual and material remains, giving primacy to the written word; as already noted in Chapter 1 of this study Mercuriale in his \textit{De arte gymnastica} aims for the recovery of what he calls the ‘true’ art of the ancient gymnastics. For this purpose Mercuriale emphasizes the importance of research, bringing together numerous branches of knowledge so as to achieve the ‘correct’ recovery of the ancient past, using at the same time his philological skills to treat textual ambiguities and support

\textsuperscript{210} \textit{idem}, pp. 223-224  
\textsuperscript{211} \textit{idem}, p. 224  
\textsuperscript{212} Nancy Siraisi, \textit{History, Medicine, and the Traditions}…cit, p. 170  
an argument. Erudition makes part of Mercuriale’s medical epistemology, his effort to recover the ‘medical gymnastics’ as the ‘true’ *ars gymnastica*, a medical art in its own right.

In the framework of Mercuriale’s epistemology *historia* and antiquarian knowledge find extensive use. Mercuriale uses historical and antiquarian knowledge so as to achieve accuracy in the recovery of the ‘true’ ancient world. In particular he deploys historical *storiae* and antiquarian sources in terms of an observational and experimental approach to the ancient practice and experience, arguing through the Greco-Roman past for the ‘true’ art of gymnastics and the beneficial effects of exercise. However, as he constantly marks quoting Galen, it is the combination of ‘*ratio et experientia*’ (reason and experience) that leads to the ‘true’ knowledge of things: Mercuriale highlights the importance of the material remains of the ancient past, however, he emphasizes the superiority of the written word, thus the antiquarian sources are always interpreted within the context of the textual sources. Here it is important to note that sixteenth-century scientific references to ‘experience’ (*experientil, experimentum*) could still be referring to assertions found in the ancient texts, disregarding at the same time the uprising empiricism and its view of sensory, first-hand experience as the ultimate source of knowledge.

Mercuriale’s conviction regarding the primacy of the written word over the physical remains as sources becomes evident particularly in the historical examination of the visual imagery of the *De arte gymnastica*. As will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this study in Mercuriale’s medical discourse the written word is considered superior to the images as well as to the antiquarian objects that the images were meant to represent/reproduce. In addition what becomes evident in the historical examination of the visual imagery of the *De arte gymnastica* is Mercuriale’s concern regarding the synergy between the text and the image, which was shared by the members of the Farnese circle. As we shall see in the relevant chapter of this study in Mercuriale’s medical discourse the image compliments the text and it serves the textual argument, rather than the other way round as was the case in other sixteenth-century scientific
Another expression of the interest in antiquity that was shared by Alessandro and his familia was the particular interest in the Vitruvian studies. The Cardinal and his circle maintained regular contact with the members of the Accademia della Virtù (or Accademia Vitruviana); Annibale Caro and Alessandro’s architect Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola were both members of the Accademia Vitruviana. The Accademia degli Sdegnati, founded in Rome in 1541 by the polygraph and cartographer Girolamo Ruscelli (1518-1566), is another academy in which we find Mercuriale along with other members of the Farnese familia and the broader Farnese circle such as Onofrio Panvinio, Ottavio Pantagatho, and Pirro Ligorio; in fact, Pirro Ligorio was the major antiquarian of this academy. Ginette Vagenheim has formed the hypothesis that the Accademia degli Sdegnati was initially founded with the aim to conclude the project of Claudio Tolomei for the Accademia Vitruviana. The first part of the programme on Vitruvian studies was already completed by 1545 when Tolomei left Rome; the second part, which was focused on the studies of the antiquitates of Rome, according to Vagenheim was taken up by the members of the Accademia degli Sdegnati who resided in Rome. According to Vagenheim the results of the studies were collected in Pirro Ligorio’s treatise Antichità romane. Vagenheim suggests that the designs for Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica were initially conceptualized in Rome within the academy and they were based on archaeological findings and textual sources; the designs were later elaborated by Ligorio and Mercuriale during their staying in Padua in anticipation of the second edition of Mercuriale’s book.215

Mercuriale’s interests -as a member of the Farnese familia and as member of the Accademia degli Sdegnati- in antiquity, architecture, and the Vitruvian studies are combined in the description of the ancient gymnasium (in Greek) or palaestra (in Latin). In Mercuriale’s endeavour to recover the ‘true’ art of gymnastics the recovery of the physical space of the ancient gymnasium and its description are raised as

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necessary since the place in which gymnastics was practiced makes part of Mercuriale’s definition of ‘true’ gymnastics. In particular Mercuriale in Book I, Chapter V, Quo tempore et quo pacto coeperit gymnastica (‘When and how gymnastics begun’) notes that ‘finally it [the art of gymnastics] came to deserve in truth the name of gymnastics once it had moved to gymnasia and to specific places designed for the purpose of training the young, protecting everyone’s health and acquiring a sound constitution’.216 For the description of the ancient Greek gymnasium in particular, Mercuriale draws from Vitruvius’ De architectura Libri X (The ten books on architecture). In Book I, Chapter VI, De gymnasiis antiquorum (‘The gymnasia of antiquity’) Mercuriale provides a description of the ancient gymnasium according to Book V, Chapter XI, ‘On the palaestra’ of Vitruvius’ De architectura, based on the ‘correct’ interpretation provided by a member of the Accademia degli Sdegnati: the humanist scholar, ecclesiastical historian and antiquarian Ottavio Pantagatho (1464-1567) – a ‘most pious and learned men’ Mercuriale marks.217

With regard to Mercuriale’s epistemology and his use of the authority of Vitruvius it is worth noting that Mercuriale rests on Vitruvius only as far as the description of the ancient Greek gymnasium is concerned. Mercuriale marks that Vitruvius discussed only the Greek gymnasia as in his time Romans had not yet started to build their own. Mercuriale notes that the palaestrae that were built later by the Romans were much similar to the Greek gymnasia and it is likely that Romans added many sections to the Greek gymnasium –as it happens with later generations that try to perfect things, Mercuriale marks- that were either unknown to the Greeks or had been poorly esteemed by them. Thus, Mercuriale notes that in his discussion of the parts of the Roman palaestra he also deploys other authorities (Galen, Celsus, Pliny, the Elder, Pliny the Younger, Plutarch, Seneca, Aristotle, Martial, etc.). However, the use of other authorities is also due to the fact that Mercuriale up to a certain extent questions the authority of Vitruvius; Mercuriale marks ‘I have never rated Vitruvius’ authority so highly, been convinced that he was a sensationalist and very little appreciated in

217 idem, p. 4
his own times’ advising at the same time ‘great caution about his reputation’ to his readers.\textsuperscript{218}

Mercuriale gives considerable importance to the space of the ancient Greek gymnasium and the Roman palaestra, dedicating four out of the fifteenth chapters of Book I to their recovery-description: Chapter VI, \textit{De gymnasiis antiquorum} (‘The gymnasia of antiquity’), Chapter VIII, \textit{De gymnasiorum diversis partibus} (‘The various parts of the gymnasium), Chapter IX, \textit{De palaestra et alliis gymnasiis partibus} (‘The palaestra and other parts of the gymnasium’), Chapter X, \textit{De balneis gymnasiorum atque etiam de stadio} (‘The Baths of the gymnasium and also the running truck’). As noted previously, in the first edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} Mercuriale informs the reader that the interpretation of Vitruvius’ text was based on the conclusions of Ottavio Pantagatho. In the second edition of the book Mercuriale writes that he provides an emended and rearranged description of the ancient gymnasium noting that ‘having thought it over carefully, as usual second thoughts are better than first, we present a more correct description, which corresponds exactly to all the words of Vitruvius’. In 1573, when the second edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} was published Mercuriale was in Padua and this time for the interpretation of Vitruvius he received help from the following scholars: the diplomat, doge in Venice and antiquities scholar Alvise Mocenigo (1507-1577), the German physician and botanist Melchior Guilandino (1520-1589), the humanist botanist, bibliophile and collector of scientific instruments Gian Vicenzo Pinelli (1535-1601) - ‘men of sharp discernment in all matters and most highly esteemed by everyone for their singular erudition’ Mercuriale notes- and the contemporary expert in Vitruvius’ work, the architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), ‘the greatest expert in the whole field of ancient architecture’, Mercuriale marks.\textsuperscript{219} While in the first edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} Mercuriale included a ground plan of an ancient gymnasium based on the textual description drawn from Vitruvius in the second edition of the book he

\textsuperscript{218} \textit{idem}, p. 63. Here it is worth noting that in the original text Mercuriale refers to Vitruvius using the Greek word ‘παραδοξολόγος’ (‘paradoxologos’, i.e. the one who tells paradoxical, odd things, stories, etc.) which implied particular philosophical doctrines. Vivian Nutton translates the word ‘παραδοξολόγος’ as ‘sensationalist’ in the English edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica}, which in philosophical terms describes the doctrine according to which sensation, the senses is the only the source of knowledge; however the present study is not sure whether this term interprets correctly the original term used by Mercuriale.

\textsuperscript{219} \textit{idem}, p. 51
includes two such ground plans noting that ‘I include two drawings because the author tells us it could be both square and oblong’.\textsuperscript{220}

In the framework of the recovery of the physical space of the ancient gymnasium we can see that Mercuriale shared his patron’s antiquarian interests and his patron’s concerns and motives as they emerged in the post-Tridentine period. On the one hand Mercuriale marks the greatness and the splendour of the city of ancient Rome; inspired by the physical remains he highlights the magnificence of the Roman antiquity noting that ‘the extent to which all others of this kind, in both the magnificence and the sheer beauty of their construction is easily proved from those famous ruins of the Baths, which have remained to this very day a source of universal wonder, to say nothing of Nero’s gymnasium’.\textsuperscript{221} On the other hand Mercuriale’s concern is to shape the gymnasium as a physical space of decorous nature. In this regard he points out that the gymnasium was so large and had such a great extent and capacity so as allow to the people who attended it to practice without any hindrance numerous exercises of diverse types for both the body and the mind, as one can easily tell from Vitruvius’ text Mercuriale notes;\textsuperscript{222} in parallel, the ‘exercise’ of the mind through reading, discussing, arguing, listening to orators within specific spaces in the gymnasium is something that Mercuriale repeats throughout the description of the physical space of the gymnasium and the palaestra.

Furthermore, in the framework of the recovery of the physical space of the gymnasium in architectural terms Mercuriale raises also moral issues and issues of decorum. In the chapters where Mercuriale describes analytically the different parts of the physical space of the gymnasium we see that he insists on describing the proper use, purpose, function of each part of the gymnasium, and the specific activities that were meant to take place in each part of the gymnasium; he also explains how the architecture of each part facilitated the physical activity taking place there (e.g. the places suitable for exercise in the winter and in the summer) and he gives particular attention in explaining how the architectural structure of the baths served the practice of bathing. In the context of discussing the proper, correct use of each part of the physical space of the gymnasium Mercuriale raises issues of decorous and moral

\textsuperscript{220} \textit{idem}, p. 51
\textsuperscript{221} \textit{idem}, p. 49
\textsuperscript{222} \textit{idem}, p. 50
conduct in the space of the gymnasium, indicating and criticising the ‘indecorous’, ‘im proper’ activities taking place in the gymnasium (such as re-anointing after exercising and bathing with perfumed oils, mixed bathing, forbidden encounters between men and young boys). As will be discussed in the following chapters of this study, in Mercuriale’s medical discourse the interest in ancient architecture and in particular the use of Vitruvius’ work (which bore a set of moral values and principles in its own right) serve the recovery of the physical space of the ancient gymnasium (or palaestra) not only in architectural terms but also in terms of decorum; subsequently, it enhances Mercuriale’s effort to shape his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a decorous method of medical treatment.

Mercuriale was renowned as a pious and devoted Catholic and as we shall see in the following chapters of this study in his medical discourse he shares the Tridentine religious and moral concerns for lack of moderation, spirituality, morality, decorum, and the concern for the indulgence in ‘worldly’ practices for which the Roman Catholic clergy was being criticised by the Protestants. As will be discussed in the following chapters of the present study the medical nature, value, and efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ are essentially shaped around the above principles: the control of both body and soul, the domination of rationality, the promotion of moderation, order, and decorum are all essential qualities of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment. At the same time these religious principles and moral values constitute the conditions under which the ‘medical exercises’ should be practiced so as to have beneficial results to both body and soul.

Matters of decorum are constantly raised throughout the De arte gymnastica. Mercuriale raises and tackles a series of ‘scandalous’ issues: nudity, homosexuality, lack of decorum in the practice of ‘exercise’ (in ancient as well as contemporary times), and mere physical pleasure are some of the issues that Mercuriale criticizes, indicating at the same time to his readers the ‘proper’, decorous practice of ‘exercise’ in terms of manners, conduct, and purpose. In the context of decorum Mercuriale also condemns ‘exercises’ such as the ancient gladiatorial fights and the contemporary duel (which he identifies with the ancient gladiatorial fights) as brutal, violent and evil raising in this way also issues of religious piety. In the endeavour to shape the decorum of his ‘medical gymnastics’, Mercuriale deploys historical and philosophical sources which present the ancient exemplum to the reader: there are many instances in
the text –as we will see in the following chapters of the study- in which the model of the ancient practice of ‘exercise’ is presented to his audience as ‘exemplary’ of the proper ways of ‘exercise’ in terms of morals and decorum. In these terms, as we shall see, in Mercuriale’s medical discourse history serves also in providing the ancient exemplum as a practical guide for the practice of ‘exercise’ in terms of manners of conduct. Mercuriale is criticising the way contemporary physical activities/practices are practiced and through the historical past he offers a model of conduct of ‘exercise’; his emphasis on the ancient exemplum is due to the fact that he considers that the way ‘exercise’ is performed is decisive in determining both its medical nature and value (for both the body and the soul). In these terms in Mercuriale’s medical discourse pagan antiquity appears to be compatible with the religious climate in Counter-Reformation Rome, favouring the ‘reform’ of modern ‘exercise’ according to the ancient example.

The iconographic programme of the De arte gymnastica through the addition as well as the absence -or omission- of images also serves issues of decorum and religious piety. Two examples should be noted in this respect. In the second edition of the De arte gymnastica (Venice, 1573) in Book I, Chapter XI, De accubitus in cena antiquorum et semel dumtaxat in die cenandi consuetudinis origine (‘Reclining at dinner in antiquity and the origin of the custom of dining once a day’) Mercuriale, discussing the triclinium controversy added an image that represented the ancient custom of reclining at dinner (accubitus). Jean-Michel Agasse discussing the image finds that Mercuriale ‘is entering fully into the post-Tridentine spirit’. Agasse suggests that Mercuriale’s attempt to ‘correct’ the misconceptions of ‘ignorant painters’ –as Mercuriale notes- is to be interpreted in the framework of the Church’s desire, in the wake of the Council of Trent, to exercise tighter control over the religious iconography. It is in the same context of religious piety and post-Tridentine propaganda that Ginette Vagenheim has interpreted Mercuriale’s decision not to include a drawing of two ancient gladiators fighting, which Pirro Ligorio had prepared for Mercuriale. Vagenheim, connecting the drawing of the gladiatorial fight with the triclinium controversy, notes that ‘L’Eglise tridentine, qui le cas échéant

223 On the importance of the absence and/or the omission of images or of scenes in images illustrating texts see Peter Burke, Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence, (London: Reaktion Books, 2001)
224 For the triclinium controversy see Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica Edizione critica…op. cit. pp. 1024-1036
In the Appendix\textsuperscript{226} added to the 1601 edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} in Book I, Chapter XI, \textit{De accubitus in cena antiquorum et semel dumtaxat in die cenandi consuetudinis origine} (‘Reclining at dinner in antiquity and the origin of the custom of dining once a day’) Mercuriale –following his patron- informs the readers of his fondness for the Jesuits; the Jesuits were eager to include the body in their educational programme following in this their founder Ignatius Loyola who had indicated that physical exercises and games can make part of an educational strategy. Mercuriale remarks upon how much he enjoyed the company of the ‘most learned Jesuits’ and he refers to three Jesuits of Spanish origin –‘remarkable for their gravity as for their knowledge’ according to Mercuriale- who were active in Rome during his time in the city: Juan Maldonado and Francisco Toledo (ordained a Cardinal in 1593) and Alfonso Salmerón -‘a man of great wisdom and exceptional knowledge’ Mercuriale marks. He notes their important contribution to the \textit{triclinium} controversy and that they shared his opinions on the matter.\textsuperscript{227} The Appendix concludes with Mercuriale praising the great knowledge that supposedly characterised the members of the Order: ‘[...] for it is the mark of the Jesuits in every discipline, indeed in the whole world of affairs both human and divine, that one can never find a topic so rare, unusual and recherché that has not been perfectly worked on by one of their members and handed down most happily to posterity’.\textsuperscript{228}


\textsuperscript{226} Appendix ad caput antecedentes, ubi iterum de accubitu, triclinio et de Mariae Magdalenae historia tractatur (‘Appendix to the previous chapter, dealing again with reclining, the triclinium and the story of Mary Magdalene’)

\textsuperscript{227} \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, edizione critica...op. cit., pp. 1030-1032

\textsuperscript{228} idem, p. 157
2.3.2 Mercuriale’s medical discourse within ‘vita aulica’

From the fourteenth century onwards there was a growing medical interest in *vita aulica* (court life), which by Mercuriale’s time had become an object of medical gaze; according to Marilyn Nicoud ‘*la cour s’y affirme […] l’un des lieux privilégiés de cette [diététique] écriture, comme elle l’est du rest de l’ensemble des productions intellectuelles est plus spécifiquement scientifique*’.²²⁹ Life at court had been a conventional subject also for moral criticism since the twelfth century, and the physicians’ interest in court lifestyle in the broader framework of the medical interest in people’s lifestyles increased as the morally based critique of court life hardened during the sixteenth century.²³⁰

This section of the chapter wishes to bring into the historical examination of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* two parameters that have not yet been addressed by scholars: i) the court of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese apart from constituting a think tank of medical savoir for the compilation of the *De arte gymnastica* constituted also a space of medical practice in which Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ was shaped and which it primarily addressed as a method of medical treatment; ii) Cardinal Alessandro Farnese apart form Mercuriale’s patron was also his patient; his corporeality as a ‘prince’ of the Church raised a series of implications that should be considered in relation to Mercuriale’s medical discourse. By taking into consideration these two parameters this section of the chapter attempts to look into a series of issues that were raised in the framework of sixteenth-century court medicine -in particular court medicine in the Roman context- and highlight the relevant connections with Mercuriale’s medical discourse.

In the historical examination of the *De arte gymnastica* we cannot overlook Mercuriale’s post as a court-physician; it is crucial to connect the *De arte gymnastica* with Mercuriale’s duties as Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s personal physician. The court-physician operated on both the preventive and therapeutic level of medicine; he

²²⁹ Marilyn Nicoud, *Les régimes de santé…* op. cit., p. 395
was expected to prescribe and supervise on a daily basis his patron’s *regimen*, intervene in the case of illness with an appropriate treatment, and provide his medical services to his patron’s *familia*. However, we should take into consideration that in comparison to the courts in other cities the Roman courts were idiosyncratic in several aspects, thus bearing implications in relation to the content and the nature of medical practice. First of all it should be marked that the Roman courts had a double nature: on the one hand the courts of Churchmen were meant to serve as ‘models’ for the Catholic world but on the other hand they greatly resembled the lay elite, the lay noble courts in their worldliness and court-etiquette. In addition, their synthesis was particular: they were consisted mainly of men, often elderly, most of who belonged in the ecclesiastical hierarchy; this ‘type’ of courtiers-patients apart from implying a specific lifestyle that the court-physician had to consider, also implied a series of diseases that were more frequent or common to occur in the space of the court.

Furthermore, although the medical treatises written in the space of the Roman courts primarily addressed the patron-patient (and in the following his *familia*), due to the wider diffusion and status they were granted by court patronage they surpassed the boundaries of the court. In this way outside the court they conveyed the image of the patron as a ‘supreme’ patient who was expected to be the role model in the field of the care of the body. However in reality this was an area in which the courtiers in general did not do well; the court lifestyle was by nature at odds with medical advice and in the Roman context, due to the dual nature of the Roman courts, this variation was stronger. Discussing the rules of *regimen* Marylin Nicoud notes that they ‘*rendent possible la controtantion entre le goûts du patient et les conseils des médecins, entre un côté d’une culture aristocratique liée aux plaisirs, à une certaine éthique de la représentantion, et de l’autre une “morale médicale” conditionnée par la nature du sujet et la savoir du praticien*.’ In addition, the patient-patron was the one to have the last word when it came to medical advice often disregarding his physician’s advice for several reasons (e.g. the difficulty to change lifestyle habits, the denial of the patron to be restricted to the role of the patient, conflict of authority between the patron and the physician, the public image the patron and his *familia*

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231 Elisa Andretta, *Roma medica*…op. cit., p. 286-287
wanted to convey, the religious *modus vivendi* in which the medical advice was called to operate and which shared the basic principles of preventive medicine).\(^{233}\)

Thus the sixteenth-century Roman court medicine can be indicative of a series of social-cultural connotations and tensions; medical advice was expected to take into consideration the court-lifestyle, court-practices, representations of the body that the patron or his *familia* sought to convey, the corporeality of the patron-‘prince’ of the Church, etc. and, shaped in a Galenic context in which the connection between the care of the body and the soul was fundamental, it was addressing the members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy trying to correspond to the explicit and implicit religious rules and spiritual demands and aspirations (regarding conduct, manners, bodily practices/activities, etc.) of the tridentine and post-tridentine period.

Taking into consideration the identity of a Cardinal as a patron, a patient, and a ‘prince’ of the Church it is important to mark the implications that his corporeality had in relation to medical practice. Elisa Andretta, discussing the implications that the pope’s corporeality bore due to his dual identity as a religious and a political leader, has marked the existence of different models of ‘*figures sanitaires*’ in which the modalities and the contents changed according to the inclinations of each pope and the model of the head of the Church that each of the popes wanted to convey. In this framework Andretta has indicated a tension ‘*entre deux types d’image et de comportement qui répondent à deux visions différentes de choses: celle del’opposition âme/corps soutenue par une religiosité contre-reformée; celle de l’intégration nécaissaire des deux éléments d’une culture empreinte d’humanisme*’.\(^{234}\)

Taking into consideration the public and the symbolic dimension that the pope’s health and lifestyle had and the fact that the Cardinals and their courts were—as discussed in the first section of this chapter- extensions of the papal curia the analysis of the pope’s health and his corporeal representation can serve—as *mutatis mutandis*—as a guideline in the historical examination of a Cardinal as a patient/patron. In the case of the *De arte gymnastica*, as will be discussed in the following chapters, we are dealing with a medical discourse in which the elements of the ‘body’ and ‘soul’ are integrated within the framework of a humanist court culture. As discussed in the

\(^{233}\) Elisa Andretta, *Roma medica*…op. cit., pp. 286-287; pp. 312-313; p. 325

\(^{234}\) *idem*, p. 23
previous part of the chapter, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and his *familia* shared a series of humanist cultural and intellectual interests, tastes, and values, which, however, had to be adjusted to the Counter-Reformation religious and spiritual demands and aspirations. In the following chapters we shall see how Mercuriale promotes the integration of body and soul as the advantage of his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment and a prerequisite for its beneficial results, however in a framework defined by the principles of the Counter-Reformation religiosity.

Furthermore we need to take into consideration the sixteenth-century associations made between the health of the ruler, the prince, etc. and the stability of his governance. During the sixteenth century medical as well as moral writings expressed the view that only a healthy ruler possessed the necessary authority to impose obedience on his subjects. It was considered that the ruler, following the advice of his personal physician, was not only promoting the welfare of his subjects but he was also representing a ‘proper’ model of living.\(^{235}\) Whereas in earlier times ‘good health’ did not feature particularly prominently in the value system of the nobility during the sixteenth century good health and longevity steadily became part of the system of values of the higher social ranks and were promoted as a precondition for successful ruling and governance.\(^{236}\)

Mercuriale’s dedication letter to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese is indicative of such attitudes. Addressing the Cardinal Mercuriale writes: ‘[...] *It remains for you following the example of the ancients to exercise your own body so wisely that you not only achieve the long life that heaven promises you and your nature suggests, but also if possible may extend it further, so that the world may continue to enjoy still longer the immortal benefits that it daily receives from you and continually hopes to gain in greater abundance, and thus in your lifetime, it may obtain that felicity of which to date it has perhaps never yet tested*. It should be noted that good health and longevity were important values in papal Rome. The ‘ill health’ of the pope could be an advantage for a rival candidate, while short pontificates due to ill health or death provoked radical changes in the papal curia and had an impact on religious and political affairs. Accordingly, although on a smaller scale, the good health of the

\(^{235}\) Vivian Nutton (ed.), *Medicine at the Courts...* op. cit., p. 33

\(^{236}\) *idem*, p. 36
Cardinal was decisive for the life and the careers of the members of his familia and the rest of the courtiers, whereas ill health could lead to the dissolution of the Cardinal’s court; such an event would subsequently enhance the climate of the general flux in the city, which was already a strong characteristic of sixteenth-century Rome. The importance of the physician’s function was accentuated as in the climate of unstable politics in the sixteenth-century capital of the Catholic Christendom the ultimate uncertainty was the health of the pope upon who all else depended.\textsuperscript{237}

This conviction offers an additional platform on which the role of medicine and the medical profession in sixteenth-century Rome could be historically addressed and evaluated. The University-trained physicians were part of the influential elite that lived in close proximity to the centres of power, setting out guidelines for the shaping of health policies but as well as for the health of those groups on whom the state depended: the ruling princes, the noblemen at court, the military, and the scholars.\textsuperscript{238}

In these terms within the Roman context which was marked by the growing power of papal monarchy and the endeavour for the Catholic Reform, Mercuriale’s medical discourse is significant in its own right: considering the role of exercise in terms of ‘technologies of power’ Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ should be addressed in the context of practices that ‘determine the conduct of individuals and submits them to certain ends or domination’.\textsuperscript{239}

An additional issue that was raised in the framework of court life and which throws light in the content and the nature of court medicine are the so-called morbis aulicis (‘court-diseases’). In medical –and moral- writings we find that writers considered a number of diseases as afflicting mainly princes and courtiers, and in general those who lived in luxury. Although this did not result in the creation of a standard classification of ‘court diseases’ and no fixed or generally accepted canon of ‘court diseases’ was established, this discussion lasted until well into the eighteenth century (referring progressively from the courtiers to the bourgeoisie and the rich social classes in general). The medical discourse on the court diseases changed over the centuries because of the physicians themselves; physicians noticed that diseases

\textsuperscript{237} Vivian Nutton (ed.), \textit{Medicine at the Courts}...op. cit., p. 54
\textsuperscript{238} \textit{idem}, p. 40
\textsuperscript{239} Michel Foucault, ‘Technologies of the Self’, in L.H. Martin, H. Gutman and P.H. Hutton (eds), \textit{Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault}, (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press), p. 18
which were considered ‘court diseases’ afflicted also people other than courtiers in so far as they had a similar lifestyle. Therefore it is difficult to define the spectrum of the diseases covered by this term; however we can draw a general map.\textsuperscript{240}

Gout (of the feet) and the French Disease were of the first diseases to be connected with court life. After its first outbreak the French Disease was promptly connected to court life; indicatively the Valencian physician Gaspar Torella (1452-1520) who served at the courts of Pope Alexander VI and Cesare Borgia noted in 1497 that in Southern Spain the French Disease was known as \textit{morbus curialis} because it was always to be found in the vicinity of a court; this connection, enshrined also in the name \textit{Mal de Cour} that was used for the French Disease, survived up to the nineteenth century. The French Disease continued to raise a broad concern in sixteenth-century Rome; the Incurabili Hospitals (the result of the alliance between the papal court, cardinals, religious orders, and physicians) and the expansion of their services during the sixteenth century was the institutional response to the French Disease that showed the recognition of the seriousness of the problem on behalf of the city authorities.\textsuperscript{241}

Other diseases considered ‘court diseases’ included arthritis, stones in the bladder and kidneys, colic and catarrh; there was also the suggestion that the court-diseases of gout, cholic, and kidney disorders were related to each other and that they could develop into one another or all be present in the patient’s body.\textsuperscript{242} These diseases, connected with the wealthy ruling classes since the Middle Ages, had been assigned to the ‘category’ of court diseases where they remained for centuries. There were some diseases that were considered particularly prevalent at courts only by a single medical writer, while other writers widened considerably the spectrum of court diseases including digestive disorders, diseases of the stomach and the bowels in general, as well as apoplexy, piles, and nervous diseases.\textsuperscript{243}

Apart from his reference to the French Disease in Book I, Chapter I, \textit{De Principiis Medicinae} (‘The origins of medicine’) Mercuriale in Books V and VI (in which he examines the medical effects and utility of each of his ‘medical exercises’) mentions many of the so-called ‘court diseases’ among the many diseases, ailments, etc. that his

\textsuperscript{240} Vivian Nutton (ed.), \textit{Medicine at the Courts}...op. cit., p. 25
\textsuperscript{241} For he Incurabili Hospitals in Rome see Jon Arizzabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French Roger, \textit{The Great Pox}...op. cit., pp. 170-230
\textsuperscript{242} Vivian Nutton (ed.), \textit{Medicine at the Courts}...op. cit., p. 26
\textsuperscript{243} \textit{idem}, pp. 27-28
‘medical gymnastics’ treat: gout, catarrh, stones in the bladder and the kidneys, colic, arthritis, digestion problems, stomach problems, bowel problems, as well as the royal disease and melancholy (considered as well the disease of the scholars who shared the sedentary lifestyle of the elite). Mercuriale does not group these diseases as ‘court-diseases’. In this regard it should be noted that there are medical writings dedicated to individual princes, princely families and court nobility that written expressly for them gave advice for healthy living, however without mentioning diseases as associated with life at court; there are also numerous prescriptions for noble invalids, which do not discuss in detail the diseases of the court. However, reading these works in the light of the treatises on diseases of the court, their causes and suggested treatment it becomes clear that they cover precisely the kinds of disorders most prevalent at courts.\textsuperscript{244}

According to the medical –and the moral- writers the court lifestyle was the cause of these diseases: the consumption of excessive quantities of food and drink, odd and irregular mealtimes, constant changes of diet, extreme variety in the dishes offered, the indigestible, highly seasoned or over-sweetened dishes, iced or alcoholic drinks, and the overindulgence of stimulants (such as tea, coffee, chocolate and tobacco) were considered harmful for health. Furthermore, the constraints of court etiquette were thought to cause great harm to bodily functions (e.g. in evacuation and repletion), while a proper time management of time (especially with regard to meal times) was considered a sign of healthy living.\textsuperscript{245} In addition, it was a common opinion that wealth tempted people to gluttony, one of the seven ‘cardinal vices’, which was considered as the chief vice of courtiers.\textsuperscript{246} As will be discussed in the following chapter according to Mercuriale gluttony, intemperance, excessive food consumption, and sophisticated dietary habits are the causes for the rise and proliferation of “new diseases” among which we find a few of the ‘court-diseases’ (e.g. the French Disease, gout and colic’s).

Furthermore, excess in emotions (considered to be more violent and more frequent amongst the members of the court and thus more dangerous for their health) was regarded as the cause for a great number of the ‘court diseases’. To this conviction it

\textsuperscript{244} idem, p. 20
\textsuperscript{245} idem, p. 161
\textsuperscript{246} idem, p. 21
should be added that life at court was thought of as a life of leisure for the body without leisure for the mind; in these terms it was believed that emotions lacked any compensating activity to be dampened down. While ‘reason’ was recommended as the best means for controlling the passions, for the treatment of illnesses caused by excess in emotion physicians -from the perspective of humoural theory- recommended a suitable diet and sexual intercourse (provided it was practiced in moderation).\(^{247}\) Mercuriale marks the ‘calming of the passions’ and the ‘satisfaction of the passions of the soul’ among the beneficial results of ‘medical exercises’ such as crying and specific types of combat,\(^{248}\) and in general (as will be discussed analytically in the following chapters of the present study) one of the main arguments around which Mercuriale articulates the medical value and efficacy of his ‘medical gymnastics’ is that it treats both body and soul, favouring ‘control’ and ‘rationality’.

For the health problems that court lifestyle caused physicians recommended order in the division of the day (especially with regard to meal times as indicated previously), exercise, and moderation in diet.\(^{249}\) Exercise in particular was considered to counteract excesses in diet due to the close interaction between nourishment and physical activity while it was considered that it also favoured the release of the harmful ‘passions’. This is why it was believed by some medical writers that poor people who engaged in physical work could tolerate heavier and fattier foods better than the upper classes who lived a sedentary life; the absence of sufficient exercise and the abundance of food of the most exquisite quality were considered to be damaging for health. Suitable exercise for the upper classes, as well as for the scholars who shared their sedentary lifestyle, included walks (especially the ones that led to ‘healthy’ places), riding, hunting, travelling by carriage or ship, games of bowls or archery, billiards, exercises with gymnastic apparatus, and dancing; all however, should be practiced in moderation.\(^{250}\)

Mercuriale’s medical advice is focused exclusively on ‘exercise’. Many of the above exercises that are recommended as suitable for the elite are extensively treated in the

\(^{247}\) idem, p. 24
\(^{248}\) idem, see Book VI, Chapter II, ‘The effects of combat sports’ and Chapter VI, ‘The qualities of reading, speaking, laughing, and crying’
\(^{249}\) idem, p. 64
De arte gymnastica and they make part of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’. However, as will be discussed in the following chapters, they are promoted as ‘medical exercises’ under particular circumstances while their value and efficacy are not restrained merely to the physiological effects they were regarded to cause. According to Mercuriale the medical value and efficacy of the ‘medical gymnastics’ are articulated around a set of principles such as order, moderation, decorum, etc. which at the same time according to Mercuriale constitute the necessary prerequisites for the beneficial results of ‘medical exercises’. The present study suggests that the health of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (as a prince of the Church, patron, and patient) and court life as an object of medical gaze are parameters that had their own share in the shaping of Mercuriale’s medical discourse and in particular in the shaping of the medical nature of his ‘medical gymnastics’. In this respect, the following chapter examines Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the proliferation of “new diseases” as pivotal in his medical discourse.
Chapter 3. The new diseases and the French Disease in the De arte gymnastica

3.1. ‘Lues gallica’: a “new” disease or a “new disease”? The French Disease as a scientific and cultural event

While the possibility of the existence of “new diseases” had long before troubled the ancient authorities, it was the outbreak of the French Disease in the Italian ground around 1495-1496 that retriggered the debate in the circles of the University trained physicians in early modern Europe. The present study is not interested in the historical investigation of the French Disease per se. However, taking into consideration the impact of the French Disease on the sixteenth-century scientific and socio-cultural landscape the present study considers that Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the proliferation of “new diseases” and the French Disease as a “new disease” has a pivotal role in his medical discourse.

Nancy Siraisi and Jean-Michel Agasse have both examined the De arte gymnastica systematically and they have not neglected to point out Mercuriale’s suggestion of the proliferation of “new diseases”. In his commentary on the De arte gymnastica Jean-Michel Agasse considers that when Mercuriale talks about “new diseases” he refers to diseases that had not previously existed.251 Agasse reaches to this conclusion by asking what is it that constitutes a “new disease”, following Mirko Grmek’s analysis: according to Grmek, a disease might be dubbed “new” either because doctors had not previously identified it or because it did not previously exist; but even in the latter case, Grmek claims, we must ask whether the disease was “new” only in a certain part of the world or in the whole world, whether it was “new” in relation to the immediate past or in relation to the entire history of humanity.252 Nancy Siraisi notes that Mercuriale took the controversial -in his day- position that “new diseases” had risen throughout history supporting the assertion of the outbreak of ‘remarkable and hitherto unknown illnesses’, as she notes, and extending the suggestion to the outbreak

252 Mirko D. Grmek, La dénomination latine des maladies considérées comme nouvelles par les auteurs antiques, in Le Latin médical: la constitution d’un langage scientifique, textes réunis et publiés par Guy Sabbah, (Saint-Etienne, Université, 1991), p. 195
of the French Disease. Thus, Siraisi too adheres to Grmek’s analysis of ‘novelty’ as she considers that ‘novelty’ in Mercuriale’s suggestion indicates diseases that were previously unknown.

However, as will be discussed in the following, determining the ‘novelty’ of a disease (and of the French Disease in particular) meant far more than historically discovering its origin. Most importantly it meant understanding, identifying its (unknown) nature and the causes of its outbreak; in this framework locating the origin of an apparently “new disease” in historical terms was only one of the ways sixteenth-century physicians tried to address the ‘novelty’ of a disease. The sixteenth-century debate on the ‘novelty’, origin, nature, causes, and treatment of the French Disease signifies it as both a medical phenomenon that introduced a new discourse in sixteenth-century medical science and as a socio-cultural phenomenon. In these terms, the present study considers that so far the analysis of Mercuriale’s suggestion of the proliferation of “new diseases” and the ‘novelty’ of the French Disease has remained limited and only peripheral to Mercuriale’s medical discourse. The present chapter explores Mercuriale’s notion of both ‘disease’ and ‘novelty’ and the framing of the French Disease as a “new disease”, suggesting that the issue of the “new diseases” in the context of the De arte gymnastica informs decisively Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical concept.

Karl Sudhoff going through the earliest references to the French Disease noted that a new approach to ‘disease’ emerged. According to Sudhoff, the French Disease forced physicians to abandon their dependence on classical and medieval texts and interact with each other and with their patients and patrons to an unprecedented extent.

Undoubtedly, the intractability of the French Disease and its chronic nature drew attention to the logistics of the fight against it, the resources and the strategies of those teaching about it, in the attempt to prevent it and treat it. There was not a unanimous agreement among physicians as to whether the disease was curable or not (some suggested that if treated at an early stage it could be cured more easily), however physicians agreed that it could relapse after a period of remission.

253 Nancy Siraisi, ‘History, Antiquarianism and Medicine: The Case of Girolamo Mercuriale’…op. cit., p. 238; Nancy Siraisi, History, Medicine and the Traditions…op. cit., p. 45
254 Karl Sudhoff (ed.), The earliest Printed Literature on Syphilis, Being Ten Tractates from the Years 1495-1498, (Florence, 1925), p. xi
255 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 379
The French Disease was a ‘social’ disease in the sense that it provoked cultural responses and had an impact on early modern society; it made no social discriminations and thus threatened the integrity of the social boundaries of a world that relied upon these boundaries to reaffirm the consistency of its own authority. In these terms, the scope and force employed to respond to the disease were enhanced. In this respect, Jon Arrizabalaga, Jon Henderson, and Roger French in their seminal work on the French Disease have suggested that people, in their response to the French Disease, organised themselves into ‘groups’, looking to safeguard their own boundaries and distinguish themselves from others; they indicate three main groups: the nation, the papal court, and the city. The papal court in particular, which is of particular interest for this study, as a political, religious, economic, and intellectual centre was in many senses supra-national and what the papal physicians thought and did about the French Disease mattered since the papal court was supposed to constitute a model for others to follow, as noted in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, the French Disease had a very potent image. Because of its nature as a horribly debilitating, disfiguring, painful -and often fatal- disease, and also because of the moral perceptions concerning its causes and spread, the French Disease represented deviance on many levels. As Kevin Siena puts it: ‘it stood for filth and impurity in a world that valued purity, it stood for ugliness in a world that valued beauty, it stood for sin in a world that valued probity’. The French Disease had a strong moral and religious dimension; physicians, clerics, and lay people all shared the view that the disease was God’s punishment for the sins of mankind. Thus the French Disease was not only a medical issue; it was also a religious and a moral issue.

The religious and moral connotations became stronger in the Counter-Reformation era: in a period of religious and spiritual crisis the link between sin and disease became stronger and, in this context, apart from enforcing the view that saw the world

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257 Kevin Siena (ed.), Sins of the Flesh. Responding to Sexual Disease in Early Modern Europe, (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2005), p. 23
259 See ‘Introduction’ by Kevin Siena in Kevin Siena (ed.), Sins of the Flesh…op. cit., p. 8
260 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 38
in providential terms the French Disease was perceived as a way that God communicated His displeasure. The French Disease, connected often to sexual promiscuity, enhanced the calls for moral purification that were intensified in the post-Tridentine period. In addition the diagnosis of the French Disease provided a legal basis to investigate and – if considered necessary – prosecute particular sexual activities, medicalising them as the causes of the outbreak of the disease or as the ‘disease’ in themselves. There was a strong connection between the French Disease and the policy efforts for social control, which was a part of the endeavour for moral purification in the context of the religious crisis.

In parallel the French Disease emerged also as a scientific marker in the sixteenth-century scientific landscape. We should note that outbreaks of hitherto unknown diseases and the plethora of books of practica that discussed them made pathology one of the most debated parts of medicine in the sixteenth century. The apparent novelty of the French Disease, its intractability, the way it spread (through contagion), and the rate at which it spread (it reached epidemic proportions particularly in the first decades of its outbreak) raised questions that challenged the status of the prevailing - at the time- ‘orthodox’ Galenic-Aristotelian medical theory and the professional status of the university-trained physician. Although the French Disease according to most of the earliest medical perceptions had features that were different from other known diseases, at the beginning the idea of admitting that the French Disease was “new” was unacceptable to the university-trained physicians for both epistemological and professional reasons.

Ian McLean and Nancy Siraisi investigating the content of medical theory in the Renaissance medical treatises written by learned physicians, have highlighted a series of issues that were raised from the contemporary perceptions and understandings of ‘disease’ (morbus) that were debated in the circles of university-trained physicians:

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262 Mary Hewlett, ’The French Connection: Syphilis and Sodomy in Late-Renaissance Lucca’, in Kevin Siena (ed.), *Sins of the Flesh…*op. cit., p. 19

263 See ‘Introduction’ by Kevin Siena in Kevin Siena (ed.), *Sins of the Flesh…*op. cit., p. 18

Are diseases infinite in number? Can they arise as composites? Are diseases local to particular regions? Do the Galenic genera and differentiae account for all diseases or can there be new species? The issue of ‘novelty’ raised additional questions as the suggestion that a disease was “new” implied that it did not belong to the diseases connected with the ‘species-genus’ relation and were to be found in the medical apparatus of the university-trained physician. Thus it contradicted a basic principle of university medicine according to which all diseases had been described by the ancient medical authorities and could be found in the authoritative texts; a principle that implied that there was no such thing as a “new” disease.

Furthermore there were additional practical reasons for the reluctance of the university-trained physicians to identify this ‘novelty’. The ‘rational and learned’ physician was trained to think and practice within the Galenic conceptual and epistemological framework, which allowed him to diagnose and subsequently treat a disease according to the premises of the humoural-complexional medical theory. The university-trained physician’s professional and social status was based on the premise that his apparatus by being efficient and credible could describe, name, and therefore cope with all the ‘known’ (i.e. found in the ancient authoritative texts) diseases.

In these terms, ‘novelty’ could seriously undermine the Galenic apparatus and consequently the physician’s ability to diagnose and treat a disease; a disease that was “new” could not be found in the extant medical apparatus and thus physicians could not apply the treatment that the species-genus relation invited. Admitting the unknown identity, nature of a disease – and therefore the lack of treatment – would cast doubt on the university-trained physician’s learning and professional skills thus leaving space for the ‘empirics’ and itinerant healers to jump in. Under these circumstances, the ‘rational and learned’ doctor in his effort to address and cope with

265 idem; see also Nancy Siraisi, ‘Disease and Symptom as problematic concepts in Renaissance Medicine’, in Eckhard Kessler and Ian Maclean (eds.), Res et verba in the Renaissance, (Harrassowitz, 2002)
266 These terms are used in historical terms, as characteristics of the early modern university-trained physician: the university-trained physician was ‘learned’ in the sense that he was proficient in the acquirement of ancient knowledge, and ‘rational’ in the sense that he was able to use arguments – usually dialectical and philosophical – also of ancient origin. See Roger French, Medicine before Science, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 2
267 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 263
268 The term ‘empiric’ (found in Galen referring to the medical sects in Rome) was used in a pejorative way to denote the medical practitioners who had not been through a university faculty, although many of these practitioners were licensed by the civil authorities. See Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 253
the issue of the French Disease would often stretch the extant medical theory to squeeze in the “new disease” in terms of causes, symptoms, nature, and treatment so as to understand it, manage it, and in this way also defend his professional status and learning.\textsuperscript{269}

Nonetheless, the outbreak of the French Disease brought developments and changes in the sixteenth-century medicine. Nancy Siraisi exploring the responses of university-trained physicians to the French Disease suggested that ‘new attention to changing patterns of disease was one of the most striking developments in Renaissance medicine’.\textsuperscript{270} Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French note that the outbreak of the French Disease brought changes to medicine;\textsuperscript{271} they suggest that the impact of the French Disease was so immense that some categories had to be changed. Because of the close links between medicine and natural philosophy every act of understanding a disease and subsequently providing a medical treatment meant that the physician deployed an aspect of natural philosophy that could vary greatly from one group of physicians to another. In these terms, understanding the French Disease (particularly ‘contagion’ which was one of its most crucial features), and providing a treatment for it was inextricably bound to forms of dissent from the ‘orthodox’ Aristotelian natural philosophy of manifest causes.\textsuperscript{272} In these terms, the French Disease constituted a litmus test for the prevailing, at the time, Galenic-Aristotelian epistemology.

By Mercuriale’s time the perception of the French Disease had changed. Physicians agreed that it did not fit the Galenic model of disease;\textsuperscript{273} rather, it was being perceived as an ‘entity’ in itself and it was considered that it had a specific external cause, a ‘seed’ or a poison-like virus which was a new element in the traditional Aristotelian causal system, and that it was contagious in a material way. This perception implied the ‘ontological’ view of the disease, according to which the disease was a sort of a natural species that had a vital cycle of birth, maturity, decline, and death.\textsuperscript{274} The

\textsuperscript{269} idem, p. 265
\textsuperscript{270} Nancy Siraisi, History, Medicine and the Traditions... op. cit., p. 35
\textsuperscript{271} See Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox...op. cit.
\textsuperscript{272} idem, p. 236
\textsuperscript{273} There were three kinds (genera) of disease according to the Galenic theory: i) disturbance of qualities, ii) a fault in conformation, iii) an interruption of operation. According to Galenic medical theory disease was considered to be the result of poor regimen, innate weakness, disordered bodily function.
\textsuperscript{274} Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox...op. cit., p. 12
cumulative experience of the disease had given it an ‘ontology’ it did not have before and it was regarded that part of its character was that it had a vigorous youth and was now growing old; the disease began to have a history.\textsuperscript{275} Nancy Siraisi suggests that in this way the advent of new diseases provided new stimuli for historical reflection and inquiry within a medical context, and she addresses Mercuriale’s suggestion of the new diseases in this framework. These developments, Siraisi continues, probably contributed also to strengthen the connections between the professional interests of medically-trained individuals and broader questions about the past, connections that emerged even more clearly with the participation of physicians in sixteenth-century antiquarian studies.\textsuperscript{276}

In the context of the emergence of the French Disease as a scientific and cultural marker two additional remarks should be made. First, that the early modern period was an era of medical pluralism and inevitably we are dealing with different intellectual ‘groups’ of learned physicians. The physician’s perception of ‘disease’ and ‘novelty’ reflects the intellectual ‘group’ in which he belonged, his medical rationale and understanding, his sources and resources, which in their turn informed the various therapeutic concepts demonstrating at the same time diverse cultural attitudes regarding ‘health’, ‘disease’, and ‘treatment’. Secondly, the way in which sixteenth-century university-trained physicians understood and subsequently treated the French Disease sheds light on both the scientific and socio-cultural aspects of early modern medicine. In an era of medical pluralism university-trained physicians, empirics and other medical practitioners -whether or not they agreed on the ‘novelty’ and the nature of the French Disease- offered various treatments as patients were seeking successful cures. In these terms it is important to look into Mercuriale’s suggestion of the proliferation of “new diseases” and the issue of the French Disease and examine the implications, the issues that it raised in relation to his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a concept of medical treatment considering his occupational post as a court-physician that addressed an elite audience in a time of religious-spiritual crisis.

\textsuperscript{275} idem, p. 282
\textsuperscript{276} Nancy Siraisi, \textit{History, Medicine and the Traditions...op. cit.,} p. 35
The present study attempts a ‘thick description’\textsuperscript{277} of Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the proliferation of “new diseases” and the French Disease as a “new disease”: it attempts to look into his perception of ‘disease’, ‘novelty’, and the framing of the French Disease as a “new disease” seeking to map how Mercuriale’s medical thinking and understanding informed his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment in post-Tridentine Rome. In this endeavour the study follows an ‘archaeological’ approach looking for the underlying medical ideas in Mercuriale’s agenda as a humanist court-physician. It tries to map how theoretical medical reasoning and medical practice are brought together in Mercuriale’s medical discourse, so as to see how the theoretical reasoning informed, was applied to, and was shaped by medical practice at the same time. By addressing the issues as they are raised in Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the “new diseases” and the French Disease, the present study seeks to link Mercuriale’s medical rationale with his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a concept of medical practice. For this task the present chapter draws from recent historiography on early modern conceptions of ‘disease’, the French Disease (e.g. its physical reality, its causes, and symptoms) and the socio-cultural reactions towards it, as well as from scholarly work on other diseases that Mercuriale discusses as “new diseases”.

The present study taking into consideration that the understanding of disease achieved through the medical act of diagnosis defined in essential, however not absolute, ways the medical treatment prescribed by the ‘rational and learned’ physician, will employ ‘diagnosis’ as a tool of analysis to look into Mercuriale’s medical rationale regarding ‘disease’, ‘novelty’, and the ‘novelty’ of the French Disease. The medical act of diagnosis enables us to reach the core of medical theory and practice and to look in parallel the social and cultural implications that this part of medicine had particularly in the case of the French Disease. In diagnosis the university-trained physician made rational connections between the elements he was trained to observe and take into account and by interpreting what he observed within the framework of textual authoritative knowledge he identified the disease (i.e. he named collections of

\textsuperscript{277} For the term ‘thick description’ see Clifford Geertz, \textit{The Interpretation of Cultures}, (New York: Basic Books, 1973)
symptoms contextualizing them in a rational and justifiable -in relation to medical theory- explanation of ill health) and prescribed the suitable treatment.  

Diagnosis was, above all, a rational operation with a nominative and classificatory role that allowed the ‘rational and learned’ physician to identify the disease, cope with it, prescribe the necessary treatment and explain how this treatment would work and affect the human body.  

In these terms diagnosis set the university-trained physician apart from the laity and the other medical practitioners (empirics, charlatans, midwives, etc.) confirming his superior status, authority, and knowledge. The present study in order to facilitate the task of ‘diagnosis’ of the “new diseases” provides a table (see pp. 253-255) that lists the features and qualities of the medical cases discussed as “new diseases” by Mercuriale as they appear in the text of the De arte gymnastica: the way they are reported (by name or by description), the respective term used (morbus, aegritudo, etc.), the time of their outbreak, their (suggested) origin, and the sources Mercuriale draws from and uses in an authoritative way.

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278 Nancy Siraisi, Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine…op. cit., p. 118
279 idem; also see Ian Maclean, Logic, Signs and Nature…op. cit.
3.2 ‘Disease’ and ‘novelty’ in the De arte gymnastica; ‘gallica lues’ as a new disease

Before we examine individually the new diseases that Mercuriale discusses it is important to locate the causes that he attributed to their outbreak in the framework of diagnosis. Identifying the causes of a disease was the first requisite in the diagnostic procedure; scientific demonstration was by its definition causal as it was grounded in the doctrine of the four Aristotelian causes. Medicine had a more pragmatic interest in the doctrine of causes; physicians needed to distinguish causes from ‘symptoms’, ‘disease’, ‘signs’, etc., and attribute them either to the patient’s nature or to the environment. In the period under discussion the Galenic doctrine of causes was criticised for its meaning, range, and combination, while at the same time the Aristotelian doctrine of (the four) causes was tested so as to verify whether disease could have an infinite number of causes, something that would render it inexplicable in Aristotelian terms. The Renaissance saw a profusion of causes in medicine and a loosening of the structure of medical thought (found also in other parts of medical theory concerning ‘signs’, ‘symptoms’, etc.). The cause attributed to a disease is crucial as it indicated what kind of model the physician made out of the disease; thus, it throws light on the physician’s perception of ‘disease’ and subsequently to the therapeutic concept prescribed. In these terms, the examination of the causes that Mercuriale attributed to the “new diseases” serves the purposes of this study.

In the opening pages of the De arte gymnastica, Book I, Chapter I, De principiis medicinae (‘The origins of medicine’) Mercuriale states that ‘as long as people were content with very little and had no knowledge of sophisticated dinners and sumptuous banquets […] diseases did not make their appearance nor were their names known’. However, he continues, when the abominable plague of intemperance, the refined arts of the cook, the exquisitely subtle spices used at feasts and the foreign ways of mixing wine invaded mankind, then multifarious kinds of diseases [morborum genera] began at once to proliferate and necessitated the discovery of medicine’; ‘it would certainly have been possible to do without it for ever’, Mercuriale continues, ‘had not human – or rather bestial- gluttony, the offspring of all vices, rendered it the most necessary of

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280 Ian Maclean, Logic, Signs and Nature…op. cit., p. 146
281 idem, p. 146-147
Later in the same chapter Mercuriale addresses the issue of the outbreak of new diseases noting that there is a ‘very large number of diseases that the ancients did not know [plarimi fuerint morbi quos ne cab ipsis cognitos] and for which no treatment had been devised’. However, the ancient forebears do not deserve less praise, he argues, because this was not the result of indolence or lack of skill; rather, it was the result of ‘the endless seductive inducements of gluttony, and insatiable lust, voracious greed, from which as Seneca and after him, Plutarch wisely argued, new species of diseases [novae morborum species] were, and still are being generated every day’. In the following Mercuriale gives an account of the outbreaks of “new diseases” throughout time, ending with the outbreak of the French Disease, to which he refers as gallica lues (‘French plague’).

We see therefore that Mercuriale identifies as the causes of the outbreaks of “new diseases” an imbalance, a ‘deviance’ in regimen characterised by luxurious feasts and banquets, refine cooking, the use of spices, and the importing of foreign dietary customs such as the foreign ways of mixing wine. By attributing the causes of the rise of “new diseases” to an imbalanced regimen Mercuriale is interpreting ‘disease’ in terms of Galenic theory. An imbalanced regimen could lead to ‘disease’, which - according to Galenic theory- could be an imbalance of the four humours, a dyscrasia (opposite to eucrasia that denoted the balance of the four humours). Dyscrasia also implied the presence of a ‘peccant’ humour with distorted qualities. In the framework of medical treatment the physician would attempt to re-establish the balance of the bodily humours by purging, expelling the peccant or excess humour through evacuative methods such as bloodletting, sweating, urinating, bowel evacuation, vomiting, etc. In this respect ‘exercise’ constituted a suitable method of medical treatment as it was a way to achieve purging through sweating.

Regarding the French Disease in particular it is important to note that humoural theory had a profound influence on its treatment since it aimed for an elimination of the morbid humours (through salivation, blood-letting, sweating, etc.), which was considered an essential aspect of its cure. Moderation, a key concept in Galenic

283 Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 11
284 idem, p. 15
285 ibid
286 It should be noted here that it was considered that sharp or bitter foods, old or sweet wine, or wine that was heated for too long were made individuals vulnerable to the French Disease. See Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox...op. cit., p. 122
medicine, sustained a key element in the evacuative procedures that were central to both curative and preventive treatments: too much purging, or not enough, could harm the patient. Treatment was essentially defined by concepts of pathology: theory defined the curative and/or preventive concept applied and the two developed together. In this context the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of treatment of the “new diseases” becomes pertinent as ‘exercise’ was employed as a purging, evacuative technique; furthermore, as will be discussed later, moderation is a key concept in Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as well.

At the same time we see that Mercuriale identifies as causes of the proliferation of the “new diseases” specific deviant attitudes, habits such as gluttony, lust, greed, and intemperance which the Church stigmatized as ‘vices’ and ‘sins’. Here it is important to note that these habits, behaviours implied excess, indulgence, and a lack of moderation and self-restraint. Thus we see that Mercuriale adopts the contemporary belief (shared by both medical and lay men) that excess of regimen (e.g excess of food, drink, sexual activity, emotion, etc.) and the lack of moderation are unhealthy as well as sinful; they are physically detrimental as well as morally harmful. In this respect moderation emerges again as a key concept. The long-term aim of Galenic medical practice was to correct the deficiencies in the patient’s regimen by moderating the six non-naturals; this meant bringing the patient’s lifestyle back from extremes to balance by prescribing a moderate, balanced lifestyle that would guarantee ‘health’. As will be discussed in the following chapter, moderation is a key concept around which Mercieriale builds the medical value and efficacy of his ‘medical gymnastics’.

The notion of ‘foreignness’ should also be marked in the framework of the causality of disease. The notion of foreignness is repeatedly found in the early modern discourses of the French Disease as well as ‘disease’ in general, in terms of causality. It was often thought that the goods imported from the outside, from the other (i.e. another country, the ‘New World’, etc.) brought with them disease, decadence, and the dissolution of virtues; thus the consumption of foreign products and the adoption of foreign (dietary and other) customs were considered responsible for the outbreak of
disease, particularly among the social groups that consumed them. As well as in the case of the French Disease, as the name of the disease itself denotes, it was considered that it was a disease that came from the ‘outside’ and it was the ‘other’ that was to be blamed: for the Italians it was the French (see the term ‘morbus gallicus’), for the French it was the Italians (see the term ‘mal de Naples’), for the Dutch it was the Spanish (the Dutch called it the ‘Spanish Disease’) and so on.

According to Charles Rosenberg ‘each disease entity, as a social phenomenon, is a uniquely configured cluster of events and responses in both the biological and social spheres’. The causation that Mercuriale attributes to the outbreak of the “new diseases” demonstrates that he sees the “new diseases” as the result of both physiological imbalance and deviance in socio-cultural terms. Thus in Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica the “new diseases” are not mere physiological events, they are also defined and constructed in socio-cultural terms and in relation to contemporary moral and religious values, which affected the way ‘disease’ was understood and treated. Therefore, the concept of disease in Mercuriale’s medical discourse is not socially neutral; rather, it entails a judgment in moral terms. In the De arte gymnastica there is an association between pathology and behaviour, sin and disease and it is in this respect that the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a concept of medical treatment should be explored, as the causality of disease was a part of its definition that allowed the university-trained physician to understand its nature and treat it.

With regard to the causes of the “new disease” it is important to note that Mercuriale distinguishes between the past and the present, a distinction that enhances his claim regarding ‘novelty’. In this respect we should note the Hellenists argued against the novelty of the French Disease suggesting that since the same causes of diseases

292 For ‘medical Hellenism’ see Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 69
existed in antiquity as now then the same diseases existed in antiquity as now.\textsuperscript{293} On the contrary Mercuriale from the beginning of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} suggests a change in everyday lifestyle from antiquity to his own era, which was marked by a moral and physical deterioration.\textsuperscript{294} The physical and moral corruption and deterioration since antiquity was an opinion that was widely shared by medical and lay alike. In the \textit{De arte gymnastica} this notion of change for the worse operates as a cause for the proliferation of the “new diseases”; thus, in Mercuriale’s discourse it is the “new” causes that justify the existence of “new diseases”.

A first observation that should be made in the examination of the original Latin text of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} is that Mercuriale suggests the rise of ‘new species of diseases’ (\textit{novae morborum specie}).\textsuperscript{295} In fact, ‘species’ (\textit{specio}) was a classificatory term that emerged in the diagnostic procedure on the basis of the ‘operations and accidents’ of disease, resting on Aristotelian theory. When making a diagnosis the learned physician would classify (according to what he identified as ‘symptom’, ‘sign’, etc.) a disease in one of the Galenic \textit{genera} (kinds) of disease and their known ‘species’ according to its essential nature. There were three kinds of disease according to the Galenic theory: congenital malformation (\textit{mala composition}), complexional imbalance (\textit{mala complexio}), and trauma (\textit{solution contuitatis}) or break in the body’s continuity. \textit{Specie} and \textit{genera} were logical relationships that intended to reveal similarities between the symptoms, signs, accidents, etc. of diseases and allow the physician to prescribe a treatment. In parallel, the physician would name the disease by drawing from the diseases that were known and nominated by the medical authorities (a process known as capitulation).\textsuperscript{296}

Thus the \textit{specio-genus} relationship served as a useful device for the early modern physician: by claiming that one disease was a species of a kind the physician extended the definition of both and strengthened his intellectual grip on each, enhancing subsequently his professional authority. For this reason the species-genus relationship was often employed as part of the physicians’ strategy to identify the nature of French Disease and to argue against its ‘novelty’. To say that the French Disease was a

\textsuperscript{293} \textit{idem}, p. 95
\textsuperscript{294} Girolamo Mercuriale, \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition—op. cit., pp. 11-15
\textsuperscript{295} \textit{idem}, p. 15
\textsuperscript{296} Nancy Siraisi, \textit{Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine}—op. cit., p. 120
specio of some known genus was a useful way to squeeze the French Disease into the extant medical apparatus: a disease that was a species of a genus known to the ancients looked a little less “new” and thus a little more acceptable to the university-trained physicians. In addition, to insert a new disease into an already existent classification within the species-genus framework enabled the physician to further his knowledge about it and subsequently allowed him to prescribe a treatment; to fit the French Disease into a proper slot meant to learn more about it. Therefore Mercuriale initiates his account of outbreaks of “new diseases” by employing a diagnostic classificatory scheme of particular use and significance; talking about a ‘new species’ of disease was surely less radical than talking about ‘new genera’ of disease which, as such, inevitably stood outside the Galenic framework.

Mercuriale begins his account of the outbreaks of “new diseases” by drawing from Seneca’s Epistulae Morales. He notes that podagra (gout of the foot) ‘started to trouble women and children after the times of Hippocrates’. Podagra was a known disease, which was already named and classified in the ancient authoritative sources. Six Hippocratic aphorisms had addressed gout and among other things it was reported that women did not get gout, and neither did youths until they engaged in coitus.

Therefore the ‘novelty’ here appears to involve the changing nature of the particular disease, in the sense that the disease is reported to have begun to change after the time of Hippocrates afflicting not only men – as is implied – but also women and children. Furthermore it is important to note that the disease known as podagra was often mentioned in the medical debate against the novelty of the French Disease; university-trained physicians, based on the similar clinical picture of these two diseases, would connect the two diseases within a species-genus framework so as to frame the French Disease within the existent medical apparatus and present it as less “new” as possible.

Looking at early modern perceptions of gout we see that the suggested cause and the image of gout and the French Disease overlap. Roy Porter has explored gout as a

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297 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 264
298 Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 15
300 idem
revealing example of the social construction of disease in the early modern period. Indicating gout as a paradigm of a discursively-framed disease, he notes that gout had already acquired a ‘personality’ in antiquity: as the Hippocratic Aphorisms indicated, it was thought of as the insignia of mature, sexually active males. Gout was a disease of the old regime and of the old world and it attacked the idle and ostentatious men who brought it upon themselves through their grotesque overindulgence. According to Porter Renaissance humanist physicians following in the steps of antiquity (drawing mainly from Hippocrates, Celsus, Aretaeus, and Rufus) considered it a disease of local humoral plethora (excess of the concentration of humours or of some morbific matter) normally gathering first at the big toe. Accordingly, the predictable treatment involved purging in order to remove this plethora, which was combined with a change of lifestyle to achieve a balanced regimen.

Gout was considered a ‘constitutional’ (i.e. relevant to the body’s constitution) disease and was typically attributed to excess; therefore it was often regarded as the outcome of the vice of gluttony and intemperance. Just like melancholy, notes Porter, gout was the ‘armorial bearing of eminence’, it was a disease of luxury of the elite class. As noted in the previous chapter, just like podagra – and melancholy – the French Disease was also considered a ‘court-disease’ which implied the vices of the courtly lifestyle. Porter marks that it is crucial to take into consideration the fact that gout was a chronic disease, something which according to Porter raises further implications (in terms of medical treatment and socio-cultural perceptions) in comparison with acute diseases.

Chronic or constitutional disease plays a more fundamental social role than epidemics such as plague that came and left so quickly and inexplicably. Chronic and acute diseases present different social realities both to the individual and the broader society; the chronic disease becomes integrated in the patient’s life and causes long-term welfare issues to the broader community, posing different challenges to the physicians, medical institutions, city authorities and governments. Accordingly, it is

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301 *idem*, p. 6
302 *idem*, p. 2
important to consider that the French Disease had, by Mercuriale’s time, acquired a chronic form (in the sense that it persisted for a long time or it would continually reoccur and relapse) and appeared to be less lethal and virulent, with the physicians considering that it was easier to be cured. Podagra, as will be discussed in the following chapter, is mentioned -along with other chronic diseases- in Books V and VI of the *De arte gymnastica* as a disease that the ‘medical gymnastics’ can treat.

Mercuriale continues and by drawing from the Roman physician Scribonius Largus, Scribonius’ teacher Apuleius Celsus, and Aetius (the Byzantine physician and medical writer), he notes that *acquae formido* or *hydrophobia*, which was ‘unknown to Aristotle and his predecessors’ and *elephantiasis* which was ‘endemic in Egypt’, made its ‘first appearance in the lifetime of Pompey and Asclepiades’.\(^{305}\) Here we are dealing again with diseases that were known, named, and classified by the ancient authoritative sources. The ‘novelty’ of these diseases refers to the time of their outbreak on the Italian ground; it is considered that they first occurred after the time of Aristotle and during the time of Pompey and Asclepiades (c. 70 BC) respectively. The disease known as *elephantiasis* is also a useful paradigm for the aims of this study for two reasons. First because it shows that cultural attitudes shaped the reactions of the medical men to diseases in the early modern era. Secondly because it was a disease that was also involved in the medical debate regarding the identity and the ‘novelty’ of the French Disease because of its similar clinical picture.

In particular, the disease known as *elephantiasis* was recognised to afflict the skin and the flesh, the face, the extremities, the heart and the liver, thus assimilating the clinical picture of the French Disease. Some university-trained physicians in their strategy to address the identity of the French Disease and argue against its ‘novelty’ connected the French Disease with *elephantiasis* in a species-genus relationship.\(^{306}\) This connection would allow the French Disease to be inserted into the existent medical apparatus allowing in this way the ‘rational and learned’ physician on the one hand to present it as less “new” and to prescribe a treatment on the other. It is due to this connection that mercury-based treatments were prescribed for sufferers of the French Disease, as mercury was used in the treatment of *elephantiasis* long before the

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\(^{305}\) *Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…*op. cit., p. 15

\(^{306}\) For the connection of the French Disease to elephantiasis and see Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, *The Great Pox…*op. cit., pp. 77-82
outbreak of the French Disease.\textsuperscript{307} Mercuriale does not identify the one disease with the other; however, by indicating \textit{elephantiasis} as a “new disease” he rounds to some extent the edges of the – otherwise – controversial suggestion of the existence of “new diseases”.

Nevertheless, there was no consensus among physicians about the tactic of connecting the two diseases as \textit{elephantiasis} was also a ‘problematic’ disease. Some university-trained physicians identified Galen’s \textit{elephantiasis} with Avicenna’s \textit{lepra}, while others disagreed. Looking at earlier diagnoses of \textit{elephantiasis} we see that as early as in 1545 Paulus Iularius of Verona noted in his \textit{De lepra et eius curatione} the confusion among physicians regarding what \textit{lepra} was. He wrote that the moderns had mistakenly followed the Arabs who had misused names and created great confusion in the identification and distinction between \textit{elephantiasis} and \textit{lepra}. Paulus Iuliarius notes that ‘moderns’ are mistaken when they think that when the ancients described \textit{elephantiasis} they were talking about \textit{lepra}. He draws from the authority of Pliny according to whom \textit{elephantiasis} attacked no one in Italy before the time of Pompey the Great, an opinion which -as demonstrated above- Mercuriale shared by drawing from Latin as well as Byzantine medical writers.

Paulus Iuliarius concludes that moderns do not understand that \textit{elephantiasis} is one disease and \textit{lepra} is another.\textsuperscript{308} In this context Mercuriale’s use of the term ‘\textit{elephantiasis}’ is significant; according to Luke Demaitre ‘the use of the term “\textit{elephantiasis}” was typical of Renaissance humanism, with a renewed interest in language, a pronounced criticism of immediate predecessors, and an express return to classical sources’.\textsuperscript{309} Mercuriale’s use of non-medical sources is indicative of contemporary scientific practices as physicians, due to the complexity of the authoritative medical literature on the identity of the disease, in their effort to address the identity of \textit{elephantiasis} and distinguish it from other diseases used other, non-medical sources and resources such as linguistic and historical arguments.\textsuperscript{310}

\textsuperscript{307} See Owsei Temkin, ‘Therapeutic Trends and the Treatment of Syphilis Before 1900’, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{309} ibid
\textsuperscript{310} \textit{idem}
Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French analysed the medical dispute over the French Disease that took place at the court of Ferrara in 1497, the earliest major medical debate on the French Disease in which ‘elephantiasis’ was also involved. They have shown how the sources and resources employed by the university-trained physicians that took part in the debate determined their opinion on the matter and the medical treatment that was to be prescribed. In the context of the present study it would be useful to note that one of the three physicians that participated in the debate Sebastiano Dall’Aquila (c. 1440-c. 1510), who taught medicine at the universities of Ferrara and Pavia, drawing from Galenic theory and resting on the premises of Galenic diagnosis identified the French Disease with elephantiasis and, being a committed Neoplatonist, paid great attention to the ‘accidents of the soul’ and focused in particular on ‘exercise’ as a method of medical treatment.

Dall’Aquila, relying on Galen and on Neoplatonist writers, recommended ‘enjoyable exercises’; he claimed that many had recovered from disease through mere ‘enjoyment’ and he suggested that playing with a ball was an ideal exercise. Mercuriale on the other hand drawing from Latin and Byzantine medical writers and using also arguments of linguistic and historical nature distinguishes the two diseases. Mercuriale in his De arte gymnastica focused exclusively on the medical value of ‘exercise’ and drew heavily from the Galenic works on ‘exercise’ remaining also in the framework of Galenic treatment. However Mercuriale, following the post-Tridentine attitudes, distinguishes between mental and physical pleasure; he advocates the value of mental pleasure derived through exercise and he criticises mere physical pleasure.

Last but not least we come across again the element of ‘foreignness’ attributed in relation to the origin of elephantiasis. Mercuriale shares the opinion that the disease known as elephantiasis was imported to Italy from ‘elsewhere’, ‘outside’, from Egypt in particular; ‘always something new out of Africa’ was a proverb of the Romans and Pliny and Strabo provide abundant evidence of Roman beliefs about the repellent habits of the ‘strange’ peoples at the borders of the Empire. The attribution of a

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311 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox...op. cit., p. 83
312 idem, p. 14
foreign origin to a disease often reflected part of the physicians’ strategy for tackling the disease. Similarly, as noted previously, it was regarded that the French Disease came from ‘elsewhere’, from the ‘other’, whether this other was the ‘enemy’ (e.g. the French troops that invaded Italy) or the ‘New World’, etc. It is important to note that the university-trained physicians by shifting the blame for the outbreak of a disease to the ‘other’ emphasised the exceptionality of the disease offering in this way an ‘absolution’ to their professional group for not knowing how to cure it; in this way they also allowed the affirmation of the conventional norms of healthy behaviour of their patients and the appropriation of the doctor-patient relationship.

‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale drawing from Celsus’ *De medicina*, ‘in the time of Cornelius Celsus’ [AD 30] a woman died within the space of a few hours with her flesh fallen away from her generative organs, and the most celebrated physicians of the day failed to discover either the nature of the calamity [*genus mali*] or a remedy for it’. Here Mercuriale describes the clinical picture of a condition to which he refers as ‘*genus mali*’ (i.e. a kind of ‘harm’, ‘calamity’, ‘disaster’, ‘evil’). Here the use of the term ‘*genus*’ (that indicates the genus-species relationship discussed earlier in the chapter) in combination with the term ‘*malum*’ could be implying a ‘kind’ of a medical condition of which the nature did not fit the Galenic model of disease (hence the use of the term *malum*). At the same time Mercuriale enforces his suggestion regarding the ‘novelty’ of the particular medical condition by marking the failure of the physicians to identify its nature and prescribe a remedy for it. The lack of knowledge of the essential nature of a disease denoted the difficulty to classify it within the framework of Galenic theory and the consequent failure to prescribe a suitable medical treatment. An additional remark that should be made here and which is useful in addressing Mercuriale’s strategy of framing the ‘novelty’ of the French Disease is that the clinical picture of this ‘*genus mali*’ that Mercuriale describes assimilates the one of the French Disease.

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315 Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 17
‘Likewise’, Mercuriale continues drawing from Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia*, according to traditions the Emperor Tiberius was ‘the first of all to suffer from a pain of the colon (coli dolorem)’; ‘unless we believe’, Mercuriale continues, ‘that the ancients had known it under a different name’.\(^{316}\) Mercuriale notes that he thinks that Hippocrates himself had referred to it under the name *ilei doloris* (‘iliac pain’). Naming a disease was the final outcome of the rational operation of diagnosis in which the physician linked the elements he observed and through his authoritative medical knowledge arrived at certain conclusions. In this way the classification and nomination of a disease through diagnosis enabled the physician to identify, understand, and subsequently treat the disease by bringing it into his medical apparatus. For some physicians naming a disease was of great concern as they regarded that it revealed its essence. Some physicians drawing from Avicenna suggested that the name of a disease denoted its substance or quality and that the disease could be named from the cause or the effect of the disease, or from a related form (like elephantiasis); this could be called the ‘nominalist’ position.\(^{317}\)

There was also a more extreme ‘nominalist’ position according to which the name preceded the essence of the disease; thus in the absence of a ‘real name’ the essence, cause, etc. of a disease would be denoted as ‘unknown’. In this context Mercuriale’s remark regarding the name of the disease highlights an additional aspect of the debate regarding the ‘novelty’ of a disease and the French Disease in particular: some university-trained physicians argued that a disease that seemed to be “new” appeared as such only because the ancient authorities could have described it under a different name. This kind of reasoning was often employed in the argumentation against the ‘novelty’ of the French Disease; there were physicians who suggested that the French Disease was a known disease for which the ancients had used a different name that may have been lost and therefore might be found by looking at the ancient sources. The Hellenists in particular could not accept that the Greeks had failed to describe the French Disease; they argued that the barbarism of the intervening ages must have resulted in the corruption or destruction of the old texts, thus the name and description of the disease had been lost.\(^{318}\) Therefore, according to Mercuriale ‘novelty’ in the

\(^{316}\) *ibid*

\(^{317}\) Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, *The Great Pox…* op. cit., p. 259

\(^{318}\) *idem*, p. 95
case of ‘iliac pain’ refers to the time of its outbreak rather the nature of the disease; it is a disease with a history and the emperor Tiberius was the first patient to be afflicted.

Here we should also mark Mercuriale’s use of Pliny the Elder (c.a. 23-79 A.D.), one of the major Roman authoritative writers. The use of Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia* during the sixteenth century is indicative of the scientific attitudes of the era. It was considered the most important work on natural science by a Roman author; known and in use since the medieval times it underwent several phases of re-evaluation in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century. It was an influential work on natural science and as a long and learned survey of ancient scientific knowledge it also served as an encyclopaedic summary. It provided literary and linguistic material that appealed to the humanist philological interests of the fifteenth century, and it also provided scientific information and material (historical, geographical, etc.) that appealed to the broader humanist tastes and interests.\(^{319}\)

Pliny the Elder appears among the eleven most cited authors by Mercuriale in his *De arte gymnastica*.\(^{320}\) The sixteenth-century humanists’ approach to Pliny came to be dominated by the utilitarian requirements of medical practice and scientific investigation. The scholarly emphasis was placed on the scientific content, its accuracy and its truth rather than its philological and linguistic accuracy and its literary elegance. The dependence of the later Renaissance medical and scientific writers on the ancient authorities found other expressions such as the need to determine the truth about nature. Pliny drawing heavily and explicitly from earlier Greek and Roman authors provided a remarkable classical vocabulary of scientific words, and the humanists in their endeavour to translate the rich body of Greek scientific works into Latin drew much of the necessary Latin terminology from Pliny.

However, an inevitable difficulty for the reader who wished to acquire useful scientific knowledge from Pliny (or from any other ancient scientific writer) was the problem of terminology: how to relate the Latin terms found in Pliny’s work to the

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\(^{319}\) For the uses of Pliny the Elder’s *Naturalis Historia* in the early modern period see Charles G. Nauert, Jr., ‘Humanists, Scientists, and Pliny: Changing Approaches to a Classical Author’, pp. 72-85, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 84, No. 1. (Feb., 1979)

Greek and Latin terms. Mercuriale’s effort to crosscheck between the terms *coli dolorem* cited by Pliny the Elder and *ilei doloris* cited by Hippocrates should be seen in this context. Furthermore, it is important to note that Pliny’s ‘Natural History’ was employed in authoritative ways in the medical discourse regarding the ‘novelty’ of French Disease. In particular it served in the explanation of contagion –one of the most important features of the disease- with regard to the view of sympathies and antipathies; this theory and Pliny fitted well in the Neoplatonic intellectual framework that at the time ravelled the ‘orthodox’ Aristotelianism. In the same context of framing the ‘novelty’ of the French Disease it should be noted that the use of natural history for medical reasons (in order to understand the disease, diagnose it, make a prognosis, etc.) implied an ontological view of a disease: it was seen as a natural species with a vital cycle of birth, maturity, decline, and death. Therefore the use of Pliny’s ‘Natural History’ serves Mercuriale’s endeavour to articulate his claims regarding ‘novelty’.

‘Likewise’, Mercuriale continues drawing again from Pliny’s *Naturalis Historia*, ‘mentagra, stomachache and sceltybri illnesses [aegritudines] foreign to our land [nostro orbi advenae] were born in Pliny’s time’ he notes. Mercuriale refers to these conditions using the term *aegritudo*, which denoted ‘illness’, perhaps suggestive of the difficulty in classifying them as ‘diseases’. Here ‘novelty’ refers to the time of the outbreak of these illnesses in the Italian ground and they are mentioned as ‘foreign’ to the Italian land. An additional observation that must be made is Mercuriale’s reference to *mentagra*, which was another disease that became entangled in the medical debate on the identity and the novelty of the French Disease.

In particular, the arch-Hellenist Nicolò Leoniceno arguing against the novelty of the French Disease and attacking in parallel the authority of Pliny suggested that Pliny the Elder was wrong that *lichenas* -also known as *mentagra*- had never existed in Italy or in the rest of Europe before Tiberius Claudius’ principate. Leoniceno contradicting Pliny’s claim stated that the *lichenas* had been very common among the Greeks and that it had already been described in many Hippocratic works. Leoniceno suggested

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321 Charles G. Nauert, Jr., ‘Humanists, Scientists, and Pliny: Changing Approaches to a Classical Author’, op. cit., p. 81
323 idem, p. 12
324 Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 17
that it was impossible that it had afflicted Italy long before Tiberius when Rome had not yet extended its empire over other nations. According to Leoniceno during this period the disease did not have a name because Rome was frequented by very few Greek physicians who were actually its name-givers (nomeclatores). The lichenas, asserted Leoniceno, came to be better known only after Tiberius when Greek medicine and the Greek arts became dominant in Rome.\textsuperscript{325} Mercuriale on the other hand employing Pliny in authoritative ways asserts the novelty of mentagra.

‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale, drawing from Plutarch’s Symposiacks and Galen’s De locis affectis, according to Agatharchides (a Greek historian and geographer) ‘many people fell ill [aegrotantibus] around the Red Sea, and little snakes appeared which ate their thighs and forearms, taking refuge there as soon as they were touched, and entered the muscular parts, generating unbearable inflammation and torment’. He continues, noting that it was ‘a kind of disease [genus morbid] which Galen confesses he has only heard of from others but does not know either its nature or the cause that produces it’.\textsuperscript{326}

Here Mercuriale describes the clinical picture of an ‘illness’, an ‘ailment’ (aegritudo) and by employing in combination the terms morbus and genus emphasising at the same time the lack of authoritative knowledge on the nature and the causes of this ailment, he indicates the outbreak of a “new” kind (genus) of “disease” (morbus). Mercuriale’s reference to this disease is similar to an earlier one: in their treatises on the French Disease and relying on Avicenna, the university-trained physicians Pietro Trapolino (1451-1509), the ordinarius teacher of theory at Padua) and Benedetto Rinio of Venice (1485-c. 1565) referred to a ‘flesh-worm’, a worm that generated between the skin and the flesh and which they suggested was unknown to all authors including Galen.\textsuperscript{327} At the same time, this “new disease” is described by Mercuriale as an ontology, a separate entity that invades the human body from the outside, rather than an internal humoural imbalance or another kind of Galenic disease; this notion of disease is repeated in the following two examples of “new diseases” as we will see right in the following.

\textsuperscript{325} Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 74
\textsuperscript{326} Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 17
\textsuperscript{327} Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 266
‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale drawing from Plutarch’s *Symposiacs*, ‘somebody who suffered for a long time from difficult urination finally passed some barley chaff that had little leg-like projections’. \(^{328}\) ‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale, drawing again from Plutarch’s *Symposiacs*, a young Athenian man ‘emitted with much semen a very small serpent covered in hair which started walking at once with many legs’. \(^{329}\) As in the case of the previous “new disease” what is suggested in these two cases is the existence of a disease of a different sort, which did not fit into the Galenic genera (imbalance, malformation, dissolution of continuity): disease is being described as an invasive entity, as a ‘thing’ rather than a disposition of the body, a condition of the individual. Therefore in the last three cases ‘novelty’ is suggested in relation to the essential nature of the diseases reported and Mercuriale identifies them as “new diseases”. The above new diseases recall examples of earlier medical dissent that claimed that some diseases were really “new” and which were deliberately used to show that Galenic medicine was incomplete. \(^{330}\)

‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale drawing again from Plutarch’s *Symposiacs*, Timon’s grandmother ‘lay hidden in a cave for two months a year, indicating only through respiration that she was alive’. \(^{331}\) Here it seems that ‘novelty’ is again suggested in relation to the nature of the disease as what is described as the clinical picture of this condition is unsettling at least in terms of the Galenic understanding and classification of disease, in other words it does not fit the Galenic model of disease. ‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale drawing again from Plutarch’s *Symposiacs*, in Meloneia ‘there is a description of the symptom of a certain hepatic affection [affectionis hepaticae] which was such that no matter who was seized by it carefully watched house-mice and chased them’. \(^{332}\) Here it is the symptoms of this hepatic affection that indicated it as “new”. ‘Likewise’, continues Mercuriale drawing from Porphyry’s *De abstinentia ab esse animalium*, ‘the servant of a doctor Craterus was gripped by some new disease [novo quodam morbo] so that his flesh left his bones’. \(^{333}\) Here Mercuriale explicitly identifies a “new disease” employing the appropriate Latin terms: novus morbus. It is

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\(^{328}\) Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 17

\(^{329}\) ibid

\(^{330}\) Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, *The Great Pox*…op. cit., p. 266

\(^{331}\) Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 17

\(^{332}\) ibid

\(^{333}\) ibid
crucial to note that the clinical picture of this new disease is similar to that of the French Disease, particularly as the latter was manifested in its more advanced stage.

Mercuriale ends his account of the outbreaks of the “new diseases” with the French Disease, as the latest “new disease” to occur. ‘Likewise, in our own day’, concludes Mercuriale, ‘that accursed and almost lethal French plague [gallica lues] has started to trouble the whole world’; he notes that ‘we must not in any way blame Hippocrates for something that has happened either through the fault of later generations or by fate and because God has so ordained it’. Here there are a number of observations that must be made. First we should highlight the Latin name that Mercuriale chooses to use in order to refer to the French Disease. As will be discussed in the following, the use of the name gallica lues raises again the problem of attributing a name to a disease; most importantly each of the two terms (gallica and lues) bears its own connotations and has its own significance in Mercuriale’s strategy to address the French Disease as a “new disease”. Therefore we need to look each of the two terms separately.

In the context of the Galenic medical understanding a disease had to have a ‘real’ name, that is a classical one (Greek or at least Latin), in order to carry a meaning for the university-trained physician. A classical name would indicate that the disease had an identity and could be found among the ancient medical authorities and that its causes, nature, and treatment were known. To put it in a different way, a ‘real’ name indicated that the disease had a place in the system of ‘rational and learned’ medicine. On the other hand a vernacular name made no sense for the university-trained physician simply because it carried no meaning for him. However, there were many physicians for whom the attribution of a name was not a matter of great concern. These physicians followed Galen’s view according to which physicians should not worry about mere names but about ‘things’ (res) as the vernacular names were simple labels that denoted historical accidents; this approach can be called the ‘realist’ position.

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334 ibid
335 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox…op. cit., p. 259-260
336 ibid
There were also professional reasons on the part of the university-trained physicians that indicated the need to attribute a ‘real’ name to a disease: the vulgar vernacular names would lessen their authority because both the laity and the empirics used them. Regardless of the status of names most physicians – following Galen’s argument – agreed that the first item on the agenda for understanding and treating the French Disease was to understand its essence. In this context, the variation in the terms used by the Renaissance physicians in interpreting the nature of the disease reveals much about what they thought a ‘disease’ was.\textsuperscript{337} It is in the same context that Mercuriale’s reference to the French Disease as \textit{gallica lues} should be considered as it reflects his view of the essence, the nature of the disease.

Ideally, the French Disease would have a classical name so that the physician could draw it into his medical apparatus that distinguished him from other groups of medical practitioners and justified his claims of professional superiority.\textsuperscript{338} Although the early modern physicians could not agree on a ‘real name’ for the French Disease they agreed that the name \textit{morbus gallicus} (the name that proved to be the most popular) was not a ‘real’ name; rather, it was a common and a vulgar term that did not mean much. It was also historically accidental meaning nothing more than that the disease had first happened to the French troops of king Charles VIII when they invaded the Italian land in 1494, thus indicating circumstances that were already broadly known.\textsuperscript{339} The present study suggests that Mercuriale’s use of the adjective \textit{gallica} emerges from this consideration, making a part of his strategy to support his claim of the outbreak of “new diseases” and the identification of the French Disease as a “new disease” by employing arguments of a historical nature. The adjective \textit{gallica} implies a particular historical event, it denotes the time and place of the outbreak of the disease, its actual beginning, to put it in one word it denotes its ‘historicity’; it indicates that it is a disease that has not always existed, rather, there was a beginning to it and thus it is “new”.

As far as the Latin term \textit{lues} is concerned it is important to note that it was a general word meaning ‘plague’, ‘pest’, and ‘corruption’. The interpretation of the French

\begin{footnotesize}
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\textsuperscript{337} & \textit{ibid} \\
\textsuperscript{338} & Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, \textit{The Great Pox…op. cit.}, p. 118 \\
\textsuperscript{339} & \textit{idem}, p. 74
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Disease as a ‘plague’ - a term that indicated a particular nature, causality, and origin of a contagious disease- is characteristic of the explanations and understandings of the disease found in the earliest medical debate on the French Disease in the first part of the sixteenth century. The university-trained physicians identified, classified it as ‘plague’ precisely because of its high contagiousness and its rapid spread particularly in the first years of its outbreak. Nonetheless, it is important to take into consideration that by Mercuriale’s time the French Disease had become more of a chronic disease and its perception was changing: it was acquiring a new ontological status that was focused on is natural essence.

The French Disease was gradually seen as a ‘thing’ that had a past and a future rather than as a condition of the individual as in Galenic terms. In the framework of this conviction, the term *lues* was used to denote a notion of ‘disease’ that was different to the Galenic, complexional one: it was viewed as an entity that had an independent existence in the body. Just like the plague the French Disease did not fit the Galenic model of disease either. As Ian McLean highlights, ‘the unvarying clinical pattern of plague and certain fevers, and their regional character, raised the possibility that they were to be explained as entities, and not dispositions of the body’. The French physician Jean Fernel (1497-1558) in his search for a different explanation of the nature of the French Disease employed the term *lues venerea*, where the term *lues* denoted the corruptive power of a disease that inflicted the whole body, thus implying a different conception of disease – albeit still of Galenic origin. Furthermore, by describing the French Disease as *lues* – thus a contagious disease- Fernel implied that it was not self-generated and it didn’t occur due to an individual’s poor regimen of the six non-naturals. The present study suggests that Mercuriale’s use of the term *lues* should be addressed in this context, indicating a “new disease” that did not fit the Galenic model.

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344 idem, p. 238
The use of the term *lues* served another purpose too. It served the explanation of one of the critical features of the French Disease that the university-trained physicians had to resolve: its contagious nature. First and foremost physicians needed to decide what was being transmitted in contagion: was it a ‘cause’ in some traditional Galenic-Aristotelian sense or was it a ‘thing’?\(^{345}\) It was difficult for the ‘orthodox’ university-trained physicians to explain in the framework of the Galenic-Aristotelian theory (based on the elementary qualities regarding the complexion of the body and its parts, of food and of medicines, etc.) why and how so many people of different, individual complexions were affected at the same time and at different places.\(^{346}\) Furthermore by Mercuriale’s time there were many new theoretical positions about the mechanisms of contagion.\(^{347}\) Thus there was the urgency for the ‘orthodox’ physicians to offer an explanation for contagion and to medicalise the various less ‘orthodox’ theoretical positions; in other words it was crucial to draw them into the broad framework of the Galenic-Aristotelian medical learning. The use of the term *lues* in diagnosing a ‘disease’ served this purpose.

In this context, Mercuriale by noting that the *gallica lues* has started to affect the whole world -thus becoming ‘universal’- indicated the pestilential rather than the merely contagious nature of the disease. In order to explain the universal effect of a disease the university-trained physicians looked for external causes as well. Among these we find God’s will -also indicated by Mercuriale- that was identified as the *prima causa* (the first, primitive cause of the outbreak of the disease) and served to explain its pestilential nature. Divine providence came first, however it was thought that it worked through natural causes (disorders in the heavens, earthquakes, etc.) which all produced the *miasma*, the bad air of an infected place, which was considered as the immediate cause of a disease that was pestilential. It was believed that the *miasma* could be absorbed through the pores of the healthy, picked up through proximity to the sick, transported by clothes, bedding, etc.; thus, the disease could be transmitted from place to place and by person to person. In this way the universality of the causes attributed to the French Disease also explained why so

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\(^{345}\) *idem*, p. 251
\(^{346}\) *idem*, pp. 235-236
\(^{347}\) *idem*, pp. 246-255
many people were ill at the same time; in other words it was considered that a pestilential disease was the effect of universal causes.\footnote{348}

Mercuriale indicates a three-fold causation (the fault of later generations, fate, and God’s ordainment) for the outbreak of the French Disease, which appears to be similar to types of causation attributed by other Renaissance physicians who sought to distribute causes across the whole field of creation and they indicated four classes of cause: God; secondary causes (the Aristotelian quartet of final, material, formal and efficient) in the operation of which God alone can intervene; the will of man (a final cause); and chance.\footnote{349} This type of causation indicated a loosening of the physical rules by which a cause was identified, an attitude characteristic of the era in which the Galenic causality was being severely criticised and debated.\footnote{350}

An additional remark that must be made is that apart from the scientific content and connotations the term lues also entailed strong moral connotations that where shared among the medical men and laity alike. The French Disease, aaddressed in the early modern interpretative framework of plague, was seen as a sign of moral depravity, a scourge of divine origin due to the sins of mankind, the result of sinful behaviour in general and/or of specific misdeeds of the time or place of an epidemic. The link between disease and sin was particularly strong in the case of the French Disease: people thought that the sever disfigurement (the ulcers, the baldness, the collapsed noses, etc.) caused by the disease could not merely be a symptom; it was surely the sign of sin and moral corruption, a sign of the wickedness that had caused God’s wrath to punish mankind.\footnote{351}

There was little debate among the sixteenth-century pox treatises regarding the \textit{prima causa} of the French Disease: in almost all of them the belief that the outbreak of the disease was the will of God punishing mankind for its sins was a \textit{topos.}\footnote{352} From this point on, what differentiated these treatises was the writers’ opinion as to which sin in particular was the cause for this divine punishment: for some it was drunkenness, for

\footnote{348} idem, p. 124
\footnote{349} Ian Maclean, \textit{Logic, Signs and Nature…op. cit.}, pp. 262-264
\footnote{350} idem, pp. 262-265
\footnote{351} See ‘Introduction’ by Kevin Siena in Kevin Siena (ed.), \textit{Sins of the Flesh…op. cit.}, p. 7
\footnote{352} Claudia Stein, \textit{Negotiating the French Disease in Early Modern Germany}, transl. in English by Franz Steiner, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 23-24
others it was fornication, and yet others believed it to be gambling, etc.\textsuperscript{353} For the Roman Catholic Church one such misdeed-relevant to the Counter-Reformation attitudes- was Protestantism and Calvinism that were perceived by the Roman Catholic Church as atheism or heresy.\textsuperscript{354} Mercuriale’s reference to the French Disease in terms of \textit{lues} demonstrates that he shared this interpretation regarding the causes of the disease. Therefore we see that even in the post-Tridentine period the notions of the divine were inseparable from the medical (and other areas) of thinking, just as the earlier perceptions of the French Disease incorporated the notion that it was a punishment from God.\textsuperscript{355}

The assessment of the French Disease in terms of plague enhanced these attitudes, as the fear of transmission and contagion obviously had decisive consequences for action defining concepts of both prevention and therapy. Contagion implied contact and the existence of a poison or taint of some sort that passed from the ill to the healthy perhaps indirectly or through the air or contaminated objects. It was also in this respect that the French Disease resembled the plague that prompted the most vigorous strategies of prevention by communities and individuals.\textsuperscript{356} There is no doubt that the plague regulations were designed as more than measures against contagion: they constituted also methods of social control.\textsuperscript{357} In these terms the diagnosis of the French Disease as pestilential bore implications and it informed decisively the health strategies and policies of the city authorities, governors, court physicians, the city’s physicians, etc.

The religious and moral interpretations of the French Disease raised further implications in this respect. It is important to take into consideration that the French Disease contributed to the increasingly puritanical attitudes of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, which were undoubtedly part of the larger drift towards moral purification that was sought in the time of religious and spiritual crisis. There was a strong connection between the French Disease and the moral policy campaigns that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{353} \textit{ibid}
  \item \textsuperscript{355} Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, \textit{The Great Pox...op. cit.}, p. 241
  \item \textsuperscript{356} \textit{idem}, p. 234
  \item \textsuperscript{357} Paul Slack, ‘Responses to Plague in Early Modern Europe: The Implications of Public Health’, in Arien Mack (ed.), \textit{In Time of Plague...op. cit.}, p. 115-125
\end{itemize}
were preventive in their nature. For instance, a disease like the French Disease that was often (but not exclusively) connected to ‘illicit’ (according to the contemporary moral order) sexual activity put coitus in the same category as the alehouses, gambling, etc. which were considered as sources of immorality and social disorder that needed to be controlled, if not banished. The present study suggests that the medical nature, function, and value of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ should be addressed in terms of strategies of control in the post-Tridentine context since –as will be discussed in the following chapter- discipline, order, and control of both body and soul are values that pertain Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment.

It is important to note that even when a disease was routinely assumed to be caused by ‘God’s will’, the ‘Lord’s wrath’, or ‘occult influences’ as in the case of the plague people looked for the behaviour that was to blame for such a divine retribution. In a situation of communal anxiety as in the case of an epidemic locating the blame for the outbreak of a disease represents a strategy of control: if responsibility can be attributed then something can be done (e.g. the imposition of discipline, prudence, isolation). Thus locating blame is in effect a quest for order and certainty in a disordered and unsure situation. Blame emerges as a social and political construct, a reflection of the worldviews, social stereotypes, and political biases that are dominant at a given time.

The patterns of blame that prevail in different historical periods reflect the social stereotypes, fears and political biases that are associated with threats of social or political change. In Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica blaming people’s sinful lifestyle, faults and attributing the outbreak of the French Disease to God’s ordainment reflects the piety of the Counter-Reformation Christian era and the calls for the moral, spiritual purification and Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of preventive medical treatment should be seen in this context as it addressed

358 See ‘Introduction’ by Kevin Siena in Kevin Siena (ed.), Sins of the Flesh...op. cit., p. 18
359 Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, The Great Pox...op. cit., pp. 34-36
both the body and the soul favouring and promoting –as will be discussed analytically in the following chapter- the purging, the purification of both. Taking into consideration how the plague brought about measures of preventive action (control of activities, quarantines, banning and/or restrictions of public assemblies, popular festivities, etc.) and in general measures of regulation and monitoring (gradually leading to the extension of the power of the state), and considering Charles Rosenberg’s remark that ‘epidemics serve as natural sampling devices, mirrors held up to society in which more general patterns of social values and attitudes appear in sharp relief’\(^{363}\) Mercuriale’s reference to *gallica lues* is indicative of the nature and value of his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment in the context of post-Tridentine Rome.

To conclude this chapter, it should be noted that overall the university-trained physicians had good reasons for preserving the Galenic-Aristotelian rationality: medical theory was not only an intellectual tool that guided medical practice, it was also a guarantee to society that the physician was learned and that he based his medicine on fundamental principles. Competition with other medical practitioners – particularly in the time of epidemic diseases – forced the learned physician to emphasize his own scholarship as evidence of his superiority.\(^{364}\) Traditional natural philosophy was still in place in the medical schools although under increasing attack from the outside.\(^{365}\) However, by the 1570s many medical writers had decided that the French Disease was an entity in itself and contagious in a material way; European medical thinking was starting to change as a result of the experience of these two epidemics: the plague and the French Disease.\(^{366}\)

According to Nancy Siraisi the issue of the possible existence of diseases that were inexplicable in terms of complexion emerged more clearly and was the subject of intensive discussion during the sixteenth century partly as a result of the French Disease. By that time there was a somewhat greater willingness to admit the possibility of idiosyncratic, ‘specific’ diseases. Nevertheless, the innovative


\(^{364}\) Jon Arrizabalaga, John Henderson and Roger French, *The Great Pox…* op. cit., p.236

\(^{365}\) *idem*, p. 272

\(^{366}\) *idem*, p. 251
explanations that were devised still took as their starting point the ideas formulated by the ancient authorities: the theory that some diseases might affect the ‘total substance’ of the body rather than its temperament was a different application of an explanation originally provided by Galen for the idiosyncratic action of a few medicinal substances. The theoretical writings continued to analyse diseases according to their complexional characteristics; however, there were signs of the modification, rather than the rejection, of the existing system of medical knowledge.367

In this respect, the present study suggests that Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the proliferation of “new diseases” and the French Disease as a “new disease” reflects the above attitude. On one hand Mercuriale’s suggestion emerges as paradigmatic of the sixteenth-century intellectual framework for the understanding and the framing of new diseases, as it features the numerous ways in which ‘novelty’ was –implicitly or explicitly- denoted, shaped, and framed by sixteenth-century university-trained physicians: by employing the rhetoric of the ‘otherness’ and ‘foreignness’; by using arguments of historical nature that denoted the beginning, the historical actuality of a disease; by implying the changing nature of ‘known’ diseases; by indicating the use of different names for diseases by the ancient authorities; by marking the lack of authoritative medical knowledge regarding the nature and the treatment of (new) diseases; by implying the inexplicable nature of the (new) diseases and the difficulty to identify and classify them in the traditional Galenic terms; by employing specific terms that had a particular scientific content and connotations (such as lues); by employing in authoritative ways classical writers (such as Pliny the Elder) of whose scientific works supported one view or the other.

Furthermore looking into the text it should be noted that what Mercuriale provides the reader with is in fact a series of case histories. The use of case histories (one of the glories of Hippocratic medicine) serves Mercuriale’s attempt to denote ‘novelty’ as case histories mark the appearance of the form by which the physician tries to deal with an individual disease (rather than an individual patient) providing the description of an unusual case, its symptoms, and its outcome; however this approach lacked in the details regarding the patient’s regimen and therapy.368 Last but not least, it is

368 For the connection between notions of disease and case histories see Owsei Temkin, ‘The Scientific Approach to Disease: Specific Entity and Individual Sickness’, in Arthur L. Caplan, H.Tristan
crucial to mark that Mercuriale also suggests the outbreak of ‘future diseases’ (futuros morbos),\textsuperscript{369} such a suggestion enhances the suggestion regarding the outbreak of “new diseases” and apparently the ontological view of ‘disease’ as, according to this view, diseases are ‘things’ with histories and futures rather than conditions of the individual.

The present study suggests that a crucial issue that Mercuriale raises through his suggestion of the outbreak and the proliferation of the “new diseases” -and the outbreak of “future diseases”- is the (in)ability to treat diseases of which the nature is ‘new’, ‘unknown’, since –as it has been marked earlier in this chapter- the understanding of the nature, the essence of the disease allowed and decisively defined its treatment. Mercuriale in his suggestion regarding the “new diseases” points out the lack of ancient, authoritative knowledge of the nature of the “new diseases” and subsequently the lack of respective remedy, cure. The present study suggests that it is against this lack of knowledge of the “new” and the “future diseases” and –subsequently- the lack of a respective treatment (particularly curative) that Mercuriale promotes his ‘medical gymnastics’, a preventive method of medical treatment, as an ideal method of medical treatment. The issue of a suitable medical treatment emerges not only from the content of Mercuriale’s suggestion but also by it position in the text, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

On the other hand Mercuriale relies on the premises of Galenic theory in order to explain the causality of the “new diseases”, which -as was demonstrated earlier in this chapter- he addresses in terms of regimen and lifestyle. As the causes of a disease made a part of its identity, nature, Mercuriale is able to manage the “new diseases” in ‘rational and learned’ ways by addressing the causes in a broad Galenic scheme and this enables him subsequently to prescribe a suitable method of medical treatment. It was only in the context of ‘rational and learned’ medicine that the university-trained physician could initiate the practical part of medicine and consider prevention and cure in a way that distinguished him from the empirics, and other ‘unqualified’ medical practitioners who were accused by the ‘orthodox’ university-trained physicians of being ‘unorthodox’ in their medical thinking and practices. As will be discussed in the following chapter Mercuriale prescribes the ‘medical gymnastics’ as

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{369} Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 23
\end{flushleft}
a method of medial treatment that treats the causes of disease and not merely its symptoms, separating in this way his professional status and authority from the empirics and other medical practitioners who prescribed the so-called ‘specifics’ which, according to the university-trained physicians, were based only on experience (rather than authoritative knowledge and reasoning). The ‘medical gymnastics’ based on Galenic teaching and theory constituted a ‘regular’, ‘canonical’, ‘rational’ method of medical treatment that did not rely solely on experience; the combination of ‘learning’, ‘reason’, and ‘experience’ (regarded again more through the ancient texts rather than actual observation) which according to Mercuriale pertains De arte gymnastica constitutes his ‘medical gymnastics’ an ideal method of medical treatment.

In addition, it should be noted that the efficacy of a method of medical treatment was to be determined in relation to the perceived causes of a disease but also in relation to socio-cultural expectations regarding ‘cure’. It is important to mark that in the De arte gymnastica it appears that Mercuriale is interested in ‘why’ there is a proliferation – rather than a mere outbreak- of “new diseases” and not so much in ‘how’ people fell sick. In the case of the French Disease in particular it appears that Mercuriale is interested more in its nature becoming pestilential (as the term lues suggests) rather than in the theories regarding the origin of the disease. What needs to be explained is the proliferation of the “new diseases” and their epidemic, pestilential nature. As noted earlier in this chapter according to Mercuriale the causes of the proliferation of the “new diseases” and the pestilential nature of the French Disease is twofold: both physiological and socio-cultural. Mercuriale indicates the imbalanced regimen as responsible for the proliferation of the “new diseases” and at the same time the deviant, sinful lifestyle, which subsequently prompted God’s wrath. In these terms in Mercuriale’s medical discourse the “new diseases” are interpreted as a form of divine punishment rather than mere physiological phenomena. The authoritative use of Seneca and Plutarch in presenting the causes of the “new diseases” adheres to the spiritual-moral views of disease.

The present study suggests that this link of the physiological and the moral aspect of the “new diseases” decisively informs Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method

370 The ‘specifics’ were medicines that corresponded to the ‘ontological’ view of disease, hence aiming at the disease rather than the patient.
of medical treatment and it gives it a reformist character, nature, making it very pertinent in the post-Tridentine context: it is a medical treatment that —as will be discussed in the following chapter— treats the body but it also responds to the calls of the Roman Catholic Church for spiritual reform and healing. It is not a merely amoral and secular method of medical treatment such as drugs perhaps; rather, the control of both body and the soul —around which Mercuriale builds the medical value and efficacy of his medical gymnastics— corresponds on the one hand to the post-Tridentine aspirations for control of human conduct and on the other to the medical need to control the pestilential nature of the French Disease and in general the proliferation of the “new diseases” and the outbreak of “future diseases”. In this respect it is important to note that the belief in the divine origin of disease as the result of immorality incorporated the idea of infection and encouraged purificatory practices; the ‘medical gymnastics’ should be seen in this context as ‘exercise’ had in fact a purging, cleansing effect (through sweating). The Counter-Reformation Church adopted this idea; more blame was put on the sick themselves and confession was added to the ancient purificatory rites and exorcisms.371

Therefore we see how Mercuriale’s perception of ‘disease’, ‘novelty’, disease causality, and the framing of the French Disease raise the issue of the need for a suitable —and efficient— method of medical treatment. The next chapter discusses analytically Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a ‘rational and learned’ method of medical treatment that addressing an elite audience responded to the issues raised by the “new” and the “future diseases” and the calls of the Counter-Reformation Church alike.

Chapter 4. Recovering the ‘true’ art of gymnastics: Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical art and method of medical treatment

Introduction

The present study considers that Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the rise of “new diseases” and the French Disease as a “new disease” is pivotal in his endeavour to shape and promote his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a valuable medical art and method of medical treatment. As demonstrated in the previous chapter Mercuriale in his suggestion regarding the “new diseases” raises the issue of the incapability of physicians to provide a cure for the “new” and the “future diseases” due to the lack of knowledge of their nature. Apart from the content of Mercuriale’s suggestion the present study considers that it is also the placement of the suggestion in the text of the De arte gymnastica that enhances Mercuriale’s endeavour to promote his “medical gymnastics” as a valuable medical art and method of medical treatment. As will be discussed later in this chapter the suggestion regarding the “new diseases” is placed within the context of a comparison that Mercuriale makes between medicina conservativa and medicina curativa; in this comparison Mercuriale highlights the medical value and the superiority of the conservative medicine and the ‘medical gymnastics’ as part of it- in comparison to curative medicine.

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate the following: i) how Mercuriale, in recovering -what he calls- the ‘true’ art of gymnastics (gymnastica vera)\(^{372}\), shapes his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical art and a legitimate part of hygiene; and ii) how he shapes the medical nature, value, function, and efficacy of his ‘medical gymnastics’, promoting it as an ideal method of medical treatment. The present study suggests that through his discourse on the ‘medical gymnastics’ Mercuriale responded to contemporary issues regarding the organisation, the scientific status, and the practical value of hygiene.\(^{373}\) In addition, the present study suggests that his medical discourse reflects broader socio-cultural issues and concerns that were raised in the Counter-

\(^{372}\) Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. op. cit., p. 171

Reformation era regarding physical activities/practices, corresponding to the calls of the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church for decorous comportment and spiritual healing.

The present study considering Mercuriale’s post as Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court-physician suggestst that his medical discourse reflects how, in the sixteenth-century Roman context, the Cardinal’s patronage emerged as an institution of medical-scientific culture: Mercuriale compiled his *De arte gymnastica* by moving between the space of the Cardinal’s court and other centres of intellectual activity (such as the *Accademia degli Sdegnati*) in mid sixteenth-century Rome, and in his treatise he recovers the ‘true’ art of gymnastics as a medical art and method of medical treatment; the epistemological and social legitimacy of his “medical gymnastics” –the ‘true’ art of gymnastics- is achieved under the Cardinal’s patronage in a framework in which medical humanism and the intellectual-cultural interests of the Cardinal and his circle met with the calls, demands, and aspirations of the post-Tridentine Roman Catholic Church.

The first part of this chapter follows Mercuriale’s steps in shaping the ‘true’ art of gymnastics as a medical art and a legitimate part of *medicina conservativa*. The second part of this chapter explores the ways Mercurialae shapes the nature, value, and efficacy of his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment. The present study suggests that in both cases the distinction between the three types of gymnastics (the ‘medical gymnastics’, the military, and the ‘athletic gymnastics’) and particualry the distiction between the ‘medical gymnastics’ and the athletics is crucial in Mercuriale’s endeavour to promote the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a noble (medical) art and a decorous method of medical treatment suitable for his elite audience in post-Tridentine Rome. Mercuriale’s insistence on this distinction and the attack against both athletics and professional athletes should be viewed in a historical context which on the one hand criticised physical culture in moral and religious terms and on the other saw the flourish of athletic, training manuals that employed the ‘new’ mathematic and mechanical philosophies (that among other things rivalled the
Aristotelian teaching on motion and the soul) disregarding the humanist values (e.g. the body-soul interaction). 374

4.1 The shaping of ‘gymnastics’ as a medical art and part of medicina conservativa

The sixteenth century witnessed the publishing of medical treatises from university-trained physicians, which dealt with each of the six non-naturals. In an era when the principles of Galenic hygiene (particularly the organizing theory of the six non-naturals) were shared among the university-trained physicians, the various lay healers, and the laity alike, and during which there was a flourishing of health books written in the vernacular by various lay healers, the ‘rational and learned’ physicians with their medical writings demonstrated that hygiene was not a matter of mere empiricism; rather, it had its own rationale and doctrine which only they were qualified to understand and apply accordingly.\(^{375}\) Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica*, focusing exclusively on ‘exercise’ (from the pair ‘motion/exercise and rest’ of the six non-naturals) is one such treatise. As will be discussed in the following, in his *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale defines in ‘rational and learned’ terms the ‘true’ art of exercise or gymnastics and its content. In particular Mercuriale, trying to revive the bonds and the continuity with the glorious Roman past and the city of ancient Rome, indicates the Greco-Roman exercises as the content of the ‘true’ art of gymnastics. After all, antiquity as a source gave prestige and status since not all physical activities/practices were considered ‘appropriate’ for the upper social classes; anything that did not belong to the ancient *exemplum* was not decorous enough.

Earlier than Mercuriale, in 1533, the Spanish physician Cristóbal Méndez (1500-1561) wrote a treatise entitled *Libro de exercicio corporal* (‘Book of Bodily Exercise’), which appears to have been the first treatise to deal with ‘exercise’ alone advocating its medical benefits. Méndez’s book was written in the vernacular and addressed the laity. It was partly based on his own experience and those of his acquaintances and partly on references to classical authors (Aristotle, Celsus, Pliny, etc.), above all Galen.\(^{376}\) On the other hand, writing after Mercuriale, the Veronese physician Marsiglio Cagnati (1543-1612) who had a successful career in Rome as a professor of medicine and as practicing physician for popes, Cardinals, nobles, and the Society of Jesus, suggested otherwise. Cagnati dealt with ‘gymnastics’ in the

\(^{375}\) Heikki Mikkeli, *Hygiene in the Early Modern*…op. cit., pp. 61-65

second book of his *De sanitate tuenda* (Padua, 1605). In this work, which was a systematic study on physical culture and the safeguarding of health, Cagnati suggested the substantial diversity and the subordinate position of gymnastics in relation to medicine.\(^{377}\)

It is important to take into consideration that in the second half of the sixteenth century there were developments in the organisation of the conservative part of learned medicine, following the recovery of the ancient dietetical texts by the medical humanists\(^{378}\) during the first half of the sixteenth century and the assimilation of the Arabic medical sources later in the century.\(^{379}\) One issue that was raised in the framework of these developments was which part of medicine - the conservative or the curative - was the primary and the nobler one. The idea of the primacy and nobility of conservative medicine gained popularity, however it was not unanimously accepted. Physicians contemporary to Mercuriale, such as Giulio Alessandrini (1506-1590) in his *Salubrum, sive de sanitate tuneda* (1575) and Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576) in his *De sanitate tuenda opus* (1560), stated that the conservative part of medicine was nobler as it dealt with the prevention of diseases. On the other hand, the physician Giovanni Argenterio (1513-1527) in his commentary on Galen’s *Ars medica* addressing the same question noted that in the last chapter of *Ad Thrasybulum* Galen stated that the curative part was invented first, thus it was of primary importance, and that in the same work he had also questioned whether the conservative part even belonged to medicine at all and not merely to gymnastics; in these terms, Argenterio concluded, the conservative part of medicine was clearly less noble and less important than the curative part.\(^{380}\) In his *De arte gymnastica*, as will be discussed in the following, Mercuriale explicitly identifies the primacy of conservative medicine and the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a legitimate sub-discipline of conservative medicine.

\(^{377}\) Heikki Mikkeli, *Hygiene in the Early Modern...* op. cit., p. 61

\(^{378}\) According to Vivian Nutton: ‘Humanist medicine may be defined as that movement in medicine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries which sought to purify medicine of complex and unnecessary accretions by a return to the classical sources of humoural therapy, and in particular to Hippocrates and his great systematic interpreter, Galen. It was a movement at one and the same time aesthetic, practical, academic, progressive, at least in the context of the first half of the sixteenth century, and emotion.’ See Vivian Nutton, (1979), “John Caius and the Linacre Tradition”, pp. 373-391, in *Medical History* 23, p. 374

\(^{379}\) For the recovery and assimilation of the Arabic writings see Nancy Siraisi, *Avicenna in Renaissance Italy. The Canon and Medical Teaching in Italian Universities after 1500*, (Princeton University Press, 1987)

Furthermore it is important to consider that in addition to the endeavour of the Roman Catholic Church to distinguish ‘true’ from ‘false’ belief and heresy we are dealing with a period when, according to David Gentilcore, ‘from the point of view of the elites the popular culture with which they were in such close contact could be considered something quite distinct, quite other; it was this very closeness that made it so threatening’. According to Gentilcore the learned physicians – as members of the social elite – in their medical writings tried to identify the ‘vulgar’ errors in medical theory and practice in analogy to contemporary religious literature that aimed to locate and identify ‘superstitious’, ‘pagan’ beliefs so as to eliminate or Christianize them. The university-trained physicians tried to ‘correct’ medicine and denounce the practices of quacks, charlatans, midwives, and other lay medical practitioners.

In this context we should also consider Mercuriale’s endeavour –addressing the Roman elite- to recover the ‘true’ art of gymnastics and indicate the ‘rational and learned’ nature of the ‘medical gymnastics’ distinguishing it from mere physical training and athletics. In fact athletics, gymnastics, games, etc. reflect how the barriers between the social classes became permeable: the movement of physical activities/practices up and down the social ladder and into the urban elite (for example ball games and tournaments moved from the countryside to the urban spaces) was symptomatic of much larger social transformations. In these terms, Mercuriale’s emphasis on the distinction between the ‘medical gymnastics’ and athletics is crucial considering that the athletic practices had become an inseparable dimension of the nobleman’s comportment (thus one of his defining characteristics) and that during the sixteenth century there was an emergence of a class of professional athletes (e.g. fencers, ball players, gymnasts, acrobats, etc.) in parallel to the publication of gymnastic, athletic, training manuals. In Mercuriale’s medical discourse, as will be demonstrated in the following, medicine serves the refinement, the ennoblement of popular, ‘inappropriate’ aspects of physical culture (ancient and contemporary), and the sublimation of its pagan roots that the Roman Catholic Church considered immoral and corrupt.

382 John McClelland, Body and Mind: Sport in Europe from the Roman Empire to the Renaissance, (Routledge, 2007), p. 125
383 Idem
It is in the light of these developments, debates, and parameters that the present study suggests that Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical art and method of medical treatment should be further explored. The necessity of this task and its and significance in historical terms lie in the following considerations: i) in his De arte gymnastica Mercuriale attempts the recovery of the ‘true’ art of gymnastics which, according to his view, is essentially medical (rather than athletic or military) and ancient in its origin; ii) similarly, according to Mercuriale, ‘true’ exercise is ‘medical exercise’, iii) in his De arte gymnastica Mercuriale is neither prescribing a regimen in which ‘exercise’ would also be included nor is he discussing merely the medical value of ‘exercise’; rather, he focuses exclusively on ‘exercise’ which in his medical discourse is built into a medical art and part of hygiene in its own right.

**Gymnastics as an ‘art’ and a ‘science’**

The sixteenth century witnessed the publication of treatises on a series of physical activities/practices (hunting, dancing, fencing, horsemanship, swimming, ball games, duelling, etc.). In these treatises athletics, games, etc. started to take a more concrete and organized form as a learned subject matter rather than a mere physical endeavour and as such they were introduced into the training programmes of the ruling-class. The writers of these treatises addressed the elite instructing their patrons and their offspring how to achieve athletic expertise and display their physical prowess in front of an -at least limited- audience. In this respect Castiglione’s Libro del cortegiano (‘Book of the Courtier’), one of the most influential books published in Venice in 1528, expresses best the ethic that started to emerge in the training programmes for the members of the elite: although competitiveness was still present according to Castiglione the most important thing for a noble was to ride, joust, swim, and play ball games with sprezzatura, a term which is to be explained as a nonchalance that demonstrated to spectators the noble’s superior physical and athletic skills. For an analysis of the term ‘sprezzatura’ see William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 224-226
defined the manners, mores, and the abilities required from the ‘modern’ upper-class male; among these requirements physical skills and dexterity had a prominent role.\textsuperscript{385}

Such treatises were in fact training, instructional manuals of athletic skill and strength. They were descriptive and also prescriptive in the sense that they established a set of rules and rational principles for the practice of the athletic activity they were describing, indicating also a set of tactics. They drew from geometry (teaching harmony, proportion, fixed measurements, composition, tempo to human movement) and employed arithmetic analysis (e.g. they calculated parameters of the athletic activity such as the number of players, the size of the space needed, the way to count the score, etc.). These treatises often included images that depicted the different gestures, movements featured in a physical activity, and diagrams (e.g. in treatises of tennis diagrams offered a geometrical analysis of a tennis ball ricocheting off the walls and floor)\textsuperscript{386} that had an instructive, informative role.

Apart from few exceptions the writers of these instructional manuals were not professionals in the athletic activity they analyzed but they were learned outsiders bringing into athletic activity the insights and methodologies of other disciplines such as geometry and mathematics.\textsuperscript{387} They tried to demonstrate that a physical activity conducted for mere pleasure could be analyzed and deconstructed in its component parts just like scientific phenomena and purely intellectual pursuits, and that they could be apprehended intellectually and executed by applying concepts that were based on reason and personal experience.\textsuperscript{388} For example in such treatises fencing was rationalized and through a geometrical analysis it was turned into a branch of abstract mathematics free of material contingencies. In parallel, in treatises on physical activities/practices that were under moral and religious scrutiny (such as duel and other types of combat) due to their violent nature that put in danger the lives of the participants the motivation of writers to establish a set of regulations also served to set the grounds on which such activities could be considered legitimate for nobles to be engaged in.\textsuperscript{389}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{385} John McClelland, \textit{Body and Mind…}\op. cit., pp. 50-51
\textsuperscript{386} \textit{idem}, p. 54
\textsuperscript{387} \textit{idem}, p. 55
\textsuperscript{388} \textit{idem}, p. 21
\textsuperscript{389} \textit{idem}, p. 58
\end{footnotes}
Against this background Mercuriale articulates the ‘medical gymnastics’ as an ‘art’ and ‘science’ distinguishing it from mere physical training and also distinguishing the gymnast from the trainer according to Galenic and Aristotelian criteria. In Book I, Chapter III, *Quid sit gymnastica et quotuplex* (‘What gymnastics is and how many parts of it there are) Mercuriale employs the authorities of Galen and Aristotle to shape gymnastics as an ‘art’ and ‘science’. He notes that although there is a definition excellently deployed by Plato, nevertheless Galen has put it more succinctly; employing, therefore, Galen’s definition Mercuriale marks that gymnastics is ‘that which has acquired knowledge of the faculties of all forms of exercise, or rather, the gymnastic art is the science (scientia) of the efficacy of all forms of exercise’.\(^{390}\)

Mercuriale continues elaborating on the definition given by Galen in order to support his argument, noting that Galen was taking ‘science’ not in a specific but in its common meaning as most authors do because ‘gymnastics is excluded from science in the true sense in so far as it has an activity as its goal, whereas the sciences do not aim at an activity, although, on the other hand, they very often consider the causes of exercising one’s strength’.\(^{391}\) Moreover, Mercuriale continues, it must be noted that through this definition ‘Galen has distinguished gymnastics from physical training, because the former explores and governs, like a queen, all the qualities of exercise and their causes, while the latter is like an attendant to it’.\(^{392}\)

Galen, continues Mercuriale, strives to separate gymnastics from physical training and similarly the gymnast from the physical trainer, arguing that one has the name of gymnastics because it pays ‘exclusive attention to knowledge of the qualities of exercise which is nobler than the performance itself’, ‘whereas’, continues Mercuriale, ‘physical training is named after the very act of exercising, insofar as it is less noble’.\(^{393}\) Mercuriale notes that it is as if Galen had said that one is speculative, judgemental and reflective and the other practical, ‘although every now and then people refer to the latter by the single terms “gymnastics”’:\(^{394}\) quite often, both the speculative and the practical parts of medicine are referred to by the single term ‘medicine’ Mercuriale notes.\(^{394}\)

\(^{390}\) *Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...* op. cit., p.26

\(^{391}\) *ibid*, p. 27

\(^{392}\) *ibid*

\(^{393}\) *ibid*

\(^{394}\) *ibid*
Subsequently, Mercuriale quotes Aristotle’s definition (from ‘Politics’, Book IV) in the endeavour to shape the ‘scientific’ nature of gymnastics: ‘in all practical disciplines and branches of knowledge whose subject matter is not a part but a whole, and is itself entirely concerned with one class of objects, each one has to consider which kind of training is appropriate for which kind of body which kind is the best, for the best kind of training must be the one which suits the naturally best endowed and best equipped body, and which single type of training is best for most, if not all, types of body for this is also the business of gymnastics’.395 ‘Furthermore’, Mercuriale continues to quote Aristotle, ‘if someone does not strive for the physical trainer no less than the gymnastic expert needed for a competition, the physical trainer no less than the gymnastic expert has the capacity to deliver this too’.396 Right after Mercuriale reconciles the two authorities marking that ‘through these words it appears with sufficient clarity that Aristotle proclaimed gymnastics to be a science in the same way as Galen, and also distinguished it from physical training’.397

Mercuriale elaborates on the ancient authorities’ definition of ‘gymnastics’ so as to further distinguish between ‘gymnastics’ and ‘physical training’: ‘the art of gymnastics is a discipline which considers the faculties of all exercises and demonstrates their variety in practice, either for the sake of maintaining good health or for the sake of acquiring and preserving a sound physical constitution’. ‘I have declared’, Mercuriale continues, ‘that this is the aim of this art, not just to give as full and complete a definition as possible, but also to show that this science is different from others that take the same form’.398 In these terms, Mercuriale identifies the ‘art of gymnastics’ with the ‘medical gymnastics’ as he attributes the maintenance and/or obtainment of health as the aim of the ‘art of gymnastics’.

Mercuriale insists on the distinction between the science of ‘medical gymnastics’ and others, as he says, that take the same form (meaning the athletic and the military gymnastics) although they share the same exercises; employing the authority of Aristotle he claims ‘they greatly differ from one another and there is no other reason for this difference than their individual aims, and Aristotle has written that all

395 idem, p. 28
396 ibid
397 idem, p. 29
398 ibid
potentialities for action are distinguished by their aim’. Last but not least, we should note that in Book II, Chapter I, *Quid sit exercitatio et quomodo differat a labore et motu* (‘What exercise is and how it differs from work and movement’) Mercuriale claims that gymnastics is an ‘art that understands the properties of all forms of exercise, and can explain their various types in action for the benefit of health’; To articulate his argument Mercuriale quotes Aristotle: ‘an art is a correct method of action’.

**The ‘true’ art of gymnastics: the ‘medical gymnastics’**

In Book I, Chapter V, entitled *Quo tempore et quod pacto coeperit gymnastica* (‘When and how gymnastics began’) Mercuriale notes that although we have no explicit information as to how and in what order the art of exercise (or the art of gymnastics) has been attained, we can however draw some conclusions from what Plutarch has written in ‘Problem Three’ of Book V of his ‘Table talk’. There, Mercuriale notes, Plutarch relates that in the beginning there were *simple contests where people had only victory and a crown to aim for; later on, they were founded by those intending to perform sacred rites to a god, in order to amuse the populace when it came to the festival*.

Mercuriale notes that ‘in the end, I think, they were little by little transferred from religious ceremonies into the gymnasium’, ‘because’, he notes, ‘when people were leading a temperate life and enjoyed permanent good health, they had just one care, to turn out in the most suitable shape for waging war and overcoming the enemy’. ‘For this reason’, he continues, ‘in order not to be completely ruined by inactivity [inertia] during their leisure time [otium], they engaged in exercises in which even prizes were accorded to the victors, so that, both enticed by pleasure and aroused by the expectation of rewards’ they might be better disposed to confront their enemies with great enthusiasm and skill. Mercuriale concludes that ‘in those earlier centuries the end of exercise was on the one hand some kind of pleasure and hope of

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399 ibid  
400 idem, p. 209  
401 ibid  
402 Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit. p. 37  
403 ibid  
404 ibid
acquiring prizes, on the other hand gaining the agility and skill needed to secure victory in wars and over the enemy’.\textsuperscript{405}

Later in the same chapter Mercuriale notes that ‘when the cult of the gods and the celebrations of religious ceremonies started to grow’, these exercises ‘were instituted as part of the solemn celebrations of the gods and they were considered, and indeed became, pleasing to gods and men alike’.\textsuperscript{406} Mercuriale notes that people began to compete in these exercises only for the prizes that were called \textit{athla} in Greek and the contestants were called \textit{athletai} (athletes); according to Erotian, continues Mercuriale, the inhabitants of Attica preferred to call them \textit{asketai} and the Latins \textit{athletae}. Among the latter, the contest itself acquired the name \textit{ludus} (‘game’) since contests of this kind, notes Mercuriale, ‘were carried out to delight the populace’ not only as part of the gods’ festivals but also in amphitheatres and before amphitheatres were established, in public as well as in private locations, just like the \textit{athloi} among the Greeks. Mercuriale mentions the Olympian Games at Pisa in Elis, the Nemean Games at Cleonae, the Isthmian Games on the Isthmus itself, the Pythian Games at Delphi, the Roma Capitoline Games, the Secular Games. Therefore we see how Mercuriale, up to this point, locates the origins of ‘exercise’ and ‘games’ in the ancient, pagan, popular past.

Mercuriale notes that in the earliest times when people were leading a temperate life and enjoyed permanent good health exercise had only two aims/purposes (the acquirement of the necessary agility and skill needed for war and the obtainement of prizes and pleasure); however, he continues, ‘as luxury began to increase and many people were trapped by long periods of ill health, exercise began to be used in order to repair health, cure debility and acquire a sound constitution’.\textsuperscript{407} Mercuriale notes that according to Plato this happened shortly before the time of Hippocrates when Herodicus of Selymbira appended gymnastics to medicine. Mercuriale explains that in his view ‘this was nothing more than transferring to the goal of preserving health and acquiring a sound constitution those contests and exercises which had been used only

\textsuperscript{405}\textit{idem}, p. 39
\textsuperscript{406}\textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{407}\textit{idem}, p. 41
in pursuit of crowns and prizes and of military skill as well as for appeasing the gods and delighting men."  

In the following Mercuriale describes how and when the art of gymnastics ‘took its beginning, development, and standing’: from training for war, it then acquired the name of ‘art of agonistic’ and ‘gymnastic exercise’ and then being transferred ‘to religious festivals and the amusement of the crowds’, Mercuriale notes, it retained these names and it also ‘acquired the denomination of “athletics” which according to Galen was also termed “perverted gymnastics” (vitiosa gymnastica)’. Then, according to Galen in chapter 58 of his Ad Thrasybulum, notes Mercuriale, Hippocrates, Diocles, Praxagoras and Erasistratus were the first to create the ‘complete art of gymnastics’. Mercuriale notes that in acknowledging that those exercises benefited the body, these authorities ‘refined some aspects, made additions in others, moved them from public or private places and even to specific locations, and finally rounded them off with certain rules, maxims and boundaries in this creating the complete art of gymnastike, which is named “apo tou gymnazesthai”, that is from exercising, as if it had no other end except to exercise in order to acquire a good physical constitution and to preserve health’. In this way, Mercuriale identifies ‘true’ gymnastics (gymnastica vera) with the ‘medical gymnastics’.  

Mercuriale locates the origins of gymnastics in the ancient popular and pagan culture however in the following he describes a trajectory of transition in which aspects of gymnastics (such as the purpose and the space for its practice) had been notably ‘developed’ and ‘improved’ resulting in the creation of the ‘medical gymnastics’. According to Mercuriale gymnastics developed into a refined, controlled, organised art with a particular place for its practice, with rules, and with the sole purpose of maintaining health and obtaining a sound constitution. Therefore we see that in his discourse Mercuriale identifies the ‘medical gymnastics’ with the ‘true’ art of exercise or art of gymnastics distinguishing it at the same time from the pagan, popular, ancient culture. This distinction bears its own significance in the Counter-Reformation context as it serves the ennoblement of the ‘medical gymnastics’ that shared the same exercises with the ‘perverted’, ‘corrupt’ athletics. In parallel it

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408 ibid
409 ibid
410 ibid
demonstrates the applications, uses of humanist medicine in the Counter-Reformation era: medicine is used to refine and legitimize the ‘corrupt’ ancient culture; the university-trained physician medicalises the ancient culture in the sense that he draws it into his ‘rational and learned’ medical apparatus, refining and controlling the aspects of the ancient past that were under scrutiny in the context of the Catholic Reform, ultimately offering a ‘paradigm’ of practice and conduct in terms of physical culture.

‘True’ exercise

In Book II, Chapter I, *Quid sit exercitatio et quomodo differat a labore et motu* (‘What exercise is and how it differs from work and movement’) Mercuriale addresses what, as he says, is first to be understood as ‘exercise’ (*exercitium*) and next he breaks ‘exercise’ down into its various classes and explains them individually. Under the heading *motus* physicians brought together a number of different factors; the two most important were the patient’s work, profession and the physical exercises in which the patient would engage himself for pleasure, called *exercitium* in the narrow sense.\(^{411}\) As it will be demonstrated in the following, Mercuriale is interested in defining ‘true’ exercise, and for this reason he goes further than the division between ‘work’ and ‘pleasure’. Mercuriale first goes through Galen’s definition; he notes that ‘Galen has defined exercise in *De sanitate tuenda*, Book II, and Aetius agrees with him, as a vigorous movement that alters one’s breathing, demonstrating also how exercise, movement, and work differ from one another’.\(^{412}\) Nonetheless Mercuriale distinguishes between ‘movement’ and ‘exercise’; drawing on Galen, he notes that ‘movement’ is something more common and appropriate to more people than ‘exercise’ since many people frequently move but cannot be said to exercise because ‘movement’ surely is not ‘exercise’ unless it is vigorous. Subsequently, Mercuriale distinguishes between ‘movement’ and ‘work’; he notes that although ‘work’ is a ‘vigorous movement’, not all types of work may ‘specifically be called exercise’.\(^{413}\)

\(^{411}\) Pedro Gil Sotres, ‘The Regimens of health’…op. cit., p. 304
\(^{412}\) Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit. p. 209
\(^{413}\) *ibid*
Mercuriale is not fully convinced by Galen’s definition and he draws also from the Arab authorities; he notes that ‘with all due respect to Galen this definition of exercise is hardly complete, and so Avicenna, the most learned of all the Arabs, accordingly suggested another when he noticed that Galen had not fully defined exercise, stating that exercise is movement voluntarily undertaken that requires frequent deep breathing’.\textsuperscript{414} Mercuriale notes that Avicenna in his definition of exercise ‘does not add the word “vigorously” because if there is frequent deep breathing, it follows that the movement must necessarily be vigorous’. Still, Mercuriale continues, ‘I am not entirely satisfied by Avicenna’s definition either’; he notes that ‘although it does indeed apply to all the exercises within the three types of gymnastics, it does not specifically relate to what he looks to the doctor to treat and which is the subject of our discourse. It certainly does not embrace all the four kinds of causes, dealing neither with the material nor with the final cause’.\textsuperscript{415}

‘Furthermore’, Mercuriale continues, ‘many may move vigorously and with increased breathing who can by no means be said to exercise in the true sense of the word, like slaves rushing to carry out their lord’s commands’;\textsuperscript{416} for this reason Mercuriale notes that Avicenna’s definition does not embrace the full nature of exercise. For this reason Mercuriale also examines the definition provided by Averroës, the other Arab authority, according to whom ‘exercise is movement of the limbs, voluntarily undertaken’,\textsuperscript{417} however he finds that incomplete too. Mercuriale draws on the Arab authorities throughout his \textit{De arte gymnastica}. Indeed, it is important to bear in mind that from the 1550s and the 1560s there appeared new translations of the Arab commentaries; the aim was to show that the Arab treatises were suitable for medical studies if only they were corrected and interpreted in the right way. In this way the revitalization of the Arab translations of the ancient texts during the latter part of the sixteenth century can be seen as a conscious answer to the challenge presented by the earlier generation of medical humanists.\textsuperscript{418}

After examining the definition of ‘exercise’ given by Galen, Avicenna, and Averroës, Mercuriale goes on to build on theses medical authorities and gives his own definition

\textsuperscript{414} \textit{idem}, p. 211
\textsuperscript{415} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{416} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{417} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{418} See Nancy Siraisi, \textit{Avicenna in Renaissance…op.cit}; Heikki Mikkel, \textit{Hygiene in the Early Modern…op. cit.} p. 26
of ‘exercise’ distinguishing between ‘true’ exercise and exercise ‘in its common meaning’,\(^4\) as he says, noting: ‘we have therefore defined it [exercise] differently, emphasising that exercise in the sense that concerns a doctor, is strictly speaking a physical movement that is vigorous and spontaneous, which involves a change in breathing pattern, and is undertaken with the aim of keeping healthy or building up a sound constitution. This definition then comprises all causes, and is appropriate only to the thing defined’.\(^5\) Furthermore he marks that ‘those who undertake exercise as defined by us above may be said to exercise in the true sense, whether they move on their own accord, or are moved by others’.\(^6\) Here we see here that according to Mercuriale an important criterion for distinguishing between exercitium and other forms of motus apart from being vigorous, voluntary, and aiming at health\(^7\) is that ‘exercise’ must fulfil the Aristotelian criteria (such as the four kinds of causes). In these terms, in Mercuriale’s discourse the definition of ‘true’ exercise constitutes a vehicle of Aristotelian theory on motion (and Aristotelian physics in general), an issue that in the latter part of the sixteenth century constituted the litmus test for the fate of Aristotelianism as the era witnessed the rise of the rivalry mechanical and chemical philosophies.

Mercuriale concludes the chapter noting that his answer to the question of whether exercise undertaken outside the gymnasium is ‘true’ exercise or not is that ‘by not specifying any particular places in the definition of exercise, I have indicated that [the gymnasium] is not essential for exercise’; ‘consequently’, Mercuriale continues, ‘vigorous movement with altered breathing, performed with the aim of maintaining good health or building up a very good constitution, can be undertaken anywhere whatsoever, and should have been, indeed in the gymnasium. For who in his right mind would not call walks through the streets, ball games, throwing things, and the like exercise, even if they take place in the countryside or in the villages, provided that the other conditions are present’. In these terms, any physical activity/practice performed outside the space of the gymnasium constitutes, according to Mercuriale, ‘true exercise’ and it can be legitimized as such provided it fulfils the rest of the criteria. It is important to note that in the history of the Italian cities from the

\(^4\) Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 213
\(^5\) ibid
\(^6\) ibid
\(^7\) Pedro Gil Sotres, ‘The Regimens of health’…op. cit., pp. 304-305
thirteenth through to the seventeenth century we find repeated laws and prohibitions against street games to which, nevertheless, the citizens paid little attention.\textsuperscript{423} Therefore we see in Mercuriale’s discourse how medicine serves the legitimization of physical activities/practices that are practiced in the city streets or the countryside; indeed, country villas of the elite often possessed facilities for the practice of athletics and games that were considered ‘country pleasures’.\textsuperscript{424}

\textit{The ‘medical gymnastics’ as a legitimate part of medicina conservativa}

In the aftermath of the assimilation of the newly recovered dietetical literature in the second part of the sixteenth century a series of issues was raised regarding the organization of the conservative part of medicine: how many are the parts of medicine, which part of medicine (the conservative or the curative) is the primary and nobler one, which are the subdivisions of the conservative part of medicine and how many types of conservation are there? Mercuriale addressed these issues in his \textit{De arte gymnastica}. At the beginning of the treatise in Book I, Chapter I, \textit{De principiis medicinae} (‘The origins of medicine’) he identifies two parts of medicine: he accepts the Galenic division of medicine into the \textit{prophylactic} or \textit{hygiene} and the \textit{therapeutic},\textsuperscript{425} a division made according to the action and the matter dealt with he notes. After accepting the Galenic division of medicine into two parts Mercuriale promotes the conservative part of medicine as being of primary importance and greater medical value, calling it \textit{medicina conservativa} – in analogy perhaps to \textit{medicina curativa}.

Mercuriale in the endeavour to attribute a high status to \textit{medicina conservativa} as a legitimate branch of medicine marks its ancient origins. He notes that the successors of Asclepius of Epidaurus became aware that without the healing of the healthy ‘the whole of medicine was defective and could in no way be perfect’.\textsuperscript{426} In addition he marks the Hippocratic origins of conservative medicine; he states that ‘Herodicus of Selymbria and his disciple Hippocrates are known to have added to the medicine that heals diseases a branch that preserves health, and it is generally concerned with what

\textsuperscript{423} John McClelland, \textit{Body and Mind}…op. cit., p. 120
\textsuperscript{424} \textit{idem,} p. 46
\textsuperscript{426} Girolamo Mercuriale, \textit{De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition}…op. cit., p. 11
is sound at least with respect to the body’. 427 Mercuriale continues noting that ‘they thought that protecting the healthy from disease was an endeavour requiring no less excellence and art than freeing those already entrapped’. 428 With regard to Mercuriale’s reference to Herodicus of Selymbria (a Greek physician of the fifth century BC believed to have been one of Hippocrates’ tutors) it is useful to note that in the early modern period Herodicus was credited with the first therapeutic use of exercise.

Indicative of Mercuriale’s intention to respond to contemporary developments and issues is the fact that at the beginning of the De arte gymnastica (Book I, Chapter I, De principiis medicinae) he begins to construct his ‘medical gymnastics’ primarily within a context of comparison between the curative and the conservative part of medicine identifying the superiority of the latter. The issue of whether the conservative or the curative part of medicine was the primary and nobler had already been raised in the thirteenth century in discussions regarding the causes of healthy, sick, and neutral bodies. 429 The debate was raised among learned physicians due to an inconsistency in the Galenic writings: in his De sanitate tuenda Galen had stated that the preventive part of medicine was nobler whereas in his Ad Thrasybulum he had stated that the curative part was invented first and therefore preceded health making it the nobler and more important part of medicine. 430

In Book I, Chapter I, De principiis medicinae (‘The origins of medicine’) Mercuriale acknowledges that the curative part of medicine was the first to be invented, however he promotes the superiority of the conservative part even if it was added later: ‘the conservative, although, indeed, added later, not only continued the name but acquired such great authority that some considered that it alone should be called true medicine, and that the other [the curative] was uncertain, false and a mere imposture on the part of those who aimed to deceive’; 431 Mercuriale continues noting that ‘[they alleged that] firstly that it makes use of empty speculations and unsound arguments in gaining knowledge of diseases, secondly almost all its practitioners apply

427 idem, p. 13
428 ibid
429 For the different bodily types and particulay the concept of ‘neutrum’ see Timo Joutsivuo, Scholastic Tradition and Humanist Innovation: The Concept of Neutrum in Renaissance Medicine, (The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, 1999)
431 Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 19
adventitious remedies and unknown drugs as much as they can, and finally they frequently make errors in both diagnosis and treatment.\textsuperscript{432} Although Mercuriale acknowledges the practical value of the curative part of medicine, nevertheless, such a comment sustains a professional claim on behalf of Mercuriale accusing the medical practitioners who used unknown, adventitious medicines. It is important to note that Mercuriale in the preface-dedication letter to Cardinal Alessandro Farnese criticizes the medical practitioners who seek glory and money and focus on the salary (private or public from the city) rather than studying; thus, Mercuriale claims, they do not make good physicians and they make mistakes in their prescriptions. Therefore Mercuriale notes that we should distinguish the physicians who cure patients only for money and glory from those who dedicate time to studying medicine and whose priority is to treat his patients and not to steal them.\textsuperscript{433} It is in the context of comparing the two parts of medicine in Book I, Chapter I of his De arte gymnastica that Mercuriale raises also the issue of the “new diseases”; through the issue of the “new diseases” Mercuriale highlights the fact that physicians failed to provide a cure because they did not know, understand their nature and against this background he marks the authority and the value of conservative medicine in averting future diseases and protecting existing health.

With regard to Mercuriale’s endeavour to promote the primacy and the medical value of medicina conservativa in comparison to medicina curativa and subsequently the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a legitimate part of the former, we should also take into consideration his words in Book I, Chapter II, De conservativae partibus et quid tractandum (‘The parts of conservative medicine and what we intend to discuss’): ‘I predict that all those concerned with health will embrace it all the more strongly because the part that we are about to present appears to be as superior to the curative part [of medicine] as drugs themselves are inferior to exercise’.\textsuperscript{434} With regard to drugs in particular Mercuriale notes that according to Galen and Avicenna - ‘extremely famous medical writers’ he notes-, exercises ‘are superior to slimming foods and drugs in as much as it is preferable to drive out what is superfluous without any inconvenience to the body, either through the melting of flesh or through the thinning of the solid parts for there are inconveniences associated with hot and

\textsuperscript{432} ibid
\textsuperscript{433} idem, p. 782
\textsuperscript{434} idem, p. 23
slimming drugs’, whereas exercise does not have any consequences of this sort Mercuriale marks. We will come back to these claims later in the chapter and examine them in relation to Mercuriale’s suggestion of prescribing particular ‘medical exercises’ instead of drugs and purging practices.

Regarding the organisation and the parts of conservative medicine Mercuriale in Book I, Chapter II, De conservativae partibus et quid tractandum (‘The parts of conservative medicine and what we intend to discuss’) after identifying again two parts of medicine, the curative and conservative or hygiene, divides the latter into three parts: prophylaktike (prophylactic) which averts future and imminent diseases, synteretike (preventive) which defends existing health, and analeptike (restorative) by which those who have been ill are restored. Mercuriale underlines the practical value, usefulness, and the high status of conservative medicine marking that ‘although all these were invented last, as we have shown, nevertheless, through the improvements made by many [doctors], they too have gained such brilliance as those first inventors would have hardly dared to hope for – on the one hand, because of the sheer quantity of things which were appended to this preservative part, on the other, because of its amazing usefulness, which even before, in times past was seen to stand out no less than today.’

In addition Mercuriale’s discussion of the ‘six non-naturals’ in a slightly different classification to that in Galen’s Ars medica could be addressed in the same framework of reorganising the conservative part of medicine after the recovery of the ancient dietetical texts. In particular, Mercuriale drawing from Galen’s De sanitate tuenda identifies four kinds of health conservation: ta prospheromena (the things taken in), ta kenoumena (the things evacuated), ta exothen prospiptonta (the external accidents) and ta poioumena (the things done). In the first group, as Mercuriale notes, we find food and drink used either as foods or remedies; in the second we find perspiration, excrements, sputa, urine and everything of a similar nature; in the third group we find water, air, brine, sea-water and the like; in the fourth group we find exercise, work,
wakefulness, sleep, sex, anger, worry, bathing and other matters of this kind.\textsuperscript{439} The Renaissance authors did not see a crucial discrepancy between the list of the six non-naturals and this one.\textsuperscript{440} Mercuriale therefore identifies four kinds of protection noting that together they bring the whole conservative art to perfection by being appropriate in quantity, quality, and timing. Thus, he notes, ‘\textit{there is not one thing and not one remedy for the defence of health that would not be included in these four kinds of health conservation’,\textsuperscript{441} implying again the superiority of 	extit{medicina conservativa}.

These and similar issues were treated in Avicenna’s \textit{Canon} and Galen’s \textit{Ars medica} and during the sixteenth century we find them in the new textbooks that enriched the medical curriculum but also in the learned physicians’ treatises dealing with the conservative part of medicine. The latter were written in Latin and were addressed either to colleagues or to medical students, but in general to a Latinate audience. These sixteenth-century medical writings were strongly influenced by Galen’s \textit{Ad Thrasybulum} and \textit{De sanitate tuenda}. In addition, it is important to note here that the newly recovered dietetical Galenic texts – especially the \textit{Ad Thrasybulum}, from which Mercuriale largely draws – had a major impact on the classifications of ‘health’ and ‘disease’ in the latter part of the sixteenth century. It was these texts that introduced the new categorization of ‘healthy’ bodies as well as the means of prevention and conservation,\textsuperscript{442} issues that Mercuriale also discusses in Book IV, Chapter VI, \textit{De corporum morborum et sanitatis generibus} (‘Types of disease and bodily health’) and Book I, Chapter II, \textit{De conservativae partibus et quid tractandum}, (‘The parts of conservative medicine and what we intend to discuss’) of his treatise.

Responding to the contemporary debates regarding the status and the place of gymnastics in medicine, Mercuriale in Book I, Chapter II, \textit{De conservativae partibus et quid tractandum} (‘The parts of conservative medicine and what we intend to discuss’) states that Galen suggested in his writings that the ‘art of gymnastics’ or the ‘art of exercise’ is not ‘\textit{an ignoble part of hygiene’}.\textsuperscript{443} In Book I, Chapter III, \textit{Quid sit gymnastica et quotuplex}, (‘What gymnastics is and how many parts of it there are’) he claims that exercise falls into what he describes as the fourth category of health

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{439} Girolamo Mercuriale, \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 21
\item \textsuperscript{440} Heikki Mikkeli, \textit{Hygiene in the Early Modern…}op. cit., p. 55
\item \textsuperscript{441} Girolamo Mercuriale, \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 21
\item \textsuperscript{442} Heikki Mikkeli, \textit{Hygiene in the Early Modern…}op. cit., p. 25
\item \textsuperscript{443} Girolamo Mercuriale, \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 23
\end{itemize}
conservation (ta poioumena, the things done) and therefore gymnastics, which is entirely concerned with exercise, belongs to this category. Contrary to the view of Erasistratus and others, Mercuriale notes, gymnastics is not to be separated from medicine mainly since one finds it frequently written in Hippocrates, Plato, and Galen that exercise produces benefits ‘so great and so numerous that other instruments of medicine can hardly compare to it for assuring a healthy life’.\textsuperscript{444}

Regarding the inconsistencies in the Galenic writings Mercuriale in Book I, Chapter IV, \textit{De gymnastica subiecto er eius laudibus} (‘The subject of gymnastics and its reputation’) asserts that ‘we define the object of gymnastics as being the human body insofar as it has an inbuilt capacity to achieve a sound condition and to maintain it together with good health as Galen too stated most beautifully in his book \textit{For Thrasybullus},\textsuperscript{445} and that Galen does not contradict himself when elsewhere in his writings he wanted gymnastics to be separated from medicine, pointing out ‘especially because he [Galen] wanted gymnastics to be a part of medicine but in such a way that gymnastics could be distinguished from medicine just as a part could be somehow separated from the whole to which it belongs’.\textsuperscript{446}
**Chapter 4.2. The medical nature, value, function, and efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’**

**Introduction**

In the framework of Galenic medicine exercise was considered to have three important functions: first, it hardened the limbs and made those who exercised regularly stronger and altogether healthier than those who were physically inactive; second, it increased natural heat, favoured digestion (it was considered most important variable in measuring digestive heat), and improved nutrition; third, it quickened the movement of the spirits throughout the body thus favouring the purging and evacuation of excrements. Exercise was divided in various types: violent (e.g. climbing up a rope), swift (e.g. running), vehement (a mixture of violent and swift exercise, e.g. dancing), moderate (e.g. walking long distances), gestation (e.g. being carried, or moved by other people). Regardless of the type of exercise, it was considered that moderation was the key for obtaining beneficial results. Too much exercise resulted in the loss of spirits and vital heat thus leaving the body cold and unable to digest food; on the other hand, too little exercise would not bring about the proper evacuative effect, thus leaving the harmful excessive humours within the patient’s body.  

Discussing the categories and the effects of exercise Mercuriale follows the authority of Galen. In Book V, Chapter II, *De singularum exercitationis differentiarum effectibus* (‘The particular effects of different forms of exercise’) Mercuriale, following Galen, distinguishes three categories of exercise: the ‘preparatory’, the ‘apotherapeutic’, and what was ‘simply known’ as ‘exercise’. The first category, according to Mercuriale, tightens and thickens the channels of the body and it corrects any looseness. The second category – performed both as an exercise in itself as well as a subdivision – softens the bodies that have been exhausted by excessive exertion, and by relaxing the body’s pathways it purges the body of its residues. The third

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447 For the function and the effects of exercise see footnote 2
category, exercise *tout court*, has different effects depending on the following factors: first, depending on the place it is performed (as the body is disposed to absorb the qualities – hot, cold, moisture, etc. – of the place or the atmosphere, as it is rendered porous by exercise); secondly, depending on the ways of exercising (whether exercise is constant, prolonged, or interrupted, whether olive oil – considered to mitigate fatigue, ward off future fatigue, and prevent dryness- or dust –considered it cooled and restored the body- is applied); thirdly, depending on the amount of exercise.

Overall exercise increases heat, empties residues, provokes sweating; so, the more exercise is undertaken the greater these effects are and accordingly less if moderate, and the least when only a little exercise is taken. Mercuriale notes that among the differences depending on the amount of exercise according to Galen exercise which is acute or quick or swift makes the body thinner drawing off its fleshiness and its juices; long and slow exercise fattens the body; vigorous and hard exercise increases one’s innate heat, deep sleep, favours the digestion of food and of uncooked humours; intermediate exercise produces results which lie between the two extremes; moderate exercise has less effect than the vigorous and hard but more than the relaxed and feeble. ‘Thus’ – concludes Mercuriale – ‘moderate exercise has a considerable contribution to the maintenance of health’.

When it comes to the nature, value, and efficacy of the ‘medical exercises’ Mercuriale goes further than the physiological aspects described above. As it will be demonstrated in the following Mercuriale shapes the nature, value, and efficacy of the ‘medical exercises’ mainly around two axes: i) the interaction between the body and soul, and ii) a set of principles that ought to pertain the practice of ‘medical gymnastics’ defining it as a decorous, noble method of medical treatment suitable for patients who were members of the elite. As will be discussed in the following, in this endeavour the distinction between the ‘medical gymnastics’ and the athletics emerges as a catalyst. This part of the chapter examines how Mercuriale shapes the nature, value, and efficacy of his ‘medical gymnastics’ in the context of the comparison between the medical and the athletic gymnastics and the distinction between the two, and in the following it examines how Mercuriale’s endeavour is manifested in a series of ‘medical exercises’. The ‘medical exercises’ discussed in the framework of this

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448 Girolamo Mercuriale, *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 543
study were chosen as exemplary of Mercuriale’s endeavour to shape the medical nature, value, and efficacy of his ‘medical gymnastics’; it is important to note that in historiography the particular physical activities/practices are considered paradigmatic of the socio-cultural issues that the practice of exercise, athletics, games, etc. raised in the period under examination.
4.2.1 The distinction between the ‘medical gymnastics’ and ‘gymnastica vitiosa’

In Mercuriale’s medical discourse the nature, value, and efficacy of the ‘medical exercises’ (the ‘true’ exercises) are shaped around the body-soul interaction and a set of values, principles that according to Mercuriale constitute the necessary conditions/criteria for exercise to have beneficial results and that guarantee its noble, decorous nature. Regarding the body-soul interaction we should take into consideration that after the 1530s numerous books started to appear giving instructions in numerous physical activities/practices (swordplay, swimming, archery, tennis, ball games, hunting, etc.)\(^449\); many of these were written not by professional athletes but by learned outsiders that offered a model of thinking quite distant from the humanist one. Athletics, games, and other physical activities/practices were transforming into a regulated, rationalized activity and a learned subject that the elite could write and talk about. By creating a literature that taught its readers how to play tennis, ride a horse, shoot an arrow, etc. both bio-mechanically and strategically and that formed a vocabulary and a syntax capable of clearly describing a succession of physical gestures, the late Renaissance objectified the forms of play and athletics, turning them into rational objects analogous to those studied by physics and anatomy, which were marked by the rise of the ‘new’ scientific method that began with Copernicus and Vesalius before 1550 and flourished with Galileo, Harvey, and Descartes in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.\(^450\)

In these terms during the sixteenth century athletics, games, and other physical activities/practices became assimilated to intellectual and artistic pursuits. The vocabulary (it employed terms such as ‘measure’, ‘proportion’, ‘rhythm’, ‘tempo’, ‘harmony’) and the syntax of the fencing manuals, the books on tennis, on ball games, on acrobatics, etc. are identical to those of contemporary books on painting, musical theory, the principles of architecture, the art of poetry, and so on.\(^451\)


\(^{451}\) John McClelland, *Body and Mind…*op. cit., pp. 3-4
suppose that the basis of what they are doing is to be found in arithmetic and geometry; in other words it is rational, regulated, predictable, and hence objectively comprehensible and superior to intuitive, qualitative methods. These treatises advocated *scienza* (science) and *ragione* (reason), which implied an intellectualized approach to what had been a mere physical endeavour. They borrowed concepts and terms from geometry and mathematics: they called for *tempo* (time) and *misura* (measure) in movement, terms that denoted rhythm, precision, and control; they advocated that gestures and movements ought to have *armonia* (harmony), *compositione* (composition), and *proportione* (proportion) so as to be both purposeful and well-balanced. In these treatises the athletic activities were described as *ragionevole* (reasonable) but this rationality was the kind that was based on ratios and numbers. By demonstrating that athletics could be analyzed into its component parts by applying scientific and empirical reasoning the aleatory, random physical activities/practices could be transformed into methodical pursuits with greatly improved chances of success.

However to itemize the rules in athletics, games, etc. meant to negate the humanists’ discourse (inspired by Cicero and other Latin authors) on physical culture and to place physical activities/practices in the realm of mathematical proof. Alfred Crosby has characterized this ‘shift’ –as he calls it- from qualitative perception to, or at least towards quantificational perception as a fundamental change in Western European thinking. While the humanists’ goal was to turn their patrons into replicas of ancient Greek and Roman statesmen embracing the crucial role of exercise in the moral life of the ancient predecessors and highlighting the body-soul interaction and the strong connection between physical and moral health, the various training manuals introduced an alternative to this humanist thinking about athletics, gymnastics, games, and other physical activities/practice. Like other arts that depended on mathematics and precise measurement (considered in earlier times as ‘skills’ rather than ‘arts’) physical activities/practices could now be reduced according geometry and mathematics and, ultimately, they were communicated as an itemized

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452 idem, p. 137
453 idem, p. 135
454 idem p. 136
455 idem, p. 137
set of disincarnate rules that were voided of any psycho-somatic content, in other words the body-soul interaction sought by the humanists. \(^457\) Hence this rationalization of physical movement, which was far away from the humanist thinking, implied at the same time a distancing between the body and soul disregarding the ‘orthodox’ Aristotelian teaching.

Against this background, Mercuriale writing in post-Tridentine Rome from the post of a Cardinal’s court physician insists on the body-soul interaction and he promotes it as an essential feature of the ‘medical gymnastics’ -the ‘true’ gymnastics- as a medical art and method of medical treatment; the body-soul interaction also distinguishes the ‘medical gymnastics’ from the athletics which Galen called ‘perverted gymnastics’ (gymnastica vitiosa). Mercuriale advocates on the one hand the importance of taking care not only of the soul but as well as the body and on the other that the treatment of the body favours the treatment of the soul as well. In particular Mercuriale in Book I, Chapter IV, De gymnastica subiecto er eius laudibus (‘The subject of gymnastics and its reputation’) notes that ‘if one should always look after one’s soul, it, in turn, is not strong enough to achieve anything serious and important without help from the body’; ‘one should certainly strive after the body’s health and wellbeing’, Mercuriale continues, ‘so that it may attend to the soul and enhance its activities rather than impede them’. \(^458\) He notes that it is for this reason that Plato asserted in his ‘Protagoras’ that ‘the person who only exercises his soul, while sloth and inactivity consume his body, deserves to be called a cripple’. \(^459\) In addition Mercuriale in Book III, Chapter I, De agendis et de ratione praesentis tractationis (‘Our agenda and the rationale behind this treatise’) drawing from Plato’s ‘Timaeus’ claims that ‘gymnastics, although it may appear to concern itself solely with the body, also treats body and soul together, as Plato recommended in his Timaeus, so that it does not allow the body to rampage insolently in its toughness and strength, but subjects it to the domination, control and direction of the rational activities of the soul [anima]’. \(^460\)

Regarding the corrupt athletics Mercuriale in Book III, Chapter II, De agendis et de ratione praesentis tractationis (‘Our agenda and the rationale behind this treatise’)
after indicating that “medical gymnastics” treats the body and the soul together marks: ‘this is what athletics could not do, and for that reason it was condemned in all well-run states, and ignominiously banished as Galen often stated’.461 Mercuriale dedicates a separate chapter to the ‘athletic gymnastics’ and a separate chapter to the lifestyle of the professional athletes. In Book III, Chapter II, De agendis et de ratione praesentis tractationis (‘Our agenda and the rationale behind this treatise’) he notes that ‘even here we may be rightly excused for speaking rather more about athletics than some would judge fair, but we did so in order that, once its nature had been, one might say, investigated to the bone, one might recognise the depravity of its [of the athletic] exercises and of the athletes’ habits and lifestyle, and, once recognised, detest and avoid them’.462

In Book I, Chapter XIV, De vitiosa gymnastica sive athletica, (‘Perverted gymnastics or athletics’) Mercuriale notes that athletic gymnastics had acquired such importance in Galen’s day, and earlier, that Galen had to attack it in a very long passage and in very violent and vicious terms; he marks ‘I hope that it will become clear from what I shall say about the habits and conditions of its practitioners how wise and right he was to do so’.463 Mercuriale notes that at first ‘athletic gymnastics’ was illustrious and worthy of admiration but then it became so corrupted and adulterated by the passage of time and ‘the wicked ways of men who in order to win prizes were concerned with beefing-up their bodies and gaining greater strength and produced minds and senses that were dull, torpid and slow’; ‘hence’, Mercuriale continues, ‘athletes were deservedly called dozy, slow, cowardly, and lazy by Plato, and were subject to vertigo and other diseases’.464 Mercuriale notes that according to Hippocrates the condition of athletes was dangerous and most unhealthy, and according to Plutarch it introduced effeminacy and slavery into Greece.

In addition, Mercuriale notes ‘I think it clear that our ancestors valued this type of athletics highly. The reason is that men always praise and honour things from which they are keen to obtain pleasure and delight (voluptates ac delecationes)’; ‘so’, he continues, ‘since athletics at public games and other shows brought immense

461 ibid
462 ibid
463 idem, p. 177
464 idem, p. 179
pleasure to the public, it was highly honoured and well sought after as a career'.

Mercuriale points out that Galen correctly attacked athletics pointing out ‘how much damage had accrued to the human race from the high repute of the athletic art. Indeed it was not only minds that became corrupted, but also sound bodies’: ‘no greater harm could be inflicted than on those men who travelled everywhere in search of glory and prizes’. Mercuriale concludes by referring to athletic gymnastics as a ‘pernicious’, ‘destructive’ art (perniciosa ars).

As far as the athletes’ lifestyle is concerned in Book I, Chapter XV, De vivendi athletarum ratione, (‘How athletes lived’) Mercuriale argues that it was to be condemned vigorously, and he goes on to examine it according to the six non-naturals: ‘since the whole of our lifestyle may be summed up in just six factors which doctors have chosen to call the non-naturals, I shall explain the situation under each of these headings in turn’. In this context Mercuriale claims that athletes made mistakes in food and drink as far as quality, quantity, order and timing were concerned; that they were disordered with regard to sleeping and wakefulness; that they were dozy and had no moderation in their movement and resting; that they made no distinction regarding the air and that they did not take into consideration the parameters of a healthy environment; that they were extraordinarily affected by the passions of the soul; and – although Hippocrates and Galen advised moderation in coitus the athletes either refrained totally from sexual intercourse or they overindulged in it. Overall Mercuriale argues that the regimen of athletes was extremely damaging to health, that the athletes suffered accidents and they never lived long.

With regard to the principles, values that Mercuriale indicates as necessary for the practice of ‘medical gymnastics’, as will be discussed analytically later in the chapter, according to Mercuriale apart from moderation the ‘medical exercises’ must be performed with decorum, grace, and control in agreement with the ancient exemplum. It is in these terms that ‘exercise’, according to Mercuriale, is to be deemed not only as ‘beneficial’ but as well as ‘proper’, ‘appropriate’ for the noble. As will be demonstrated in the following in Mercuriale’s medical discourse the manner (in terms

465 idem, p. 183  
466 idem, p. 185  
467 Ibid  
468 Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 187
of conduct) with which ‘exercise’ is performed is crucial for distinguishing between
the noble and the lay and it is also indicated as a distinct feature of the ‘medical
gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment: ‘proper’ conduct, comportment is an
essential feature of the medical nature of the ‘medical gymnastics’ and a
criterion/condition for its beneficial results.

Therefore we see that Mercuriale’s concern is to define the ‘medical gymnastics’ as
the ‘true’ gymnastics distinguishing it from mere physical training and the perverted
athletics, to demonstrate the ‘scientific’ nature of the ‘medical gymnastics’ and shape
the nature, value, and efficacy of the ‘medical exercises’. The distinction between the
‘medical gymnastics’ and the ‘athletic gymnastics’ emerges as crucial in Mercuriale’s
endeavour to promote the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a noble, decorous method of
medical treatment suitable for his audience—and potential clientele—corresponding at
the same time to the calls of the Roman Catholic Church for spiritual healing and for
moderate, moral, decorous conduct.

It is important to take into consideration that during the sixteenth century physical
practices/activities such as games, athletic contests, dancing, etc. were part of both
popular culture and the elite’s courtly lifestyle, performed in the framework of the
elite’s public display, leisure, private and/or public festivities, etc. Such athletic
activities/practices had a ritual significance as they were linked to specific dates on
the calendar or to specific places, and they had a symbolic content and identity. For
a great part of the population, athletic activities, games, etc. were part of the cycle of
everyday life. The De arte gymnastica was written in an era of religious and spiritual
crisis when bodily activities/practices were under scrutiny by the religious authorities
and the attitudes towards physical culture was being reshaped in the framework of the
reform sought by the Roman Catholic Church.

The ‘exchange’ between the popular and elite culture was regarded as ‘problematic’
in the framework of the reform sought by the Counter-Reformation Church; after the
Council of Trent there was a concerted effort to modify and purify aspects of popular

469 See Peter Burke, Burke Peter, ‘The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe’, Past & Present,
No. 146 (Feb., 1995), pp. 136-150; Peter Burke, Popular Culture…op. cit.
culture, an effort that was led by the clergy and justified primarily on theological
grounds.\textsuperscript{470} In parallel there were efforts from governmental and religious authorities
to monopolize the feast days during which athletic contests and games were held, while the religious orders that arose after the Council of Trent concentrated on play in
private, paying particular attention to the role of play and exercise in the education of
the young. The era under examination saw the endeavour for the ‘Christianization’ of
physical culture under the rules of moderation and limitation; these principles served
as the guidelines for the practice of a series of bodily activities/practices and shaped
the attitudes towards physical culture during the sixteenth century especially after the
Council of Trent.\textsuperscript{471} On the one hand, the Church recognized that the sedentary life of
ecclesiastics and members of the lay elite had to be compensated by some form of
exercise but it could not be pleasurable; at the same time it had to be morally justified
and most importantly it ought to favour the maintenance of the Christian order.
Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ responded to this aspiration.

In the Roman context, these developments take on a more noteworthy significance
because of the dual nature of the city as a political and religious centre and the
particularities of the Roman society at the time. Addressing the particularities of
sixteenth-century Roman society, scholars have noted the strong links (often kinship
links) between the local lay aristocracy and the curial milieu, marking the
‘clericalization’ of sixteenth-century Rome.\textsuperscript{472} Furthermore, in sixteenth-century
Rome the elite lifestyle was shared (albeit to different degrees and with differing
emphasis) by the Roman feudal baronage, the Roman merchant aristocracy, the
Cardinals, and by the other rich clerks of the papal court alike. The clerical and the
chivalrous orders tended to mix to such an extent that, as Peter Partner notes, it is hard
to make a clear distinction between the clerical humanist ideal presented in Paolo
Cortesi’s (1465-1510) \textit{De Cardinalatu} (Rome, 1510) and the lay humanist ideal
represented by Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529) in his \textit{Il Libro del Cortegiano}
(Venice, 1528): both schemes implied luxury, education, and order.\textsuperscript{473}

\textsuperscript{470} \textit{idem}
\textsuperscript{471} See John McClelland and Brian Merrilees (eds.), \textit{Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe},
(Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2009)
\textsuperscript{472} See Peter Partner, \textit{Renaissance Rome…}.op. cit., p. 149; Boutier Jean, Brihitte Marin et Antonella
Romano (eds.), \textit{Naples, Rome, Florence…}.op. cit. p. 355
\textsuperscript{473} Peter Partner, \textit{Renaissance Rome…}.op. cit., p. 153
In Mercuriale’s time the enforcement of the decrees of the Council of Trent brought changes to the elite’s lifestyle at the Roman courts: the cheerful worldliness of the banquets, the hunting, the feasts, and other amusements that featured in the previous Renaissance courts (such as the court of Pope Leo X) were to be replaced by attention to simplicity and morality. An ambassadorial report written in 1565 during the Pontificate of Pius IV (when the spirit of the Council of Trent found its full embodiment in the papacy) informs us about the climate at the papal court at the time: simplicity, distance from amusements, and morality were the princely examples that cardinals and courtiers were to follow at least in public.  

Peter Partner notes that that early modern Romans were not indifferent to religious feelings but ‘in a city where religion had been, so to speak, industrialised, it was easy to treat religious ceremony in a ‘carnal’ way, and to turn a coarse witticism in the midst of a pious observance’. Partner explains that it is not that the ascetic and unworldly strain did not exist in Rome; however it was typical of the court culture of the era in the sense that it was learned, obsessed with the antique and rather cavalier in its approach to traditional theology.

Games and other bodily activities/practices as part of the court ceremonies, festivities, etc., could not have been missing from the court of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, which was renowned for its grandeur and splendour; the Cardinal’s delegates mention the performance of festival court activities/practices such as wrestling, dancing, and hunting, which Mercuriale –as we will see in the following- discusses as ‘medical exercises’ in his De arte gymnastica. It was crucial for Mercuriale, as the personal physician of one of the most eminent and powerful Cardinals of the time, to distinguish between the ‘medical exercises’ and physical activities/practices (athletic contests, games, etc.) that made part of the elite court-culture performed in the context of court-etiquette and for amusement and which at the time were under moral and religious scrutiny. The present study suggests that it is in these terms that Mercuriale is seeking to recover the ‘true’ ancient art of gymnastics identifying it with the ‘medical gymnastics’: in the De arte gymnastica medicine legitimizes the ancient physical culture and through this legitimization it also systematizes and controls the contemporary physical culture according to the calls of the post-Tridentine Church,

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474 See Clare Robertson, ‘Il Gran Cardinale’...op. cit.
475 Peter Partner, Renaissance Rome...op. cit., p. 207
476 Clare Robertson, ‘Il Gran Cardinale’...op. cit., pp. 75-76
advocating at the same time the humanist values (such as the body-soul/mind interaction) that the sixteenth-century athletic manuals disregarded as they advocated the principles of the ‘new science’.

Furthermore it is in these terms, the present study suggests, that Mercuriale promotes his ‘medical gymnastics’ as an ideal method of medical treatment against the issues raised by the outbreak of the “new” and the “future diseases” and in agreement with the post-Tridentine aspirations: by favouring both the body and soul and promoting principles such as moderation, control, and order the ‘medical gymnastics’ treats not only the symptoms but as well as the causes of disease perceived as the result of immoderate and sinful lifestyle. In these terms, considering also the manifold issue of the French Disease, the ‘medical gymnastics’ perhaps more than any other means of conservation/prevention or therapeutics reflects a moral, spiritual, and religious view of medicina conservativa and medical treatment in general that corresponded accordingly to the moral and religious views regarding the origin of disease and its treatment. At the same time, speaking strictly in secular medical terms, the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a ‘rational and learned’ method of conservation/prevention rooted in the ancient authoritative knowledge appears to be more efficacious in comparison to curative medicine as indicated in the previous chapter. This is so as, according to Mercuriale, the first averts future diseases, protects existing health, and it helps those recovering from illness to build their strength whereas the second, although valuable, cannot provide a cure as it lacks in knowledge of the nature of (the “new” and “future”) diseases.

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477 Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 23
4.2.2 The ‘medical exercises’ in the De arte gymnastica

In Books II and III of the De arte gymnastica Mercuriale examines the ‘medical exercises’ that make up the whole art of the ‘medical gymnastics’. In Book II he examines the saltatory, ball games, dancing, wrestling, boxing-pancratium-cestus, running, jumping, discus and weights, and the throwing of the javelin. In Book III he examines standing still, combat, holding one’s breath, vociferation and laughter, hoops-wheels-petaurum-pall-mall, riding, being carried (in a carriage, litter, and chair), rocking in hanging beds, sailing and fishing, swimming, and hunting. In Books V and VI of the De arte gymnastica Mercuriale examines analytically the medical function and the effects of each one of his ‘medical exercises’.

Each Chapter of Books II and III explores one ‘medical exercise’. In each Chapter Mercuriale addresses what each ‘medical exercise’ was, its ancient origin, how many parts or kinds of it there are, how it was performed/practiced in antiquity, what was the apparatus involved, why and how the ancient forebears used it, where and by whom it was practiced. In the framework of recovering the ‘true’ ‘medical exercises’ Mercuriale is defining their medical nature, value, and efficacy: these are based on the principles/values of moderation, control, order, and the interaction between body and soul (or mind). It is these features that guarantee the decorum of the ‘medical gymnastics’ and essentially distinguish it from the ‘corrupt’ athletics, making thus the ‘medical gymnastics’ a noble method of medical treatment suitable for Mercuriale’s elite audience. At the same time, as will be demonstrated in the following, these features and of course the maintenance and/or obtainment of health as the (noble) purpose of exercise constitute a physical activity/practice ‘legitimate’ and ‘decorous’ for the noble men to be engaged in.

Throughout Books II and III of the De arte gymnastica we see that Mercuriale his endeavour to shape the decorous nature of his ‘medical exercises’ addresses particular aspects of their practice, use, origin, etc. For example Mercuriale systematically distinguishes between the noble and the lower social classes when it comes to the practice of the ‘medical exercises’ and their origin. In Book II, Chapter IV, De sphaeristica (‘Ball games’) he notes that ‘the rustic ball (paganica) derives its name from the fact that it was a lower-class game played in the villages or in the quarters
of the city’. In Book II, Chapter XIII, De iaculatione, (Throwing) he marks that not only ‘lowly people but also very illustrious ones and even emperors’ practiced the throwing of the javelin so as to grant the particular exercise an illustrious status.

Similarly, Mercuriale discussing riding as a ‘medical exercise’ in Book III, Chapter IX, De equitatione (Riding) notes that riding is ‘more noble than the rest [exercises] as Plato wrote in the Laches, most suitable for a free man’ and that according to Galen, Antyllus, Aetius, and Avicenna it treats both the body and the mind (sensus). Later in Book VI, Chapter VIII, De equitationis facultatibus, (‘The properties of riding’) Mercuriale indicates what decorous riding ought to be noting that ‘those who delight in travelling long distances on a succession of galloping steeds should recognise how much they are behaving not as gentlemen or those who care for their life and health but like those examples of depravity, athletes and those who think nothing of life than which nothing can be found more dear to us more desirable’.

In addition Mercuriale makes sure to distinguish between ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ aspects of exercises with regard to the purpose of their practice and the social status of the individual. For example in Book II, Chapter VIII, De luctatoria (‘Wrestling’) Mercuriale notes that ‘Galen not only disapproved of athletic wrestling which he says that well-organized states repudiated, but also he sometimes allows wrestling scant place for a man in pursuit of good health in that, although strength was enhanced, there was a risk of dislocation and bone fracture and even of suffocation’; ‘Similarly’, he continues, ‘Clement of Alexandria also who flourished at Rome in the time of Galen in treating exercises (The Instructor III 10) expresses disapproval of all wrestling, regarding as more honourable and more worthy of a true man an art which “in a seemly fashion” is performed for the sake of practical good health’. Later in Book V, Chapter V, De luctae commoditatibus et incommoditatibus, (‘The advantages and disadvantages of wrestling’) in order to ennoble wrestling as a ‘medical exercise’ Mercuriale notes that ‘wrestling was always widely practiced and held in high honour among the ancients, although medical men,
as we have marked did not think so widely of it as a means to health, and today it is neglected by the upper class and practiced only by the country people’; nonetheless Mercuriale notes that he will present the advantages and disadvantages ‘which have been observed by authors of long experience and sound reasoning’\(^{484}\) granting it in this way a scientific status.

In similar ways Mercuriale in Book III, Chapter XII, *De agitatione per lectos pensiles et per cunas facta, et de scimpodio* (‘Rocking in hanging beds and cradles and the skimpodium’) finds it necessary to indicate the medical nature and value of activities that had another purpose in antiquity so as to legitimize their practice by employing the authorities of Galen, Aetius, Avicenna, and (the physician): rocking in hanging beds was aimed mainly for the children and also adopted by the rich for luxury and pleasure but these medical men, Mercuriale notes, confirmed the medical value of rocking in hanging beds as an exercise that introduces movement without effort and tiredness, reduces pain and facilitates sleep, suitable for the weak and the elder. Similarly, with regard to the exercise of being carried in a litter or a chair Mercuriale in Book III, Chapter XI, *De gestatione in lectica et sella* (‘Carriage in a litter and chair’) notes that it was adopted by the rich (princes, emperors, kings) for luxury, pleasure of convenience but also adopted by the medical authorities for the elderly, the weak, and those who could not walk.

Furthermore, particular ‘medical exercises’ are being addressed as well as in religious, moral terms. For example in Book II, Chapter VIII, *De luctatoria* (‘Wrestling’) Mercuriale addressing the origins of the word *palaestra* reports the opinion according to which it comes from the Greek word πλησιάζειν (‘pleisiazean’, to approach, to come near) which implied that the bodies of the wrestlers became entangled. In this regard he mentions that the ecclesiastical writer Tertullian (c. 160 - c. 225 AD) in his work *De spetaculis* (‘On Shows’) marks that ‘wrestling is the work of the devil, who drove out the first men from Eden. Wrestling has the same style –the tenacious strength of a serpent to seize, its tortuous force to bind, its slippery strength to escape’\(^{485}\) however, Mercuriale notes, there were wrestlers who avoided this style and who beat their opponents by standing upright and by reaching their arms.\(^{486}\) This

\(^{484}\) *idem*, p. 555

\(^{485}\) *idem*, p. 261

\(^{486}\) *ibid*
kind of remark and the distinction between different types of wrestling serve the endeavour to ‘legitimize’, ‘appropriate’, ‘ennoble’ wrestling in the post-Tridentine period as the bodily entanglement and the close physical contact were criticized in religious and moral terms. In addition, regarding the way a ‘medical exercise’ should be performed Mercuriale indicates the elegance, grace that the ancients showed in their movement; for example in Book II, Chapter IV, De sphaeristica (‘Ball games’) Mercuriale notes that ‘players took special care to coordinate their movements elegantly’ and that ‘the participants liked to play in a polished and elegant way’.487

In Book IV, Chapter I, De ratione agendorum et de exercitationis usu (‘Our plan of action and the value of exercise’) Mercuriale announces that in this Book he will go through the general rules that should pertain the practice of the ‘medical exercises’ so as to have beneficial results and avoid error in their practice. Throughout the chapters of Book IV he indicates the proper time, place, extent/amount, and manner of exercising and he marks that the physician should also take into serious consideration the physical condition of the individual and the type of each exercise. Mercuriale highlights the twofold medical value of the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment noting that ‘as Galen so clearly wrote there are innumerable types of exercise which if rightly and properly performed, improve and even abolish natural weakness in the body and human errors in lifestyle’;488 here we see therefore that the ‘medical gymnastics’ treat the body but it also treats the immediate causes of disease which are indicated as the ‘human errors in lifestyle’. Mercuriale also compares the ‘medical gymnastics’ (as part of medicina conservativa) and the use of drugs (as part of medicina curativa) and he concludes by noting that ‘hence those who exercise moderately and appropriately can lead a healthy life that does not depend on any drugs, but those who do so without proper care are racked by perpetual ill health and require constant medication’;489 here we see again that the use of and the dependence on drugs is criticised by Mercuriale.

In this respect it should be noted that there are ‘medical exercises’ which, according to Mercuriale, can successfully replace medicaments (e.g. purgative drugs) and other treatment practices (e.g. bloodletting). For example, Mercuriale discussing jumping as

488 idem, p. 439
489 idem, p. 439
a ‘medical exercise’ notes that according to Galen ‘where purging and blood-letting are called for but cannot be applied by reason of the patient’s age or of some other impediment, jumping can take its place and thin out the redundant humours’. Discussing the medical effects of weights Mercuriale notes that according to Galen ‘where purging or bloodletting was indicated, but the patient’s age did not permit it, or he did not consent, their use could fill the gap’. Mercuriale discussing exercise with the discus notes that ‘this process of cleaning out is, quite rightly, a concern for Galen, so that, if it should happen that a purge or a phlebotomy was called for, but could not be applied for some reason, then exercise with the discus should be prescribed in their stead; it would certainly produce the effects which would be hoped for from phlebotomy and purgative drugs’. In addition Mercuriale notes that being transported (in a carriage, litter, or chair) helps those who have taken hellebore (a purging drug); similarly, rocking in hanging in beds, cradles and sailing helps those who have taken hellebore while the unstable motion during the sailing cures all the conditions (diseases of the head, eyes and chest) for which one takes a draught of hellebore.

Historians have not yet addressed Mercuriale’s reference to drugs and the comparisons he makes between the ‘medical exercises’ and purging drugs (e.g. hellebore) and practices (e.g. bloodletting), which as methods of medical treatment (both curative and preventive) corresponded to views of disease as something that needed to be expelled from the body and to the view that the expelling of superfluities and residues that concentrated in various parts of the body favoured the conservation of health and the prevention of disease. As previously demonstrated (pp. 16-17) Mercuriale is rather assertive regarding the medical value and the superiority of medicina conservativa and the ‘medical gymnastics’ in comparison to the curative part of medicine and the use of drugs. He explicitly notes that ‘the part that we are about to present appears to be as superior to the curative part [of medicine] as drugs themselves are inferior to exercises’. Similarly, Mercuriale in Book IV, Chapter II, Concutatio opinionis eorum, qui exercitationem in sanis damnabant, et de exercendi

490 idem, p. 577
491 idem, p. 581
492 idem, p. 583
493 idem, p. 671
494 idem, p. 675
495 idem, p. 23
necessitate ac commoditate (‘A refutation of those who condemn exercise for the healthy; the necessity and value of exercise’) notes that ‘Hippocrates and his followers have shown through an infinite number of trials that drugs cure disease, if appropriately administered. Yet these men have long declared that the sick are not only helped by drugs but are seriously harmed by them.’ Here therefore Mercuriale raises again the issue of the proper administration of drugs, an issue that was central within the framework of competition between the various groups of medical practitioners and for which the university-trained physicians set boundaries in order to protect their occupational status.

Considering on the one hand the significance that the various groups of medical practitioners put on purging drugs and practices during the sixteenth century and on the other that drugs (curative and prophylactic) are of central importance in the history of medicine bearing also broader cultural, social, and economic implications, it would be useful to make a brief parenthesis to go through the issues that the use of various kinds of remedies raised at the time so as to understand in historical terms what was at stake behind Mercuriale’s references to purging drugs and practices.

In fact, during the sixteenth century the number of remedies increased. The learned pharmacopoeias were enriched with the exotic remedies that were imported in the European ground coming from the New World and the East through the voyages of discovery and commerce. Similarly, northern and central European medicinal plants were assimilated and included into the learned herbals and books of simples that drew from the ancient authorities such as Dioscorides, whose *De Materia Medica* (ca. 60 AD) was one of the fundamental texts of medical botany. In addition the study of medicinal plants in the sixteenth-century Italian Universities favoured the rediscovery and identification of the drugs of antiquity; medical botany resembled anatomy in that

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496 *idem*, p. 447
it became a part of the endeavour to give a realistic representation of what was being observed while at the same time recovering in a pure form the ancient knowledge.\textsuperscript{498}

Remedies constituted a battleground between the various groups of medical practitioners.\textsuperscript{499} Overall, despite the boundaries between the learned physicians and the rest of the medical practitioners the making and administering of remedies were shared between the university-trained physicians and the rest of the various groups of lay healers (wise women, quacks, charlatans, etc.). In order to maintain their professional authority and status the university-trained physicians claimed greater knowledge and expertise in knowing how the remedies worked and how they should be prescribed and administered and in parallel accused the lay healers of not being able to give rational explanations for therapy thus failing to relate cures to the cause of the disease, and in general of being ignorant and deceitful. In his \textit{De arte gymnastica} Mercuriale addresses the controversy over remedies noting: ‘\textit{the other [the curative part of medicine] was uncertain, false, and a mere imposture on the part of those who aimed to deceive’ as ‘it makes use of empty speculations, and unsound arguments in gaining knowledge of diseases; secondly almost all its practitioners apply adventitious remedies and unknown drugs as much as they can, and finally, they frequently make errors in both diagnosis and treatment’}.\textsuperscript{500} Therefore we see that Mercuriale criticizes the medical practitioners who used unknown, adventitious remedies, accuses them of lacking in medical knowledge, and describes them as impostors and deceitful. Indeed, one of the issues raised during the sixteenth century in relation to remedies was the ‘unknown’ and ‘adventitious’ origin particular of the foreign and compound drugs.

The use of the foreign remedies that were imported from the New World (and other areas) raised a series of questions regarding the way they worked, their efficacy, and whether they were better than the local medicaments. Despite the disagreement on these issues and although there was a fear that foreign drugs were often counterfeited, adulterated, substituted, or rotten (a conviction that university-trained physicians put

\textsuperscript{498} Andrew Wear, \textit{Knowledge and Practice}…op. cit., p. 67
\textsuperscript{499} See Andrew Wear \textit{Knowledge and Practice}…cit; David Gentilcore, \textit{Medical Charlatanism in Early Modern Italy} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Gentilcore, \textit{Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Gianna Pomata, \textit{Contracting a Cure: Patients, Healers, and the Law in Early Modern Bologna}, translated by the author with the assistance of R. Foy and A. Taraboletti-Segre (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)
\textsuperscript{500} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition}…op. cit., p. 19
forward so as to exert their authority over the apothecaries who sold them but which also expressed the fear that an ‘impure’ drug would not work), there was a consensus amongst learned physicians that the foreign remedies did work and that they could cure diseases; gradually the foreign drugs were incorporated in the Galenic *materia medica.* The French Disease becomes pertinent in the discourse regarding foreign, exotic remedies, as one of the most renowned drugs for its treatment was the guaiacum wood, the ‘foreign’ remedy that was imported from the New World. The guaiacum wood was drunk in decoctions by the patient who, at the same time, was put in heated rooms (heat was regarded as particularly efficacious in the elimination of the corrupt matter) wrapped in clothes and covers so as to sweat as much as possible; this was a standard technique of evacuation that corresponded to the view that in the French Disease there was a morbid matter in the patient’s body that needed to be expelled.

In similar ways, the use of compound remedies represented another weak point in learned medicine. Compound remedies were made from plants but also from mineral and animal substances; theriac and mithridatium were the most renowned in elite medical practice in the 1550s and 1560s and theriac in particular was reputed to cure the plague, the French Disease, and other diseases (e.g. epilepsy, apoplexy, asthma, catarrh, etc.). Learned physicians, compilers of books of ‘secrets’, and lay medical writers recommended compound remedies, and recipes for their making were much sought after. Although compound medicines were used by learned physicians and were extremely popular they raised a controversy.

The problem was that it was difficult to distinguish them from the ‘secrets’, panaceas, and other remedies that were made and sold by the empirics and the mountebanks, as both remedies were made from a mixture of ingredients. These were suspect in a medical sense as some lay healers would literally hide the true virtues of simples, whereas openness about remedies was appreciated as it made knowledge available to

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501 Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*...op. cit., p. 91
502 *Idem*, pp. 47-49
all and was believed to fight against malpractice favouring the compilation of safe materia medica. The learned physicians presented themselves as being open about the medicines that they prescribed and accused the lay healers of substituting simplicity with the ‘exotic’ and the ‘complex’, and tending to move away from what was ‘natural’. The learned physician would protest that only he, unlike the empiric, had the required knowledge, learning, and rationality to choose the ingredients that made up his compounds and guarantee their safety.

Accordingly, one of the most notable battles regarding remedies was the one between the Galenists who advocated the use of herbal remedies and the Paracelsians who advocated the chemical medicines. The Galenist physicians linked chemical remedies (e.g. aurum potabile or drinkable gold and the remedies based on mercury) with deceit, danger, and mere empiricism; at the same time Paracelsianism, often being identified with all the above, was accused as ‘unorthodox’ and ‘heretic’ by both medical and religious authorities. In reality, the controversy was an issue of scientific authority and professional status between the two medical groups. For example, although the medicaments based on mercury were used as well by ‘orthodox’ physicians they were tainted because of their use by the rest of the groups of medical practitioners (e.g. the empirical practitioners, the Paracelsians, etc.). The ‘orthodox’ physicians in order to claim authority and status drew these remedies in their medical apparatus and claimed that the unqualified practitioner could not prescribe them safely (in terms of timing, dose, duration of treatment, the patient’s bodily condition, prognosis).

According to Mercuriale, who was a Galenist university-trained physician, the ‘medical gymnastics’ has an important advantage in comparison to drugs; he notes that ‘Galen and Avicenna extremely famous medical writers, have declared that

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506 Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*...op. cit., pp. 93-95


508 Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*...op. cit., p. 64
exercises are able either to release the excrements or to eliminate them through the channels of perspiration, and they are superior to slimming foods and drugs in as much as it is preferable to drive out what is superfluous without any inconvenience to our body, either through the melting of flesh or through the thinning of the solid parts: for there are inconveniences associated with hot and slimming drugs, whereas exercises, far from having any consequence of this sort, rather bring about a toning of the members, as natural heat itself is increased and some strength and resistance is acquired from the rubbing of parts against each other’. \(^509\) The mercurial drugs and the French Disease become pertinent in this respect. Mercury was extensively used for the treatment of the French Disease; it was believed to remove the morbid matter, relief the pain, and vanish the skin pustules. As heat was also thought to favour the absorption of the mercury patients were anointed with mercury ointments and lotions and then they were put in hot rooms, they were given hot, spiced drinks, and they were covered; they were also put in the ‘dry stove’ (stuffa sicca) a device big enough to contain the patient. The aim of these techniques was to make the patient sweat and salivate as much as possible so that the disease would be brought out. However, mercury was dreaded because of the stigma that the treatment brought and the severe side effects it caused (it routinely produced ulceration, swelling and pain in the gums, cheeks, tongue and throat, it caused poisoning, loss of hair, teeth, skin, etc.). \(^510\)

It is crucial to note that evacuative practices (e.g. vomiting, bleeding, cupping, blistering, sweating, etc.) and purging drugs corresponded to the shared -by the various groups of medical practitioners and patients alike- (Galenic) conviction that health consisted in cleansing and clearing the body, and that disease consisted of impurities, corruption, and putrefaction within the body that had to be expelled. Aristotelian teaching and the Catholic religion shared the view that putrefaction was inextricably linked with death and disease and associated putrefaction with ‘renewal’. \(^511\) In these terms medical treatments that had a purging effect and that favoured the movement of fluids and other substances through the body and the expelling of residues were considered to be efficacious. In this regard we should note Mercuriale’s remark regarding the value of exercise as an evacuative treatment: ‘although nature in her wisdom created many passages and ways for the purgation of

\(^{509}\) Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 23

\(^{510}\) For the use of mercury in the treatment of the French Disease see footnote 128

\(^{511}\) Andrew Wear, Knowledge and Practice…op. cit., p. 139
these residues, they are beyond any doubt not enough to remove them all, and we need exercise first to reduce them and then to remove them by sweating or though some form of perceptible or imperceptible expiration. Otherwise as a result of laziness or torpor there is danger that many kinds of deadly disease maybe engendered, which is why Socrates in Plato’s Theaetetus says that the body’s disposition is destroyed by rest and quiet, but maintained by exercise and activity.\footnote{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 443}

In this context of purging, evacuative practices we should also address Mercuriale’s recommendation regarding the use of hellebore and bloodletting. Herbal plants were the basis of the Galenic (and the chemical) pharmacopeia. Hellebore in particular, as Mercuriale mentions, had a strong purging function causing vomiting and was thought to expel excess, corrupt humours and residues. Because hellebore and similar medicinal plants (e.g. hemlock, senna, cassia etc.) had a very strong action and were dangerous for the patient’s wellbeing, physicians advised that they should not be administered to older patients or to patients with weak bodies and that they should be prescribed with great caution and/or after being ‘corrected’ (by dilution, mixing with other herbs or with inert materials as in pills).\footnote{Andrew Wear, Knowledge and Practice…op. cit., pp. 87-88}

It should be noted that much of the sixteenth-century discourse about remedies was concerned with convincing the patients that they worked; it was the violent and visible effects that drugs produced to the body that, to the eyes of both the doctors and the patients, granted them with a curative power. The effects of drugs, such as the mercurial ones whose obvious physiological powers were experienced and agreed upon, gave weight to the rhetoric of persuasion.\footnote{idem, p. 87} Despite its side effects mercury was still sought after by patients and doctors because despite its side effects it appeared to be the supreme evacuative treatment.\footnote{idem, pp. 269-270} For a while the decoction of the guaiac wood was seen as an alternative to mercury but by the later sixteenth century mercury had regained its place as the primary treatment for the French Disease. According to Andrew Wear this was less because guaiac was judged as unsuccessful in the ‘modern’ sense of cure and more because the evacuative effects of mercury were dramatic and visible; patients and medical practitioners were convinced that the
putrefactive matter that produced the disease was expelled along with the sweat and saliva produced by the patient.\textsuperscript{516}

It is therefore in this context that Mercuriale prescribes his ‘medical exercises’ as an alternative treatment to drugs and hellebore as, according to Mercuriale, ‘medical exercises’ offer the required purging effect through sweating however without putting the patient in danger. For the same reasons Mercuriale prescribes the ‘medical exercises’ instead of purging practices such as bloodletting, which could also entail danger for the weak and the older patients. In this respect Mercuriale notes in Book IV, Chapter II, \textit{Confutatio opinionis eorum, qui exercitationem in sanis damnabant, et de exercendi necessitate ac commoditate} (‘A refutation of those who condemn exercise for the healthy; the necessity and value of exercise’): ‘we in no way dispute that exercise which we have defined as a violent activity that alters one’s breathing can sometimes be hard and, when it is being performed, unpleasant. But god health is not incompatible with some discomfort, provided that is small and does not last long, like that associated with moderate exercise which is momentary and not immoderate. Indeed it herald even greater and more lasting delight, since it frees the body from superfluities, and, according to Aristotle natural evacuations are always a source of pleasure.’\textsuperscript{517} Mercuriale acknowledges that exercise can be violent and discomforting but as long as it is moderate these effects are minor and do not last long; thus the ‘medical gymnastics’ does not harm the patient. All types of bodily emissions were considered positively in humoural physiology as long as they were not protracted and did not endanger the natural heat of the body.\textsuperscript{518} With regard to natural heat in particular Mercuriale notes that appropriate, moderate exercise does not harm natural heat; rather, it favours it and makes it stronger: ‘once [natural] heat is freed from the burden of many residues through exercise, it becomes stronger and all the body’s faculties become stronger and more efficient in their performance’.\textsuperscript{519}

Mercuriale, after addressing the proper conditions (time, place, amount, etc.) for exercise to be undertaken, goes through the medical effects of each of the ‘medical

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\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{516} \textit{idem}, p. 267
  \item\textsuperscript{517} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 445
  \item\textsuperscript{518} See Sandra Cavallo, ‘Secrets to Healthy Living: The Revival of the Preventive Paradigm in Late Renaissance Italy’, pp. 191-212 in Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin (eds.), \textit{Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine}, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011), p. 210. I am grateful to Prof. Sandra Cavallo for providing me with this chapter before its publication as part of the aforementioned work.
  \item\textsuperscript{519} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 443
\end{itemize}
exercises’ in Books V and VI of the *De arte gymnastica*. In Book V, Chapter I, *De ordine agendorum et de nonnullis scitu dignis* (‘Our order of action and other things well worth knowing) Mercuriale notes that ‘by providing a good detailed choice of exercises for those who are desirous of good health, they will make either no mistakes or as few as may be; and that, in this way, many dangerous diseases can be avoided which arise from laziness, aversion to hard work, from ignorance [of the proper] exercise, and from inappropriate application of exercise’.\(^{520}\) Going through Books V and VI of the *De arte gymnastica* we see that, overall, when the ‘medical exercises’ are practiced in moderation and under the proper conditions as prescribed by the physician they have the following medical function and effects: they favour concoction, they promote sweating, increase innate natural heat, warm the body, heat up the whole system; they favour digestion of food and crude humours; they conserve natural moisture, impart greater solidity and purity to flesh and other body parts, they favour the passage of matter downwards through the body, they expel, dilute, and disperse excess and morbid humours, they have a purging and drying effect; they favour the expelling of stones in the kidneys and the bladder; they strengthen the whole body (or parts of it); they favour evacuation, they have the effects of laxatives, they induce urination; they have a slimming effect and they cure obesity; they treat numerous acute and chronic diseases (e.g. elephantiasis, gout, satyriasis, priapism, colic, melancholy, cachexia, vertigo, catarrh, epilepsy, fever, kidney diseases, ‘holly fire’ - *sacro igne* - or herpes, arthritis, asthma, insanity, dropsy, catarrh, scabies, paralysis, jaundice, sciatica, tetanus, exanthemata, leprosy, etc.). Therefore we see that the ‘medical gymnastics’ having an evacuative, purging function and causing all the above effects, however without harming the patient, confirms the validity of the contemporary medical (and religious) narratives of health and disease and at the same time it serves the act of persuasion of the patient regarding its efficacy as a method of medical treatment. In Mercuriale’s discourse the efficacy of the ‘medical gymnastics’ is further proved by the ancient example and through *ratio et experientia* (‘reason and experience’).

In the following the present chapter examines a series of ‘medical exercises’, exemplary of Mercuriale’s discourse on the medical nature, value, and efficacy of the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a decorous and efficacious method of medical treatment that

\(^{520}\) Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 534
was in agreement with the decrees of the Council of Trent and the calls of the Roman Catholic Church for order, morality, decorum, and austerity.


**Dance as a ‘medical exercise’**

In the early modern medical treatises dance was classified as an ‘exercise’. Physicians explored the role of dance in maintaining health, as a remedy for disease but also as a cause and a symptom of disease, and they examined its effects on both dancers and the spectators of dancing events. Mercuriale’s shaping of dance as a ‘medical exercise’ in his *De arte gymnastica* is indicative of the contemporary medical and moral issues and concerns that it raised in the framework of the post-Tridentine endeavour for spiritual reform. The late Renaissance and the Baroque saw the publication of many books on dance and the composition of music especially for dancing, while dance masters were hired by the aristocracy and often held a permanent position in the courts. Throughout the sixteenth century, dancing was everywhere: from elite courts to town squares and marketplaces; from stately ballrooms to rural villages; from spontaneous expressions of joy to learned philosophical conceits; from simple measured moves to dizzying displays of virtuosity; from personal pleasure and diversion, to political statements of magnificence; and from individual performance to elaborately staged choreographies. Dance in theory and practice and as a source of literary inspiration became a major preoccupation.

Dance offered entertainment and pleasure, making part of the elite’s *otium* and a part of the elite’s public display. It had an omnipresent role in the life of the Italian elites and had significant importance in both private and state occasions. Dance was an important element of large state spectacles as well as of private celebrations, and through it the rulers, the governors of the cities and their courts presented an image of themselves and sent coded messages to society at large. Dance was a part of the ritual

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through which the status and the power of the ruler and his court was publicly expressed; it was one of the ways a ruler consolidated and magnified his self-image as a powerful, princely figure.\textsuperscript{523} It was used as a mechanism through which the elite believed they demonstrated their superiority to the rest of society; it was one way the group defined itself and at the same time excluded others. Thus, dance was a significant tool in the presentation of power and rank through rituals and ceremonies, and it also functioned as a form of ritualized courtship.\textsuperscript{524} It is crucial to take into consideration these aspects of the practice of dance in a period marked by the widening of the gap between the elite and the popular culture that resulted from the attempt, in the framework of the Catholic Reform, to separate and differentiate among the various social practices and forms of recreation.\textsuperscript{525}

In the period under examination we come across a variety of cultural responses to the numerous dance practices, responses that were marked by an ambiguity in the opinions expressed.\textsuperscript{526} The social milieu and the religious orientation of the early modern writers of dance treatises tend to imply that dance was portrayed in one of two opposing ways: as a disorderly activity that equated human beings to beasts or as a noble and edifying practice which inserted them in a political and cosmic order.\textsuperscript{527} In particular, on the one hand the members of the noble class through dance were adopting more polished manners, a more self-conscious style of behaviour, they were learning to exercise self-control and behave in nonchalant ways modelled on the contemporary courtesy-books such as Castiglione’s ‘Book of Courtier’.\textsuperscript{528} On the other hand dance was under severe scrutiny from the protagonists of the Counter-Reformation with particular dances being singled out for special denunciation; it was considered that excessive indulgence in dancing had begun, temporally, to break down social barriers, while confusion and disorder were common features of court entertainment.\textsuperscript{529} This moral discourse also prevailed within the medical discourse on dancing, although the beneficial role of dance as a form of exercise was rarely

\textsuperscript{524} \textit{idem}, pp. 8-9
\textsuperscript{525} See Peter Burke, \textit{Popular Culture…op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{527} \textit{idem}
\textsuperscript{528} See Peter Burke, \textit{Popular Culture…op. cit., p. 212}
\textsuperscript{529} \textit{idem}; also see Margaret McGowan, \textit{Dance in the Renaissance…op. cit., p. 178
challenged; nonetheless, physicians indicated that excessive and disordered dance was a cause of disease. While judgements on dance during the period under examination tended to cluster around the two extreme positions of enthusiastic approval or uncompromising condemnation, any radical attempt to ban dancing outright was destined to fail.\(^{530}\)

In this historical context, Mercuriale’s medical discourse on dance is significant, especially if we take into consideration the following two parameters: first, Mercuriale’s post as the court-physician of one of the most eminent Cardinals known for maintaining one of the most illustrious and worldly courts; second, the worldliness of sixteenth-century Roman courts which was viewed as one of the ‘vulnerabilities’ of the Roman Catholic Church, for which Rome was severely attacked by the Protestants and which the post-Tridentine policies targeted, seeking to moderate the behaviour of its clergy and to direct its flock towards spiritual reform as a way to deal with heresy. As this chapter will try to demonstrate, Mercuriale, in his *De arte gymnastica*, defines dance as a ‘medical exercise’ by shaping it in terms of decorum and according to the ancient example, legitimizing in this way its practice on behalf of his elite audience.

Indicative of the importance of dance for Mercuriale is the fact that he dedicates four chapters of his *De arte gymnastica* to its discussion. In these chapters he identifies the *saltatory* (an archaic word describing the act of leaping or dancing) as part of the art of gymnastics and then he moves on to the legitimization and the ennoblement of dancing through medicine: the medical aim/purpose, the decorous, proper, appropriate manner of conduct and the appropriate place and time for dancing all inspired by the ancient example are the parameters around which dance is shaped as a ‘medical exercise’ and legitimizied in Mercuriale’s medical discourse on behalf of the elite.

What emerges again as a crucial concern in Mercuriale’s discourse is the distinction especially between ‘athletic’ dance (involved in the athletic games, religious festivities etc. that was a part of the ancient popular culture) and dance as a ‘medical exercise’ and as a ‘military exercise’; ‘athletic’ dance as an essential part of (public as well as private) court life appeared to be at odds with the calls for austerity of the post-Tridentine Church.

In Book II, Chapter III, *De saltatoria* (‘The Saltatory’), Mercuriale identifies the *saltatory* or *orchesis* as one of the two parts of ‘medical gymnastics’ (the other being the *paleastric*). In the following, he identifies three parts of the *saltatory* (or *orchesis*): i) tumbling, ii) ‘ball games’ (*pilae ludus*) or *sphaeristica*, ‘because playing with a ball is dancing, as Homer has already shown in the sixth book of the Odyssey’ Mercuriale points out, and iii) plain *orchesis* which can also simply be called ‘dancing’ (*saltatio*). It is the *orchesis* or *saltatio* that emerges as the most ‘problematic’ considering Mercuriale’s focus on it; seeing amusement and pleasure as the purpose of dancing in contemporary and ancient times and comparing the ancient forebears and his contemporaries Mercuriale notes that ‘our forebears used to dance mostly for their amusement and jollity, a tradition that still survives in our time’.  

Regarding tumbling it would be useful to note that Mercuriale distinguishes between tumbling as an ‘art’ on the one hand and contemporary, popular (i.e. unlearned) practices on the other, noting that ‘Xenophon and the Suda describe it [tumbling] as an art by which people dance with their feet and hands twisted towards their heads’, marking that ‘even in our times, many acrobats do the same deceiving people in order to make money, as they wander from town to town performing comic plays’. In this regard, it should be noted that by the 1570s Italy had a rich and continuous tradition of acrobatic dancing which had an athletic element to it; professional dancers performed in front of large crowds with impressive leaps and pirouettes; male athletic dancing accompanied by exotic instruments was particularly popular in the courts in the second half of the sixteenth century. It was from dance forms (such as the *volta*) that a variety of acrobatic turns with leaps, high jumps, and movements in the air were developed and performed by professional dancers who combined these acrobatic moves with pantomime and expressive gestures, that became popular during the sixteenth century and which along with the broader theatrical activity in Rome faced the opposition and condemnation of the Church.

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532 *idem*, p. 219
533 Margaret M. McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance*…op. cit., p. 234
534 See M.A. Katrizky, *The Art of Commedia. A study in the Commedia dell'Arte 1560-1620 with Special Reference to the Visual Records*, (Amsterdam and New York, 2006); See also David Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing*…op. cit., chapter 4
One thing professional dancers were criticized for on behalf of dance masters was that they introduced to established forms of dance steps that were freely invented and improvised and distant from tradition, with an emphasis on acrobatics. Furthermore, what was raised as a religious and moral concern was the professionals’ ease and dexterity which, to the eyes of their spectators, transformed them as insubstantial, as having no body: the ignorant audience unable to follow the subtleties of movement doubted the evidence of their eyes and believed in forms they had not seen, taking it as some kind of demonic power. On the other hand, the learned asserted that such a movement came from diligent and sustained practice. Mercuriale makes the pertinent distinction characterizing these performers as deceitful; at a time when issues regarding transubstantiation and motion sustained a litmus test for Aristotelian philosophy and Catholic orthodoxy, such forms of dance spectacles came to be seen as controversial.

With regard to saltatio Mercuriale, after acknowledging that dance was part of all three types of gymnastics, makes the necessary distinctions noting that it is widely known that dance plays a role in ‘military’, ‘athletic’, and ‘medical’ gymnastics but each type of gymnastics makes use of dance (as of other exercises) specifically for its own purposes. After he has explained dance in ‘military gymnastics’ pointing out its useful role, he locates dance in the framework of ancient athletics: drawing from Pliny the Elder and Plato he notes that dancing was established at secular games, that the emperors used to dance, that particular dances were customarily performed on the occasion of sacrifices and expiation ceremonies, and that, according to Xenophon, athletics also involved dance. In this regard it is important to note that Mercuriale marks that games and religious festivals belong in the realm of athletics, the ‘perverted gymnastics’: ‘[…] athletics to whose realm games and religious festivals belong’. This remark is significant as it implies the purpose of dance in its athletic form: dance in the framework of games and religious festivals falls into the realm of athletics, and as such its aim is pleasure.

As far as ‘medical gymnastics’ is concerned, Mercuriale claims that Galen plainly admits that he would not reject dance as part of the ‘medical gymnastics’ and he

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535 See Margaret M. McGowan, Dance in the Renaissance…op. cit.
536 *idem*, p. 101
537 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 221
asserts that in his ‘On the preservation of health II’ Galen explains that he has ‘restored good health to many feeble patients by means of wrestling, the pancratium, dance and similar exercises’.\textsuperscript{538} Following Galen, Mercuriale notes that the “intermediate” dance, which by nature stands between round dance and shadow-fighting, can be performed by children, women and old men that have a feeble as well as thin body and that in this case ‘I dare say that we may be dealing with that class of dance which Plato calls ienic or appropriate to peaceful times and which he writes is performed in times of prosperity giving moderate pleasure to temperate souls’.\textsuperscript{539}

Here it would be useful to make two remarks regarding Mercuriale’s attempt to shape the decorous, noble character of dance on behalf of his elite audience. The first remark relates to Mercuriale’s reference to moderation. In Mercuriale’s era emphasis was put on the moderate and controlled movement of one’s body, an emphasis that was shared by the religious authorities, humanists, moral writers, and dance masters alike indicating a widespread concern regarding bodily control.\textsuperscript{540} Moderation (and temperance) in everyday life was a prerequisite of the post-Tridentine Church; an individual’s daily activities needed to be controlled and to conform to a set of rules or standards. Moderation in movement in particular, was highly valued by humanists and physicians alike; in this they drew from Aristotle’s teachings and the Latin rhetorical texts that stressed the importance of moderation in relation to virtue and to eloquent movement. Moderation in movement was seen as ‘natural’, whereas excess movement or lack of moderation was regarded as ‘unnatural’, ‘ugly’, and as sign of the vices or defects of a person’s character. It was considered that movement revealed a person’s character and in dance each movement, each step, and each gesture served to display the individual: moderation in movement signified a virtuous soul, a person who is not dominated either by excess of vice or by excessive virtue; whereas, excessive movement or no movement at all was a sign of a corrupt soul. Thus, through moderate dance a person was taught virtuous behaviour. In parallel it was considered that a spectator watching such a performance could appreciate the moral values by watching their physical manifestation.\textsuperscript{541} In Mercuriale’s discourse on dance moderation emerges as a crucial principle around which the decorous nature of

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{538} \textit{ibid}
  \item \textsuperscript{539} \textit{idem}, p. 222
  \item \textsuperscript{540} Jennifer Neville, \textit{The Eloquent Body}…op. cit., p. 90
  \item \textsuperscript{541} \textit{idem}, p. 10
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dance as a ‘medical exercise’ is shaped; even the pleasure that dance offers is legitimate as long as it is moderate. At the same time, as will be discussed later in the chapter, in Mercureiale’s medical discourse moderation is also a prerequisite for dance to have a medical utility.

The second remark concerns Mercureiale’s ‘daresay’ in relation to a dance called the *intermedio*, which according to Galen stands between the round dance and shadow fighting. From the late fifteenth century onwards this dance was identified with the dance genre known as *moresca*.\(^{542}\) It would be useful to discuss the particular dance so as to see what was at stake in Mercureiale’s ‘daresay’. The *moresca* was often featured at the Italian festivities and was an important part of the dance culture of the early modern elite. *Moresche* were frequently performed during formal state occasions, such as banquets, triumphal entries, jousts and tournaments, marriage celebrations, and theatrical performances, and were danced by courtiers as well as by professional dancers.\(^{543}\) *Moresche* were elaborate stage shows with sumptuous costumes and opportunities for display; they were a part of public spectacles which sustained public rituals in which every action, no matter how small, had enormous implications. Features of *moresche* in early modern Italy included dance combat and other pantomimic dancing, including the depiction of exotic characters, such as wild men, allegorical figures such as vice and virtue, and mythological figures. The performers were often masked or had their faces blackened, and their costumes were usually made of other precious fabrics.

In these terms, it appears that Mercureiale by drawing on Plato’s authority is trying to legitimize this dance genre that made part of the elite’s rituals of public display as well as of private celebrations, as it was characterized by sumptuousness, splendour, pagan features, etc. that looked rather ‘suspicious’ in the framework of the post-Tridentine attitudes. In the context of his legitimization of the *moresca*, Mercureiale locates the origins of this dance genre in the ancient Greek martial dance called the ‘Pyrrhic’. In Book II, Chapter VI, Mercureiale discusses the ancient origins of the Pyrrhic directing the reader’s attention to ‘*this image from some ancient stones, which we have printed here*’, adding that ‘in our day the equivalent of the Pyrrhic dances

\(^{542}\) For the *moresca* see Margaret M. McGowan, *Dance in the Renaissance*...op. cit.; Jennifer Neville, *The Eloquent Body*...op. cit.  
\(^{543}\) idem
are the sort of mock combats that are popularly known as “morescas”.\textsuperscript{544} Mercuriale’s fascination with the particular dance was common in his time and was indicative of the broader humanist fascination with antiquity. Furthermore, the interest in the Pyrrhic dance emerges as highly relevant to contemporary dance types as its forms have distinct affinities with both imitative and geometrical patterns of dancing.

Mercuriale, drawing from Plutarch’s ‘Table Talk IX’, locates the practice of the Pyrrhic dance in the space of the palaestra indicating it as an ‘exercise’, while at the same time he points out its valorous style and its value in military training noting that ‘to the point that our ancestors practiced the art of dance to acquire bodily strength and equally military skill, for which it is approved by Plato, must be added the further point that an armed dance, called Pyrrhic, was invented for no other purpose than to allow, through its valorous style, boys as well as women to learn how at one time to evade the enemy at another to attack and also other activities necessary in the conduct of war’.\textsuperscript{545} Judging that it is suitable for both men and women, Mercuriale continues to emphasise the pedagogical and medical value of the Pyrrhic noting that ‘it is easy to assert that this same dance was immensely conducive to good deportment and the maintenance of health, since the subject of hand gestures or “hand control” – cheironomia – is discussed both by Hippocrates and by Aretaeus and is deployed by others with regard to the exercise of bodies in health and sometimes in illness too’.\textsuperscript{546} In fact, what was stressed in Mercuriale’s time was the ancient origin of this dance as well as the skill and agility required to execute such a violent and difficult dance with its complex gestures and movements.\textsuperscript{547}

In Book II, Chapter VI, De orchestica sive tertia saltatoriae parte (‘Dancing or the third part of the saltatory’) Mercuriale focuses on orchesis (dance) and he announces that in this chapter he will examine what is simply called dancing addressing what is was, how many types of it there were, why the ancients used it, where and by whom it

\textsuperscript{544} Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 251
\textsuperscript{545} idem, p. 255
\textsuperscript{546} ibid
\textsuperscript{547} Margaret McGowan notes that in a reappraisal of the place of the Pyrrhic in late sixteenth-century preparations for war, Kate van Orden has demonstrated that the dance was far from being merely of antiquarian interest; it was pertinent to the art of war making part of the larger discourse on military strategy. See Margaret M. McGowan, Dance in the Renaissance…op. cit., pp. 124-126
was practiced.\textsuperscript{548} In order to define \textit{orchesis} he quotes Aristotle: ‘dancers carry out imitation by rhythm but without harmony: they imitate character, affections and actions by deliberately using rhythmical gestures’ so as to conclude that dance (orchesis) is ‘the faculty of imitating character, affections and actions by deliberately artful and rhythmical movements and gestures’. He notes that Plato, Aristotle and Plutarch agree that ‘the whole of the faculty of dance consists in imitation produced solely by movement’\textsuperscript{549}

Pointing with the arms and imitation in dancing suggest the ‘rhythmical and ordered movements of the earth, sky or the surroundings’ Mercuriale writes.\textsuperscript{550} Comparing ancients and contemporaries Mercuriale notes that Plutarch says that in his day ‘dancing had become perverted […] and had descended from its lofty position to hold tyrannical sway over tumultuous and ignorant audiences; every good man knows that this habit has persisted even to our own day when all dancing has become corrupted’.\textsuperscript{551} It is crucial to note that the possibility of the ‘abuse’ of dance by the ignorant was a common argument against dance that clerics and moralists used; it was considered that when the dance is ‘abused’ by the unlearned sections of society it may have negative effects, whereas when practiced by virtuous and noble men who are informed about its style, structure, and philosophical framework, it will have only positive and beneficial results;\textsuperscript{552} the \textit{De arte gymnastica} by providing information regarding dance and its medical value certainly serves this purpose.

In Book II, Chapter VII, \textit{De fine saltationis et de loco} (‘The purpose and place of dancing’) Mercuriale discusses the purpose of dance and the places it should be practiced, mapping the evolution of dance into ‘medical gymnastics’. At the beginning of the chapter Mercuriale notes that ‘granted that the first aim is imitation’, nevertheless he admits ‘I am sure that dance has other aims’; ‘for in addition to Plato and Plutarch’, he notes, ‘Galen testifies that it had been practiced to give pleasure on dramatic and athletic occasions and also, because of some religious link, on

\textsuperscript{548} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 247
\textsuperscript{549} \textit{idem}, p. 247
\textsuperscript{550} \textit{idem}, p. 249
\textsuperscript{551} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{552} Jennifer Neville, \textit{The Eloquent Body}…op. cit., p. 68
occasions of religious ceremony’. However, Mercuriale, criticizing the overindulgence in dance, points out that Galen ‘vehemently inveighs against men of his day, on the grounds that they pay too much attention to dance and, seemingly dedicated to nothing but pleasurable pursuits and the games, neglect noble arts’. Here Mercuriale raises an additional issue, that of the proper use of time.

In Mercuriale’s era less time for public display and pleasurable pursuits and more time for inner speculation and examination had become a religious prerequisite and demand. While the religious authorities acknowledged the need of the individual for recreation, for time apart from ordinary occupations, the question of time and its proper management remained fundamental becoming a vehicle for moral criticism of the ‘leisure classes’ (the courtiers) and their occupations. The appropriate way to manage one’s time was considered a godly gift and resource and as such it was found at the core of the Christian reflection on leisure and recreation, while at the same time with the revival of the classical literature the early modern moralists too could find a wealth of passages which warned against the waste of time. Regarding the ‘proper’ management of time Alessandro Arcangeli has noted that there was ‘a peculiar religious flavour in the concern for the improper use of a benefit that was felt to belong directly to God and his inscrutable will’. Particularly when participation in court activities and practices (such as dancing events) was seen as a reason to neglect religious duties, then it was essentially regarded and condemned as a ‘misuse’ of time.

Therefore the time that needs to be devoted to religious duties could not be spent to activities such as dancing. The same applied as well to other vocations; one could not dance instead of working, while at the same time a too vigorous pastime was not considered a suitable recreation outside working hours. Activities that moral and religious discourse indicated as ‘time-wasting’ ranged from the most general and obvious ones such as idleness and excessive sleep, to a series of more specific activities which were found to be as ‘inordinate’ and ‘adorning of the body’: excessive pomp and ceremonial, banquets, idle talk, vain company, pastimes, needless and inordinate games, excessive mundane concerns, useless and ungoverned thoughts. However, it was not the activity/practice per se that was criticized; rather it was the

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553 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 253
554 ibid
555 Alessandro Arcangeli, Recreation in the Renaissance…op. cit., p. 68
556 idem, p. 68
attitude, the circumstances, the purpose for which something was done that defined the activity/practice as an inappropriate use of time.\textsuperscript{557}

Having to do with physical activities/practices that were find also in the realm of pastime, leisure, games, athletics and the like, Mercuriale in his \textit{De arte gymnastica} indicates the purpose/aim, circumstances, features, etc. that define a physical activity/practice as a ‘medical exercise’ rather than \textit{ludus}, athletics, etc. With regard to dance in particular Mercuriale marks that ‘indeed in our own times no one would deny that other dances performed in time, formation, and a prescribed way, would have such utility, inductive to good deportment and the maintenance of health, just as Galen declares that he had restored many to health, and he had maintained others in health by the art of dance alone’;\textsuperscript{558} ‘Galen’, continues Mercuriale, ‘regarded dance training as one of the things sought after by doctors’. Mercuriale notes that ‘no one should doubt that we have properly included dance in the category of gymnastic medicine, especially since Socrates in the Symposium of Xenophon openly declares that he had practiced dancing with a view to both achieving and maintaining health and also to acquire strength of body’.\textsuperscript{559} In these terms, in Mercuriale’s medical discourse contemporary dances are legitimized as useful (rather than time-wasting, or inappropriate) through their medical – and pedagogical – utility that according to Mercuriale is achieved under particular circumstances: when and if practiced in time, in formation, in a prescribed way; in other words when dance is controlled and ordered. These qualities are also repeated in the chapter in which Mercuriale discusses the medical effects of dance, as we will see in the following. According to Mercuriale the utility of such a kind of dance (controlled and ordered) in the maintenance and/or obtainment of health is verified by the ancient authorities such as Galen and Socrates.

Regarding the place where dances might be carried out, Mercuriale notes that ‘at first when dances were not yet developed, villages and public squares were used, then when they had acquired greater status and embellishment, they were removed to special parts of theatres’\textsuperscript{560}, implying how the change of place indicates a transition of refinement, the ennoblement of dance. Mercuriale, drawing from Athenaeus, notes the shift of dancing from the theatres to the \textit{palaestra}. The moving of dance to the

\textsuperscript{557} \textit{idem}, pp. 69-70
\textsuperscript{558} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 255
\textsuperscript{559} \textit{ibid}
\textsuperscript{560} \textit{idem}, p. 257
palaestra is a crucial aspect in the shaping of dance as a ‘medical exercise’ since the
palaestra in the De arte gymnastica emerges as the organised space for the practice of
the ‘true’ gymnastics which in Mercuriale’s discourse is identified with the ‘medical
gymnastics’. Mercuriale concludes by noting that ‘dance was accepted in all kinds of
gymnastic training just like ball-play. These are aspects respectively of activity in the
orchestra and activity in the palaestra, these being broad categories of gymnastic
activity’. In these terms, in Mercuriale discourse the parameters according to which
dance constitutes a ‘medical exercise’ are the following: the medical utility and health
as the aim/purpose of dance, the controlled and ordered manner of dancing, the
palaestra as the space for dancing.

Later in Book V, Chapter III, De saltatoriae effectibus (‘The effects of the saltatory’)
Mercuriale discusses the medical effects of the three different types of the saltatory.
Through a comparison between the ancient and contemporary dancing practices
Mercuriale discusses again the right conditions for dancing, presenting the ancients’
dance practices as a model for his contemporaries to follow. He notes that when one
looks at the various types of the ancient dances he will see that ‘they were not lacking
in rhythm, pattern, proportion and musical harmony’. Musical harmony was an
expression of the misura indicating proportion and order sought in the relation
between movement and sound. The role of music was crucial: measure, rhythm,
and the beat of the music, as well as the timing of the steps were accepted by all
(dance masters, writers, etc.) as fundamental to dancing. All these features indicate
order in movement, a principle highly valued among humanists. In dance order was
seen as leading to moral virtue. In particular geometric order (as also applied to
Renaissance architecture and garden design) and geometric shapes in choreography
represented the order of the cosmos, while geometrical movement in dance was
thought to encourage men and women to imitate the divine order in their lives through
noble and virtuous behaviour.

‘Consequently’ Mercuriale continues – criticizing his contemporaries – it can be
supposed ‘that our own dances, cavorting, and gestures, which are enjoyed nowadays

562 idem, p. 543
563 Jennifer Neville, The Eloquent Body…op. cit., pp. 77-82
564 Margaret M. McGowan, Dance in the Renaissance…op. cit., pp. 39-40
565 Jennifer Neville, The Eloquent Body…op. cit., p. 11
both by women and by men, in pursuit of delight and pleasure, differed from the dances of the ancients in this way: the latter often were good for the preservation of health, whereas ours seldom or never have that end in view. On the contrary, they are indulged in, mostly, after dinner and by night, as part of the banquet at an hour when sleep and rest would be much better’.\textsuperscript{566} It is therefore the principles of rhythm, pattern, proportion, musical harmony, and the maintenance and/or obtainment of health as their aim/purpose that the ancient example indicates, around which Mercuriale shapes the medical utility and value of dance as a ‘medical exercise’, distinguishing it from contemporary dance practices which were considered time-wasting, inappropriate, and harmful. Contrary to the ancient example contemporary dance habits according to Mercuriale involve indulgence, the pursuit of delight, pleasure as its sole aim. Contemporary dance lacks in rhythm, proportion, and harmony, and it is practiced at the wrong time (after eating, late at night) and with the wrong aim (for pleasure); contemporary dance as such indicates disorder and lack of control. Mercuriale concludes defining the conditions for the efficacy of dance: ‘So it is that dancing, if only it were practiced at the right time, as it was by our ancestors, and as we have already shown that all exercises ought to be, would undeniably be productive of many advantages’.\textsuperscript{567}

After indicating the principles and the conditions around which the medical utility of dance is articulated, Mercuriale discusses the more particular medical effects of the different types of saltatory; they are mainly expelling, reducing, slimming, and strengthening treating diseases and ailments that were common in the elite circles. Mercuriale notes that tumbling strengthens the arms and the legs, fills the head with blood, shakes up the back and the fingers. For the type of dancing which is called orkestic Mercuriale claims that according to Hippocrates or Polybus it attenuates the humours, lifts up the flesh, while – according to Mercuriale – Aretaeus recommended it for the gradual relief of persistent headache and for cases of vertigo, epilepsy and gout problems. Finally Mercuriale notes that dance warms the whole system and is highly suitable for warding off stiffness and certain kinds of tremors or where the stomach is finding digestion difficult or where it is accumulating undigested humours. Discussing its medical value in relation to medicaments Mercuriale marks that dance

\textsuperscript{566} Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 545
\textsuperscript{567} ibid
‘strengthens weak hips, feeble legs, and uncertain feet; there are few remedies as potent for complaints of this kind. Nor does it yield to any other as a means of expelling the stone from the bladder’\textsuperscript{568}, promoting the practical superiority of dance as a ‘medical exercise’ in relation to medicaments.

\textit{Combat as a ‘medical exercise’}

The second ‘medical exercise’ that the present study examines as exemplary of Mercuriale’s endeavour to promote the noble, decorous nature of his ‘medical gymnastics’ in the post-Tridentine context is that of combat. At the same time Mercuriale’s discourse on combat is paradigmatic of the religious and moral issues raised regarding contemporary athletic combat practices (e.g. joust tournaments and the duel). A first point that should be made is that combat – and hunting as we will see in the following – did not belong to the \textit{saltatory} or the \textit{palestric} gymnastics, the two parts of gymnastics that Mercuriale identifies; in his endeavour to recover the ‘true’ art of gymnastics Mercuriale draws combat into his ‘rational and learned’ apparatus defining, controlling, and legitimizing the controversial practice of combat in the context of medical practice.

In particular, in Book III, Chapter I, \textit{De agendis et de ratione praesentis tractationis} (‘Our agenda and the rationale behind this treatise’) Mercuriale notes that ‘there are still many others [types of exercise] no less interesting, although the majority were not principally performed in gymnasia nor directly related to that type of saltatory activity, into which, along with the forms of the palaestric, we have divided the whole of gymnastics in our previous book’. ‘Nonetheless’, he continues, ‘we have concluded that they should all be discussed, because they deserve the title of exercise in the general sense of the word, although perhaps not in the specific sense, and thus should on no account be excluded from the art of gymnastics’. It is therefore in these terms that Mercuriale identifies combat (\textit{pugna}) primarily as an ‘exercise’; subsequently in Chapter IV, \textit{De pugnarum generibus} (‘Types of combat’) he discusses combat as a ‘medical exercise’ and in Book VI, Chapter II, \textit{De Pugnarum effectibus} (‘The effects of combats’) he discusses its medical effects.

\textsuperscript{568} ibid
Mercuriale in Book III, Chapter IV, De pugnarum generibus (‘Types of combat’), noting that the word ‘combat’ (pugna) can mean many things in Greek and Latin, states that what he means by this is the ‘type of exercise’ in which one or two persons fight together ‘either to gain strength and skill in war or to win crowns of victory and delight the populace at games (ludis), in the amphitheatres or competitions and shows, or to obtain and preserve good health and a sound physical condition’, thus identifying combat as a part of all three types of gymnastics: the ‘military’, ‘athletic’ and ‘medical’ respectively. Drawing from Oribasius, Antyllus, Plato, and Plutarch, Mercuriale identifies two types of combat that ‘our ancestors regularly used in training, and which are included among the exercises recorded in every account of gymnastics’: i) monomachia (i.e. single combat) or hoplomachia (i.e. combat with naked weapons which can strike or wound), and ii) skiamachia (i.e. fighting one’s shadow or against a column or a pole).

Locating combat in ‘athletic gymnastics’ Mercuriale notes that ‘it is clear that combat with naked blades must be included among the exercises performed by athletes, although we may suppose that they occasionally indulged in shadow fighting’. In the following he locates combat in the ‘military gymnastics’; drawing from Plato and Aristotle he suggests that these two types of exercise were used in the ‘military gymnastics’. Correcting contemporary writers he identifies the type of single combat with blunt weapons with fencing, and not shadow-fighting ‘as Budé in his Notes of the Roman Law Codes, Guillaume du Choul and some others wrongly believe’.

Based on the utility of single combat Mercuriale legitimizes fencing (a very popular practice of the elite), identifying it as important for young men in imparting martial skills, for self-defence, and for the obtaining of a robust constitution.

As far as the ‘medical gymnastics’ is concerned Mercuriale, drawing from Antyllus and Oribasius, notes that the Greeks never used exercise with weapons for those who were convalescing but only for making better soldiers in war and that it was the Romans who were the first to introduce it ‘for the sake of one’s health’. According to Mercuriale, Galen considers training with weapons as among the jobs of the

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570 idem, p.347
571 idem, p. 349
572 ibid
gymnast as if it was ‘conducive to a sound constitution’; it is the passing of combat to the space of the gymnasium that serves again for defining an exercise as ‘medical’. Mercuriale continues noting that indeed Galen shows quite clearly that gymnasts had taken over both training with weapons and shadow fighting when he recommends the latter for exercising the arms and legs. Concluding he notes that combat, whether with weapons or as shadow fighting, ‘had a place in every type of gymnastics’.

Mercuriale, tracing the origins of combat in antiquity, raises the issue of gladiatorial combat, an ancient Greek but also Roman phenomenon performed in festival games and banquets. Because of the notoriety of the gladiatorial combat Mercuriale finds it necessary to distinguish the ‘legitimate’ combat from the gladiatorial type. Mercuriale considers that gladiatorial fighting was a ‘stupid art’ (quoniam artem plurimis absurdis plenam) and he notes that he will discuss it only to distinguish it fully from other types of combat. He offers three reasons for why gladiatorial fights are detestable. The first reason is because the combatants sought to wound each other as much as possible with the fight carried on until the death of one or both of the participants. Following, ‘the second disgraceful behaviour for which the profession of gladiator (monomachiae huius professio) was renowned’, notes Mercuriale, was their diet; Mercuriale states that Pliny says that they were called ‘barleymen’ because in antiquity the gladiators fed on barley and later Galen describes how they used to live on beans and barley gruel. The third reason, ‘another abomination’ Mercuriale notes, is that gladiators ‘used to drink the blood from the very wounds of their opponent in the actual contests, as if this worked to give them strength and courage, and after the fight then drank their ashes as a tonic, according to Pliny’. Therefore, it is the violence, the cruelty of the gladiatorial fights, the regimen, and the habits of the professional gladiators around which the depravity of both the practice and the athletes is to be articulated. Condemning gladiatorial fights in religious and moral terms, Mercuriale provides the passage of Cyprian, a ‘Christian writer’, arguing that nothing could show the depravity of gladiatorial training better; in the particular passage Cyprian describes the cruelty of these fights, noting how a man kills another for enjoyment and killing becomes a habit, a skill, even an art, but this is a crime and

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573 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 349
574 idem, p. 351
575 idem, p. 341
576 idem, p. 343
577 ibid
the fact that it is taught to others is savage and inhuman, it is a dreadful and impious spectacle.\textsuperscript{578}

Attacking the practice of gladiatorial fights and pointing out their depraved and corrupted nature Mercuriale suggests the – unwanted – breakdown of the boundaries between higher and lower social classes when it comes to the spectators (but also the participants) of the gladiatorial fights. Mercuriale notes that ‘it has always struck me as even worse that both under the Republic, when liberty reigned, and under the Empire, there were few citizens, high or low, even ex-consuls and emperors, who did not watch these savage, criminal and altogether inhuman spectacles gladly and with the utmost pleasure’.\textsuperscript{579} As far as the participants are concerned Mercuriale writes: ‘I am not entirely sure whether any sort of men or only the lowest were gladiators. On the one hand, I am persuaded that only the lowest and filthiest of men, like slaves, became gladiators, from various facts’.\textsuperscript{580}

‘On the other hand’, Mercuriale continues, ‘Galen talks of priests training gladiators, and Athenaeus describes how famous warriors and generals indulged in single combat. Herodion and Julius Capitolinus say that the emperor Commodus was a great gladiator and that he would trample underfoot his imperial dignity to fight as a gladiator at public shows’.\textsuperscript{581} Concluding, Mercuriale laments: ‘when I ponder all this, I am almost forced to believe that high and low alike practiced this form of gladiatorial combat, especially when I find in Athenaeus that some even gave instructions in their wills for gladiatorial combats between very beautiful women or charming children’.\textsuperscript{582} Mercuriale ends his discussion on the gladiatorial fights in this chapter by condemning this type of combat as ‘sinful’ and praising God for its abolition: ‘thanks be to God, who made the emperors eventually abolish this sinful practice: Theodoret, Ecclesiastical history XX.5 says that this was first done by the Emperor Honorius’.\textsuperscript{583}

In Book VI, Chapter II, De Pugnarum effectibus (‘The effects of combats’) Mercuriale sets off to examine the medical effects of the combat exercises. At the

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\textsuperscript{578} Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 345
\textsuperscript{579} ibid
\textsuperscript{580} ibid
\textsuperscript{581} ibid
\textsuperscript{582} ibid
\textsuperscript{583} ibid
\end{flushright}
beginning of the chapter he makes sure first to point out the legitimate character of combat exercises by noting that ‘combat exercises which were beneficial to the health of our ancestors and have continued to enjoy a similar esteem down to our own day, are carried out either with imitation weapons which do not strike a person heavily or cut him, or, alternatively, they are performed against a column or a pole, or even against a shadow’;\textsuperscript{584} In these terms, in Mercuriale’s medical discourse it is the ancient example and the use (or not) of weapons around which initially the legitimacy of combat as an ‘exercise’ is shaped. Mercuriale continues to ascertain again in this chapter the nature of combat as an ‘exercise’ noting that Galen thought that fighting with a person or against a column was an ‘important exercise’, and that Averroës, ‘not the least amongst the Arabs’, identified contest with swords as a ‘fast and strong exercise’; in addition, according to Mercuriale, Galen, Avicenna and Paul all agree that shadow fighting is a ‘fast exercise’;\textsuperscript{585} Mercuriale claims that he examines the medical effects of unarmed fighting (i.e. fighting against a pole, column or shadow) because, as he says, Galen clearly stated that armed fighting was an ‘exercise’ as well as a ‘job’.\textsuperscript{586} 

Regarding the medical effects of combat exercise, Mercuriale notes that unarmed fighting or fighting against a column or a pole has as warming effect, expels residues, promotes sweating, suppresses excess flesh and was used by Caelius to cure obesity; it strengthens the arms, and it has an effect on weak heads prone to vertigo; it makes the body slim, sheds fat and humours; according to Antyllus, notes Mercuriale, it is useful in ‘calming the passions by promoting a sense of tiredness’,\textsuperscript{587} strengthening the humours, correcting nervous weakness and tremors; it benefits the kidneys, and the large intestine, it transports matter to the lower parts of the body. Mercuriale notes that fighting against a pole has a similar value whereas fighting against a person is a more vigorous exercise and fighting with weapons is a very vigorous exercise. Therefore we see that the ‘medical exercise’ of unarmed combat has strengthening, expelling, warming, slimming effects for the body while at the same time it treats the soul by calming the passions.

\textsuperscript{584} Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 617
\textsuperscript{585} ibid
\textsuperscript{586} ibid
\textsuperscript{587} idem, p. 619
In the following Mercuriale makes the necessary distinctions between types of armed combat and through evidence from ancient writers and the use of linguistic arguments he distinguishes types of armed combat that have a medical utility from others that do not. In this context Mercuriale notes that ‘it does not seem necessary to talk here about gladiatorial combats (de gladiatorial pugna) because the delivery of blows and slashes often resulted in lethal wounds to one or both of the contestants’, ‘hence’ he claims ‘I believe everybody would fully agree that it has no contribution to make to fighting disease or protecting health’.\footnote{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 621} At this point Mercuriale raises the issue of the duel. In his discourse, duelling has negative connotations as he identifies it with – the sinful and brutal – ancient gladiatorial fights: ‘this is what today in many Christian nations goes by the name of a duel (sub duelli nome) often accompanied by great human losses for the state’.\footnote{ibid}

Mercuriale’s discourse on the duel becomes pertinent considering his elite audience and the upsurge in duelling in the context of the sixteenth-century elite culture that raised concerns among the governors of European countries and of the Roman Catholic Church alike. The increased popularity of duelling was indicative of a reassertion of aristocratic sensibilities and privileges (such as the code of honour and the bearing and use of weapons that was one of the traditional privileges of the elite)\footnote{See Roger B. Manning, Swordsman. The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)} at a time when the utility of the noble class was being questioned and undermined on the one hand by the changes in warfare associated by the military revolution and on the other hand by the emergence of the absolutist monarchy throughout Europe that tried to confine the powers and the privileges of the local nobility and to subordinate them to the rules of law.\footnote{See Sydney Anglo (ed.), Chivalry and the Renaissance, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1990); Peter Burke, The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Norbert Elias, The Court Society, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983)} In this context, throughout the sixteenth – and the seventeenth – century the rulers of the countries where duelling was prominent tried to outlaw it, aligning with the pertinent endeavour of the Roman Catholic Church. As Lawrence Stone has noted regarding duels, in this era men felt at liberty to indulge their tempers and to engage in behaviour that was characterized by

\footnote{588 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 621 
589 ibid 
ferocity and lack of self-control; such conduct was stigmatized by the post-Tridentine Church.

Mercuriale attacks the practice of duel severely on a religious basis, noting that ‘I have always believed that both in antiquity and now it was invented by mankind’s greatest enemy, Satan, to destroy our souls’ while at the end of the chapter he laments ‘Oh that mankind would repent and see that something most barbarians would deprecate is even less appropriate for Christians!’. Mercuriale’s discourse strongly echoes the attitudes of the Council of Trent regarding duelling; according to the decrees duelling was to be forbidden, considered an abominable practice, introduced by the devil, bringing the destruction of both the body and the soul; in addition kings, princes, etc., that allowed the practice of duelling as well as the participants were to be excommunicated while additional severe penalties were to be imposed on them as well as to those who gave advice in matters of duelling and to the spectators.

The practice of duel made part of the aristocracy’s code of honour; it was the concept of honour as manifested in the early modern era that gave duelling its raison d’être. However, Mercuriale is critical towards this aspect of elite culture. In particular he notes that the sole difference between antiquity’s gladiatorial fights and the contemporary duels is that in the ancient days the participants were led to take up the fight because they were forced to, or because they were sentenced to death or because they were bought as slaves and trained for that purpose and sent to fight, whereas, ‘nowadays they volunteer without anybody pressuring them, under the vain and false pretext of pure honour, and they have much less excuse for rushing headlong to their own ruin’.

In his attempt to highlight the decorous nature of combat exercise as a ‘medical exercise’ Mercuriale takes pains to distinguish the ancients’ single combat

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594 *idem*, p. 621
(monomachia) – which was previously indicated as an ‘exercise’ in Book III, Chapter IV, *De pugnarum generibus* (‘Types of combat’) – from contemporary duelling (identified as the ancient gladiatorial combat). In this regard he notes that ‘*the proof that today’s duel is not the single combat of the ancients as earlier writers on duels have falsely tried to show, but rather a gladiatorial combat, in addition to what has already been said in Book IV, is simple: our duellists fight with almost the same weapons and for the same end as gladiators once did*. Thus the difference between ‘single combat’ as an ‘exercise’ and the gladiatorial fights and duels is made clear: the manner of conduct (e.g. the use of weapons) and the immoral, sinful purpose, the aim of which was to harm, even to kill the opponent rather than to exercise for a noble purpose such as imparting martial skills and maintaining and/or obtaining good health. Last but not least, in order to eliminate any notion of the medical value of the ancient gladiatorial fight Mercuriale concludes the chapter by highlighting that the opinion of Celsus, Scribonius, Pliny and Aretaeus and of other authorities that drinking the blood of a slain gladiator is a cure for epilepsy ‘*reveals their primitive form of superstition rather than being a credible account*.  

**Hunting as a ‘medical exercise’**

In Book III, Chapter I, *De agendis et de ratione praesentis tractationis* (‘Our agenda and the rationale behind this treatise’) Mercuriale classifies hunting – as with combat – as an ‘exercise’ in the general rather than the specific meaning of the word, although it does not belong to either the saltatory or the palaestric part of gymnastics. Hunting was one of the major recreational activities of the aristocracy (the other being the jousting tournaments), within the ranks of which members of the clergy appeared as enthusiastic hunters. Originally open to the elites, since it involved elaborate and expensive equipment, it was surrounded by rituals and rule-bound activities in every stage; it combined elaborate ritual and etiquette with elements of real danger and in its

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598 *ibid*

599 Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, a Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 622

ritual splendour hunting was an aristocratic pastime. In parallel, early modern physicians considered hunting as an exemplary mode of exercise. Mercuriale in Book III, Chapter XVI, De Venatione (‘On hunting’) praises hunting for its medical value, noting that physicians wisely placed much value on it as a means of exercising the body and keeping it strong and healthy. Indeed, ‘the ancient fathers of medicine Chiron, Machaon, Podalirius, Asclepius went so far in this, according to Xenophon, as to assert that they believed they should engage in this activity every day’. Furthermore, with regard to hunting Mercuriale notes the particularly celebrated saying by Galen: ‘of all forms of physical exercise it would seem that the most beneficial is undoubtedly that which in no way exhausts the body and indeed even gives pleasure to the soul’ (animam).

In Mercuriale’s time hunting was another bodily activity/practice that was subject to criticism in religious and moral discourses. Hunting per se was considered as a legitimate form of recreation or pastime, having also a medical value; it was the set of characteristics attributed to it, the conditions and the circumstances under which it was practiced that could indicate it as ‘illegitimate’. In this regard, it was thought that hunting being performed ‘merrily, with agitation, hounds and the noise of voices’ was normally lawful for lay people; on the other hand when it came to members of the clergy, hunting was allowed only for recreation or in the case of illness, since it was normally forbidden to them. In the texts of Christian moralists and theologians we find listed the standard conditions under which hunting was to be tolerated and those under which it was forbidden: hunting was not permitted during a period devoted to penitence, such as Lent, or during a religious service, while it was acceptable otherwise on Sundays provided that it was undertaken only as a pastime and not for profit, and if it did not occupy too large a portion of the day; in these terms fishing was considered preferable (indeed the Holy Scripture offered good examples of fishermen, not of huntsmen). The correct management of time, particularly in

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603 ibid
604 Alessandro Arcangeli, Recreation in the Renaissance…op. cit., p. 50
605 Wild animals were considered ferae naturae, that is, wild by nature and not objects for profit and commerce. See Bert Hall, ‘Firearms and Sports: Hunting’, in John McCelland & Brian Merrilees (eds.), Sport and Culture…op. cit., p. 232
606 Alessandro Arcangeli, Recreation in the Renaissanceop. cit., p. 49
relation to fulfilling religious duties, emerges as a decisive criterion in moral and theological discourses, in which pastimes and recreations were judged in positive (or negative) ways. Pope Leo X, known as the ‘hunting Pope’ due to his love for hunting, was severely condemned for spending months hawking and hunting at his country villa at Ostia, neglecting his duties. Furthermore, the religious and moral criticism of hunting lay on the grounds that the practice of hunting as a form of military training, and to the conviction that the hunting of wild, fierce animals was considered to place human life in danger.

In Book III, Chapter XVI, De venatione (‘On hunting’) of his De arte gymnastica Mercuriale tackles these issues indicating the conditions under which the practice of hunting is legitimate. Mercuriale, apart from noting the medical value of hunting, draws from Aristotle – and describes hunting as ‘natural’; he marks that ‘nature herself virtually prescribed and approved hunting; in it she tries to take possession of what is her own’. In addition, Mercuriale notes that it is also a spectaculum (spectacle) that it is not tainted by any crime; rather, in it, ‘physical strength and mental energy are increased’. In Book III, Chapter XVI, De venatione (‘On Hunting’) Mercuriale claims that Galen had said of hunting that ‘of all forms of physical exercise, it would seem that the most beneficial is undoubtedly that which in no way exhausts the body and indeed even gives pleasure to the mind’. Mercuriale suggests that hunting is a type of exercise in which ‘the effort is tempered in such a remarkable way by enjoyment, and indeed by the desire for praise, that it is hard to judge which is greater: the activity of the body or that of the mind’. Mercuriale notes that ‘the hunts that were judged more suitable were those in which the hunters walked or ran rather than those on horseback with dogs and weapons; indeed nobody can deny that there was much greater physical exercise in those: all those senses were on the alert and they brought greater mental pleasure’. Thus Mercuriale distinguishes between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ types of pleasure: the pursuit of mere sensual pleasure is to be avoided and condemned, while on the other hand the
pursuit of mental pleasure gained by a physical activity is accepted; hunting is a noble, legitimate physical activity/practice as it favours both the body and the mind.

Drawing from Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle, Mercuriale acknowledges hunting as part of the ‘military gymnastics’. According to Xenophon in his *De Venatione*, hunting is to be associated with military training, and Plato in the *Theaetetus* and in Book VII of the ‘Laws’ regarded hunting as of great assistance for military training; although Aristotle was less eager to assimilate the practice of hunting into military gymnastics, nonetheless he did explicitly make it a part. Being aware of the issues that this overlap raised, Mercuriale (drawing from the ancient authorities) emphasises the educational, pedagogical value of hunting as part of the ‘military gymnastics’. Hunting favours the obtainment of warlike courage, and courage was to be considered an essential feature of ‘nobility’ at the time. Drawing from Xenophon’s *De Venatione* (one of the major classical sources on hunting), Mercuriale marks that Xenophon encourages young people to take up hunting for two main reasons: ‘firstly because it brings about good bodily health, and secondly because it prepares them for war better than any other exercise, making them strong soldiers as well as fit for other matters’.614

In the same context of ‘appropriating’ hunting, Mercuriale notes that he discusses the type of hunting that involves capturing animals on the ground using courage and bodily effort, without recourse to trickery (e.g. traps and nets, etc.), and he distinguishes between different types of hunting: ‘using nets, traps, bird-lime and the techniques of fowling, others using birds for prey, other using dogs and arrows, whether clean or poisoned’;615 in the same context he also cites Plato (‘Laws Book VII’) who claimed that ‘nocturnal hunting deserves no commendation since it involves long periods of inactivity, and success is obtained through the use of nets and traps rather than the courage and effort needed to attempt to overcome the strength of wild animals’.616

Hunting is also to be located in ‘athletic gymnastics’, considering that it shares ‘the enjoyment and glory that athletes strive for’.617 Mercuriale notes that the athletic

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614 idem, p. 423
615 idem, p. 425
616 idem, p. 423
617 idem, p. 421
profession (\textit{athletica professio}) also included this kind of exercise; in the ancient athletics however, Mercuriale points out, they favoured a spectacle in which fighters would fight with beasts until either they or the beasts were killed, thus, in this the ancient hunting differed greatly from contemporary hunting. In these terms Mercuriale judges athletic hunting to be ‘inappropriate’ as it merely involved physical – rather than mental – pleasure, enjoyment and vanity (such as the quest for glory) and he makes the distinction between this athletic ancient example and the contemporary hunting practices.

After locating hunting in the category of ‘military gymnastics’ and ‘athletic gymnastics’ Mercuriale addresses hunting in relation to ‘medical gymnastics’. He marks that nobody would deny that hunting was appropriate for the attainment and maintenance of health and good physical condition. Mercuriale notes that Xenophon, Galen, Pliny the Younger, Rhazes ‘\textit{the most learned Arab doctor}’ all attest to the medical value of hunting; indeed Rhazes, notes Mercuriale, claimed that during an epidemic of plague it was only the hunters that survived due to their excellent health, which was a result of exercising through hunting. Promoting the ancient medical example Mercuriale marks that ‘it should be clear to anyone just how highly hunting was regarded by the ancients as physical exercise for the sake of health’.

It is therefore based on the medical value of hunting as certified by the ancient authorities, (the medical but also the non-medical, and not only the Latin and the Greek but also the Arabic sources) that Mercuriale classifies hunting as a ‘medical exercise’ in his \textit{De arte gymnastica}.

The comparison between hunting in antiquity and contemporary hunting is continued. Mercuriale criticises contemporary hunting practices in terms of medicine: ‘\textit{I cannot say whether the ancient physicians would have approved of the hunting that is carried out today with falcons and hawks against birds}’ (although, he notes, Aristotle recalls something similar); nevertheless, Mercuriale continues, what Aristotle mentions ‘\textit{must have been very different from ours}’.

In the sixteenth century, texts on hunting became available to a wider public through the printing press and hunting and falconry became the object of metaphoric discourses as well as the subject of debates about tradition and modernity and about the defence and condemnation of warlike

\begin{footnotes}
\item[618] \textit{idem}, p. 425
\item[619] \textit{idem}, p. 427
\end{footnotes}
attitudes; hunting was identified with warlike attitudes whereas hawking and falconry were considered more appropriate for the elite. This was a time when hunting practices that originated in the Greco-Roman era and were practiced as *negotii* or *exercitia* considered as pleasant and useful, were being abandoned by the aristocracy and replaced by falconry and *chasse à courre* (hunting with dogs) which were not known to the ancients and had come to occupy the forefront of the social scene.\(^{620}\) In this context Mercuriale enhances contemporary hunting practices with the dignity of the ancient ancestry noting that ‘*our falconry and hawking was invented in the imperial period according to Julius Firmicus*’.\(^{621}\)

Mercuriale returns to hunting in Book VI, Chapter XIII, *De venationis condicionibus* (‘The situation of hunting’) where he discusses its status, properties, and its function as a ‘medical exercise’. Mercuriale describes the ‘popularization’ of hunting and the breaking down of social boundaries: he notes that Galen had noticed that hunting required a great deal of paraphernalia and thus it could not be undertaken by everybody but only the independent and the rich; still, he continues, ‘*it is well known that the situation today is rather different, since we often see country folk and paupers going out to hunt with a dog or two and not much more in the way of equipment*’.\(^{622}\) However, he argues, this should not be a taken as a reason to attribute less praise to hunting. Previously, in Book II, Chapter XV, *De venatione*, (‘On hunting’) Mercuriale had referred to Galen’s opinion according to which, because of the equipment needed, hunting was unsuitable ‘*for the artisans or the townsmen engaged in civic business*’.\(^{623}\) We see therefore how Mercuriale is trying to establish a noble status for hunting despite its practice by the lower social classes. Preserving the dignity of the social rank to which the medical advice was addressing was a principle of the early modern physician; it was in this context that activities such as horseback riding as well as ball games were reserved for the higher social classes, while, for example, wrestling and throwing the javelin were normally excluded.\(^{624}\)

\(^{620}\) See Daniela Boccassini, ‘Chasse et fauconnerie du Moyen Age à la Renaissance: les recueils cynégétiques français’ in John McCelland & Brian Merrilees (eds.), *Sport and Culture*...op. cit., pp. 199-226

\(^{621}\) *Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica Critical Edition*...op. cit., p. 427

\(^{622}\) *idem*, p. 687

\(^{623}\) *idem*, p. 425

\(^{624}\) Pedro Gil Sotres, ‘The Regimens of Health’...op. cit., p. 306
a ‘medical exercise’ in his *De arte gymnastica*) were considered as particularly suitable for high ecclesiastical dignitaries.

After establishing the noble status of hunting, Mercuriale discusses the medical function and properties of hunting as a ‘medical exercise’: due to its nature, hunting cannot be done without vigour, a certain amount of time and speed and so it heats the body vigorously, disperses residues, reduces flesh and excess humours, it encourages sleep, and in this way hunting favours the digestion of food and of crude humours. Mercuriale claims that according to Xenophon hunting sharpens hearing and sight and at the same time defies old age. In this chapter, Mercuriale repeats that Rhazes, ‘*the weightiest author amongst the Arabs*’, and Galen recorded that ‘*once in an epidemic of plague it happened that almost everyone died except the hunters who escaped because of their frequent exercise*’.625 Next, Mercuriale discusses more analytically the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of hunting (that of equestrian hunting and hunting on foot), since – he says – the whole potential of hunting for good or for bad health is included in these two kinds. Hunting too has expelling, slimming, and digestive effects and it also favours the prolongation of life.

Another remark that should be made is that what emerges in Mercuriale’s discourse as a crucial feature in relation to the medical value of hunting is moderation and subsequently the right managing of time. Concluding the chapter, Mercuriale advises that those who wish to go hunting should consider ‘*whether they hunt in moderation and for enjoyment, or whether, as often happens, they do so without great thought or pleasure*’.626 In addition, Mercuriale notes that what should be taken into account is the person’s own strength, the air, the season, the duration, the location and mode of performance so as to avoid the ills to which others who take hunting up casually are subject. This is especially so because, he asserts, ‘*the chief feature of hunting is one that no other exercise seems to have in the same way, namely that it not infrequently requires a whole day*’;627 in this regard, Mercuriale, concluding the chapter, underlines the right management of time with regard to eating and digestion, two of the most important medical matters.

625 Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica* Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 687
626 *idem*, p. 691
627 *ibid*
Chapter 5, The ‘medical image’ in the De arte gymnastica

5.1. Re-viewing the visual images of the De arte gymnastica

Considering the *De arte gymnastica* a medical treatise and thus a scientific work, the present study could not fail to examine the illustrations featured in the book in the light of the recent studies in the history of science and medicine that have underscored the importance of images for our understanding of the relation between the content of early modern scientific knowledge and its context(s). Exploring the illustrated botanical, anatomical, surgical, and other scientific writings (published and unpublished) in the early modern period, scholars from a number of disciplines (history of art, science, technology, philosophy of art, science, technology, sociology of science, history of the book, cultural studies, etc.) have indicated the manifold roles, functions, and uses of visual images in the creation and the transmission of knowledge.\(^{628}\)

Before proceeding to the analysis, it would be useful to provide some basic information regarding the images of the *De arte gymnastica* in its various editions.\(^{629}\)

In the first edition of the book (Venice, 1569) there is only one engraving, the ground plan of an ancient *gymnasium* (*palaestra*), whereas the following editions were embellished with more illustrations: in the second edition (Venice, 1573) we find two

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ground plans of the ancient gymnasium and twenty-two other engravings, and in the fifth edition (Venice, 1601) a further two engravings were added. According to Jean-Michele Agasse, because the production of copper-plates was always an expensive endeavour for a publishing house and the publisher would need to be convinced of the future success of the book in order to justify the expense, it was the success of the first publication of the *De arte gymnastica* that allowed the embellishment of the following editions with the illustrations.\textsuperscript{630}

Jean-Michele Agasse emphasises that during this period it was by no means a matter of course to provide a book with copperplate engravings, especially in humanist circles where there was the implication of vulgarisation. According to Agasse it was a ‘relatively innovatory step’ to take, indicated first of all by Mercuriale’s profession as a physician (given that medical books were among the earliest to be illustrated), secondly by the influence of his contacts in the circle of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, as well as Mercuriale’s own tastes; we cannot exclude the consideration that the illustrations were favouring the Mercuriale’s status and the book’s success in relation to factors such as the new dedicatee (dedicating the second edition to the Emperor Maximilian II Mercuriale writes in the preface-dedication letter ‘…to offer to your majesty…this work…now that I am bringing a new version, more accomplished, more complete and more handsome’), as well as Mercuriale’s current position as professor of medicine at the University of Padua.\textsuperscript{631}

Adopting Jean-Michel Agasse’s classification, the illustrations of the *De arte gymnastica* can be grouped thematically into the following categories: i) architectural ground-plans of the palaestra, ii) objects connected to the palaestra, iii) scenes of exercises, iv) bathing scenes, and v) mealtime scenes. To date, scholars have explored the illustrations of the book by looking into the origin of the designs for the engravings, the identity of the artist, the engravers and the draftsmen, as well as exploring the production of the engravings, and mapping their additions throughout the several editions of the book, etc. as part of a broader endeavour to address the book’s materiality. These aspects of the pictorial material of the book have their own significance in relation to the aims of this chapter, however, due to the practical limitations of the present study I will refer the reader to the respective scholarly work.

\textsuperscript{630} Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., pp. 869-870
\textsuperscript{631} idem, pp. 867-870
for the related information. In the context of the present chapter it will suffice to note that the majority of the designs for the engravings are attributed to the painter, architect and antiquarian Pirro Ligorio (1510-1583): ten of the designs are attributed to him by Mercuriale himself, and, according to Ginette Vagenheim and Jean-Michele Agasse, one can conclude with a high degree of certainty that Ligorio is responsible for nineteen of the twenty-two engravings featured in the second edition (Venice, 1573).

The present chapter calls for a ‘re-viewing’ of the pictorial material of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica*; apart from filling what the present study see as a gap in the study of Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* by re-addressing the illustrations (as aspects of the book’s materiality) in relation to Mercuriale’s medical discourse, the present study wishes to offer some considerations regarding the ‘medical’ image in early modern medical writings. Although forming a part of Mercuriale’s medical treatise, the illustrations of the *De arte gymnastica* have yet to be discussed by scholars as ‘medical images’. The present study suggests that the antiquarian nature of the designs used for the illustrations have somewhat restricted their interpretation (in terms of genre) as ‘evidence’ of antiquarian observation or as mere illustrations of observed objects of the ancient past. This interpretation although useful in providing information, does not address how, and on what terms, the illustrations were part of contemporary scientific and scholarly projects and ambitions as expressed in the respective texts (published or not) and it can be misleading in the overall evaluation of the particular illustrations as historical sources.

Going through the references to the pictorial material of the *De arte gymnastica* in the framework of studies of the treatise, as well in broader scholarly research (on

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634 *Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 871

Renaissance humanist medicine, Renaissance erudition and antiquarianism, early modern sport and physical culture)\textsuperscript{636} the present study suggests that there are two tendencies for ‘viewing’ the book’s images. On the one hand, scholars addressing the antiquarian style and content of the illustrations have discussed them as ‘antiquarian images’ examining them as ‘evidence’ of Mercuriale’s interest in antiquity and antiquarianism, his use of antiquarian sources, and in general of the antiquarian content and aspects of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} as – undoubtedly – one of its most exceptional features. On the other hand, scholars considering the themes and content of the images have referred to the them in terms of ‘visual representations of athletics’, as well as ‘illustrations’ of ancient ‘athletic exercises’, ‘gymnastics’, ‘sports’, ‘games’, and forms of ‘physical exercise’. In both these views the medical element of the images remains restricted to Mercuriale’s advice regarding the medical value of the (ancient) art of gymnastics or exercise.

As regards, Peter Burke notes that sometimes historians reproduce images as ‘\textit{mere illustrations}’ either with an undeveloped historical analysis, or none at all, although the images just like the text raise problems of context, function, rhetoric, recollection (whether soon or long after the event), second-hand witnessing and so on.\textsuperscript{637} What further complicates the historical analysis is what Burke calls the ‘\textit{visual equivalent of intertextuality}’.\textsuperscript{638} It is crucial to take into consideration that the images in the \textit{De arte gymnastica} are presented by Mercuriale as ‘representing’, ‘reproducing’ other images found on antiquarian objects (such as ancient coins), which were produced as records documenting the physical remains and antiquarian objects of the ancient city of Rome, and in general of the classical Greco-Roman past. In these cases, according to Burke, we cannot ignore additional issues that are raised such as the possibility of propaganda, the importance of the visual conventions accepted in the socio-cultural environment of the time, and the fact that they record a ‘point of view’.\textsuperscript{639}


\textsuperscript{637} Peter Burke, \textit{Eyewitnessing. The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence}, (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 15
\textsuperscript{638} \textit{idem}, p. 97
\textsuperscript{639} \textit{idem}, p. 19
Similarly, we cannot view the pictures of the *De arte gymnastica* as simply illustrating aspects of classical Greco-Roman bodily/physical culture. This is not to say that they are not to be trusted as ‘documents’ of the past; in fact Ginette Vagenheim has shown the similarities between the *De arte gymnastica* illustrations and Pirro Ligorio’s designs of his antiquarian research findings (as included in his writings). Nonetheless, she also shows the gap between the illustrations of the *De arte gymnastica* and the respective antiquarian sources, as well as the similarities between the illustrations of Mercuriale’s book and the designs for part of Ligorio’s iconographic programme for the decoration of the Este Castle in Ferrara (on the request of Cardinal Ippolito II d’Este).\(^{640}\)

Thus, two remarks can be made at this point: i) that the scholarly research has revealed a series of contexts in which the designs used for Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* were produced and employed, and these are often different to the context of their use, role, and function in the *De arte gymnastica* itself; ii) that the historical interpretation of the images as merely illustrating aspects of the ancient Greco-Roman past overlooks the different context(s) of the production and the use of the designs, which could be misleading in the historical understanding of the book’s images. It is crucial therefore to apply a revised agenda in the historical analysis of the pictorial material of the *De arte gymnastica* so as to achieve a fuller historical understanding of the pictures and their role, use, and function. Thus, the present study calls for a re-viewing of the book’s illustrations as ‘medical images’. The illustrations will be examined as a kind of historical source in relation to the text of the *De arte gymnastica* and for their role in Mercuriale’s medical discourse; rather than discussing the visual images of the *De arte gymnastica* in terms of comprehension or as mere illustrations, they will be discussed in terms of ‘visualization’, in this respect following Peter Murray who has suggested the use of this term so as to ‘to eschew anachronistic assumptions about medical illustration […] and consider the relationship of image, word and medicine afresh’.\(^{641}\)

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In this endeavour it is important to place the historical analysis in the series of frameworks (cultural, social, political, material and so on) from which the images originated; this involves a number of considerations: the assessment of Mercuriale’s intellectual viewpoint as the writer of the text, questions regarding patronage (the patronage received by the writer and the writer’s patronage of his illustrator), the intended and actual production of the text, the intended and actual audience, the values in contemporary society relating to the roles of books, medicine, observational science and so on, the artistic conventions at a particular place and time, the interests of the artist, and the intended function of the images.\textsuperscript{642} The present study recommends the re-viewing of the pictorial material of Mercuriale’s \textit{De arte gymnastica} in relation to such an agenda, some aspects of which have been already addressed in the previous chapters; due to practical limitations the present chapter will not address all of these aspects, however pertinent remarks will be made where necessary.

In this research framework it is, first and foremost, crucial to acknowledge that the \textit{De arte gymnastica} is a medical treatise, and thus we are dealing with medicine. As noted in Chapter 1 of this study, Martin Kemp notes that an image connected in some way with the history of medicine is by definition ‘medical’, even if not in the sense that we normally understand (e.g. regarding the educative role of an image, from specialist instruction to public information, etc.).\textsuperscript{643} Nonetheless, when asking what makes an image from the history of medicine ‘medical’,\textsuperscript{644} Martin Kemp has distinguished between the medical ‘function’ of a picture and their ‘functional’ element(s). Kemp points out that it is important that ‘function’ and ‘functional’ are not confused. The term ‘functional’ refers to the medical utility of what is being visualized; in these terms, discussing how the pictures in the second edition of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} recast a text ‘about the physiological benefits of exercise’\textsuperscript{645} involves the ‘functional’ element in the pictures, in other words the medical utility of exercise, following Mercuriale’s pertinent medical advice.

\textsuperscript{643} See Foreword by Martin Kemp, in Julie V. Hansen and Suzanne Porter (eds.), \textit{The Physician’s Art}…op. cit., p. 11
\textsuperscript{644} \textit{idem}, p. 13
\textsuperscript{645} Frederika H. Jacobs, \textit{The Living Images in Renaissance Art}, op. cit., p. 32
On the other hand, the ‘function’, according to Kemp, refers to aspects (such as the ‘style’, or ‘decorative’ aspects, etc.) of a picture or of what is being visualized, that sustain integral parts of the total field within which the role of what is visualized can be acceptably performed. Kemp suggests that, for their part, these aspects are vital components in the transaction between those who claim access to powers of healing and those who believe in the efficacy of those powers.\textsuperscript{646} The present study suggests that the antiquarian element of the pictures is also to be addressed in this context, as an aspect of the medical function (as defined by Kemp) of the images and as a component in the transaction between Mercuriale (as the medical writer and physician claiming power and authority) and his elite audience to which he promotes his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment and with which he shared an enthusiasm for antiquity and ancient physical culture.

The present study suggests that the ground plan of the palaestra in the book is particularly indicative of the need to re-view the images of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} and of the need to distinguish between the medical function and functional element in them. So far, scholars have focused on the illustrations that were added in the second and the following editions of the book while the ground plan of the ancient palaestra found in the first edition of the book has been neglected in terms of historical analysis. In terms of attempting a mere textual analysis it could be that the ground plan of a palaestra fits with the content of a treatise that describes the ancient art of gymnastics. Still, in terms of a discourse analysis the question remains: what does an architectural plan have to do with medicine? The fact that Mercuriale added a second ground plan to his second edition of \textit{De arte gymnastica} (of 1573), in the context (as we will see in detail later in the chapter) of improving the second edition of the book as he explains, attests to the importance of addressing this question.

Martin Kemp has suggested that although images in early modern scientific treatises might involve common elements (such as similar factors of realism, rhetoric, aesthetics, etc.) still, there is no single, unifying theme, no single story to be told about images in early modern science and medicine.\textsuperscript{647} In recent years, scholars,

\textsuperscript{646} See Foreword by Martin Kemp, pp. 13-19, in Julie V. Hansen and Suzanne Porter (eds.), \textit{The Physician’s Art…} op. cit., p. 13

through their systematic research on the great illustrated botanical, anatomical, surgical and other scientific treatises of the sixteenth century, have indicated many different levels in the use and function of images by the authors of these scientific texts. What has also become evident through the systematic scholarly research on the visual imagery in early modern scientific writings is that there was little consensus in the learned communities regarding the usefulness of pictures in scientific texts; in fact, there were many objections regarding the use of pictures and what they could/should represent, objections that implied pertinent philosophical-scientific debates, for example whether what is depicted each time is/should be the accidental qualities of an object or its substantial forms or essences, whether what is/should be depicted is the ‘canonical’ human body or different examples, variations of it, etc.\textsuperscript{648}

As Sachiko Kusukawa notes, the period between 1450-1600 was a time when there was no established consensus as to what illustrations represented and how they might be used for gaining knowledge about nature and the human body. It was indeed also a time when people experimented with different ways of representing nature and the human body in two-dimensions, devising various methods and rules of representation. Kusukawa suggests it is precisely because there was little consensus regarding the use of the illustrations and what they could offer, and what they were meant to represent and how they related to the text that they accompanied, that we need to consider them carefully.\textsuperscript{649}

In the light of these assumptions it is the intellectual agenda, or project of each scientific writer that becomes the unique context within which the role and function of the images featured in the text should be established. In the framework of this study Mercuriale’s intellectual agenda emerges as the context in which the images of the \textit{De arte gymnastica} are addressed and established. Here, it would be useful to provide a series of points that Mercuriale makes and which are indicative of his intellectual agenda. In Book I, Chapter II, \textit{De conservativae partibus et quid tractandum}, (‘The parts of preservative medicine and what we intend to discuss’) Mercuriale writes: ‘\textit{But given that almost everything has been abundantly covered in a satisfactory manner by}


\textsuperscript{649} \textit{idem}, pp. 108-109
both older and more recent authorities, whereas on gymnastic practices or exercises, from which the art of gymnastics, extremely famous among the ancients, has been transmitted, and only in a random and confused manner, I have in consequence decided to devote a whole treatise, one which is perhaps for the first time complete, to them and to the art of gymnastics, called by the Latins the art of exercising. All the more so as Galen has indicated in his writings that this is a not ignoble part of hygiene, and practically everyone testifies to the fact that the art of exercise brings amazing benefits as regards averting future diseases, protecting existing health and building strength in those recovering from illness, the three parts which constitute the whole preservative art’.650

Later in Book III, Chapter I, De agendis et de ratione praesentis tractationis (‘Our agenda and the rationale behind this treatise’) Mercuriale informs his reader: ‘our aim in this book is particularly to record all the types of exercise that can benefit health and produce an optimal bodily condition and to consider gymnastics with regard to each in turn’;651 later in Book III, Chapter VIII, De circilasias, trocho, petauro et pilamalleo (‘Hoops, wheels, petaurum and pall-mall’) he writes: ‘if everything that had been common and, so to speak, popular in antiquity had been directly handed down to us, as Galen says of anatomy, and ancient written accounts had not perished, there would have been no need for the enormous and costly labours of modern scholars to shine a new light into the dark corners of a by-gone past. Some things have fallen out of use though the harsh passage of time, some have become corrupted and changed beyond recognition, others have vanished with the death of their chroniclers, and others, generally neglected over the centuries, have never recovered their. But where so much is obscure, we are sometimes forced to let our imagination wander from the truth. I have taken as my province to restore to life the art of gymnastics, once so highly esteemed, but now dead and forgotten, and my mistakes may appear all the more venial, since few or almost none of the ancient authors have survived to guide my project, not to speak today, leaving us no way of knowing how they were performed or what they were’.652

650 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., pp. 21-23
651 idem, p. 321
652 idem, p. 373
Mercuriale’s intellectual project is therefore focused on the recovery and restoration of medical gymnastics as an aspect of Galenic medicine and on the recovery of the ‘true’ ancient knowledge regarding medical gymnastics (what it was, how it was performed), so as to revive it. Taking this aim as the denominator of the employment of visual images the role, use and function of each of the images – as we will see in the following – varies: an image is used to clarify a (textual) problem/obscurity, to promote an opinion in a debate, to refute an opinion, to serve as evidence, to demonstrate to the reader how something looks (a piece of apparatus, the path of a moving body, etc.), to convey information that would be difficult to put across in words, as a means of comparison, of identification (of a practice, of an object), etc. Nonetheless (as we will see in the next part of this chapter especially in the case of the ground plan of the palaestra and of the triclinium), there are visual images that, having a vocabulary of their own, as Stephanie Moser suggests: ‘make arguments in a distinctly visual manner, in a way that verbal text cannot’. With these two remarks we pass on to the second part of this chapter.

5.2. The role, use, and function of the antiquarian images in Mercuriale’s medical discourse

This part of the chapter will address the illustrations of the De arte gymnastica as they are found in the first (1569), second (1573) and fifth (1601) editions of the book. In order to gain a better understanding of their synergy with the text and Mercuriale’s broader medical discourse, the analysis is largely thematic, grouping the illustrations according to their content and in relation to the content of the chapter in which they appear.

i) The ground plans of the ancient gymnasium (palaestra)

In the first edition (1569) of the De arte gymnastica we find only one illustration, the ground plan of an ancient gymnasium (palaestra), which is placed in the very first opening pages of the book, just before the beginning of Book I. Going through Book I we see that the architectural plan corresponds to the textual description of the palaestra that Mercuriale provides in Chapter VI, entitled De gymnasiis antiquorum (‘The gymnasia of antiquity’). The textual description is taken from Vitruvius’ De architectura (On architecture) from Book V, Chapter XI, De palaestrarum aedificatione et xystis (‘The construction of the palaestra and its porticoes’).654

In the second and the following editions of the De arte gymnastica, the ground plan of the palaestra is placed in Book I, Chapter VI, De gymnasiis antiquorum (‘The gymnasia of antiquity’), thus being fully incorporated in the text, while we also come across a second, oblong ground plan (the first is square); as regards, Mercuriale informs the reader: ‘I included two topographical drawings (iconographias) because the author [Vitruvius] tells us that it could be both square and oblong’. The illustrations are introduced right after the textual description from Vitruvius, and are followed by an index in which the different parts of the palaestra are identified. Whereas in the first edition the architectural design is annotated with the full Latin names of the different parts of the palaestra, the designs in the second and following

editions of the book are annotated with capital Latin letters and lower case Greek letters which indicate the different parts of the palaestra and correspond to the aforementioned catalogue.

So far, scholars have focused on the illustrations that were added to the second and the following editions of the *gymnastica*, yet the palaestra ground plans have attracted no scholarly interest.\(^6\) The present study considering, first of all, the mere presence of an architectural design in Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* ‘problematic’, suggests that the ground plan of the *palaestra* has a dual role in Mercuriale’s medical discourse. On the one hand, the design is part of Mercuriale’s effort to recover the physical space in which gymnastics was practiced, as an aspect of the broader recovery of the ancient ‘art of gymnastics’ or ‘art of exercise’, following the ancient textual authority of Vitruvius. In these terms the ground plan of the palaestra serves Mercuriale’s endeavour to recover the ancient art of gymnastics or exercise, and it also has informative purposes in that it conveys information to the reader. This is something that becomes evident from its synergy with the text, especially as manifested in the second and following editions of the book.

Nonetheless, in order to achieve a fuller historical understanding of its use and function in Mercuriale’s medical discourse, it is important that we take into consideration a series of additional parameters. First, it is crucial that we consider the nature of the particular illustration. We are dealing with an architectural design inspired by Vitruvius; we are dealing therefore with a kind of illustration that bears a set of implications and significance in its own right, especially considering the Renaissance recovery of Vitruvius. In these terms, the present study suggests that here we are dealing with a case in which the image sustains a visual argument on its own and which can only be comprehended by the initiated reader. The fact that the architectural design in the first edition of the *De arte gymnastica* is placed at the opening of the book, could attest to the symbolic role and function the architectural design is embedded with. Secondly, considering a series of points that Mercuriale (as we will see later) makes in his endeavour to recover the palaestra as the physical space where gymnastics was performed, the present study suggests that he also aims

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6\(^5\) The only exception is *Girolamo Mercuriale, De arte gymnastica*. Luoghi scelti, tradotti e annottati da Michele Napolitano. Introduzione di Rober Stalla, (Roma: Edizioni dell’Elefante, 1996), pp. 19-22, where the ground plan is connected to the architectural project of Pope Pius IV for the Palazzo della Sapienza
to shape a particular ‘image’ of the palaestra as a noble, decorous space for the
erexercise of both the body and the soul; in this context the employment of an
architectural design inspired by Vitruvius, bearing a series of moral values and
principles, is enhanced with a function of crucial significance and a didactic purpose.

Regarding the first aspect of the design’s use, in Book I, Chapter VI, *De gymnasiis
antiquorum* (‘The gymnasia of antiquity’) Mercuriale outlines the historical
background of the genesis of the palaestra, looking into the terms/names used in
antiquity and its Greek and Roman origins, finally providing a description of the
different parts of the palaestra and their use. Mercuriale opens the chapter writing
‘*after establishing that gymnastics or the art of exercise used to be practiced in
specific places, it is reasonable to explain what the places themselves were and of
what sort. The fact that they were not other than the place called gymnasia is plainly
confirmed by many writers, and especially by Galen’s assertions in the second book
of *On the preservation of health*.‘ 656 Mercuriale notes that ‘*I find that these places are
called “palaestras” in Vitruvius, Celsus, Pliny and other Latin authors*‘; ‘*Hence*,
Mercuriale continues later, ‘*I conjecture that in the age of Vitruvius palaestras or
gymnasia were quite rare in Italy or did not exist at all, all the more so as, when he
prepares to record how they are built in his book *On architecture*, he proclaims that
they did no conform to the Italic tradition*.‘ 657

In his endeavour to recover the ‘true’ palaestra Mercuriale does not mind clashing
with the views of his contemporaries, among them Pirro Ligorio: ‘*As for those
buildings which Ligorio, the greatest expert of all aspects of antiquity, says that he
found represented among the remains of the emperor Hadrian’s villa at Tivoli, and
Athenaum, as Hermeium and Panthenaicum, I do not consider them in the least to
have been gymnasia where bodies were exercised, but places where attention was
paid to education and other arts, or where festivals were held, like the Panathenaic
festival in the Panathenaicum*.‘ 658 Looking into the Roman past Mercuriale notes that
*the Romans were, on Varro’s authority, the last of all to start building gymnasia in
their city, following the example of the Greeks; they called them palaestras. The
extent to which they surpassed all others of this kind, in both the magnificence and in

656 Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 43
657 *idem*, p. 45
658 *idem*, p. 49
the sheer beauty of their construction, is easily proved from those famous ruins of the Baths, which have remained a source of universal wonder’.\textsuperscript{659}

Right after making this point, in the second and the following editions of the book, Mercuriale elaborates on the addition of the second illustration as follows: ‘Since in our first edition we published a substantially different version based on the conclusions of Ottavio Pantagatho, our great contemporary, now, having thought it over carefully, as usual, second thoughts are better than first, we present a more correct description, which corresponds exactly to all the words of Vitruvius. In doing so, we have derived considerable benefit from the help of Alvise Mocenigo son of Francesco; of Gian Vicenzo Pinelli; of Melchior Guilandino, men of sharp discernment in all matters and most highly esteemed by everyone for their singular erudition; and also of Andrea Palladio, the greatest expert in the whole field of ancient architecture. So I am confident that in this way his account of the palaestra will emerge in a form acceptable to the learned and to students of Vitruvius’ science, and that this disposition, which had been unknown almost to this day, will now become intelligible and be made clear for posterity. Indeed if Ottavio himself were to come back to life, I should have no doubt, for he was a most pious and learned man, that even he would subscribe most willingly to this description and to a text of Vitruvius which has not only been emended but also rearranged for the better in some places.’\textsuperscript{660}

We see therefore that the addition of the second ground plan is part of the endeavour to provide a ‘more correct description’, a ‘correct’ recovery (‘acceptable to the learned’) of the work of the ancient authority of Vitruvius, with the aim of making his work ‘intelligible’ and ‘clear for posterity’ but also for didactic, teaching purposes (Mercuriale at the time was teaching in the University of Padua) ‘for the students of Vitruvius’ science’, as Mercuriale notes, with the help of erudite scholars,\textsuperscript{661} of which

\textsuperscript{659} ibid.
\textsuperscript{660} ibid.
\textsuperscript{661} Alvise Mocenigo (1507-1577), a diplomat of the Republic of Venice, was an enthusiastic antiquarian and collector of antiquities. Gian Vicenzo Pinelli (1535-1601) was a humanist, collector of manuscripts and scientific instruments, botanist and also considered as a mentor of Galileo Galilei. Melchior Guilandino (1520-1589) was a physician and botanist, prefect of the botanical garden of the University of Padua where he was appointed professor of botany in 1567. Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), was an architect, author of the seminal architectural treatise I quatro libri dell’ architettura (‘The fours books of architecture’) published in Venice, in 1570; he is considered as one of the most important architects of sixteenth-century Italy and most influential figures of Western architecture.
Andrea Palladio is praised by Mercuriale as ‘the greatest expert in the whole field of ancient architecture’. The addition of the second ground plan, as well as the incorporation of the designs within the text (unlike the first edition), appears to be part of Mercuriale’s endeavour to recover the ‘true’ ancient palaestra as a physical space following the ‘proper’ recovery of Vitruvius’ text, achieved with the help of erudite and expert scholars, as accurately and ‘scientifically’ as possible.

The nature of the illustration helps with the understanding of the physical space of the palaestra. The ground plan is an orthographic projection, which was the chief graphic device of sixteenth-century architects.\(^{662}\) It was a method for representing the interior and exterior elevations of a building, not in perspective but laid out flat in a consistent scale. In this way, every measurement and relationship of each part of the building to each other and to the whole of the building may appear on the drawing as on the building itself, only reduced by a consistent factor. As a drawing it was more abstract, but it could be translated directly from the drawing into the actual building and vice versa; this is something that had not been possible with earlier perspective drawings in which measurements were affected by the position and distance of the observer.\(^{663}\)

James Ackerman has suggested that, as such, the orthographic projection was an expression of the Renaissance architects’ concerns regarding the rationalization of proportion and the refinement of techniques of representation, in their endeavour (as dictated by the humanist ambitions) to describe accurately and systematically the ancient physical remains. In these terms, Ackerman notes that this type of drawing was not merely a means to record the visible ancient findings and physical remains, rather it was a ‘tool’ to design a model of a building for others to follow.\(^{664}\) In these terms, the use of the orthographic projection helps Mercuriale in his effort to recover and describe the ancient gymnasium as a physical space in a way that parallels the respective interest of anatomists and anatomical illustration; it is a type of visual image that demonstrates the concern to define and rationalise a particular physical space.

\(^{663}\) ibid.
\(^{664}\) ibid.
In the context of Mercuriale’s attempt to recover the ancient palaestra, the architectural design inspired by Vitruvius sustains a ‘visual language’ of communication between him and his audience. It is a kind of encoding, enhanced with an epistemic value relying on the ability of the audience to make the necessary inferences. If the audience were unfamiliar with the conventions deployed, then the utility of the illustration would be compromised.\footnote{See Bert S. Hall, ‘The Didactic and the Elegant: Some Thoughts on Scientific and Technological Illustrations in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance’ in Brian S. Baigrie (ed.), \textit{Picturing Knowledge...}, op. cit.} However, Mercuriale was addressing an audience familiar with Vitruvius’ work and the values and principles entailed in it, as well as with the use of this particular type of architectural design and its conventions. Cardinal Alessandro Farnese himself had a great fascination with architectural projects and he was familiar with architectural technicalities.\footnote{See Clare Robertson, ‘Il Gran Cardinale’...op. cit.}

Regarding the second aspect of the role, use and function of the palaestra ground plan in Mercuriale’s medical discourse it is useful to consider a few points that Mercuriale makes about the ancient origins of the palaestra. Looking for the origins of the word \textit{gymnasium} (from the Greek word \textit{gymnazesthai}, i.e. to become naked) Mercuriale also tackles the scandalous issue of nakedness by noting that it was not certain that all who exercised only for the sake of health took off their clothes. In the following Mercuriale gives a brief history of the first Greek and Roman gymnasia, in which he brings up a series of explanatory and clarifying points regarding the names employed to describe gymnasia in Roman times, as well as regarding the use of the gymnasia.

In this framework Mercuriale notes that Latin-speaking authors used other terms that described or designated the Greek gymnasium and he also makes a distinction between the original gymnasium and places introduced for other purposes and activities (e.g. for education, or other arts and festivals). Regarding the use of the palaestra Mercuriale states that ‘it was possible to carry out without any hindrance innumerable exercises of diverse types, of both body and soul, as anyone even moderately educated in these matters will be able to gather from the appended description in Vitruvius’.\footnote{See Girolamo Mercuriale, \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 49} He characteristically notes that Plato and Aristotle were in the habit of philosophising in the (so-called) Athenian gymnasia, the Academy and
the Lyceum respectively, marking how the Academy was considered ‘the noblest gymnasium on earth’.668

The ancient palaestra, as a physical space, is therefore implied as a noble, decorous space, qualified by structure to host the exercise of both the body and the soul and thus suitable to the status of the noble and decorous people. In the context of shaping this ‘image’ of the ancient palaestra the deployment of Vitruvius plays a significant role due to the moral values, principles, and qualities that his De architectorura was embedded with. As regards, Vitruvius’ concern to provide architecture with a distinct structure and order, as well as his view that geometry, measure, and proportion were the qualities and characteristics of the Greek and Roman architectural achievements, were considered unsurpassed paragons for Renaissance architecture; they mirrored the beauty of nature and of the human body.669 It is important to take into consideration how Vitruvius in Book III Chapter I of his De architectorura compares the human body directly to the body of a building and he makes claims regarding this analogy in terms of proportion, symmetry, and harmony. These Vitruvian ideas, apart from being connected with the Aristotelian understanding of corporeality,670 might also be connected with another set of ideas from the Aristotelian tradition, those of physiognomy; though not directly concerned with the beauty of the human form, but rather with the diagnosis of inner psychological characteristics from outward physical form, physiognomy texts or Renaissance writings influenced by them, frequently associate good proportions with moral worth and deformities with deficiency.671

Therefore, with the recovery of Vitruvius the sixteenth-century experts and enthusiasts found the means by which they could interpret the remains of ancient buildings, measuring them and then restoring their forms in drawing; they could design buildings all’antica reviving the harmony that the ancients sought between nature, the human body and architecture.672 With the deployment in the context of the

668 ibid.
De arte gymnastica of the ground plan of the palaestra following the authority of Vitruvius and the values that his work represented, the present study suggests that Mercuriale aimed to provide such a model, expressing the Renaissance attitudes according to which classical antiquity should serve primarily as a model and standard for contemporary life; after all (as demonstrated in the previous chapter of this study) it is around the principles, qualities of harmony, order, and measure that Mercuriale shapes the medical nature and value of his ‘medical gymnastics’.

**ii) The ‘strigiles’ and the baths**

In Book I, Chapter VIII, De gymnasiorum diveris partibus (‘The Various parts of the gymnasium’) Mercuriale describes the anointment of the body with oil and dust before exercise and the scraping from the body of this oil, dust and sweat after the end of exercise, in terms of an ancient ‘gymnastic practice’. Drawing from textual authorities (Martial, Book XIV, Epigram 49), Mercuriale explains that the ancients used ‘iron scrapers’ (strigilibus ferreis), ‘curved blades’ (curvo distinguere ferro) – quoting Martial here – so as to remove the oil, dust, and sweat after exercise, which, Mercuriale claims, were mixed together and retained for medical usage and that this can easily be confirmed from Dioscorides, Pliny, Galen and Aetius. Mercuriale also notes that although in Galen’s time scrapers were provided for use at the baths, everybody brought their own (drawing from the ‘Fifth Satire’ of Persius) and that sharing ‘tools’ (instrumenta) with other people was avoided.

Mercuriale states that the scrapers were made of iron, gold, silver, cornel-wood, ivory or bronze and were used to scrape dirt from the bodies of those who exercised: ‘the strigiles in the picture [pictura] set here or those that were recovered some time ago from the ruins of the Baths of the emperor Trajan, were made of bronze’. He directs the reader’s attention to the illustration (annotated in Latin with the words STRIGILES and STRI.AMMONI.LIBE.F) in which two scrapers are depicted, thus helping the reader to visualize what they looked like. We see therefore that Mercuriale starts off with the textual description of the object (its shape, use, and material) primarily informed from the textual sources, and then introducing the illustration he matches the

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673 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 69
textual description with the visual representation of the object – as recovered in the ancient remains, according to Mercuriale.

With regard to the understanding of the particular image within Mercuriale’s medical discourse it is important to note that Mercuriale’s focus on the scrapers is within the context of the ‘gymnastic practice’ of anointing. His claim is that anointing before exercise and wiping off the oil and dust after exercise are legitimate ‘gymnastic practices’ in the framework of exercise, in the sense that they had a particular utility (they favoured the exercising body), contrary to the habit of re-anointment with perfumed oils after bathing; criticizing the practice of re-anointment as immoral Mercuriale notes that the anointment with perfumed oils after bathing was ‘thriving among the foreigners’ and drawing from Pliny he states that ‘others more effeminate also anointed themselves after baths, for the sake of licentiousness and lust’.

In this context I would suggest that the image of the scrapers supports the legitimate practice of removing excess oil (or the mixture of oil and dust) after exercise, with the authorities of Dioscorides, Pliny, Galen and Aetius confirming the medical utility of such a practice. The illustration of the scrapers makes part of Mercuriale’s ‘rhetoric of reality’, sustaining a visual device that emphasises a particular act/practice; it is a visual reference to the act/practice itself. This will become more evident as we examine the following illustration, the image of the baths, in which the scrapers are visualized ‘in situ’, in the sense that they are visualized in context (in a bathing scene) thus providing an accurate representation of the associated ancient bathing culture. Furthermore, as we will see, the economy of the drawing helps the reader to identify the scrapers and their actual use in this specific context.

As regards, Mercuriale in Book I, Chapter X, De balneis gymnasiorum atque etiam de stadio (‘The baths of the gymnasia and also the running track’) provides the reader with an image of a bathing scene. In the endeavour to recover the gymnastic practice of bathing Mercuriale discusses whether the vessels for bathing were fixed or not, the material from which they were made, the names used, their shape and their size, noting that their remains can still be seen in Rome, amid the ruins of the Baths. Noting that they had different forms ‘as it appears from the extremely old ones that

674 idem, pp. 71-73
675 See Martin Kemp, ‘Temples of the Body…’ op. cit., p. 43
survive in Rome to this day’ Mercuriale directs the reader’s attention to the illustration noting ‘but here we simply give one single drawing (forma) which was transmitted by Ligorio, from his most renowned Annals of antiquity, for we consider it to be both of remarkable beauty and also perfectly adapted to enlighten the perspicacious reader on a number of points’.

There should be no doubt that a beautiful image might also be didactic, informative and the other way round but since Mercuriale remarks on both qualities of this particular image it is worth digressing to make a point here. According to Mercuriale’s words therefore, in this image the ‘didactic and the elegant’ (to borrow the phrase from Bert S. Hall) meet; there is no opposition between the aesthetic qualities of the image and its informative, educational, instructive qualities. As Bert Hall argues, in one possible conflict between these two qualities the elegance of a drawing may seduce the viewer into accepting as ‘true’ something that is not; it is this possibility that the ancients seem to have found so threatening and that led them to the conclusion that ‘pictures…are very apt to mislead’. However, as Hall notes, we need to consider that scientific illustrations made part of ‘courtly’ texts and were patently meant to respond to patrons’ aesthetic tastes: they were meant to be both elegant and didactic, they were designed to both charm and instruct. So in this image of the De arte gymnastica, and according to Mercuriale’s remarks, we have here an example of the blending of the didactic and the elegant in early modern scientific illustration: the image conveys to the reader a set of information and at the same time it enhances in aesthetic terms the appearance of the page (and of the book).

Examining the economy of the drawing we see that it matches Mercuriale’s description of the different kinds (movable and not) and shapes (rectangular, round, etc.) of baths as well as their purpose: two baths are shown, one fixed, one movable, the one is rectangular, the other is oval. The reader can also get an idea about their

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678 On the economic issues of scientific illustrations see Martin Kemp, ‘The mark of truth…’, cit. op. cit. Martin Kemp indicates that the cost and other practical factors in the production of illustrations in printed books often led to the invention and use of systems of representation that, in the context of practical considerations, restricted as little as possible the effectiveness of the illustration as a medium.
size (judging by the number of figures that are shown inside the baths) and their material; furthermore, the previously identified and discussed (in terms of material, shape, use) strigiles are pictured again in the top left of the image, while their actual use is also shown: some of the depicted (male) figures are seen scraping themselves while some are shown as having their bodies scraped by others. The image, therefore, has an informative role, it conveys information to the reader and it helps the reader visualize both how the actual objects looked and to understand the bathing practice. Furthermore, we see again in this case that the image visualizes whatever Mercuriale’s words – drawn from textual authorities – describe. The image illustrates the textual sources.

It is important to note that public baths and bathing were criticized for engendering immoral behaviour. However in his discourse Mercuriale connects baths and bathing with legitimate, medical practices, locating bathing and its purpose in the framework of exercise: according to Mercuriale cleaning the body of impurities is the purpose of bathing. More in particular, Mercuriale notes that there was more than one reason why people bathed: to clean the body, to make it cool, for pleasure, to become tougher, and to draw out the inner heat that was deep in the body, or to help prolong life. Nonetheless, he marks, ‘I have always considered the reason baths were instituted was to wash off the impurities of the day and to permit the people who bathed every day to be able to dine in a clean body’. Therefore, Mercuriale continues, the reason that baths existed in gymnasia was entirely reasonable as people bathed in order to remove the filth after exercising. The image of the scrapers, which had been identified in the previous picture, helps the reader to visualize their actual use (where and how they was used); it serves as a visual clue that accentuates exactly what Martin Kemp has suggested as ‘the concrete situation and procedures by which the representations were generated’; in this case bathing as a cleaning practice in the framework of gymnastics.

The insistence on the cleaning practices and on maintaining a clean body is significant in relation to the ethics of Mercuriale’s elite audience, considering also the rhetoric

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680 See Martin Kemp, ‘Temples of the Body…’ op. cit., p. 43

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behind contemporary cleaning practices.\textsuperscript{681} In these terms, the present study suggests that the image emphasises Mercuriale’s claim; the image sustains a visual argumentation: the practice of bathing is identified with the practice of cleaning the body, a practice which is emphasised by the images of the \textit{strigiles} as the instruments used to get rid of the excess oil and dirt. We see therefore that Mercuriale deploys these two images in his endeavour to recover ancient bodily/physical practices however in a particular context in which he aims to recover and/or re-define the ‘true’ nature and the purpose of these ‘gymnastic practices’. In this endeavour the images play a vital role for establishing \textit{his} interpretation and recovery of textual ancient knowledge and of aspects of ancient bodily/physical culture, while as a medium the images transmit/communicate knowledge that – according to Mercuriale – has been drawn directly from the ancient sources, in this case the material remains.\textsuperscript{682} Appealing to Ligorio’s authority, competence, and work as an antiquarian in producing a drawing ‘\textit{perfectly adapted}’ (a comment referring to the economy of the drawing) to convey the information to the reader, Mercuriale emphasises the power of the image to convey knowledge and he enhances at the same time its credibility as a source of information on antiquity.

\textit{iii) The ball games}

In Book II, Chapter V, \textit{De pilae ludo secundum Latinos} (‘The ball game according to the Romans’), Mercuriale is trying to recover the Roman ball games. He opens the chapter as follows: ‘[...] \textit{it remains to explain those [types of ball game] that were played by the Romans and have been described to us in writing. I hope it will become clear to what extent they are alike, and how they differ [from the Greek ones]’}.\textsuperscript{683} When describing the four different ball games Mercuriale focuses on the four different types of ball that the ancients used; focusing on the \textit{follis} or ‘swift ball’ or simply ‘ball’ ‘he explains that it was ‘\textit{a large ball that was made from leather tanned with alum, filled with nothing but air, and it was so large that it was hit with the}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{681} See Douglas Biow, \textit{The Culture of Cleanliness in Renaissance Italy}, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006)}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{682} Mercuriale does not provide the source of information here but we know that Pirro Ligorio participated in the excavation of Trajan’s Forum in 1555, and in 1569 near Trajan’s Baths, so it is possible that Mercuriale received the information regarding the results of the excavation from Ligorio himself. See \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 947}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{683} \textit{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…op. cit., p. 233}
Directing the reader’s attention to the illustration, he writes ‘this type of ball exercise can be seen on the coins of the Roman emperor Gordian III, and we have attached the relevant pictures [depictos] to our text; from these you may see that each player had his own ball, and that this game was played at the Pythian festival at Apollonia, as one can easily conclude from the inscription “Pythia”, the palm, and the sacrificial vessels’. According to Mercuriale, the image visualizes ‘this type of ball exercise’: it depicts three male figures each hitting with his arm a large ball, while in the background we can see the symbols of the Pythian festival, (the inscription, the vessels and the palm) as Mercuriale informs his reader. The image visualizes how and where (the place/occasion) this type of ball-exercise was practiced, following Mercuriale’s textual description: it visualizes what Mercuriale wants the reader to notice. The coins, as the source of the image, attest to the credibility and the authority of the image.

Later in the same chapter Mercuriale describes another type of ball game, the trigonalis (the “three-corner”) ball game. ‘The trigonalis they played with was small and it was named either after the place where they exercised with it, which had three sides, as some claim, or rather and more credibly, after the number of players, their formation and their position’. In the following Mercuriale, drawing from textual sources (Martial, Celsus, Antyllus), describes how this exercise was performed noting that ‘we can easily conjecture how that exercise is performed from he words of Martial, who demonstrates that the players usually played in a triangular formation, throwing the ball with both hands, sometimes left, sometimes right, so that it never drops to the ground’, concluding that ‘it is blindingly obvious that the “three-corner” players used to throw and catch the ball, sometimes with the left hand, sometimes with the right, rather like throwing a small ball over a rope’. In the following Mercuriale turns the reader’s attention to the picture and the picture is introduced in the text: ‘an example of the “three-corner” ball seems to be found on coins of M. Aurelius Antoninus struck at Byzantium. This game is recorded as having been played at the festival of Apollo Pythius Actiacus’.

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684 idem, p. 233
685 idem, p. 235
686 idem, p. 237
687 idem, p. 239
688 idem, p. 241
The economy of the image helps the reader to visualize how this exercise was performed: three male figures are depicted, each of them playing with two small balls; depicting two small balls allows the reader to visualize how the ball was to be thrown and caught with the right but also with the left hand – following Mercuriale’s description – while the different postures of the figures aids the visualization of the movement from different angles. Furthermore, in the background of the image the inscription, vessels, and palm as symbols of the ‘festival of Apollo Pythius Actiacus’ are included as Mercuriale notes in his description. We see therefore how the objects are deployed as visual signals that convey information to the reader about the place and the occasion that the particular exercise was practised. The integration of symbols grants the image with an epistemic value as the symbol sustains a kind of encoding that demands a set of conventions that are shared between the image and the user; if the user is unfamiliar with the conventions put at work then the epistemic utility of the image is compromised.\textsuperscript{689} In order to understand fully the role of the particular images it is important to note that Mercuriale connects the size of the ball with the way the exercise was to be performed, the bodily condition of the person who was to perform the exercise (healthy, convalescent, sick), and the different effects each type of exercise (defined by the type of ball that was used) had for the healthy, convalescent and the sick.

\textit{iv) Discus-throwing, the statue of the discovolos, and the discus}

In Book II, Chapter XII, \textit{De disco et halteribus} (‘Discus and Weights’) Mercuriale uses an image of discus-throwers to prove the opinion of the ancient authorities on this activity: ‘\textit{the common opinion of authorities makes it evident that athletes did indeed train in this and also competed in public competitions}’; ‘\textit{the authorities}’, he continues, ‘\textit{unanimously count discus among the competitive athletic events, and in addition, there is the picture reproduced here}’.\textsuperscript{690} Mercuriale concludes that ‘\textit{Galen, Aetius, Paul and Avicenna regard discus among exercises conducive to health and good physique}’.\textsuperscript{691} The economy of the image favours the visualization of the textual

\textsuperscript{689} See Brian S. Baigrie (ed.), \textit{Picturing Knowledge…}\textsuperscript{op. cit.}, pp. xx-xxi
\textsuperscript{690} Girolamo Mercuriale. \textit{De arte gymnastica}, Critical Edition…\textsuperscript{op. cit.}, p. 289
\textsuperscript{691} \textit{ibid.}
argument: in the background of the image, behind the (male) figures, we see a vase with the palms of honour on a table or altar, as well as three metae (goalposts) indicating a Roman circus, unlike the colonnades depicted in other images that represent the space of the palaestra; in this image the objects are deployed as visual signals that imply in visual terms the space where the competitions used to take place (e.g. the Roman circus), indicating thus that discus throwing was a competitive exercise.

It would be useful to explore further the economy of the particular image. Judging by the several figures that are shown throwing the discus we can assume that this visual element attests to Mercuriale’s claim that discus throwing was a competitive exercise, as the representation of more than one figure suggests. In other words, we see a ‘competition’ in action. In addition, it is crucial to note the sequential views, the successive viewpoints that the economy of the image provides us with, visualizing the successive stages of the bodily movement during the throwing of the discus. This visual device appears to address a distinction Mercuriale is trying to make between throwing the discus and throwing the javelin; explaining how the discus was thrown by the ancients Mercuriale writes: ‘this [the discus] they threw in the air but in a manner different from the throwing of javelins, as in throwing javelins the arms are outstretched and then pulled back, whereas in throwing the discus the hand is drawn to the chest brought out and down, as if in a turn’.\footnote{idem, p. 291} In these terms the image has an instructional, informative function as it helps the reader to visualize the description of the throws.

Mercuriale makes use of two additional illustrations in his attempt to define the discus as an object in the context of exercise, recovering thus the ‘true’ discus. He notes that it is reasonable to clarify what the term discus means as it means different things to different writers. Mercuriale discusses the shape of the discus, its size, and the material from which it was made, explaining at the same time how these qualities favoured the actual exercise of discus throwing. Drawing from the textual sources, Mercuriale provides first the argument of the authority of Dioscorides regarding the shape of the discus and he notes ‘that the discus has a shape, as we said, like a lentil
is confirmed, apart from the fact that Dioscorides calls it a lentil, by a marble statue
of a discus thrower, which is preserved today at Rome in the house of Giambattista
Vettori, in whose hand you can see a discus of just the shape described by us’, introducing at this point the image. Mercuriale continues noting ‘this is shown
likewise by the stone arm of a discus thrower in the Pitti palace of the great Duke of
Tuscany, from which you can understand the way of throwing the discus similarly, as
the very learned Pietro Vettori, an ornament of our age, who sent us the image of the
arm, informed us’; introducing at this point an additional picture of an arm holding a
discus. These two images, visual representations of antiquarian objects according to
Mercuriale, enhance his claim regarding the discus as an object, a claim which stems
from the recovery of the ancient knowledge drawn from textual sources; the image
therefore also serves in visualizing the recovered ancient textual knowledge. The fact
that, according to Mercuriale, the antiquarian objects are a part of the private
collections of eminent men enhances the credibility and the authority of the images in
use.

Mercuriale continues to argue about the shape of the discus through references to
pertinent antiquarian objects as visualized in his treatise, this time supporting his
opinion against that of the French antiquarian Guillaume du Choul (1496-1560); he
notes that ‘it is probable that two further statues of a discus thrower were similar to
these; one of those, Pliny tells us, was made from bronze by Myro, the very famous
sculptor and was celebrated by Quintilian; the other was excellently depicted by
Tauriscus, a very famous painter’; Mercuriale concludes noting that ‘if Guillaume du
Choul had seen this type of discus, with the testimonies mentioned, and examined it
carefully, he would not have ventured to make the definite statement that “the discus
is a round ball with a hole through the middle”’; ‘unless’, Mercuriale continues,
‘perhaps this worthy man understood by the word “ball”, contrary to normal Latin
usage, simply some sort of rounded object’.

Mercuriale returns to the image of the discus throwers, informing the reader that the representation comes from some coins of the emperor Marcus Aurelius struck at Apollonia in Illyria and he writes that in the image ‘it seems that the discus was a flat round object, with a hole in the
middle’; from this and from what St. Cyprian says in his book ‘On the games’ in

693 idem, p. 291
694 ibid.
695 ibid.
which he calls the discus a “bronze orb”, ‘I may conjecture’, he concludes, ‘that there was more than one form of discus in existence, used either at religious ceremonies or in the gymasia’. 696

v) Halteres

In Book II, Chapter XII, De disco et halteribus (‘Discus and Weights’), in the effort to recover an exercise – similar to discus he notes – that is called halteres in Greek and that according to Galen was customarily practiced in the palaestra, Mercuriale offers his readers an additional illustration. Mercuriale tries to distinguish halteres from the jumpers’ weights and he elaborates on the way the halteres were used drawing from Antyllus; Mercuriale provides the pertinent text noting that he provides Antyllus’ words as cited in Oribasius: ‘there is a difference between actual halteres. They are thrown either with both arms outstretched then bent, or by stretching out the hands, which are kept still and moved with the slightest possible motion. The men in the process of training come in and strike, no differently from boxers, or alternatively exercise with movement of hands and backs in turn’. 697

Mercuriale continues, noting that ‘from this passage, it seems to be clearly indicated that, even if halteres of this type are made of the same material and in the same form as jumpers’ weights, they nevertheless differ from the latter in that they are not only held in the hands, but are also thrown in various ways’; ‘and so that a clear idea may be had of the form of this exercise’, Mercuriale continues, ‘we have appended images (imagines) of halteres, which Pirro Ligorio took from ancient carved gems and sent to us’ introducing at this point the illustration in the text. In the following, after distinguishing between the word halter and alter, Mercuriale provides a description of the actual halter quoting Pausanias (‘Description of Elis V’): ‘they [the halteres] have the shape of an oblong, their halves not being exact semicircles, and so their shape is contrived in such a way that the fingers are inserted as if into the handle of a shield’. 698 Drawing from another ancient authority (Caelius Aurelianus) Mercuriale concludes ‘from these words it can be gathered that halteres were in the form of a kind of lump, or had weights made of various materials, sometimes lighter sometimes

696 idem, p. 293
697 ibid
698 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 295
‘heavier, of such a size that anyone could hold them in his hands’. Nonetheless, Mercuriale continues the discussion regarding the halteres and interpreting the words of Plato (‘Laws VIII’) he notes: ‘for halteres were sometimes stones which have indicated that trainers were accustomed to throw them with their hands: from this it is not contrary to reason that Plato understood halter as the name of a stone hurled with the hands’.

Looking at the economy of the drawing we can see how it matches Mercuriale description as drawn from the authoritative sources. The image depicts five male figures in the space of a palaestra, where they are practicing; another four male figures are shown watching them. In the image we find the two types of halteres as described by Pausanias and according to Mercuriale’s interpretation of Plato: the three male figures are throwing what appear to be the objects described by Mercuriale (that is oblong, with the halves not being semicircles) and the other two male figures in the background are depicted as throwing what appear to be stones. The postures of the figures help the reader visualize the way in which the exercise was performed. We see therefore that the image provided verifies the information drawn from the textual authorities, and enhances at the same time Mercuriale’s claims. The authority and credibility of the image is once again based on the authority of Pirro Ligorio as an antiquarian, while Ligorio’s first-hand witnessing and observation are noted by Mercuriale enhancing the authority of the image provided.

**vi) Wrestling and the pancratium**

In Book II, Chapter VIII, *De luctatoria* (‘On wrestling’) Mercuriale tries to locate the origins of the name pale (‘πάλη’ in Greek) as, he notes, the Greeks generally used the term for this exercise. In this endeavour, he notes that according to some ‘the term comes from plesiazein, which in Greek means ‘approach’, ‘come near’; ‘runners always kept their distance and were never at close quarters and boxers equally were never permitted by the referees to become entangled: only wrestlers did this’. ‘Ligorio’, continues Mercuriale, ‘shows us how to visualize this better from some

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699 ibid.
700 ibid.
701 Girolamo Mercuriale. *De arte gymnastica*, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 261
Syracusan coins on which various wrestlers are so presented\textsuperscript{702} and at this point the picture (annotated with the Latin ‘\textit{LUCTATORES}’) is introduced in the text. In relation to this bodily entanglement Mercuriale mentions Tertullian’s work ‘On shows’, in which it is claimed that ‘wrestling is the work of the devil, who drove out the first men from Eden’.\textsuperscript{703} Mercuriale, however, tries to ‘defend’ wrestling by noting that there have been some wrestlers remote from this style. The economy of the image envisages Mercuriale’s idea of ‘moral’, ‘decorous’ wrestling: it depicts three different pairs of male figures wrestling (two standing and two entangled solely by the arms) illustrating Mercuriale’s textual description of wrestlers ‘who beat their opponents by their stance and by the reach of their arms’\textsuperscript{704}.

In the endeavour to recover an exercise similar to wrestling and to distinguish it from wrestling, Mercuriale introduces an additional image in the chapter. He tries to describe the differences between the various kinds of wrestling, one of which is called \textit{pancratium volutatorium} (as is also inscribed on the image) and he writes: ‘…whereas in the twisting pancratium they would lie on the ground and there in turn mutually entangled one would try to get on top of the other’\textsuperscript{705}; the ‘coins’, continues Mercuriale, ‘show this very clearly especially those of a certain author called Sallustius who under the principate of Valentinina and Placidia Augusta, after the capture of the kingdom of Africa, held contests like these, and others too, to celebrate his victory’\textsuperscript{706} and at this point the picture is introduced in the text. The image depicts two pairs of male figures practicing this type of wrestling, visualizing the two sequential, successive stages of this particular kind of wrestling, according to Mercuriale’s textual description. In these terms the image has a dual function: on the one hand, seen in comparison to the previous image of the wrestlers, it helps the reader to distinguish between the two exercises; on the other hand the image has an explanatory function, illustrating Mercuriale’s description of the conduct of the particular exercise which is rather difficult to do verbally. Antiquarian objects, coins in particular, were the sources of this visual representation, thus enhancing its credibility.

\textsuperscript{702} ibid
\textsuperscript{703} ibid
\textsuperscript{704} ibid
\textsuperscript{705} \textit{idem}, p. 263
\textsuperscript{706} \textit{ibid}
vii) Pugiles and the caestus

In Book II, Chapter IX, *De pugilatu et pancratio et caestibus* (‘Boxing, pancratium and the cestus’) Mercuriale introduces an additional image in his effort to distinguish between boxing, *pancratium* and the *cestus*. Mercuriale notes that people fighting with the cestus (a kind of boxing or battle glove) were still called boxers (*pugiles*) according to Cicero’s *Tusculan disputationes II* and he continues noting that men wearing the cestus were customarily trained in gymnasias, something which he notes is also testified by the authorities. Later in the chapter Mercuriale writes ‘*we here offer various pictures of boxers who fought with cestus and various pictures (picturas) of the cestus themselves, just as Pirro Ligorio, who was most skilled in restoring ancient monuments, conveyed them to us; they are taken either from tombs or from engraving on old gems*’.[707] Here, three pictures in a row are introduced. The first image shows four boxers, two are engaged in fighting, wearing the cestus on their hands. The illustration annotated with the word ‘*PUGILES*’ follows Mercuriale’s remark that men fighting with the cestus were still called boxers (*pugiles*) according to the authoritative textual sources; in addition the colonnades in the background as well as the Latin word ‘*XYSTOS*’ serve as visual signals implying the space of the palaestra; the *xystos* was the covered portico of the palaestra described by Mercuriale previously in Book I, Chapter VI, *De gymnasiis antiquorim* (‘The gymnasium of antiquity’) – also indicated in the ground plan of the palaestra.

This image therefore illustrates Mercuriale’s argument, his effort to recover and distinguish between similar types of exercise through the deployment of ancient textual sources. The two illustrations that follow (annotated with the Latin word ‘*CAESTUS*’) show hands wrapped with the cestus. They have an informative, descriptive function as they reveal how the cestus, the apparatus of the particular exercise, looked and how it was wrapped around the hand: the first one shows three hands wrapped in the cestus and the second illustration depicts two details each demonstrating a different way of wrapping, helping the reader to visualize the cestus as well as the different ways in which it was wrapped around the hands, something which a textual description alone would have been difficult to convey. The credibility and the authority of the images rest once again on Pirro Ligorio’s authority as an

antiquarian and in particular in his skill in restoring the ancient monuments, as Mercuriale marks.

viii) The Pyrrhic

In Book II, Chapter VI, *De orchestica sive tertia saltatoriae parte* (‘Dancing or the third part of the saltatory’) Mercuriale provides us with an additional image. In this chapter Mercuriale embarks on his discussion of the third part of the saltatory and he begins by writing: ‘we have already distinguished the three parts of the saltatory, tumbling, ball play and what is simply called dancing. Having discussed the first two, we now come to the third, and we shall make clear, first, what it was; secondly, how many types of it there were; thirdly, why our ancestors used it; and fourthly and finally, where and by whom it was practiced’.

Later in the chapter, when considering the different types of dance Mercuriale notes that ‘one can find innumerable different types of dancing recorded by Homer, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Strabo, Plutarch, Galen, Pollux, and Lucia. The best and most famous took their names from the regions where they were performed or were found and described, from their inventor or from their mode of performance’; ‘those that are named after their inventor’ Mercuriale continues, ‘included the Pyrrhic dances, from Pyrrichius the Laconian, or, as some prefer, Pyrrhus son of Achilles, when armed men dance, sometimes chanting and sometimes in silence, as can be seen from this image [ex icone] from some ancient stones, which we have printed here’.

The picture introduced in the text here is annotated with the Latin words ‘PYRRHICHIA’ ‘SALTATIO’ and it depicts armed (seemingly young) men performing to the music of two flute players, while being watched by another three (older) men who are shown to be talking and pointing to the dancers. Mercuriale continues ‘in our day the equivalent of the Pyrrhic dances are the sort of mock combats which are popularly known as “morescas”’. The image here has a descriptive role, helping the reader to identify the Pyrrhic. Mercuriale also notes the ancient origins of the particular dance, explaining that the image is reproducing ‘some ancient stones’. The visualization of this ancient dance, as well as drawing a

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708 *idem*, p. 247
709 *idem*, p. 251
710 *ibid.*
comparison between ancient and contemporary dances, allows Mercuriale to describe the ‘morescas’ – ‘the sort of mock combat’ – as the equivalents of the ancient Pyrrhic. In the following chapter, Chapter VII, *De fine saltationis et de loco* (‘The purpose and place of dancing’), he promotes the Pyrrhic dance as a ‘model’ dance: highlighting its ‘valorous style’ and its utility for learning the skills necessary for war, as well that it was ‘immensely conducive to good comportment and the maintenance of health’.\(^{711}\) The image of the Pyrrhic dance is instructive, informative, helping the reader to visualize the ancient dance and make the comparisons with the contemporary equivalent dance.

**ix) Jumping**

In Book II, Chapter XI, *De Saltu* (‘Jumping’) Mercuriale tries to recover jumping as an exercise. He notes that Aristotle ‘testifies abundantly that in athletic activity jumping had a place’ and that Galen ‘has adequately confirmed that medical gymnastics itself did not exclude jumping, since he often reckoned it among other exercises of the palaestra’;\(^{712}\) in addition, he notes, Antyllus and Oribasius show more diligently than anyone that jumping was an exercise suited to health. Describing the exercise of jumping he writes: ‘I discover that it was not only in their hands that jumpers held weights, but they sometimes carried even heavier weights on their heads, their shoulders or even their feet’; at this point Mercuriale directs the reader’s attention to the picture, writing ‘this can be seen from the depiction (tabulae pictura) on an old plaque where jumpers are finely represented (repraesentantur); we have taken it from Ligorio that this was an ancient and genuine work’.\(^{713}\) Indicative of Mercuriale’s endeavour to recover jumping as a medical exercise is the placement of the particular illustration in relation to the text: beneath the illustration the text continues with Mercuriale noting ‘I think that these weights, serving to make the exercise more demanding, had that end for those who exercised for the sake of their health’.\(^{714}\)

\(^{711}\) *idem*, p. 255
\(^{712}\) *idem*, p. 281
\(^{713}\) *idem*, p. 283
\(^{714}\) *ibid.*
The image therefore illustrates Mercuriale’s ‘discovery’ and it enhances his claim, through the credibility and the convincing, authoritative power of the image resting again on Pirro Ligorio’s authority as an antiquarian drawing from ‘ancient’ and ‘genuine’ works. So far, we have seen that in Mercuriale’s discourse the textual sources come first in importance, authority and credibility in relation to illustrations. Regarding the primacy of the textual sources over the illustrations it would be useful to note that in this image we can see male figures holding, apart from stones, *halteres* (weights); in this regard the image visualizes the claims of the authorities of Aristotle and Theophrastus, although Mercuriale has a different opinion: ‘in the second mode [to be practiced] they held weights in their hands...although from Aristotle and Theophrastus I know that such weights are called *halteres*, nevertheless, I shall demonstrate below that this word refers to a different type of exercise’.\(^{715}\) Thus, despite Mercuriale’s disagreement on the issue, the authoritative claim of Aristotle and Theophrastus as drawn by the textual sources prevails and this is what is shown.

\(x\) Recovering ‘other types of exercise’

In Book III, Chapter V, *De nonnullis aliiis exercitationum specibus* (‘Some other types of exercise’), Mercuriale attempts to recover, as he claims, additional types of ‘exercise’ that, as ‘Galen believes’, were usually performed in the gymnasium although they could be performed elsewhere as time and human affairs demanded. The first of these exercises that Mercuriale discusses is climbing ropes. Explaining how this exercise was performed by the ancients he writes ‘*how they trained by climbing ropes can be understood without difficulty from this representation of a design on some ancient gemstones*’\(^{716}\) pointing his reader’s attention to the picture placed on the left page, preceding the pertinent part of the text. Mercuriale continues noting that ‘*Galen rightly classified a similar exercise as vigorous; one can clearly see from the preceding image that the ancients found a popular entertainment in tightrope walkers, what Martial, in Satire III, calls schoenobatae*’.\(^{717}\) In the following Mercuriale continues describing a similar exercise: ‘*a not dissimilar type of game to tightrope walking was what Hesychius and Pollux called skapadra; a large beam was fixed firmly in the ground, with a hole at the top, through which was passed a rope...*’

\(^{715}\) *ibid.*
\(^{716}\) *idem*, p. 351
\(^{717}\) *ibid.*
which was tied with a smaller rope to a person on the other side; whoever managed to haul his partner to the top was declared the winner, but if the other resisted and did not allow himself to be moved, the victory was his.\(^\text{718}\)

The economy of the image (annotated with the Greek word ‘ΣΧΟΙΝΟΒΑΤΗΣ’ and the Latin word ‘FUNABULI’) favours the comparison of these similar exercises, thus helping the reader to distinguish them. Furthermore, the way these exercises were performed as well as the apparatus involved are also visualized in the image, following again the textual description that Mercuriale provides – taken from the ancient textual sources. The image (representing the pictures found on ancient gemstones) therefore enhances the authority of the textual sources certifying in visual terms the information provided, and it also functions in descriptive and informative ways by helping the reader to visualize the textual description of the way these two exercises were performed, as provided by Mercuriale.

In the same chapter (Book III, Chapter V, De nonnulis aliis exercitationum septicibus, ‘Some other types of exercise’) Mercuriale adds an additional illustration noting that ‘other exercises are enumerated by Galen, including telling someone else to try to drag or push one over violently, while resisting steadily with one’s arms, legs and spine, and not giving away’; ‘it is said’, Mercuriale continues, ‘that Milo used to train in this way, by inviting others to move or dislodge him from a greased disc on which he stayed upright, as can be seen from this illustration’.\(^\text{719}\) At this point the illustration is introduced in the text and it shows four male figures, one is standing upright on a disc and the other three are shown trying to dislodge him by pushing him or by moving the disc. Here the image has an explanatory and descriptive role, demonstrating how the particular exercise was performed, in the context of recovering the exercise; again in this case the image appears to visualize Mercuriale’s textual description.

\(^{718}\) ibid.

\(^{719}\) Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 355
xi) Holding One’s Breath

In Book III, Chapter VI, *De spiritus cohibitione*, (‘Holding one’s breath) we come across an additional illustration. Mercuriale promotes holding one’s breath as a helpful exercise, noting in the beginning of the chapter that it is recorded by Galen in his “On the preservation of health III” and by Caelius Aurelianus, ‘not the least among physicians’ he marks, ‘recommended by the best writers on gymnastics, particularly among the after-care exercises’.720 Towards the end of the chapter he writes that ‘Milo is said to have bound his head, forehead, ribs and chest with strong ribbon and then held his breath for so long that these bindings broke under the pressure of the swelling veins’; ‘sufficient proof of this’, Mercuriale notes, ‘can be found in the bronzes that Ligorio said he found in the collection of the most illustrious Duke of Ferrara, a consummate patron of all that is good, and which he told us that he had copied with his own hand’,721 and at this point the illustration introduced in the text. Addressing the content of the image Mercuriale writes that ‘one can see the bandages that Galen describes around the ribs and chest, and around the belly and scrotum, which are greatly enlarged, as happens through the vigorous retention of breath’; continuing to address the content of the image Mercuriale notes ‘why they have shaven heads or only a few hairs on the top of their heads, and are supporting a weight with their left arm is, I think, because they are slaves and are good at weightlifting, which is shown by the artist because it notoriously involves holding one’s breath’.722

The image is therefore used to substantiate the information provided by the textual sources in the context of the recovery of this exercise; it proves the practice of this particular exercise by the ancients while it also visualizes the way it was performed, matching again Mercuriale’s textual description, helping the reader to understand the exercise and how it was performed. It should be noted how the economy of the image serves this purpose: the image depicts four male figures who have their bodies bound, while the different posture of each (sideways, front, back and three-quarter posture) provides a panoramic view of the way the body was supposed to be bound. At the same time the physical appearance of the figures matches Mercuriale’s description in

720 idem, p. 357
721 idem, p. 361
722 ibid.
the text. The credibility of the image, according to Mercuriale’s rationale, lies in the fact that it is a representation of an object that comes from the private collection of an ‘illustrious’ patron ‘of all that is good’, and of course on the authority of Pirro Ligorio as an antiquarian and artist. Mercuriale highlights that Ligorio copied the design ‘with his own hand’ suggesting first-hand observation that further enhances the authority, the credibility of the image.

xii) Hoops, wheels, petaurum and pall-mall

In Book III, Chapter VIII, *De circilasia, trocho, petauro et pilamalleo*, (‘Hoops, wheels, petaurum and pall-mall) Mercuriale compares contemporary and ancient practices and identifies the contemporary game of swinging with the ancients’ swing: ‘it is clear from this that this delightful exercise can in no way resemble driving a hoop, although I imagine that this “swinging” is very like our common childhood game, whereby, a little platform is attached by four ropes to a roof-beam, and boys and girls sitting on it are tossed into the air, something which I think was known in antiquity as a swing’; ‘it is perhaps’ Mercuriale continues, ‘what Avicenna mentions at the beginning of IV.2 ch. 13 when he recommends for stopping perspiration having the patient put on a machine that propels boys and girls skywards’ and then Mercuriale, drawing from Aelius Stilo as reported by Festus, identifies the Greek term “petauristas” as ‘those who fly up into the air or skywards’. Mercuriale continues noting that ‘this sort of game was obviously played by the Thracians, Egyptians, and many other races in history, witness also some coins of Augustus and Tiberius Caesar which show a swinging game like this introducing at this point the image in the text. This is the only image in the *De arte gymnastica* in which female figures are depicted; three women are depicted, one on the swing and the other two are depicted as moving the swing. The image has an explanatory, descriptive function in the context of recovering the particular exercise, as it visualizes how the swing was constructed and how the exercise was performed.

723 *idem*, pp. 375-377
724 *idem*, p. 377
725 *ibid.*
In the same chapter an additional illustration is provided of the ancient *trochus*. This is the only image that is not provided in full-page size; rather, it is inserted in the middle of the page, within the text. Mercuriale is trying to distinguish the ancient *trochus* as an ancient exercise and the contemporary *truchus* (billiards) which, as he notes, ‘is a game played with wooden balls on wooden tables covered with cloth’, whereas ‘first, trochus was played in gymasia and other public places, secondly, it involved a ring or rings that made a noise, so that people in the street could clear out of the way of the trochus, once they heard the noise, and, finally, it was made of metal and involved a hooked stick’; ‘none of these things, singly or together’, Mercuriale continues, ‘can sensibly be said to be found in tops or in truchus, so we must conclude that the ancient trochus was something vastly different’.

‘In my opinion’, Mercuriale marks, ‘it is accurately depicted in this drawing [figura]’ and at this point the illustration is introduced in the text. The image, he explains, ‘that Ligorio sent me, and which he said that he had got from an image on a very ancient and very grand monument to a comic poet and satirist on the via Tiburtina near Rome, except that he shows the rings as movable teeth fixed inside the hoop, which we can agree were certainly in a good position to make a loud noise’. The image therefore is used to resolve a debate (probably the result of a linguistic similarity between the words *trochus* and *truchus*) and to promote Mercuriale’s opinion on the matter, enhancing his argument. The image visualizes the description provided by Mercuriale in the text, while its credibility and authority is based on the fact that it reproduces another image found –as noted above- in ‘*a very ancient and grand monument*’.

**xiii) The custom of reclining at dinner and the triclinium controversy**

In Book I, Chapter XI, *De accubitus in cena antiquorum et semel dumtaxat in die cennandi consuetudinis origine* (‘Reclining at dinner in antiquity and the origin of the custom of dining once a day’) Mercuriale is trying to recover the ancient custom of reclining at meals as a practice in the framework of gymnastics. According to Mercuriale this custom followed the practice of bathing after exercise and this chapter

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726 *idem*, p. 379
727 *idem*, pp. 379-381
similarly follows the chapter on bathing. In this endeavour Mercuriale provides the reader with two more illustrations. Mercuriale opens the chapter noting ‘I cannot omit publishing my opinion on the origins of the ancient custom of eating once a day and reclining at the table [accubitus].’ Mercuriale notes that Horace, Martial, Plutarch and Galen have provided proof on this and after going through the respective textual sources he claims that ‘it is not only literary testimony that can show us that the ancients reclined in this way’, but, directing the reader to the illustrations, ‘two pictures (picturas) below provide very convincing proof (testimonia). One showing diners around a typical three-legged table, was provided for me from some ancient monuments by Pirro Ligorio, an antiquarian of the utmost authority. The other is an accurate and faithful copy of a very old and extremely rare marble that can be seen at Padua in the splendid palace of Paolo Ramnusio, an excellent connoisseur of literature and antiquities. This latter picture in particular confirms my view of the true form of reclining at dinner, which I perhaps first put forward, without this marble, in Rome to Ottavio Pantagatho, Onofrio Panvinio and other very serious scholars and finally to Ligorio in Padua.’

Mercuriale continues: ‘It was a conjecture, based on literary authorities, but now one can clearly see the three-part couches. It refutes the fantastic ideas of Lambin and others, throws light on some passages, both crystal clear and deeply obscure. All lovers of art and antiquity should be eternally grateful to Giovanni Battista Ramnusio, who bought the stone and to his son Paolo, who preserved it and pointed it out to us’; then he notes ‘the passage where Plutarch talks of the place of honour and the three couches in the triclinium is no longer obscure since this Ramnusian drawing shows them in a square; equally, various passages in Horace can now be much better understood’.

Mercuriale’s choice of words regarding the origin of the designs and the use of the particular illustrations are quite revealing. It becomes evident that these images are being used in order to prove, or to confirm, his opinion (a ‘conjecture’ as he calls it) that was based on textual authoritative sources, and subsequently to promote it while refuting the opinion of others as mistaken, the other’s ‘fantastic ideas’. Furthermore,

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728 Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical Edition...op. cit., p. 117
729 idem, p. 123
730 ibid.
according to Mercuriale, apart from confirming the textual sources, the images favour the understanding of obscure passages while they also allow the further understanding of the passages that are already clear as they throw extra light on them. We can therefore see from this case that the images come second in importance, and they are used in order to confirm the textual authoritative sources that come first in authority and credibility; the images are thus a ‘tool’, serving the interpretation and understanding of the textual sources.

Later in the chapter after providing the reader with the description of the ancient custom of reclining as drawn from the textual sources, Mercuriale returns to the Ramnusian stone noting ‘all this leads us to conclude, with some justification, it would seem, that the Ramnusian stone is of extreme antiquity, for it shows with perfect clarity the canopies, the bands of wool or linen around the brows of the guests, and the passing round of the drinking horn’; all these details are first provided by Mercuriale in his textual description and only after does he address the content of the image as matching the textual description, certifying thus once again the authority and the primacy in importance and credibility of the textual sources.

The credibility of the images are based once again on the authority of Pirro Ligorio whom Mercuriale praises here as ‘an antiquarian of the utmost authority’, as well as on the fact that the image is – according to Mercuriale – ‘an accurate and faithful copy of a very old and extremely rare marble’ that makes part of the private collection of the ‘connoisseur of literature and antiquities’ Paolo Ramnusio and his father Giovanni Battista Ramnusio. Regarding Mercuriale’s strategy of shaping the image’s authority and credibility it is crucial to note that he writes: ‘there are some other things at the side to the right that I leave to others more skilled in interpreting antiquity than I to explain. But I should warn them not to be surprised that one cannot see some diners or the tables in this triclinium as clearly as others, for we thought it better to reproduce the marble as it is today, eaten away by the years, indeed almost destroyed, rather than cast doubt on the faithfulness with which I have had it copied by adding or removing anything’. It is only at this point that the two illustrations are introduced in the text; the first illustration is annotated with the Latin word ‘ACCUBITUS’ while the second illustration is provided with the inscription

731 *idem*, p. 127
732 *idem*, p. 123
‘MARMOREM TRICLINUM VETUSTISSIMUS Patavii, in Aedibus Rhamnusianis, post Curiam Urbis Praefecti, in vico Patriarchae, ad Divi Petri’.

For a fuller understanding of the particular images in the context of Mercuriale’s medical discourse it is important to note that Mercuriale’s concern in this chapter is to present the practice of reclining at dinner as something that is directly connected with gymnastics and that has a practical and medical purpose. In this context he writes: ‘they [the ancients] did not begin to eat reclining out of enjoyment or convenience or moral virtue, for if we compare sitting at dinner with reclining, there is no doubt that the former is more convenient, more pleasant, easier, more dignified and more moral than reclining’; ‘it is a likely conjecture’, Mercuriale continues, ‘that this custom was introduced for a good reason, which I believe, simply this: they bathed daily. Hence to avoid suffering the harmful consequences of bathing or becoming too tired, and to derive greater advantage from the moistening properties of the bath, they went to their couches, and wearing a cloak (sometimes called a wedding shirt), sometimes completely naked, as can be seen on some marbles, they had the tables set before them’. 733

It is in the same context that later in the chapter Mercuriale remarks on the degeneration, even the corruption, of this particular practice: ‘this habit of reclining was then followed extremely frequently by the lower classes and the poor, aping the rich, whether or not they had just bathed, for Columella is forced to tell his farm bailiff that he should not recline at dinner except on festival days. The same thing happened, as one can see, with bathing as with many other things which were first devised for a good purpose and almost out of necessity, but then perverted to serve luxury, debauchery, pleasure and other ends’. 734

In the 1601 edition Mercuriale added the Appendix ad caput antecedens, ubi iterum de accubitu, triclino et de Mariae Magdalenae historia tractatur (‘Appendix to the previous chapter, dealing again with reclining, the triclinium and the story of Mary Magdalene’), in which he develops and defends his suggestions regarding the ancient custom of reclining at dinner. In the appendix Mercuriale enriches the treatment of the issue, however, this time, taking it to a theological level and in the broader framework

733 ibid
734 idem, p. 133
on the triclinium controversy.\footnote{For the triclinium controversy see Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical edition…cit.op. cit., pp. 1027-1037; Ginette Vagenheim, Des inscriptions ligoriennes dans le Museo Cartaceo. Pour une étude de la tradition des dessins d’après l’antique, in Cassiano dal Pozzo’s Paper Museum, [Milano], Olivetti 1992 (Quaderni puteani, 2), II, pp. 79-104} In this endeavour Mercuriale provides the reader with two further illustrations. Suffice to say that in the context of this chapter Mercuriale emphasises that these representations are ‘based on the right interpretation of the Gospel’,\footnote{Girolamo Mercuriale. De arte gymnastica, Critical edition…op. cit., p. 137} therefore, the images provided here are deployed to visualize Mercuriale’s ‘right interpretation’ of the Gospel, and in these terms they sustain a visual argument as they are visualizing and at the same time promoting Mercuriale’s opinion in the framework of the particular debate. As such, these two images are addressed to the initiated reader.
CONCLUSION

The present study focusing on Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* highlighted aspects of this exceptional sixteenth-century medical treatise in the endeavour to demonstrate that its historical significance in the field of late Renaissance preventive medicine is much broader than scholars have originally suggested. In a historiographic background where the historical analysis of Mercuriale’s work was limited in editing the text (examining mainly the content of the book in terms of sources, materiality, etc.) and which addressed mainly—however not unreasonably— the antiquarian content of the treatise, the present study readdressed Mercuriale’s medical discourse following recent scholarly studies. In particular, following scholarly research that introduced sixteenth-century Rome as a centre of scientific and medical culture in its own right, and scholarly suggestions for a more profound analysis of the sixteenth-century preventive medical culture the present study addressed the *De arte gymnastica* in a specific historical context (the ‘Roman context’), moving further than viewing the treatise as a part of a linear preventive ‘tradition’.

By addressing Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* in the framework of a preventive ‘tradition’ scholars have restricted the historical analysis of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ in merely pointing out that Mercuriale suggests the benefits of exercise in the maintenance and/or obtainment of health following the dominant medical theory of the six non-naturals. In parallel, because of the vast antiquarian material of the treatise scholars have implied a limited practical value of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ at least in comparison to the advice of other sixteenth-century medical writings that treated exercise and the rest of the six non-naturals. Overall scholars have addressed Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* more for the antiquarian treatment of exercise, rather than Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical art (as the title of the treatise suggests) and method of medical treatment in its own right.

Following the recent scholarly research the present study tried to bring into the historical analysis of the *De arte gymnastica* the particularities and idiosyncrasies that exemplified the city of sixteenth-century Rome as a centre of scientific and medical culture, particularly Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court as a think tank, as a centre of power, and as a space of medical practice that was connected through the Cardinal’s patronage and the intellectual activities of the members of his *familia* (within and
outside the court) with the rest of the city’s centres of intellectual activity and power and the broader papal agenda. The present study demonstrated that the Farnese court patronage as a part of the broader Roman context defined decisively Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* not only in terms of intellectual and cultural interests but as well as in terms of medical epistemology and thinking and in terms of moral and religious concerns. Thus the Cardinal’s court patronage emerges as an ‘institution’ of scientific-medical culture and the *De arte gymnastica* as a product of this institution. In this framework the aim of the present study was not to evaluate the scientific nature and the medical value of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ in comparison to other sixteenth-century medical writings; rather, the aim was to map how Mercuriale shaped and promoted the scientific nature and the medical, practical value of his ‘medical gymnastics’ within a plethora of methods of medical treatments (curative and preventive) offered by medical practitioners of rival groups (university-trained physicians, empirics, popular healers, etc.) during a time of religious and spiritual crisis in the framework of which antiquity and physical culture were under scrutiny by the Church authorities.

In this research framework the present study argued for a ‘different’ reading of the *De arte gymnastica*. It read Mercuriale’s arguments, suggestions, medical advice, etc. not merely in the fringe of their own meaning but for their significance in the broader context of Mercuriale’s medical discourse taking into consideration that Mercuriale was writing from the post of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese’s court physician and was (primarily) addressing the elite audience in post-Tridentine Rome. Thus, instead of reading Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the proliferation of the “new diseases” and the French Disease as a “new disease” merely as part of the treatise’s introduction the present study indicated a different approach. Taking into consideration the medical-scientific questions that the French Disease as a “new disease” raised and the moral-religious issues and interpretations that it evoked, it put forward the consideration that the suggestion regarding the “new diseases” plays a pivotal role in Mercuriale’s medical discourse.

The present study examined not only the content but as well as the placement of Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the “new diseases” in the text. By drawing from the historiography on the issue of the “new diseases” and the French Disease, and by employing the medical act of diagnosis as a tool of analysis the present study
demonstrated that Mercuriale’s suggestion framed contemporary medical issues and debates (e.g. notions of ‘disease’ and ‘novelty’, the lack of medical knowledge of the nature of the “new diseases”, the incapability of physicians to provide a cure for the “new diseases”, etc.) and the overlap between medical and socio-cultural views (e.g. views regarding the causality of disease) as manifested in Mercuriale’s time. Furthermore, the present study demonstrated that Mercuriale placed the suggestion regarding the “new diseases” within the framework of a comparison between medicina conservativa and medicina curativa. In this way Mercuriale enhanced the view according which medicina conservativa is superior to medicina curativa in terms of scientific status and medical value, responding to contemporary debates regarding the status and the value of conservative medicine in comparison to curative medicine. The present study demonstrated that in the same context Mercuriale argued that the ‘medical gymnastics’ (as part of medicina conservativa) is superior to drugs (as part of medicina curativa).

In these terms the present study argued that Mercuriale’s suggestion regarding the “new diseases” decisively informs the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of medical treatment that corresponded to contemporary fears regarding the outbreak of diseases. According to Mercuriale’s discourse the ‘medical gymnastics’ treats the causes of the “new diseases” which are defined in terms of humoural medicine (imbalanced regimen, lack of moderation in lifestyle) and in moral-religious terms (sinful lifestyle stigmatised by overindulgence, lack of moderation, etc.); in similar ways according to Mercuriale the ‘medical gymnastics’ averts also the “future diseases”. In this way the ‘medical gymnastics’ (resting on the ancient knowledge of hygiene or medicina conservativa) succeeds where curative medicine appears to have failed: physicians could not provide a cure for a disease of which the origin and nature were unknown to the ancient authorities whereas the ‘medical gymnastics’ favours the maintenance and obtainment of health by correcting the patient’s lifestyle and errors in life. Thus, the present study demonstrated that Mercuriale’s suggestion is more nuanced than scholars originally indicated and that it can be considered paradigmatic for the historical studies on the crucial and manifold issue of the “new diseases” in the context of sixteenth-century medicine.

Taking into consideration the developments in the field of preventive medicine during the second part of the sixteenth century and following the recent scholarly suggestions
according to which the study of the six non-naturals has been explored only as part of general historical studies while at the same time even less attention has been paid to the relationship between preventive medical advice and practice throughout the early modern period, the present study argued for a revision of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical art –legitimate part of *medicina conservativa* according to Mercuriale- and method of medical treatment. In the framework of the different reading of the *De arte gymnastica* the present study demonstrated that Mercuriale’s aim is not merely to recover the ancient art of gymnastics or exercise; rather, his aim is to recover -what he calls- the ‘true’ art of gymnastics or exercise, which in the *De arte gymnastica* he identifies with the ‘medical gymnastics’.

In this framework the present study mapped Mercuriale’s steps in this endeavour: Mercuriale retrieves primarily the origins of gymnastics in the ancient popular, pagan culture and in the following he locates the creation of the ‘medical gymnastics’ in the transition of gymnastics to an ordered, controlled with rules and principles art with health as its only purpose, practiced in the controlled space of the gymnasium/palaestra. In similar ways Mercuriale also defines ‘true’ exercise and he articulates the scientific nature of the ‘medical gymnastics’ following the Aristotelian and the Galenic criteria, arguing that it is a legitimate and noble part of *medicina conservativa*. Through this endeavour Mercuriale responded to contemporary debates regarding the scientific status and the place of gymnastics in the field of medicine.

Subsequently the present study looked into the medical nature, value, and efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ in the endeavour to go further than merely marking that exercise favours the maintenance and the obtainment of health, as scholars that have examined the *De arte gymnastica* have suggested so far. The present study argued for an analysis of the medical nature, value, and efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ within a particular historical context defined by a series of parameters (e.g. the religious-moral calls of the post-Tridentine Church, the developments in the sphere of physical culture, the contemporary medical needs and debates, etc.). In this framework it demonstrated that the medical value and efficacy of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ are articulated around two main axes of function: i) the purging function of exercise through perspiration, ii) the body-soul interaction, which as Mercuriale notes favours the control of both and the domination of rationality. Furthermore, the present study demonstrated that according to Mercuriale in order for the ‘medical gymnastics’
to have beneficial results the ‘medical exercises’ should be practiced not only with moderation –as medical theory suggested at the time- but as well as with decorum, control, and order according to the ancient *exemplum*.

In this way, the present study demonstrated that Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of preventive medical treatment becomes pertinent in a historical context in which the purging, evacuative function of medical treatment (preventive and curative) was an essential and much sought after feature of treatment that corresponded to particular notions (medical but as well as moral and religious) of ‘disease’. The medical view of ‘disease’ as a corrupted, putrefied matter that had to be expelled from the body overlapped with contemporary religious and moral views of ‘disease’ as a product of moral corruption that advocated the ‘purging’ of sins, the ‘cleansing’ of both body and soul/mind. In analogy to policy of the Counter-Reformation Church Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ is manifested in the *De arte gymnastica* as a means for the conservation of health and the prevention of disease by moral reform through the practice of ‘medical exercises’: they favour the body-soul interaction leading both to control and rationality while at the same time their performance requires moderation, control, and order, which were values that were strongly sought after in the post-Tridentine era. In this way, the present study argued, Mercuriale built the medical nature, value and efficacy of the ‘medical gymnastics’ corresponding to the contemporary medical needs and the calls of the Roman Catholic Church for spiritual healing and reform.

The present study highlighted that in both the recovery of the ‘true’ gymnastics and in the shaping of the medical nature, value, and efficacy of the ‘medical gymnastics’ Mercuriale makes sure to distinguish the three types of gymnastics (medical, military, athletic) emphasizing particularly the distinction between the ‘medical gymnastics’ and the ‘athletic gymnastics’ (the ‘corrupt’ gymnastics according to Galen). The emphasis on this distinction reflects the socio-cultural issues that were raised with regard to physical culture in the Counter-Reformation era: athletic performances, gymnastic competitions, games, etc. that made part of the elite (and the popular) culture and the social identity of the noble class but were under scrutiny as the Catholic Church called for austerity, moderation, and decorum in conduct particularly from its representatives. Mercuriale, a medical humanist writing from the post of the Cardinal’s court physician, condemns athletic gymnastics (particularly violent athletics and games such as the duel)
as corrupt and unhealthy and through the ‘medical gymnastics’ advocates moderate, controlled, ordered, decorous motion. In parallel Mercuriale argues for the value of the body-soul interaction (as a prerequisite for health) noting that this was something that ‘corrupt’ athletics could not do, at a time when the training, athletic manuals were introducing a discourse different to the humanist one by employing the “new” philosophies and by focusing on physical dexterity rather than the body-soul interaction.

Therefore the historical significance and the medical value of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ should be addressed in broader terms. This is so as on the one hand controlled, decorous, ordered motion manifested in physical terms nobility and at the same time corresponded to the discipline policy of the Counter-Reformation Church. On the other hand motion also became the litmus test for the Aristotelian teachings as the “new” philosophies (the mechanic, mathematical, chemical etc.) that were rising in the latter part of the sixteenth century had an impact on the views regarding the natural and social world, political and moral philosophy, physics and cosmology and challenged the ‘orthodox’ Aristotelian philosophy.

In these terms we see that Mercuriale’s humanist endeavour to recover the ‘true; art of gymnastics (or exercise) should not be seen merely in the general context of sixteenth-century medical humanism with regard to the humanist ideas and the sources (textual and material) employed in the treatise; rather, it should be addressed within a particular historical context taking into consideration the various parameters and developments that defined this context. In this respect the present study suggested that in the *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale promotes his ‘medical gymnastics’ as the ‘true gymnastics’ prescribing it as a decorous method of medical treatment for his elite audience claiming its superiority to curative medicine and the use of drugs for the treatment of the “new” and the “future diseases”. In his medical discourse antiquity and ancient physical culture, which in the framework of the post-Tridentine attitudes were under scrutiny and criticism, are being appropriated and legitimized (with specific criteria such as purpose, manner of conduct, etc.) through medicine; advocating moderate, controlled, ordered, and decorous motion the ‘medical gymnastics’ appears to be in full agreement with the newly shaped socio-cultural demands and the aspirations of the Counter-Reformation Church as they emerged particularly after the completion of the Council of Trent.
Following Michel Foucault scholars have addressed early modern preventive medicine in terms of the technologies of the self; Mercuriale’s *De arte gymnastica* has been addressed in these terms too. According to Foucault these technologies permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. The present study suggests that the *De arte gymnastica* should be addressed also in terms of Foucault’s technologies of domination: the ‘medical gymnastics’ –as a method of medical treatment- emerges also as a technique of disciplinary power (i.e. a form of power focused on the control and discipline of bodies and exercised fundamentally by means of surveillance) and the physician takes up the role of the agent of normalization as he regulates behaviour and produces normalized subjects. The focus and mechanism of disciplinary power as a technology of domination is the body but as the body-soul/mind interaction is an essential feature of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’, the latter as a disciplinary technique produces subjected, docile bodies and minds/souls, whereas in athletic activity according to John Hargreaves ‘the primary focus of attention in sport . . . is the body and its attributes’; ‘...this need not imply that the mind is not involved...’, Hargreaves notes, ‘but it is the body that constitutes the most striking symbol as well as the material core of the sporting activity’.

The separation that Mercuriale makes between the three kinds of gymnastics (the medical, the athletic, and the military) following the medical authorities, reflects the nature of his ‘medical gymnastics’ as a technique of disciplinary power. Mercuriale highlights that the ‘medical gymnastics’ -the ‘true’ gymnastics- is directly connected to health, whereas the athletic and the military gymnastics are skill-related, they are specific to motor skills. In this way, the ‘medical gymnastics’ as the health-related gymnastics is distinguished as its own discursive formation separated from the competitive athletic and military training, which has its own coherent and exact groups of concepts and theories. Thus the ‘medical gymnastics’ in the *De arte gymnastica* emerges as a ‘theory’ that indicates the suitable (health-related) exercises but most

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importantly, since all three kinds of gymnastics shared the same exercises, it regulates their practice.

The archaeological approach to Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ has revealed that concepts of ‘health’, ‘disease’, ‘disease causality’, ‘exercise’ etc. are all combined to create a specific theoretical space for health-related gymnastics. This ‘theory’ is supported by the (Galenic and Aristotelian) medical-scientific knowledge which defines how exercise functions and what are the effects of its practice. In the following, an additional concept emerges that links together the theory, the scientific knowledge, and practice of health-related gymnastics into a discursive field: the ‘exercise-prescription’. As discursive practice provides the conditions for the function or meaning of discourse it is important to point out the rules that make an actual ‘exercise prescription’ in Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica: the present study demonstrated that apart from moderation -as the sixteenth-century medical writings recommended- decorum, control, and order are the rules that pertain the ‘exercise prescription’ in Mercuriale’s medical discourse. Thus ‘exercise prescription’ enables an operation of a medical gaze that monitors and submits individuals to coercive, centralised power relations, constituting the ‘medical gymnastics’ as an instrument of disciplinary power. In these terms we can assume that Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a method of preventive medicine served the aims of the religious-political agenda of his patron Cardinal Alessandro Farnese as it was shaped after the Council of Trent in order to be in agreement with the papal disciplinary policy and aspirations regarding the role of the Church representatives.

It is important to take into consideration that Mercuriale’s discourse focuses exclusively on the ‘medical gymnastics’, seeing it as a method of medical treatment in its own right, as a medical art and science, rather than as a part of a broader regimen. In Mercuriale’s discourse ‘health’ (bodily and spiritual) is connected to disease: as Mercuriale notes the ‘medical gymnastics’ favours the conservation of health and the prevention (and treatment) of disease. This connection, in turn, manifests in the actual bodily practices, the ‘medical exercises’: it limits the kind of movement/motion acceptable for ‘exercise prescription’ only to the (medical) ‘exercises’ that have been scientifically proven to conserve health, prevent and treat illness; in Books V an VI of
the *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale indicates that there are ‘exercises’ that have the above medical effects and benefits, while others do not (e.g. particular combat exercises). Thus the connection between health and physical activity is medicalized through the connection between the conservation of health and the prevention of disease.

Therefore in Mercuriale’s medical discourse health benefits can occur only through the practice of health-related exercises that are prescribed by physicians. This implies that without a clearly defined ‘exercise prescription’ any of the everyday physical activities (e.g. walking, dancing, etc.) is an insufficient health practice; in other words it does not consist a ‘medical exercise’ and the present study demonstrated that Mercuriale clearly defines the criteria according which an exercise can be considered ‘medical’. An ‘exercise prescription’ is therefore tightly defined to act as a means of conserving health and preventing disease and just like in the case of any drug if one abuses the proper dosage, neglects the right timing, etc. it provides no health benefits; on the contrary it can have harmful effects. In this way, ‘exercise prescription’ favours the creation of disciplined bodies that only move in specific, scientifically proven ways to conserve health and prevent/treat disease. This limitation, control favours the normalization of the exercising body as it is dictated to adopt these particular practices instead of others in order to obtain/maintain health and prevent disease. Such normalisation, according to Foucault, further strengthens one’s body into the surveillance of the invisible power relations; however, according to Foucault one’s level of normalisation needs to be regularly observed in order to gain its full impact.  

According to Michel Foucault, apart from the control of the actual activity, the spatial organization is also an element of disciplinary control of an individual’s body. In this respect Mercuriale’s emphasis on the space of the gymnasium (*palaestra*) further reflects the nature of the ‘medical gymnastics’ as a technique of domination. As the present study demonstrated in the *De arte gymnastica* Mercuriale provides the ground plan of the ancient gymnasium, he describes analytically each of the parts the gymnasium, the use and function of each part of the space, marking that the

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architectural organization and partitioning of the gymnasium created useful spaces that favoured the practice of different exercises for both the body and mind/soul. According to Foucault effective disciplinary practices are enabled by the spaces that accommodate such practices. Foucault noted that discipline requires a space that ‘is the protected place of disciplinary monotony’;740 furthermore, what is required is the ‘partitioning’ of this space so as to separate the individuals from each other and avoid group formations that are difficult to control.741

According to Foucault the space needs to be organized in such a way so as to eliminate uncontrollable aspects of human bodies gathered together, but at the same time to know where and how to locate individuals and to be able at any moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits.742

The next characteristic of disciplinary spaces according to Foucault is functionality; not only does the disciplinary space need to be partitioned, it also needs to be divided in such a way to create a useful space. Foucault concluded that the disciplines create the spatial organization in which disciplinary tactics are ‘situated on the axis that links the singular and the multiple. It allows both the characterization of the individual as individual and the ordering of a given multiplicity’.743 In these terms the gymnasium (palaestra) as described in the De arte gymnastica and with the moral principles and values with which it is enhanced through the employment of the authority of Vitruvius, emerges as a ‘disciplinary’ space completing Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a technique of disciplinary power and Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica as a medical discourse on technologies of domination.

The last chapter of the present study suggested a ‘review’ of the visual images of the De arte gymnastica. So far, scholars have mainly focused on the antiquarian origin of the images; they have explored the identity of the artist, the engravers, the origins of the designs, etc. marking that in the case of Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica we can see that antiquarianism serves medicine. The present study following the recent historiography that explores the use of visual images in sixteenth-century scientific and medical writings suggested a ‘review’ of the images of the De arte gymnastica in terms

740 idem, p. 41
741 idem, p. 143
742 idem, p. 143
743 idem, p. 149
of ‘medical imagery’; such an approach aimed to explore the role, function, and use of the images in Mercuriale’s medical discourse.

The present study suggested that the images make part of Mercuriale’s humanist endeavour to recover the ‘true’ gymnastics; they make part of his epistemology as their topics derive from the ancient world and they illustrate the ‘correct’ interpretations of the ancient world according to the textual authoritative sources. Examining individually the visual images of the De arte gymnastica the present study demonstrated that in Mercuriale’s endeavour the images are used to clarify textual obscurities found in the authoritative sources, to promote or refute an opinion, to provide ‘proof’ in order to enhance an argument, to identify and to demonstrate how something ‘really’ looked (e.g. an object as a piece of apparatus) and worked in antiquity, to facilitate comparisons, etc. always in synergy with the text, however complementing the text thus demonstrating that Mercuriale insisted in the superiority of the written word. The antiquarian element in the visual images of the De arte gymnastica should be viewed not only in terms of Mercuriale’s and Ligorio’s common interest in antiquity; it should also be viewed in relation to the dominant artistic conventions in Mercuriale’s circle in Rome and in relation to Ligorio’s interests, principles, and values as an artist. Both Mercuriale and Ligorios –as probably did the membeers of the Farnese circle- promoted the ancient exemplum and it si in these terms that we should consider the medical images in the De arte gymnastica in comparison to the ‘naturalistic’ images in other preventive medical writings, taking also into consideration the problems that were raised in the early modern period regarding the function and the utility of imagery in scientific writings.

The present study drew from several areas of scholarly research and historiographies in the endeavour to bring forward aspects of Mercuriale’s ‘medical gymnastics’ as a medical art and method of medical treatment and aspects of the De arte gymnastica as the medical treatise of a humanist physician, put together under the court patronage of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in post-Tridentine Rome. The present study sincerely hopes that it succeeded in demonstrating the many and various issues that Mercuriale’s De arte gymnastica raises as a sixteenth-century medical treatise on preventive medicine rather than merely an antiquarian and encyclopaedic treatment of gymnastics and exercise.
### Table 1. The new diseases in the *De arte gymnastica*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Condition By name /By Description</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Time of the outbreak</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>“New” as...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Podagra</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Seneca</td>
<td>“Sic”; “after the time of Hippocrates it started to trouble women and children”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aquae formido seu Hydrophobia</td>
<td>“morbus”</td>
<td>In the time of Pompey and Asclepiades [c. 70 BC]</td>
<td>Egypt (“endemic in Egypt”)</td>
<td>Scribonius Largus; Apuleius Celsus; Aëtius</td>
<td>“Sic”; “unknown to Aristotle and his predecessors”; “made its first appearance in the time of Pompey and Asclepiades”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Elephantiasis</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(Plinius)</td>
<td>“Sic”; “unknown to Aristotle and his predecessors”; “made its first appearance in the time of Pompey and Asclepiades”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. -</td>
<td>Clinical picture “genus mali”</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Cornelius Celsus</td>
<td>“Sic”; “the most celebrated doctors failed to discover either the nature of the calamity or a remedy for it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Coli dolorem/ilei doloris</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Emperor Tiberius (42BC-37AD)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Plinius; Hippocrates</td>
<td>“Sic”; “Emperor Tiberius was the first of all to suffer...”</td>
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<td>6. Mentagra</td>
<td>“aegritudo”</td>
<td>Pliny’s time (c. 60 AD)</td>
<td>“foreign”</td>
<td>Plinius</td>
<td>“Sic”; “...diseases foreign to our land were born in Pliny’s time”</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Stomachace</td>
<td>“aegritudo”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plinius</td>
<td>“Sic”; “...diseases foreign to our land were born in Pliny’s time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sceltyrbis</td>
<td>“aegritudo”</td>
<td>Pliny’s time (c. 60 AD)</td>
<td>“foreign to our land”</td>
<td>Plinius</td>
<td>“Sic”; “...diseases foreign to our land were born in Pliny’s time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. -</td>
<td>“genus morbi”</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>“Around the Red Sea”</td>
<td>Agatharchides; Plutarchus; Galenus;</td>
<td>“Sic”; “Galen confesses he has only heard from others but does not know either its nature or the cause that produces it”</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. -</td>
<td>Clinical picture</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Plutarchus</td>
<td>“Sic”</td>
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<td>11. -</td>
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<td>12. -</td>
<td>Clinical picture</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Plutarchus</td>
<td>“Sic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. -</td>
<td>Clinical picture</td>
<td>“affectionis hepaticae”</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Plutarchus</td>
<td>“Sic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. -</td>
<td>Clinical picture</td>
<td>“novo quodam morbo”</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Porphyrius</td>
<td>“Sic”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 15. “lues gallica”                        | -                   | “gallicae lues”      | The invasion of the French army on the Italian ground (1495-1496) | -         | “Sic”;
|                                           |                     |                      | (France)  |         | “So too, in our own day...the French Disease has started to trouble the whole world” |
ILLUSTRATIONS

(The illustrations are courtesy of Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Roma)

i) The ground plans of the ancient gymnasium (palaestra)

(1st edition, 1569)
(2nd edition 1573)
ii) The ‘strigiles’ and the baths

The ‘strigiles’
The baths
iii) The ball games

‘Follis’
The 'trigonalis'
iv) Discus-throwing, the statue of the discovolos, and the discus

Discus-throwing
The statue of the discovolos—the discus
v) Halteres
vi) Wrestling and the pancratium

Wrestling
The pan克拉提翁
vii) Pugiles and the caestus
Nil est, quod invinisset consensu, nec eadem
cosa nullius, sicuti pestilens et passu
sit. Contra, ut nocet, si, similiter, non sit
caestvs, qui, sicuti, non sit cura.

Secundus

Cap. X.
viii) The Pyrrhic
ix) Jumping
x) Recovering 'other types of exercise'

Climbing rope
Dislodging from a disc
Holding one’s breath
The swing
The trochus
xi) The custom of reclining at dinner and the triclinum controversy

Reclining at dinner
The triclinium controversy
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