

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF
MEDICINE AND THE BODY
IN THE RENAISSANCE

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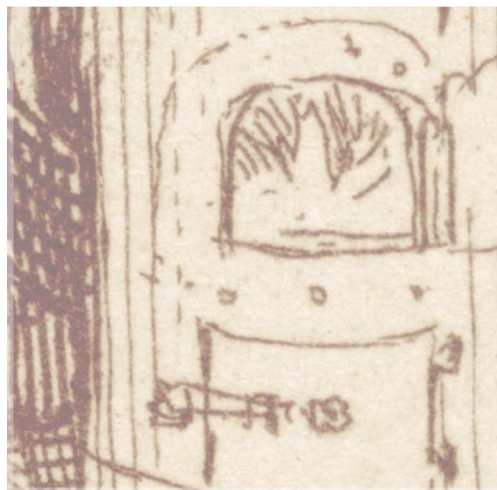
UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA



STUDIO FIRMANO
PER LA STORIA DELL'ARTE MEDICA E DELLA SCIENZA



CSMBR
ONLINE
EVENTS



TOO COMPLEX TO EXPLAIN?

23
JANUARY
2024
5.00 pm CET

POISONS, ANTIDOTES AND EMERGENT PROPERTIES IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

ANDREAS BLANK • Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt

Early modern theories of antidotes (*alexipharmaca*) revolved around three central, interrelated questions: (1) Do antidotes act upon the organic body affected by poisons or do they act upon the poisonous substances themselves (or a combination of both)? (2) Can antidotes be used only in acute cases of poisoning, or do they also have a prophylactic use? (3) Do antidotes act by means of primary qualities, or by means of higher-order qualities that can be

reduced to primary qualities, or by means of their whole substance? The third question leads directly into the controversy between reductionism and emergentism in early modern natural philosophy. Inspired by aspects of the writings of Galen, Alexander of Aphrodisias and John Philoponus, sixteenth-century natural philosophers such as Jacob Schegk (1511-1587) maintained that complex composites possess causal powers that

cannot be reduced to the combination of the causal powers of their constituents, whereas thinkers such as Thomas Erastus (1524-1583) defended reductionist explanations. Such rival explanatory programs were applied to the analysis of the properties of living beings, as well as to the properties of medicaments and poisons. The lecture will analyze the various types of causation that were believed to be involved in the therapeutic use of antidotes, and explore how the debate about antidotes could contribute to an understanding of early modern pharmacology in terms of the action of drugs, antidotes and compound remedies more generally.

The event is free to attend but registration is required. Info at csnbr.fondazionecomel.org