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In Memoriam - Dr. Kenneth D. Keele, M.D., F.R.C.P.

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The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine was Dr. Keele's spiritual home. Many knew of him mainly as a medical man. Trained as a cardiologist, he became a Harley Street physician at 25. In the 1930's he devised one of the first devices for measuring pain quantitatively and wrote papers on the problem of pain, several of which were quietly put into drawers until the 1980's when experts persuaded him to publish them as the frontiers of research.

While concerned with quantitative methods, new technologies and drugs, which he called the scientific side of medicine, he remained adamant that the humane side was equally important: that doctors must help patients to accept pain and suffering as realities which cannot simply be drugged away and must ultimately teach individuals how to die nobly and gracefully. Today the dignity of the patient is spoken of as if it were a new thing. But then as his wife, Mary, notes, most of his ideas were 50 years ahead of their time.

During the second world war he was in India where he headed sprue research, studying Hinduism and Buddhism on the side. In 1946 he returned to Britain, helped to set up a new hospital at Ashford, Middlesex; became involved in medical administration and remained there as a consultant until an early "retirement".

Dr. Keele was vitally interested in the history of medicine and played an important role in the development of this subject through his activities at the Wellcome Institute where Dr. F.N.L. Poynter was a close friend; as president of the History of Medicine section at the Royal Society of Medicine and by organizing courses at the Apothecaries Society. In addition he was active in the International Academy for the History of Medicine; was visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University, UCLA and Yale, where he was also the first Fulton Fellow (1979).

In terms of his studies Dr. Keele had three heroes: Robert Boyle, the subject of his Sydenham Lecture (1974); William Harvey, about whom he wrote an important book, and Leonardo da Vinci on whom he concentrated. As a medical student in the early 1930's he had literally stumbled over an edition of Leonardo's anatomical drawings in the library of the Royal College of Surgeons. What impressed him at first was that Leonardo's drawings were often more effective than those in Gray's Anatomy. The librarian encouraged him, as was later again the case with Miss Scott Elliot at Windsor Castle. This led him to prepare the anatomical notes and to lecture at Leonardo's Quincentenary Exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1952, at Buckingham Palace in 1962, at the Royal Academy in 1979 and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1984. Meanwhile his work gradually inspired the need for the monumental *Anatomical Works in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* on which he worked full time, almost single-handedly, with his wife Mary doing the typing,

from 1975 to 1980, and for which Professor Pedretti provided insights into chronology and his own commentary.

Dr. Keele also wrote specialized studies about Leonardo's work on the heart and blood (1952), and anatomical demonstration (1952,1979). His Beaumont Lecture at Yale (1959) gave provocative evidence to show that Mona Lisa was pregnant. Essays followed on Leonardo's work in neurology (1961), experimental method (1961), physiology of the senses (1969), alimentary tract (1972), and arteriosclerosis (1973).

By 1975 he had become concerned with the continuity of Leonardo studies. His own generation had produced only a handful of serious scholars, notably, Brizio, Clark, Gombrich, Heydenreich, Marinoni and Reti, and there were even fewer in the upcoming generation. He developed the idea of a new society based either at Windsor or at London. Various complications delayed this until 1986 when he was named its first president. Meanwhile, as one of the only non-Italian *Soci* of the Raccolta Vinciana in Milan, he quietly explored ways of revitalizing this group, and also helped indirectly to stimulate Leonardo studies in Los Angeles, where a society with remarkably similar goals emerged.

Until 1985 when he retired to Newick, Leacroft House in Staines --referred to as the Leacroft Institute by close friends --, remained the base of his activities. Here nuclear physicists, engineers, medical doctors, historians and philosophers would consult him regularly. Collectors would come to him, even unannounced, with enquiries about paintings possibly by Leonardo or his school. For Mary the line about being prepared for the nine o'clock visitor was not merely a figure of speech.. Kenneth, as one of the only persons who had actually read all the extant notes of Leonardo had an amazing set of files which permitted him to produce immediately citations on food, machines, music, religion, water or whatever topic might come up.

Dr. Keele had a particular fascination for the nature of modern science. He would spend hours discussing proper conditions for research, discovery and invention with persons ranging from students such as myself to eminent men such as Sir Peter Medawar. He saw quantitative experiment as an essential characteristic of science and liked to suggest that there was something in the pragmatic, empirical nature of the English that made them particularly sensitive to this approach.

By the early 1970's he had become convinced that the shift from qualitative (verbal) to quantitative (visual) explanation was the most momentous event in the history of man and he turned his attention to the questions of how and when this came about. The accepted wisdom had it that this had occurred in the seventeenth century with Galileo, Huygens and Newton, aided by figures such as Harvey and Descartes. But he himself suspected that it might be earlier.

When a young man approached him concerning Leonardo's studies of linear perspective, he became extremely interested because the evidence suggested that Leonardo might actually have made quantitative measurements. He was also cautious and reserved, knowing that respected scientists such as Clifford Truesdell were flatly denying that Leonardo ever did an experiment. This explains why it took a full two years (1973-1975) to repeat a handful of perspectival experiments, which have since been published as an appendix to the present author's work (1986). By 1975 Dr Keele was convinced that Leonardo had indeed made

quantitative experiments. By 1981, at the Milan conference, even Professor Truesdell had begun to accept this new position.

Dr. Keele was fully aware that there was more to modern science than experiment. Quantitative experimental demonstration had to be coupled with a systematic approach to nature. Earlier systematic views in the *I Ching* Plato's *Timaeus* or the works of Aristotle, depending as they did on organic metaphors of generation and corruption in natural cycles, had all been qualitative and verbal (rhetorical). Suspecting that Leonardo might mark a turning point, Dr. Keele discovered in the seeming chaos of the notebooks a concept of four powers of nature: movement, force, weight, and percussion which, according to Leonardo, were unified by a perspectival pyramidal law.

The quantitative experiments concerning linear perspective of the 1490's now assumed a monumental significance: they were a key to understanding Leonardo's science and indeed marked the beginnings of a modern scientific world view more than a century before Galileo. Although he drafted these findings in 1973-1975 he was interrupted by the Windsor Corpus and so it was nearly a decade before he published them in (1983). His student developed them (1986). Meanwhile, he had written of Leonardo's Science (1977) for children, concerned as he was with inspiring an interest in science among the young.

In his last years he would sometimes point out that there were at least 30 articles for which he had collected materials, which he would never write. Unlike some who concentrated on publishing, his real concern was in understanding Leonardo and in this he had a modesty that was extraordinary. An incident in 1975 comes to mind. He had come across two lines in the anatomical writings which he felt unable to translate. he asked me but I was too naive at the time to see the problem. We went to see Sir Ernst Gombrich. For two hours the two men pored over dictionaries together at the Warburg Institute only to conclude that the text was too difficult for them to translate.

At Leacroft House one discovered that Dr. Keele had a number of other dimensions. One might arrive to find that he had just reread Hegel in the original and within five minutes of entering the door there would be a vivid discussion about the differences between the German and the English mind.

Kenneth would suggest that an emphasis on individuals was a particularly English quality. Biographical dates and facts were only a beginning. As his lifelong friend and colleague, Miss Jessie Dobson, curator of the Hunterian Museum, used to say: in the case of a person one is studying one has to be able to picture what they had for breakfast, what they did, why, and even when they went to bed. This fascination with reconstructing the lives of individuals guided many of Kenneth and Mary's travels: to Rome and Istanbul to retrace the steps of Florence Nightingale --whom Mrs. Keele studied; to Greece in order to see where Hippocrates and Galen lived and worked; to places as exotic as Poland, Russia, Turkey and India and, of course to Vinci, Milan, Amboise and other places where Leonardo lived and travelled. Kenneth retraced Leonardo's footsteps literally as well as spiritually, with the result that his conversation would flow effortlessly from comment on some tiny architectural detail in Pavia, or about the flora and fauna north of Milan, to a particular quote from the notebooks.

Unlike those specialists who can talk only about their own subject, Kenneth's interests were as universal as the man he studied. One would arrive and find him playing Chopin or Scriabin

exquisitely or one of his own piano compositions and conversation might turn naturally to details of Scriabin's life, or impressions of Chopin's house which he had recently revisited.

Art interested him deeply. Philosophy and religion concerned him at a personal level, all the more so because the death of his first wife in the second world war and the sudden death of his eldest son at age 16 in an accident, had given immediacy to the problems of suffering and death with which he had struggled all his life as a doctor.

When he was younger he spoke of hoping to grow old gracefully. When he was older he did so with a quiet wisdom that was even more inspiring than his many deeds and books. In his last years, as health failed, he would report on his problems objectively and often end his letters with Leonardo's own dictum: "io continuero." He did so to the end. In the last week there two detailed letters. And when on 3 May 1987 he died suddenly the world lost more than one of the greatest Leonardo scholars of our time. A rare individual who lived the universality of Leonardo quietly left our midst. May his example remain an inspiration.

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