of this theory, shadows that materialised in scenes of totalitarianism and terror. If we consider Gramsci’s lesson in the view of events today, one has to admit that the “myth” of the party-prince is still relevant and that it must be understood as a process that is able to express the common, democratic will, a force that is able to legitimise government representatives while also opposing the establishment of any authoritarian situations.

In *The Health of Princes*, with the refreshing knowledge of a scientist and elderly teacher, who has contributed to the education of many generations of doctors, Ramazzini is able to offer the young prince a range of healthy and valuable hygienic and moral advice, which is therefore simply further confirmation of the fact that hygienic education and moral education are so “indissolubly linked that one cannot be conceived without the other” (Maggiora, 1902).

In the *Treatise* the prevalent approach is one of a physio-pathological and pathogenetic kind, since greater commitment is required in putting forward and supporting the hypothesis that various kinds of harm to one’s health, which could almost be called “professional” from a certain point of view, and which are unlike the more typical ones such as gout, lithiasis and colic, are certainly caused by certain habits and “indulgence”. In some cases this physio-pathological approach is insufficient, although this is not so much because of the lack of subject matter and scientific data. Nevertheless, Ramazzini adopts it until the very end to give more weight to the advice he gives regarding preventive measures.

Guided by one of the fundamental criteria of preventive medicine, Ramazzini claims that whenever possible, a known or even suspected risk factor should be eliminated, even before one is able to prove its relationship with a specific or at times unspecific illness (if it is a multi-factorial disease) or change in health. In a nutshell, he expresses the “imperative of responsibility” that Hans Jonas was to develop more fully in the second half of the twentieth century, the basis used by the European Union in 2000 in its drafting of reasons that support the arrangement of the “precautionary principle” that should allow better management of risk situations in conditions of scientific uncertainty (Jonas, 1990).

Chapter 9, entitled *Nothing damages the health of princes more than the passions of the spirit; medicine can provide no remedy for these* is particularly relevant to this subject today. Indeed, if the
princes wish to take care of their health, wherever possible they have to avoid violent passions of the spirit but, at the same time, without hoping to achieve that state of apathy so forcefully promoted by certain philosophers. It is therefore reasonable that they should hold the reins and control the states of the spirit, in particular that of anger, which those in power are more prone to. Claudian (?-404) could be referring to princes when he writes: “Those who are guided by reason and not by anger are more like gods”. This is also the wise piece of advice that Ramazzini gives since reason is “the only remedy for the passions, in that it is able to control the serious risks they pose for health. In this field one must turn to moral philosophy, not medicine, for enlightenment”. One should therefore use one’s head if one wants to make sure that excessive political passion does not devour one’s spirit and reduce the powerful to an empty shell with deep wrinkles, ready to mark the requital of a life that was so full of concentration at the onset that it let its spirit escape, and with it good rulership.

III. Notes on the treatise by Alvise Cornaro on the advantages of the sober life.

Life in the true meaning of the word is one that is far away from doctors and medicine

Today, fashion “demands” that everyone is slim, efficient, vivacious, sporty and lives to a ripe old age. Unfortunately, reality is still light years away from what fashion itself would have us believe since the extra years we have gained are not always full of activity and complete independence; however, fortunately, “elderly in age” does not necessarily mean a loss of lucidity or creativity. The fact that the relentless technoscience of the modern diet has not yet won its battle can be seen not only in the increase in the number of obese in industrialised countries (Tomatis, 1993) but now also in newly industrialised countries, where it also affects children. Indeed, infantile obesity is increasing rapidly in China, Malaysia, Thailand, South Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

Growing old is not an illness (Bianchetti et al., 1987) but at the same time it is useless and perhaps even harmful to profess exaggerated geriatric optimism. What should be borne in mind is that
old age is the sum of an entire existence, its synthesis and aging well means having lived healthily since childhood. From this perspective the sixteenth century Discourses by Alvise Cornaro (1484-ca.1566) are informative. According to Milani, Cornaro’s supposition is very simple: “The sober life is the only and perfect solution to man’s physical and psychic ills (one can add, especially for those like Cornaro, whose health is ‘poor’ because this results in serenity and cheerfulness and keeps away the fear of death and the final judgement” (Milani, 1983). In itself, there is nothing revolutionary about this supposition and it goes back to an ancient tradition of treatises that accompanied the birth and development of medicine from Hippocrates and Galen (131·201) onwards and then underwent a considerable revival and diffusion in the Middle Ages with the “health regimes”, “advice against the plague” and then more developed works such as those by Michele Savonarola (1385-1466), Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) and Tommaso Rangoni (1493-1577) (Rippa Bonati, 2004). What is new is the context and ideology surrounding the supposition: that of social and economic development, personified by none other than Cornaro himself, an active agricultural “capitalist” and cultural “operator” of his time (Ventura, 1993). “Cornaro delights in portraying himself in the role of an omnipotent Demiurge, who not only provides God with new terrain in good climatic conditions, but also gives him new souls with the constructions of villages, farmsteads and churches. In the guise of an agrarian humanist, the agrarian capitalist sees himself as the executor of a plan of divine salvation” (Bentmann and Muller, 1986).

Once he has been forgiven his vanity because of his genuine and communicative joie de vivre that resulted in the diligence that allowed him to “enjoy this beautiful world which is truly beautiful to those who make it so, as I did”, thanks goes to Cornaro for having encouraged a sober lifestyle with his skillfully persuasive discourse. Above all, unlike medicine tends to do today, he passes no sentence by blaming the patient for his illness. If he wants to cure him, it is the doctor’s duty to talk to the patient and try to understand the reasons for his behaviour, his malaise, his suffering, and not to repress or terrifyse him. The latter is a path that several western countries are also following, establishing a sort of ethical State, oblivious of the poisoned fruit generated by the only two such experiences that history so terribly left us – Nazi Germany and Stalin’s USSR.
Cornaro refuses the concept that what we find tasty and enjoy is also nourishing and good for us. Instead he says that only what is chosen rationally is good for you. In his *Comments* (opposite Cornaro’s text in 1714), Ramazzini challenges this approach and shows himself to be more open and tolerant, specifically reminding us that nature endowed us with a delicate mouth and palate so we are able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy food, and that this sense is our most faithful guide. Ramazzini seems slightly sceptical about the fact that primary prevention can actually be achieved by imposing a limited diet. Indeed, he says that it would be no easy task to induce young, healthy men to make certain sacrifices by following hard and fast rules. However, just a little further on, he states that a healthy old age can only be the result of a sober life lived at the right moments in the right way. The fact that Ramazzini sometimes appears less enthusiastic than Cornaro is certainly due both to his familiarity with diseases and the sick, and to his profound experience and knowledge of men who, more often than not, only agree to change their lifestyles when they are forced to by some serious illness, and he is therefore all too well aware of the difficulties of actually putting primary prevention into action rather than simply promoting it (Tomatis, 1993). This is why he is less indiscriminate in his support of the sober life described by Cornaro and encourages the study of the various variables it automatically entails, suggesting a more detailed assessment of the environmental and personal risks each individual is exposed to on the basis of his own specific biological makeup. The message Ramazzini gives us is that moderation in eating needs to be seen as a premise for good health and longevity, reminding us that true life is one that is led when respecting the rules of moderation because this is what is able to keep doctors and medicine at bay.

IV. The Epidemic Constitutions
   A study of the risk factors that burden the health and diseases of the people

During the 1690s, with his considerable clinical experience and knowledge of the results published in the most important European scientific literature, Ramazzini the “innovator” realised that the
advances in medicine were not only to be achieved in the clinical and physiological fields, but also in the field we now call "public health", by observing the people and the possible interrelations between environmental factors and diseases. Just like other authors, Ramazzini’s first innovation was to go beyond the Hippocratic lesson of “air, water and places”. This was a real “break” with tradition because it also went hand in hand with the need to identify new observation criteria “on” the people and, no less important, to find new tools to process and interpret the data gathered. As the author himself says: “For my part, however, I deemed it more opportune to adopt the opposite, but sounder method, and summarise the nature and climate of the past year, which diseases raged, which remedies were found effective and which harmful. I intend to do this year after year, until my work is interrupted by ‘death, the final finishing-line of all things’. I believed this would both please the noble professors and be of use for the future, as the art of medicine owes its origins and progress to nothing other than simple observation; and this progress would be even greater if more attention were paid to novel, uncommon events that are a daily occurrence in the treatment of diseases. Nevertheless, as in the Astrologers’ Ephemeredes, there will also be room for prophecy. I believed it did not suffice to describe what happened to our landsmen this year, but that it was also my duty to discover why such an abundance of diseases afflicted our fields and, while not exactly philosophizing, at least try and predict what the impact of this epidemic disease might be. Furthermore, human weakness should not be ashamed of making prophecies of things that are obscure and enveloped in darkness, the art of medicine especially”. (Ramazzini, 2006).

The First (rural) Epidemic Constitution was for the year 1690 and was an account of the illnesses that had prevailed in the area around Modena in that year (Ramazzini, 1690, Ramazzini, 2006). Most attention is focused on the countryside, which was flooded by continuous rainfalls until the month of July and then afflicted by “blight”, while the peasants were afflicted by an epidemic of tertian fevers, accompanied by a variety of illnesses such as diarrhoea, jaundice, dysentery and dropsy. Of interest are his attempts to relate various factors, such as the environment and living and working conditions, to be able to establish an interrelation between the phenomena within a conception of reality that is still mechanis-
tic. Parallel to human mortality, Ramazzini was also able to observe behavioural changes in insects, bees and silkworms, which were both less lively and active than usual, or were affected by an uncommonly high mortality rate; during the same period cattle had also been afflicted by various illnesses.

In the *Urban Epidemic Constitution for 1691* dedicated "To the Most Illustrious and universally-renowned Wilhelm Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716) Ramazzini carries out a similar study, which he published the following year (Ramazzini, 1691; Ramazzini, 2006). Here he is focusing on the city of Modena and the epidemic diseases the citizens were most afflicted by. He discusses the nature and cure of "catarrh", what Ramazzini calls "scabies" and once again fevers. He places particular importance on the climate and the relationship between the diseases and seasons. The results show phenomena that differ to those of the previous year, both regarding the climatic conditions and the trends of mortality and diseases and there seems to be an increase in "apoplexy". Here he also discusses the revolutionary discovery by Harvey (1578-1657), which Ramazzini is firmly convinced of; he expresses the need for the supporters and detractors of the new blood circulation theory to make peace.

Ramazzini had intended to give annual reports on the weather in relation to the weather, but the *Third Epidemic Constitution in the City of Modena and its Territory* was not published until 1695 and also includes his observations in the years 1692-1694 (Ramazzini, 1695; Ramazzini 2006). Amongst other things, the climatic data he systematically gathered clearly highlights a high number of sudden deaths on the night of 23rd January 1693, coinciding with a lunar eclipse. Ramazzini neither supports nor denies any relationship between the two phenomena. The heart of his observations is the epidemic of petechial fever. He analyzes the intercurrent relationship between the blood and petechia, interaction with the climate, air and winds and tries to make a comparison between this fever and lenticular fever, or rather typhus, which Fracastoro (1478-1553) so accurately described in 1546. His concluding remarks are of considerable interest: "Far be it from me to regard anatomical study as a dishonest task. I simply find it regrettable that since this sword already seems to be as well-decorated and clear as medical practice requires, nearly all those devoting themselves to this field do so to waste time. It would be much more profitable if they turned their
minds and energy to other things that would be of much greater use. The history of epidemic illnesses is certainly not the least of these, as it is one of the most sought-after and least known fields" (Ramazzini, 2006). In this manner the primacy of "epidemiology" is asserted with vigour since it is identified as an inalienable tool for the "politics" of research, with a scientific approach that makes it possible to place other studies such as morphological and pathogenetic ones in the background in certain historical periods.

Zocchetti deserves credit for his passionate and learned discussion of Ramazzini as an "epidemiologo ante litteram" (Zocchetti, 2000, Zocchetti, 2007). Certainly, the foundations had already been laid by more ancient authors such as Hippocrates (460 BC, ca. – 377 BC) and other more recent authors such as Guillaume de Baillou (1538-1616) or Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689). Zocchetti's hypothesis is formulated as a consequence of the analysis of four elements that are all possible "Ramazzinian primacies" – the epidemic constitutions and his works while in Modena, the general layout of his main work, De Morbis, the first known description of an episode of environmental pollution and its consequences (the episode in Finale Emilia) and the Orations he held for the opening of various academic years at the University of Modena and Padua in particular (for example the 1711 Oration). In addition to such obvious primacies (extending his observations of infectious diseases in man to animals, an expansion of the concept of epidemic to non-infectious events, a study of the distribution of diseases as well as the distribution of risk factors), with hindsight, and therefore with greater severity, it is also possible to recognise the "limits" of Ramazzini's epidemiology. On the one hand, he presents a "virtual" practical epidemiology that does not seem to question the method, that tries (with all possible caution) to use "just" the significance of the facts he observes, and on the other, he uses an approach that is almost entirely qualitative. As Zocchetti rightly says: "(Methodologically speaking) the epidemic constitutions seem to be extensive descriptions, lists of symptoms and pathologies that have never been confirmed by any figures. How many case-studies? How many deaths? Ramazzini gives no answers to these questions although his contribution regarding the lists of which pathologies were observed and what their characteristics were is much more fortuitous. In actual fact, there are some semi-quantitative assessments or comparisons,
for example: “Robust men found it easier to bear the force of this season than women and young children – nearly all of those under the age of three died”, but the qualitative nature of these observations is clear, so much so that one could question (obviously speaking in modern terms and without the risk of showing any irreverence towards the Maestro) the characteristics of his ‘informative system’ and his ‘observation network’” (Zocchetti, 2006).

The merit of having described mortality patterns with numbers goes to two English authors, William Petty (1623-1687) and John Graunt (1620-1674), both contemporaries of Sydenham. The former two worked together and anticipated the very man who is considered the true “founder” of epidemiology, William Farr (1807-1883) (Stolley and Lasky, 1995). It would, however, be more correct to say that these seventeenth-century authors are at the foundations of a “movement” which included the works by James Lind (1716-1794) and John Snow (1813-1858) who, together with Farr, are to be considered the protagonists of what Morabia calls “preformal” epidemiology, the stage that effectively precedes “classic” and “modern” epidemiology (Morabia, 2004).

There is unanimous agreement that Ramazzini’s best results are to be found not so much in the field of “environmental health” but in the research branch that is to be called “occupational epidemiology” (Hook, 1995).

V. The Inaugural Orations
“Dense in thought, rich in doctrine”

The 16 “inaugural” orations, which the author himself calls Orationes jatrici argumenti or on another occasion Orationes medicae, are “all original owing to the choice of subject, dense in thought, rich in doctrine, harmonious, clear, and elegantly written” (Maggiora, 1902). They are introductory university lessons, generally of a philosophical nature and at times simply occasional, for example “the first, held on 5 November 1682” on the occasion of the restoration of the University of Modena. In it he exalts the learning and names of Modenese scholars of all times and praises the Duke Francesco II d’Este, thanks to whom the University was restored, originally founded as Studio Comunale in 1175.
The *Oratio secularis* held on 12 December 1700 is basically an account of the progress of medicine during the 1600s. It emphasises the importance of new times and describes his forthcoming programme of studies and teaching. After having exalted the glories of the University of Padua, quoting Acquapendente (1537-1611), Casserio (1552-1616), Aselio, and Harvey (of whom he says, his name will last as long as blood flows), he speaks of other Italian and foreign scientists and of Borelli in particular ("never praised highly enough for the geometrical laws of muscular movement") and goes into the inevitability of experiments in the field of new medical research (Castiglioni, 1928). He also speaks of the importance of biological and histiological studies, evoking the figures of Malpighi (1628-1694) and Santorio (1561-1636); he praises the results of chemistry and the need for the eye of the scientist to study plant life and its morphology and physiology with the aid of the microscope. Ramazzini goes on to conclude, "We have to exert ourselves at our studies, endless observation, and continuous experiments to try and solve problems both big and small".

In the *Oration held on 12 November 1701* he emphasises the existing difference between the lifestyle of the nobility, mainly in reference to diet, and the condition of the *plebs misera et malis desueta*; Ramazzini says there is an illness that makes no distinctions, and that is syphilis.

The subject of the *Oration held on 6 November 1702* is fever and its treatment with cinchona bark.

In the *Oration held on 4 November 1703* Ramazzini compares the "medical profession" to a voyage at sea, claiming that "just like a ship, the doctor has to brave the treacherous seas with its storms and lulls and is never quite sure if one will reach one's destination".

The subject of the sixth *Oration held on 12 November 1704* was once again the medical "profession" and a doctor's possible mistakes. Ramazzini offers a fundamental piece of advice that is close to his heart: "at all costs avoid any discussions with colleagues who are examining a patient of yours".

The *Oration held on 15 November 1705* is a eulogy to the doctors of ancient times, Hippocrates in particular, but it is also a call for the need to recognise what is new, and to recognise the new anatomic and clinical discoveries.

The *Oration held on 3 November 1706* is about the advantages
of simple medication as opposed to the poly-pharmacology of that period.

The Oration held on 5 November 1707 deals with “theoretical” and practical medicine, also from a historical perspective, and he expresses the hope that the two will come to some kind of agreement.

The Oration held on 6 November 1708 goes over the Holy Bible from a medical point of view, highlighting the healing carried out by medicorum maximo Christo Servatore nostro.

The Oration held on 13 May 1709 (which was the occasion for the transfer of the “primary” chair of Practical Medicine) deals with the influence on people’s health of the cold climate that Padua had suffered from in the previous months, using criteria that are reminiscent of those in the Modena constitutions.

The Oration held on a day in November 1710 goes back to the problems of medical methodology, the meaning of theoretical compared to practical medicine, and the decline of medical practice that had been seen during those years in conjunction with the advances made of theoretical medicine. The oration ends with a resolution: “after having taught his students the theoretical notions and medical pathology, he will concentrate on teaching practical, rational medicine, that is, clinical medicine”.

The Oration held on 9 November 1711 deals with subjects regarding public health, starting with the bovine plague that had come from Dalmatia and raged in the countryside around Padua and the nearby regions (Zanier, 2006). It was in this “case-study” that Ramazzini perfected the highly modern and current principle that underlies preventive medicine: It is “much better to prevent disease rather than treat it”, Longe praestantius est praeservare quam curare, sicuti satius est tempestatem praevidere ac illam effugere quam ab ipsa evadere. Ramazzini identifies the sick animal as the source of the pernicious contagion, thus demolishing the hypotheses that attributed the causes to the air, the meadows or the influence of the stars and then goes on to express his belief that the carcasses of animals that died of that disease should be buried deep down in the earth. This Oration is a milestone in the history of public health also because it not only explains why doctors should deal with veterinary subjects, but also encourages the observation of biological phenomena on a broader horizon and
analyzing and practically applying the concepts of contagion, latent periods, healthy carriers and immunity.

The *Oration held on 20 November 1713* describes an epidemic illness, generically called the “plague”, which broke out in Vienna. It also includes the hygienic measures enforced by the Venetian Senate to make sure the contagion did not reach the territories of the Venetian Republic. In particular, it deals with the relationship between “plague” and “hunger”, that is, the relationship between the infectious illness, which afflicts the weaker members of society in particular (hence the name, *mysoptoncham*, a hater of the poor) and the patients' social conditions.

In the last, the *sixteenth Oration*, held on a day in November in 1714, the year of Ramazzini’s death, he insists that it is necessary for a doctor to have a vast general knowledge. According to Ramazzini, this need can be met by travelling and meeting other scholars.
DE MORBIS ARTIFICUM DIATRIBA
BERNARDINI RAMAZZINI
IN PATAVINO ARCHI-LYCEO
Practicæ Medicinæ Ordinarìæ
Publici Professoris,
ET NATURÆ CURIOSORUM COLLEGÆ.
Illustriss. & Excellentiss. DD. Ejusdem
ARCHI-LYCEI
MODERATORIBUS.
D.

MUTINÆ M. DCC.
Typis Antonii Capponi, Impreßoris Episcopalis.
Supriorum Consensus.

4. Frontispiece of the first edition of De Morbis, Modena 1700
The Diseases of Workers

(De morbis artificum diatriba, 1700-1713)
5. Sample of Bernardino Ramazzini’s handwriting, Auctor ad Librum, preserved together with the entire manuscript of the Modena edition of De Morbis in the Modena State Archives
From the author to his book*

Since you are so eager and impatient,
To be published, dear book, first pay heed
To an apprehensive father's warning. I shall give you a brief idea
Of what destiny has in store for you.
Since you are the harbinger of something novel for scholars,
Those who are most curious will rush to meet you,
But once they have read just a few pages,
It is likely they will leave you in the workshops
Or on the streets where the common folk buy
Sausages, fish-sauce and anything greasy.
Do not take this amiss, for this also happens
To bulky legal texts
Which frequently end up being used to wrap our
Mackerel, or pepper or spicy cumin.
Never forget that you were born in gloomy workshops,
Not in the wealthy abodes of the powerful
And neither in splendid courts where court physicians
Lay down laws for the cooks but have no place to sit down.
So listen to what I say, and you shall suffer less
Than other books with more pretentious titles,
If those who read you send you straight back
To the workshops where you were born.

* Introductory poem present in the first edition of De Morbis Artificum of 1700 and not in that of 1713.
To the Illustrious, Excellent and Learned Rectors of the University of Padua
Girolamo Venier, Chevalier and Procurator of Saint Mark's;
Francesco Lauredano, Chevalier and Procurator of Saint Mark's;
Giovanni Francesco Morosini, Chevalier

Most Illustrious and Excellent Rectors, those who spend all their time striving to write something that is useful and to prove to themselves and posterity that they truly lived, know all too well just how difficult it is for the author, even after his work has been published. Indeed, in this century in particular, one that is so quick to criticize, it is inevitable that a man who has published a work as best he can long remains exposed to the various judgements of men. However, I believe there is one particular criterion one can rely on to know whether one's work is truly appreciated or not, and that is to hear that it has been printed elsewhere, abroad in particular. I know this was the case with my work The Diseases of Workers, which was published in Modena thirteen years ago and has now been translated and published in Germany. I have therefore improved this book as best I could, including a supplement on the same subject, as it is my wish it be reprinted in this city and dedicated to your illustrious names. Being a professor of Practical Medicine, I have done what I believed to be my duty as I deem it inappropriate to have dealt with theoretical or abstract issues that are of no use, either now or in the future. I believed it would be of great use to society as a whole to study the individual diseases of the workers and their remedies in detail, something that has not yet been attempted by anyone. The Emperor Charlemagne himself showed
just how much the protection and cultivation of the liberal arts and work contributed to the wealth of nations and cities when, just after he had captured Desideratum, the last of the Lombard kings, he took the most famous masters of both intellectual and manual work to France, as the booty of his complete victory. There is a famous saying, "the State protects the arts and trade", but one might rightly ask oneself whether it is the State that protects the arts or the arts that support the State; both statements are correct and Venice is proof of this. For while certain trades have made some cities famous and prosperous, Venice has concentrated all kinds of trades in that city and continues to provide for them by offering privileges and incentives. Thus, when my book was published for the first time it was dedicated to the rectors of that period. Now it is only right that it should reappear under the auspices of your authority and the most illustrious, excellent and vigilant guardians of the University of Padua. Whatever it may be worth, I therefore offer this book to you, to receive and favour with your characteristic benevolence. May God the Almighty protect you and grant you the best of health always.

Padua, 1 September 1713
We can read or hear that many believe that nature, the mother of the universe, was ungrateful or showed little foresight as regards the human race. But of all the complaints made against nature in the guise of a stepmother, the most unjust is that she imposed upon the human race the need for daily bread to be able to preserve and prolong life and without which it would otherwise simply perish. If human beings were freed from this law, they would recognize no laws at all and the earth we live in would be completely different to the one we know. So it was very perceptive of Persius to call the stomach, and not the hand, which can perform all kinds of tasks, the Master of Arts. In his prologue he says: “Who made the parrot so glib with his ‘Good day’, and taught the magpie to try to talk like us? That master of art and bestower of mother-wit, the belly”.

It therefore follows that it is this need, which makes even irrational animals sharp-witted, that is the source of all human manual and intellectual arts. It is therefore something positive, and not something that should be cursed. However, as is often the case in all human affairs, there is also something negative in it. For we must admit that every trade that provides the worker’s daily bread both for himself and his family is also the source of hardship and serious illnesses that can even result in death. Many workers therefore curse the very trade they had hoped would give them life. In my work as a doctor, I noticed that this occurred very frequently and I therefore tried my utmost to write a treatise on the diseases of workers. However, just as with the production of manual work, in which every product can always be perfected by others, the same must be the case with the product of a literary scholar. I
know there are countless reasons why this will be the fate of my treatise on the diseases of workers, but the main one is that the subject is a novelty. For, as far as I know, nobody has ever studied the effects of various trades in detail.

The work I am about to publish will not be perfect, and this is intended to encourage others to offer their contributions so that the work will be as complete and thorough as possible and thus earn its rightful place in the field of medicine. We certainly owe this to the workers, whose trade is almost always tiring and demeaning but always of benefit to mankind. I repeat, this is a debt that must be paid by the most illustrious of all arts, as Hippocrates calls medicine in his Precepts, that “which cures without a fee and assists the poor”.

Anyone wishing to assess the extent of the advantages manual workers brought to a more civilized life only needs to consider the great differences between the Europeans and Americans and other barbarians in the New World. It is therefore only right that the works of various writers should clearly reflect that the founders of great cities and States held the workers in the highest esteem. Indeed, they founded workers’ guilds and corporations; for example, according to Plutarch, Numa Pompilius was greatly admired for having united the workers according to their trades, so that flautists had their own guild, as did goldsmiths, architects, dyers, cobblers, tanners, coppersmiths, potters, and so on. Livy writes that in the consulship of Appius Claudius and Publius Servilius, a guild of “Mercurials” was founded; this guild of merchants was so called because they worshipped Mercury as the patron of commerce. In his work The Laws, Plato also writes that craftsmen chose Vulcan and Minerva as their protectors, as they were the gods of work. In De jure antiquo Romanorum and De notitia utriusque imperii, Signonio and Guido Panciroli describe the rights and privileges that craftsmen enjoyed. They were allowed to vote and hold public office, hence Sionius concludes they were enrolled in the lists of Roman citizens. Shipbuilders are also mentioned in the Pandects and Codes. In the first book, in the paragraphs “on what shall be done in the name of, or in opposition to each corporation”, in Gaio’s Civil Law, this worker’s corporation is mentioned, including their rights and privileges; as if they were a small state, they were allowed to manage their own affairs, receive legacies and make