



Veins. The eloquence of symbols

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At a time when the fragmentation of specialist knowledge is increasingly dividing scholars of different disciplines by creating an almost total lack of communication between humanists and men of science – which category do physicians belong to? – a search for cultural unity may not be without purpose. “Being able to find out what, deep down, holds the universe together” (Goethe, Faust) is not dissimilar to the idea of unifying fundamental forces, as in Einstein’s *Einheitlichkeit*.

For physicians, to rediscover the appeal of culture, and even of erudition, an age-old phenomenon and it is not hard to see why they, always dealing with the meticulous observation of the pathological side of everyday life, want to turn with some pleasure to its healthier aspects, for recreation purposes.

While in recent years many “hot” scientific topics have enlivened the phlebology debate in Italy and abroad, *Acta Phlebologica*, the Official Journal of the Italian College of Phlebology (published by the same publisher as the present volume, Edizioni Minerva Medica), over the past decade has decided to extend its scope to include within modern medicine areas such as medical humanities which represent “the study of the intersection of medicine and humanistic disciplines such as philosophy, religion, literature, and the fine and performing arts” with an eye to the importance and role of the patients, thanks to narrative medicine.

Combining informative ideas and phlebological discussion, free from the prejudice and controversy that certain innovations have triggered among “VEIN experts”, with art representations and the eloquence of symbols, this is a mini-treatise on phlebology that follows a logical anatomy-physiology-pathology-therapy thread through the leading players in this long story of phlebology and lymphology, culminating in 2016 and the anniversaries of the discovery of venous thromboembolism and its therapeutic approach with heparin.