



Introduction

The art of memory and the sciences in the Early Modern Age

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Abstract

This focus concerns the relation between the tradition of the art of memory and the sciences during the Early Modern Age in Europe. Seven essays: from anatomy to mathematics.

Keywords

humanities and sciences, art of memory, Scientific Revolution, European Renaissance

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The aim of this focus is to investigate a particular aspect relating to the tradition of the art of memory, during the Early Modern Age in Europe: the relationships between mnemonics and scientific development. The art of memory encompasses techniques for memorization that have been passed down from classical culture, particularly within the context of rhetorical training. For centuries, mnemonics were part of the *trivium* and only became an independent discipline during the Renaissance. This was due in part to the radical changes of the time, ranging from the invention of the printing press to the Scientific Revolution, which led to an unprecedented production and dissemination of knowledge. In his book *Clavis Universalis* (1960), Paolo Rossi emphasized the importance of mnemonic knowledge in the development of modern science. Using this work as a cornerstone for the history of philosophical and scientific ideas, we aim to expand Rossi's analysis by studying scholars he neglected or to examine more precisely the position of major figures in the early-modern natural philosophy. Furthermore, this focus aims to broaden Rossi's perspective by questioning the rise of experimental sciences and the mathematization of the world from a social and cognitive point of view.

The contributions collected here have the advantage of bringing together these topics within very broad and varied fields, thus allowing the reader to immediately get a clear idea of the important connection between mnemonics and sciences. In particular, the essay of Tommaso Ghezzi inquires how mnemonic and hermetic propaedeutics affected the visual tools and experimental habitus of early modern anatomy, and vice-versa. The essays of Annarita Angelini, Lucia Delaini, Koji Kuwakino and Ute Frietsch inquire the use of mnemonic tools by authors who focused in the methodology for structuring a renewed *encyclopedia* of knowledge, ranging among France, Italy, and England. At the end, the essays of Marco Matteoli and Clément Poupard inquire the evolution of the classical art of memory relating to the creation of new techniques to memorize kinds of information that were neglected up to that point, in particular in the mathematical fields.

Despite the exceptional breadth of disciplinary fields taken into account in this collection of studies, there is still a lot of work to be done in this direction and, through this focus, we hope to have at least sparked historiographical interest for further investigations in this sense. Study this topic remains fundamental to better understand at which degree both scientists and humanists continue to share the same "*outilage mental*" (Febvre, *Le problème de l'incroyance au XVIe siècle*, 1947).