



Marko Polo's Diary

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On the perceptual senses and the sense of reason

13th Congress of the European Academy of Dermatology and Venereology, Florence, Italy, November 17-21, 2004

Fifteen years after the first EADV Congress held in Florence in 1989, this city, the cradle of European Renaissance, was selected again to welcome participants of the Congress. For me, it was once more the pleasure of being in one of my favorite European places. I passed Michelangelo's David outside the *Palazzo Vecchio* (where the original stood until 1873), and walked beside the *Duomo* which 460 steps I did not intend to climb this time, neither I did cross the *Ponte Vecchio* with its gold shops. I knew we would participate in an equally exciting event in the Museum of History and *Science Museo di Storia naturale* nicknamed *La Specola*, with its permanent collection. Actually the traditional *History Day* of the EADV took place in *La Specola* (opened in 1775) in Via Romana 17, where we had a chance to have a guided tour to the collection of anatomical wax figures. The art of using wax models to demonstrate anatomy reached its zenith in the 18th century, particularly in the work of *Ercole Leli* in Bologna and *Clemente Susini* in Florence, two of the world most renowned collections of wax models. This tradition took root later in other famous medical training centers such as Paris and Vienna. Actually visiting Tuscany in 1775 and later, Emperor Joseph was staying as the guest of his brother, the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo, and was fascinated by the lifelike wax models of the human body. Right away he decided to order a duplicate collection for his *Josephinum* in Vienna. Equally fascinated were the participants

of the EADV, who observed the exhibition with attention, being aware that art is present in every nook in Florence, not excluding science or medicine. This made me think about the gap between art and science that has been forced upon us by specialization, and perhaps it has never been so extreme as now. I was wondering further, how much time will pass until we become aware that we cannot entirely divide our sensual perceptions from our sense of reason or where the origins of our creativity are. I did not find answers, of course, but Florence was a perfect place to think about it more profoundly.

After the exhibition we attended the *Alibert Lesson*, this year held by one of the founders of the EADV, professor Emilio Panconesi. The lecture was entitled *In Florence with Galileo Galilei and Vincenzo Chiarugi: from the Scientific Experimental Method to the Teaching of Medicine and Dermatology*. We had organized transfer for lunch at the restaurant Papuen where the meeting of the ESHDV also took place. From there we were taken by a minibus transfer to the Congress Center for the inauguration ceremony of the EADV Congress and welcome cocktail.

The atmosphere of history and heritage was stronger than in any other place in the world and dominated all my thoughts.

Indonesian earthquake, December 2004

The end of the year culminated in the terrible Sumatra-Andaman earthquake in Indonesia and its tsunami, followed by the massive loss of life. It seems that this time as much as many times after the great disasters the need to rethink the existing warning system became more pressing. It is true that disaster can rarely be forecast, yet

preparations for peoples' protection could certainly be done in advance. One cannot resist thinking of too many disasters that happened in history, provoking governments to act only when it is too late and the damage has already been done. The sense of reason regarding prevention and protection seems to be operative sufficiently only with

regard to war operations. In this respect it looks as if hardly much has changed in the human nature throughout history.

The world is waiting, sretan vam put!
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19. 11. 22

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