

SARTON CHAIR LECTURES

LAUDATIO HARM BEUKERS

Robert Rubens

As is well known dr.G.Sarton was a very important holistic scientific thinker and writer. Based upon his ideas and works germinated in this university but mainly grown to adulthood in the US, science and knowledge were conceived as being one. Sarton claimed very correctly no science could ever exist without the knowledge of the historical genesis of the idea.

The same argument similarly can state no medical knowledge is conceived without the knowledge of the previous ideas about medicine and therapeutics. The teaching of the history of medicine is considered to be an important element in the formation of the next generation of physicians. The principle already stated by Galenos and retained in the academical world is present in nearly all English and German speaking universities of the world. The traditional Dutch universities still cherish the idea and consider the knowledge of the history of medicine an important part of the medical university curriculum. Our university which was founded in 1817 upon the principles of Leyden university had this course as a main part of the medical formation in the first hundred years of its existence. In the following 50 years the introduction of more and more exact science in the curriculum did eclipse the historical formation. It was only retained as an elective subject and still remains important in the formation of the professions allied to medicine and teachers training. In Leyden it remained a part of the basic curriculum of the formation of the physician.

It therefore gives me great pleasure to introduce to you as proximus in this aula which still reminds us of the ancient relations between Gent and Leyden Prof. H. Beukers, professor in the history of medicine at Leyden University as the laureate of the Sarton Chair for the history of sciences at the proposal of the faculty of medicine.

Prof.Beukers was born in 1945 and after medical studies at Leyden university started a research career in the same university. His first subject was biochemistry and in 1978 he obtained his Ph.D. in medical

biochemistry. During his research work in basic science Dr.Beukers already became involved in medieval palaeography and codicology. In the second part of his scientific career Dr.Beukers mainly performed original medical historical research. When in 1981 the chair for the history of medicine became vacant he was appointed professor of the history of medicine in the department of *metamedica*. The last twenty years he produced some 144 papers about the history of medicine, history of the university and the advent of Western medicine in Japan. The important historical relationship existing between Japan and the Netherlands since more than two centuries was his main research subject. His original studies of historical "fontes" and intrinsic knowledge of the Japanese culture and language makes him an internationally recognised expert on the connections between Japan and the Netherlands.

The expertise is well recognised and gave him a visiting professorship in Tokohu University in Japanese culture and studies. Needless to state this honour is seldomly bestowed upon Western researchers.

Besides the important teaching and research responsibilities Prof.Beukers is involved in numerous committees on the history of medicine as well in the university of Leyden, the Dutch Academy of Sciences, the International Society for the History of Medicine.

Prof.Beukers is a member of various editorial boards. He is the general editor of the main journal about the history of medicine, *Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde*, in the Dutch speaking Netherlands. Furthermore he is the president elect of the European association for the History of Medicine and Health.

Based upon his main research interest Prof.Beukers will now give his lecture about "Red-haired medicine.The introduction and acceptance of Western medicine in Japan", to-morrow he will give his paper concerning Franciscus dele Boë, Sylvius, the founding father of the very important Leyden medical School. It is certainly too frequently forgotten that the contribution of the Dutch intelligentsia to the formation of the scientific medical knowledge at the end of the XVIIth century not only influenced but really moulded total Europe.

