

SARTON MEDAL LECTURES

LAUDATIO JOSE VAN LAERE

R. Rubens

Dr.J. VAN LAERE graduated as a doctor medicinae at the KUL in 1939. After finishing his studies he was trained by Prof. Van Gehuchten in neuropsychiatry. In 1951 Dr.Van Laere obtained his 'Aggregaat voor het hoger onderwijs', our Ph.D., with as subject the anatomy of the vestibular system.

After his university training he became an important and well-known clinical neuro-psychiatrist in the city of Courtai. His endeavours were high, he founded the Saint Joseph psychiatric hospital in Pittem. Due mainly to his interventions, labour and scientific input the institution was recognised as a front runner in modern psychiatry.

Although being very active as a clinician he never relinquished his scientific interests. Being a very respected member of the medical community he was elected to the Belgian Royal Academy of Medicine. The aeropagus of medicine recognised his abilities and in 1989 he chaired the Academy as president.

After his retirement from clinical work his interest in medical history grew. Being a very astute scholar and having an investigative mind he not only reported about the curricula of the great physicians of the past, but also got involved in the study of source material in medical philosophy.

As a faithful inhabitant of the city of Courtai he reported about the life of the famous surgeon of Courtrai, Dr.Emiel Jan Lauwers, who was also a member of the Academy of Medicine. Furthermore the life and works of Palfijn always puzzled him.

The acme of his interest in medical history however was concentrated upon the period of great changes during the XVIth and

XVIIth centuries in anatomical and medical thinking.

He made a study of the evolution of cardiovascular physiology from Galenos to Harvey. In his studies he showed the important contribution of the anatomical school of Padua upon the physiological ideas and experiments of William Harvey.

During the last years he was involved in projects concerning the translation and explanation of the works of Andreas Vesalius. He not only reported about the anatomy of the nervous system, but he was one of the principal authors in the important work of the translation of the *Adreae Vesalii Anatomicarum Gabrielis Fallopii Observationum Examen* into Dutch. The increased accessibility of this important source of scientific discussion from the XVIth century obtained by the work of Dr. Van Laere together with the other members of the Academy and external experts makes available to us the methods of scientific thought during an important period of 'scientific revolution', or change of paradigm as Kühn would call it.

Remaining interested in the important sources of our medical heritage we are very glad that he has accepted the Sarton Medal from the faculty of medicine for the year 1995-96 and will talk to us about the report by the XVIIth century physician MONTANUS or Van den Berghe about the plague in Bruges.

