

[Galien. Des lieux affectés - suite]

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forms at will the movement of each joint, whenever it wants; and men do likewise, although they are ignorant of the muscles which produce each movement?

In regard to the movement of the tongue, to remind you of this example, how should one not be amazed to find the anatomists in disagreement not only about the number of the tongue muscles but also about their function, while nature teaches the children how to imitate one sound or another and how to move their tongue, and shows them which muscles are instrumental to produce speech itself? And the same applies to the sounds of other animals and to their respiration. To speak about voluntary movements in a few words: who would be astonished that anyone of the organs is self-taught? (K 446). On the other hand, there is considerable disagreement among anatomists about these activities, of how these functions originate, which organs are involved, how all animals breathe and utter sounds right after birth.

Therefore, is it not amazing that the genital organs possess at once the knowledge of the activities for which nature created them: for instance, that the uterus, after having received the semen, closes tightly, but opens completely when the growth of the fetus is terminated; and when it has opened up that it expels the fetus? People seldom think about the things which they commonly observe and which the multitude disregards, since they customarily do not marvel at what is truly wonderful but only at what they rarely see. What in nature, for instance, is more marvelous than the fact that the mouth of the uterus remains so fully closed through an entire period of nine months, that it would not admit even the round head of a probe, but that at the end of gestation it opens up so wide that the whole body [of a child] passes through?

Therefore, one cannot question that likewise the function of the penis is self-taught (K 447), and that consequently its cylindrical body, which is composed of a kind of sinew, becomes immediately dilated when an animal has the urge for cohabitation. For the penis has the natural faculty of dilatation, as does the heart and the arteries, with the difference, however, that these organs are constantly in motion because we are in perpetual need of their activity, whereas the cylindrical sinews [of the penis] are never in motion except when its function requires it. When it becomes dilated, pneuma enters from the arteries, as the lungs follow [the movement of] the chest wall in order to fill a vacuum. One could perhaps attribute the expansion of the arteries to the power of the pneuma which fills the tendinous tubes [of the penis] when the animal is eager for intercourse. It is much better to explain that erection is due to the activity of these tendinous structures but not of the arteries, since it is logical that a function is derived from the specific structure of an organ and not from its [anatomical] position. Thus, the heart would have the same function if it were located in another part of the body, and so would the liver, spleen and all other organs.

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