Bodies of Knowledge: anatomy, complexity and the invention of organizational systems, 1500-1850

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Appel à contribution
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Beginning with the remarkable work of Andreas Vesalius (1543), anatomists sought to create new narrative arrangements that mimicked the internal organization of the body. In the years following the publication of Vesalius' systematic arrangement of anatomical narratives provided an opportunity for examining avariety of topics across many disciplines. As a result, many authors adopted the anatomy as a means of describing/mapping the structural particulars of nearly every imaginable subject. In an attempt to assign meaningful connections to the seemingly discrete phenomena of the 'rational' cosmos, scientists, philosophers and artists looked to the human body as an organizational reference, citing the internal structure of the human body as a prime example of an integrated system. The body, they argued, was an enclosed space (delineated by the flesh), making the investigation of its inner structure relatively straightforward. What they discovered inside the human body, however, was a degree of complexity previously unsuspected. In the attempt to arrange distinct parts/organs of the body into groups according to their specialized, collaborative functions, anatomists exposed the limitations of traditional modes of scientific narration. Faced with mounting complexities, they tried to describe the human body as an order of simple and distinct parts that could be arranged into increasingly compounded configurations (systems). Taken
together, these systems contributed to the integrity (interrelatedness) of the physical whole.

To give an account of such complex, trans-spatial associations required the development of new forms of scientific description: cross-referenced, digressive narratives that could accommodate the non-linear arrangements of systematic embodiment. Anatomists sought to explain the body's inner structure by dividing/dissecting it (both abstractly and physically) into distinct parts and by creating 'textual maps' of the coherences of "Structure," "Action," and "Use" that they discovered between individual components (to arrange internal organs according to the 'physical logic' of structural and functional relation.

With the concurrent rise of anatomical and mathematical science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, understandings of the divisibility of matter––theoretical and actual––arrived at a kind of observational and experimental depth, conceived most often in terms of mathematically divisible space. Quite naturally, the intellectual dissection and mapping of human knowledge followed in the wake of these advancements. The resulting shift toward systematic arrangements of information (organizational schemes

of such important characters as Bacon, Descartes, Leibniz, Newton, and Bayle. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (particularly in the works of Chambers, d'Alembert, Condorcet, Linnaeus, Erasmus Darwin, and Lamarck, among others), the narrative logics of systematic organization dominated the
various approaches employed by philosophers and scientists to arrange the scattered contents of the universe in a single, unified, branching system––thereby giving rise to the construction of a changing radically the way that we think about the universe and human understanding.
For the purposes of this collection, we seek essays that consider the influence of anatomical science and/or early modern theories of the body on the 'artificial' organization of knowledge and the world (1500-1850). We are mindful of opening this discussion to include emerging Atlantic considerations, including the application of systematic organization to 'New World' contexts. We are eager to entertain abstracts that explore the manner in which colonization of the Americas, Africa, and the Caribbean was influenced by emerging organizational systems (taxonomies of knowledge) in Europe. In addition to the themes listed above, proposals should cover a broad range of topics, from an expansive list of disciplines : Mikrokosmografia (1615). In short, systematic organization resulted from effortsesprit de système) took shape in thebody of knowledge by functional (rather than syllogistic) relation ”¢

Scientific Materialism between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The body as a central reference for the theoretical construction of
”¢

Body as an Organizational Metaphor
”¢

Encyclopedism and the Body of Knowledge
”¢

Bodily Systems, Systematic Classification and the Evolution of Species
”¢

Complexity, Logic and 'Systematic' Arrangements of Knowledge
”¢

Body as a cartographic metaphor / Cartography as a metaphor of the body
”¢

Atlantic Circulation as a metaphor of Systematic Unity
”¢

The Classification of Bodies in the 'New World'
”¢

The Influence of Taxonomies on Artistic Representation
”¢

Politics of the Body/Body Politics in the Enlightenment
”¢

Comparative Anatomies and the Categorization/Hierarchy of Knowledge
Keywords & Key Phrases:

System(s)

Systematic

Body/Bodies of Knowledge

Spatial Organization [of Knowledge]

Complexity

Physical Logic/Logic of Physicality

Aesthetics of System

Textual Mapping

Artistic Representations of the Body

Important Figures (include, but are not limited to):

Andreas Vesalius

Leon Battista Alberti

Albrecht Dürer

Piero della Francesca

Helkiah Crooke

Leonardo da Vinci

Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa

Peter Ramus

René Descartes

Baruch Spinoza

Francis Bacon

Rembrandt van Rijn

Frans Hals

Thomas Hobbes

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

Isaac Newton

Bernard de Mandeville

Pierre Bayle

Ephraim Chambers

Julien Offray de La Mettrie

Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle

Jean-Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet

Jean le Rond d’Alembert

Denis Diderot

Carl Linneaus

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Erasmus Darwin

Jean-Baptiste Lamarck

Charles Darwin