The University of Padua and the Learned Journal in the Early Eighteenth Century

One morning in 1701 Antonio Vallisneri, First Professor of Practical Medicine at the University of Padua, delivered his lecture on diseases of the head to the usual packed audience. As was his custom, he paid as little attention as possible to the official text upon which the lesson was to be based according to the university statutes and the course description as stated in the yearly rotulo or class schedule. In fact, on this particular day he entirely ignored the first Fen, entitled De Febribus, of Avicenna’s Liber Canonis, preferring instead to devote the lesson to recent cases and theories. And in explaining a case of headache caused by worms, he told the story of a young woman who had been resting by a field in a prone position when a worm crawled into her ear and remained there for several weeks—a condition to which the doctors thereupon applied their most ingenious methods. In the ponderous modern Latin of university discourse, he had this to say:

Puella e annorum 18 in ditione Bapepergensi in prato dormienti vermiculus rotundus, dimidii auricularis longitudine, lumbricum crassitie adaequans, aurem subentravit dextram, et paulatim rodendo in frontem ascendit, inibique per quattuor septimanas hospitans incommoda puella peperit quam plurima. Multa remedia interna, et externa, praescripta, sed omnia incassum. Derelictae ab omnibus succurrit Jacobus Bertach pharmacopoeus, iubens, in aures puellae reclinato capite inmetteretur Oleum Juniperinum, quo aliquoties facto, due ejecti fuere vermiculi minores albi, praedicti quippe soboles.¹

¹ Perugia, Biblioteca Augusta [=BAP] cod. 1796, c. 22r.
Where the information came from he dutifully informed his students—as his lecture notes for that session in the year 1701 clearly show: “Misc. Curiosa an 3 1672.” That the information indeed came from the Miscellanea curiosa of the Academia Leopoldina in Schweinfurt, Germany, is easily provable by reference to the journal itself. And there we find the identical citation, which we reproduce below with italics showing in italics the portions omitted or modified by Vallisneri:


It was not the first time Vallisneri had brought material from the learned journals into class; nor would it be the last. Yet his lessons are some of the earliest testimonies we have of the actual in-class use of material from the first learned journals.

Vallisneri at Padua

Before analyzing this and other cases, let us say something about Vallisneri’s life and accomplishments. Born in the vicinity of Lucca in 1661, he studied medicine at Bologna under Marcello Malpighi and Girolamo Sbaraglia, eventually finishing his degree at Reggio Emilia. By the last years of the 17th century he was devoting most of his energies to the observation of nature, and the first significant fruit of this effort was the “Dialogues Concerning the Curious Origin of Many Insects” published in the short-lived learned journal “Galleria di Minerva” between 1696 and 1700. This work placed him squarely within the tradition of naturalistic exploration in Northern Italy, running from Vesalius, Fabricius and Harvey through Malpighi by way of Francesco Redi.  

2 Misc. Curiosa an 3 (1672): 480-1:

3 The bibliography on Vallisneri is vast. A rapid resume in English is Rhoda Rappaport, “Italy and Europe: The Case of Antonio Vallisneri (1661-1730),” History of Science, 29, 1991, pp. 73-98; see also her When Geologists were Historians, 1665-1750, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997, passim. On the same topic in reference to Vallisneri are relevant portions of Paolo Rossi, The Dark Abyss of Time. The History of the Earth and the History of Nations from Hooke to Vico, Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984. Apart
empirical methods into university research, including the use of instruments for minute and comparative anatomy. In his thoughts concerning natural history, he assimilated a Cartesian world view without accepting an entirely mechanistic analysis of nature, campaigned against spontaneous generation, and contributed to the preformism-epigenesis controversy. These aspects, along with his essays in paleontology, are all represented in the vast corpus of his publications, printed together for the first time posthumously by the son in 1733, three years after the father’s death, in three massive in folio volumes. Among the first items to appear recently in the new National Edition are manuscripts showing Vallisneri at work as a practicing physician who endeavors to apply the insights of naturalistic observation as well as iatrochemical methods to the practical business of curing, in a wide array of medical consultations. More closely related to our concerns here is his involvement as a scientific communicator—not only through the vast system of correspondence, but as editor, with Scipione Maffei and Apostolo Zeno, of the first successful encyclopedic journal published in Italy, the Giornale de’ letterati d’Italia (1710-40). Now we will find him engaged as a communicator of scientific results in the classroom. Indeed, learned journals were fundamental for Vallisneri’s teaching, and they furnished not only the themes but even the very words spoken, as we have seen. A complete history of the reception of early modern learned journals will thus certainly have to take account of oral presentation as a means of diffusion, collecting as many as possible of the kinds of testimonies of which Vallisneri is such an extraordinarily rich example. The end result could be a new appraisal of the role of this genre in general in eighteenth-century society. This paper will attempt to assess this role not only from the standpoint of the history of the diffusion of learned journals, but also from that of the history of teaching.


4 Antonio Vallisneri, Opere fisico-mediche, 3 vols., Venice, Sebastiano Coleti, 1733.


For tracing the use of learned journals in Vallisneri’s early eighteenth-century classroom, we have an extraordinary source: namely, the lessons themselves. Of a 30-year teaching career stretching from 1700 to 1730 personal lesson notes for the equivalent of nearly 7 years of teaching have been preserved. We will concern ourselves here mainly with two manuscripts. The first, now preserved in the Biblioteca Augusta in Perugia [=BAP], 7 contains lesson notes regarding the first year, devoted to diseases of the head, of a three-year cycle on practical medicine. Vallisneri first gave these lessons in his second year of teaching, namely, 1701, and repeated them in 1704 and 1707, each time the cycle returned. The second manuscript, preserved in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice [=BNM], 9 regards the first year, devoted to the reproduction of living things, of a three-year cycle on theoretical medicine. Vallisneri gave these lessons in his second year of teaching in the chair of theoretical medicine, namely, the year 1712, and in the years in which he repeated the substance of those lectures, i.e., in 1715 and 1718.

This precious documentation provides insights into a number of aspects of university history that have hitherto been little studied. What we now know about teaching complements what has already been discovered concerning student demography, classroom buildings, museums, gardens of simples, colleges housing for the various nations, and student rioting.11 And the more we know about all these aspects the better we are able to appraise the institutional contexts where a considerable number of the key researchers spent most of their careers.12

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7 Perugia, Biblioteca Augusta [=BAP], ms. 1796.
9 Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana [= BNM], cod. it. X: 148 (6685). Note that there is no pagination; so lessons are noted by their name.
The history of classroom instruction adds a new dimension not only to the history of universities, but to the emerging historiography of the oral culture of knowledge. From new kinds of evidence around Europe, we are finding out more and more about early modern teaching styles and their effects on students; and the same goes for early modern oral examinations and doctoral performances. These elements corresponding to acts of speech and hearing may now be examined in the light of what science historians have already suggested concerning the rhetoric of scientific exposition. A forgotten world of scientific sociability is gradually coming into

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On his arrival at Padua, Vallisneri quickly established the style of teaching that would be his trademark. He found the faculty divided between innovators (Pompeo Sacco, Domenico Guglielmini and others) and traditionalists (Michelangelo Molinetti, Giacomo Viscardi and others), the latter group enjoying a slight advantage.\footnote{William Clark, \textit{Academic Charisma}, p. 19, regards academic sociability in the forum of the voice as a quaint throwback to Medieval traditionalism.} When delivering the festive inaugural lecture, he had still more cause for concern than the mere problem of correct delivery about which we reported at the beginning of this paper. He was expected to take sides; instead he offered an uneasy compromise, as the title of the lecture proclaimed: \textit{“The Studies of the Moderns Do Not Overthrow the Medicine of the Ancients, But Confirm It.”} No trace of this inaugural has yet been found except for Vallisneri’s own autobiographical commentary in notes published posthumously by Giovan Artico di Porcia. There he explains the elements of a larger strategy of paying false obeisance to the traditionalists while gaining more freedom to express his own views. Here is what he later says about the general reception to the major theme of his lecture, and his subsequent practice:

This reasoning of Vallisneri was greatly appreciated and praised by the majority of the professors and physicians, who were all followers of the ancient school. They hoped he would continue always to defend their old doctrines, whether good or bad. But in the lessons that he gave, subsequent to this, they noticed that instead he inclined to the moderns, although he attempted to reconcile cleverly the different systems, where he could. Nonetheless, as the two are often irreconcilable, he opposed the ancients with his usual candor and showed clearly where they went wrong.\footnote{Gian Artico di Porcia, \textit{Notizie della vita e degli studi del Kavalier Antonio Vallisneri}, Dario Generali (ed.), Bologna, Patrón, 1986, p. 64.}

As time went by, the portion of the lectures devoted to his own research and that of his contemporaries increased, eventually crowding out the ancients almost entirely.

As he promised in his inaugural, Vallisneri gave ample account of modern developments in medicine (with occasional reference to the ancients); and the list of cited authors covers an astonishing range. Next to iatrochemists like Daniel Sennert and Franciscus Sylvius de le Boë,}\footnote{Porcia, \textit{Notizie}, p. 73}
there are physiologists with botanical interests like Michael Etmüller, physicians like Théophile Bonet, botanists like Johann Theodor Schenck, surgeons like Johannes Schultes and Wilhelm Fabry (Guilhelmus Fabricius Hildanus), not to mention his own correspondents in the Veneto, such as Guglielmo Gratarol. Frequent reference is made to pharmaceutical preparations and cures, ancient and modern (“Inter haec igitur tamquam anodyna dolore mitigantia enumeratur: succus aut mucilago malvae, vel altheae, cum oleo rosario, vel cum lacte muliebri capiti applicata . . .”19 or else “Ex luxuriante humore frigido, crasso et viscoso procedendum, prout diximus de Melancholiâ, vel de Apoplexiâ, et praeter ea, aliqui habent in usu praescribere potum caffé vel cocolatae, et Herbae Thé”20). A note to lesson 11 refers to information had from colleague Giambattista Morgagni: “he said that in the biblioteca anatomica of [Jean Jacques] Manget in a treatise De Cerebro, there is a case of fungus in the dura madre, which once removed returned immediately to germinate as soon as the cutting tools were put away.”21

Journals in the Classroom

For a considerable portion of his information about contemporary research, Vallisneri drew upon the increasingly influential learned journals of his time. The list of cited references included the *Journal des sçavans* (here called “Gallicae eruditorum ephemerides”) the *Miscellanea curiosa* of the Academia Leopoldina, the *Novelles de la République des Lettres* begun by Pierre Bayle (here called “Novitates Reipublicae Litterariae”), the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society (“Acta Philosophica Angliae,” possibly read in the Amsterdam or Leipzig translations22). Of Italian journals, the reference to “Ephemerides italicæ” occurring before 1710 (founding date of the authoritative *Giornale de’ letterati d’Italia*) must designate Benedetto Bacchini’s *Giornale de’ letterati*, published sporadically in Parma and later Modena between 1686 and 1697. Strangely absent from this list is any reference to the *Acta eruditorum*, perhaps because of that journal’s less frequent attention to medical matters.

Most probably, in providing this information, Vallisneri did not expect students to seek out the original texts, at least not right away. If he did, the library situation in Padua was hardly encouraging. For books, the professors themselves relied largely upon their own collections, which they assembled by forming their own networks of connections with booksellers all over Europe, often mediated through large firms like the Hertz and Baglioni in Venice or the Comino

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19 BAP, ms. 1796, c. 75r.
20 BAP, ms. 1796, c. 230v.
21 BAP, ms. 1796, c. 40v.
in Padua. How often they consulted the better-furnished libraries of the local convents such as that of the Franciscans at St. Anthony’s basilica cannot be discerned; and their letters are equally mute concerning their use of the still fledgling university library established in 1629, twenty years after the Bodleian, but never really developed. By the early eighteenth century this library was reported to have insufficient books, too few readers to read them, and irregular opening hours. Journals in particular were not regularly acquired by the library until the second half of the eighteenth century, although there may have been scattered volumes in the collections bequeathed by the lawyer Giovanbattista Rainis and the naturalist Felice Viale.

If Vallisneri’s citation practices would not always have been much help to students intending to seek out the material he cited (particular journal titles may be clear, but the volume number or article is often entirely missing), nonetheless our results demonstrate that he made good use of the journals in his lessons. Consider this reference to an article in the Philosophical Transactions concerning an epileptic woman cured by an intravenous injection of some medical preparation, which occurs in the lecture on epilepsy. On the left is an excerpt from the original article:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original article</th>
<th>Vallisneri’s text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Philosophical Transactions</em>, Monday Dec. 9, 1667. This was lately communicated in a letter from Danzick written by Dr. Fabritius, Physician Ordinary to that city. A married woman of 35, and a serving Maid of 20 years of age had been both of them from their birth very grievously afflicted with epileptic fits. There was injected into their veins a laxative rosin, dissolved in an anti-epileptical spirit.</td>
<td>Vallisneri (BAP cod. 1796) c. 184v. In <em>Actis Phylos. Angl.</em> Dec. 1667 from the physician Fabro physician in Danzig: an epileptic woman was cured by an antiepileptic medicine infused in her vein by a surgical procedure</td>
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Consider another case, this time concerning an article in the *Miscellanea curiosa* about severe headache due to worms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miscellanea curiosa 9-10 (1679) obs. 50, p. 127. Obs. D. Joannis Schmidii de verme capitis. Vidua Georgii Sperling, mercatoris, dum viveret, apud nos, quinquagesimatum aetatis iam egressa annum, de doloribus capitis conquerebatur derepente intolerabilibus, qui adeo miseram excruciantabat, ut insomnes plerasque ductere noctes cogeretur; sentiebat in fronte cursum vermis, ut aiebat, ad aurem dextram, ex hac iterum cuniculos quasi, hinc inde ad frontem...</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vallisneri (BAP cod. 1796), c. 14v: In Ephemeridibus Germanis Ann. X Obs 50 de pertinacissimo capitis dolore ab inclusis vermis excitato legitur.</td>
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Occasionally the citations repeated the exact phrasing in the original, as in the following concerning a woman with a severe migraine, for which various cures were tried (portions in common are in italics):

<table>
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<th>M. Curiosa 3 (1672) obs. 183 p. 346: D. Aleardi Hermanni Cummeni: Singulare Hemicraniae solutione. <em>Foemina quaerabatur de Hemicrania dextri lateris frontem potissimum infestante; adeo ut oculos aperire vix valeret.</em> Administrata V. S.ne adhibentur idem Pillulae cephaliae a Domino Licentiatu Julio Georgio Behrens, Archiatro Guelferbytensi, qui mihi hunc casum communicavit, ordinatae, sed nullo cum levamine... Jubentur itaque ad aures applicari vescicatoria, item formari turundae, eaque immergi in spiritum salis armoniaci volatilem, Spiritusque per nares in cerebrum attrahi. Non diu his rimediis usa, cum noctu stillicidium ipsi narium accideret, non sanguinis sed aquae ad tactum frigidissimae, in tanta copia, ut fere mensuram Guelferbytensem (ein Quartier) repleverit, et ex eo tempore omnes dolores capitis cessaver, sanaque fuit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vallisneri (BAP cod. 1796) c. 61v: Legimus... quod <em>foemina quaerabatur de himicrania dextri lateris frontem potissimum infestante, adeo ut oculos vix aperire valeret.</em> Post variorum remediorum usum, vel &lt;potius&gt; post naturae vincentis triumphum stillicidium ipsi aquae frigidissimae accidit et maxima copia, unde dolores evanuerunt...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whatever may have been Vallisneri’s expectations concerning his students’ future use of this material, there can be no doubt from these instances that spoken science was an important point of diffusion for information in the journals.
However, the role of journals in spoken science appears to go much further. For Vallisneri did not only cite articles. Sometimes he appears to have built entire lessons on journal excerpts, as the example cited at the beginning of this paper demonstrates. In that example, Vallisneri apparently copied down several paragraphs from the article and placed them in his lesson. As we shall see, this became his common practice.

As we said, Vallisneri was promoted to the first chair of theoretical medicine in 1711. To get the flavor of his teaching in this period we might compare his lessons to those on theoretical medicine delivered on the same topic in the same years by Giambattista Morgagni, his friend and associate on the *Giornale de’ letterati d’Italia*, who came to Padua in 1712 to take the second chair vacated by Vallisneri. The Morgagni lesson manuscripts in the Ashburnham collection at the Laurentian Library in Florence were published in a fine edition by Adalberto Pazzini in the 1960s.²⁴ It would be highly misleading to consider Morgagni among the traditionalists. However, his teaching differed significantly from Vallisneri’s. The first Morgagni lesson introduces the three texts to be explained, namely, Galen’s *Ars medica*, Hippocrates’ *Aphorisms* and the first book of Avicenna. Subsequently, each lesson begins with the presentation of the text to be commented. After a more or less detailed analysis of this text, there follows a series of criticisms based on new research; but the text always furnishes the structure of the lesson. Thus, the second lesson sets out to explicate the first chapter of the *Ars medica*. The third takes up chapters 2-3, the fourth, chaps. 4, 5, 6 of the text, whereas the fifth explains chap. 7, the sixth chap. 8, the seventh chap. 9 and so forth, each time analyzing the doctrine of Galen and then bringing in the latest authorities.

In the lessons for these years, Vallisneri laid out the principle arguments for his theory of the reproduction of living things, based on the three cardinal notions: like produces like, all creatures come from eggs of some kind (“ovism”), and fecundation simply vivifies preformed material already in existence from previous generations (“preformism” and “involucrism”).²⁵ It is well to recall the subtitle of the *History of the Generation of Man and Animals*, namely, *Whether Generation is Effected by the Spermatic Worms or by Eggs*. Thus, a good portion of these lessons was devoted to debunking any theory attributing a predominant role to the spermatozoa, and likewise any theory of epigenesis or development of foeti from incohat matter, including versions of the Aristotelian theory of spontaneous generation. Names of key figures in the lively debates surrounding these issues parade across the pages of the documents, as they must have

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²⁵ In the literature, Vallisneri has been called an “ovista, preformista, incapsulatore di stretta osservanza” Roberto Savelli “L’opera biologica di A. V.” *Physis* 3 no. 4 (1961): 286; although such older treatments can be misleading. See the relevant portions of Walter Bernardi, *Le metafisiche dell’embrione: scienze della vita e filosofia da Malpighi a Spallanzani, 1672-1793*, Florence, Olschki, 1986, Parts 3 and 4.
been recited in class—ranging from physiologists like Thomas Bartholin to protagonists in the microscopic observations, such as Robert Hooke, Richard Waller, Théophile Bonet, Nicolas Hartsoeker, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, including citations to works, chapters and pages (‘Fatetur Levenhochius in epistula ad D. Christoph Wren . . . , p. 207’ [lesson no. 20]). Vallisneri’s own observations of the similarities and differences between plants and animals (a topic covered in great detail in the eventual publication) are accompanied by weights and measures, as: “Ponderavi insuper in alio tempore ovis materiam luteam, et ponderabat gr. 18” [lesson no. 23].

Discovered by Leeuwenhoeck some thirty years before, the spermatozoa had come to assume an increasingly important role in current discussions. Vallisneri explains the debate in terms that add color to irony:

In labyrincho Cretae homines aliquando fuisse incerto, et dubio pede vagantes, nisi Ariadnae filo viam invenissent, per quod erupserent; Graecae narrat fabellae, sed non uti fabellam Angli, Batavi, Galli, Germani, Italique multissimi anatomici et medici narrant in labyrintheis testiculorum semitibus homunciones vagari sub figura vermium, qui tandem exitum invenientes et uterum foemineum ingressi, ibi crescent, nidifcent, et tandem in hominem perfectum se explicant et evolvant. 

In a typical lesson, no. 20, Vallisneri undertakes to “impugn the spermatic worms,” against which various arguments are adduced. The worms cannot themselves be fetuses, he says, because there are far too many, and nature does nothing in vain—moreover, they do not resemble human fetuses as observed in the uterus. Indeed, the form of the sperm appears in some ways similar in all species which have them, even those with the most contrasting characteristics. Finally, Leeuwenhoek himself, among the most dedicated proponents of the thesis (says Vallisneri), was never able to view the actual spermatatozoa in the corpus luteum of a fertilized ovum. Vallisneri’s solution comes later in the year: the spermatozoa excite but do not inform the ovum, in which all generative power resides.

The famous observations by François de la Plantade (Dalempatius) of tiny homunculi emerging from the sperm cells could obviously be a problem for the “ovist” view. Probably invented, and later branded as a hoax by Jean-Pierre Aumont in the Encyclopédie article on “Generation”, these observations were first published in Claude Bernard’s Nouvelles de la République des Lettres in 1699. In Lesson 15, Vallisneri reports on them by copying a sizeable excerpt of text describing tiny men shedding the outer sperm covering as though it were a kind of tunic (shared portions in italics).

26 BNM, lesson 15.
**Nouvelles de la République des Lettres, Mai 1699, p. 553**: Extrait d’une lettre de M. Dalempatius à l’auteur de ces Nouvelles, concernant une découverte curieuse, faite par le moyen du Microscope:

> . . . Insuper animalcula quaedam deteximus, eadem fere forma, qua, mense Maio, in rivulis, limosisisque paludibus ranarum foetus videntur. Horum corpus vix granum frumenti superat, quedam grandicula ; a cauda autem quater aut quinies corpus adaequat; mira agilitate se se agitant, caudaeque verberibus undulas, quibus innatant, cient, pulsantque. Corpus humanum in istis quis crediderit? Attamen illud ipsismet nostris vidimus oculis. Nam dum omnia curiose castamus, unum grandius exuto iam senio (sive exuta veste, aut exuvii) quo involvebatur, se se aperuit, nudat ase clare ostendit ambas tibias, crura, pectus, gemina brachia, et exuvium altius protractum caput ad instar cucullae obnubebat.


> Mira agilitate se se agitant, caudaeque verberibus undulas; quibus innatant, cient, pulsantque. Corpus humanum in istis quis crederet? Attamen illud ipsismet nostris vidimus oculis. Nam, dum omnia curiose castramus, unum grandius exuto iam senio (sive exuta veste, aut exuvii) quo involvebatur, se se aperuit, nudat ase clare ostendit ambas tibias, crura, pectus, gemina brachia, et exuvium altius protractum caput ad instar cucullae obnubebat.

With the slight modifications evident in the above text, Vallisneri incorporates nearly the entire letter into his lesson. This he follows with a lengthy criticism centered on the the fervid imagination, the defects of lenses, and improper control over the liquid sample. Whether he intended to copy and distribute the original article’s fantastic accompanying illustrations, upon which volumes of commentary were made at the time and which he carefully drew in his notes (Fig. 1), we cannot say.

![Vallisneri’s drawings from Dalempatius’ article](image)

1: Vallisneri’s drawings from Dalempatius’ article in the *Novelles de la republique des lettres* (Venice: Biblioteca Marciana, cod. it. X: 148 (6685), lesson 18.)
What we do know is that manuscript diagrams were occasionally distributed in multiple copies for lectures at Padua, and that the blackboard was being used, notably by Vallisneri’s colleague Giovanni Poleni. Indeed, more illustrations can be found in lecture 18, depicting the generation of frogs (Fig. 1).

From Written Science to Oral Science

The two collections of lessons we have examined here give testimony to three decades of teaching by one of the leading naturalists of the time. We should therefore be able to answer the question of whether students actually heard page upon page of text from the learned journals and were expected to copy what they heard into their own class notes. And the answer is a definite “no”. Current research suggests that the lessons as we find them provided essential information and a reservoir of concepts upon which to elaborate in the actual teaching. They do not offer a perfectly faithful representation of that teaching. In every case we have discussed, the handwritten page is not the lesson itself—especially because the lesson was delivered without notes, so we are still at a secondary remove from what occurred in class.

A superficial comparison of these documents with those concerning the teaching activity of Vallisneri’s colleague Giambattista Morgagni might suggest differences in approach. The former claims repeatedly to have memorized a text beforehand; and he complains about “having to learn so many lessons by heart” Morgagni on the other hand, in his autobiographical memoirs, claims to have delivered his lessons not only without notes, but without preparation. He would simply walk into class and speak about the topic for the day, then he would go home and write up what he remembered having said. This at least would explain the remarkable orderliness encountered by Pazzini when publishing the documents extant in the Ashburnham collection.

However, we ought to be wary of any presumed distinction between a Vallisneri excellent memorizer and a Morgagni brilliant improviser. Vallisneri’s lecture notes tell a more nuanced story. They are in fact a mass of semiordered ideas, not finished texts to be remembered and recited word for word. Indeed, the notes referring to any average day, read aloud at moderate speed, yield scarcely twenty minutes. They obviously furnished merely a basic armature upon which Vallisneri might build as the hour wore on. A curious half-sheet attached to lesson 36 among the Perugia manuscripts, concerning vertigo and paroxysms, reinforces this point. It


contains a list of incomplete phrases of which a sampling can be found in the left-hand box below. Now, if we examine the “complete” document to lesson 36, extant in the same collection, we find that these very phrases are the beginnings of much longer paragraphs. The elaboration of the first phrase is on the right:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BAP, ms. 1796, c. 251r:</th>
<th>BAP, ms. 1796, c. 250r:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non satis est intestinum hostem nobiliora penetralia etc.</td>
<td>Non satis est intestinum hostem nobiliora penetralia turbanter fugare N.N. Totis viribus, toto Marte incumbendum est, ne obсидionem tentet, ne muros plectat, ne interiora penetret.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In genere omnia remedia, quae sunt antiepileptica etc.</td>
<td>Fugaviums in anteacta Praelectione divexantem in paroxysmo vertiginem. Nunc omni cura explorandum est, ne patientem amplius invadat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Italia autem parum sunt in usu, tum ob delicatiorem etc.</td>
<td>Inprimis igitur causa vertiginis perscrutanda et removenda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apparently the smaller sheet contained a reminder about the main points that would be elaborated when the time came, keeping in mind the material already pieced together in the longer version of the lesson. Yet another sheet, unattached to any lesson, appears to contain sample openings, to be utilized as the occasion arose:

Illustrissimi et sapientissimi patres, vel professores, nobilissimi et florentissimi iuvenes, omnis litteraturae cultissimi, ornatissimi auditores, vel...

Illustrissimi et sapientissimi patres, praestantissimi ac studiosissimi artis Phoebeae alumni, celeberrima ac famigeratissima auditorum corona, vel...

Illustrissimi et sapientissimi patres, celebris artis celeberrimi sectatores, ornatissimi ac spectatissimi auditores, etc.31

Once again, a strong element of bricolage prevails. Samples of ideas are set down that will later be taken up, as in a writer’s notebook. Therefore, concerning the daily practice of teaching, Morgagni apparently says too much, and Vallisneri says too little: diligent memorizer though he was, Vallisneri was also an improviser.

Indeed, the similarity between Vallisneri’s lecture notes and a writer’s notebook, or now let us say, a naturalist’s notebook, is by no means casual; and we end with some reflections on the relation between teaching and research. In fact, Vallisneri habitually made copious records of

31 BAP, ms. 1796, c. 1v.
what he saw, heard or read; and the so-called “Quaderni di osservazioni” published by the Edizione Nazionale delle Opere contain numerous references, collected by Vallisneri, that would appear in some form in the later published works. However, we should hardly be surprised if we rarely find material transported from the lesson notes to the published works in exactly the same form—and this not only owing to the difference in context or the Latin idiom. Vallisneri did not merely publish his lecture notes, which were intended for a public of students. Nor was he a “cut and paste” writer. He composed works meant to argue his case with rhetorical consistency as well as persuasive data, designed for a specific forum. However, as we have seen, the lecture notes provide a precious insight into thought processes, otherwise inaccessible, that deserve all the study we are able to devote to them.

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