

Univerzita Karlova v Praze
Přírodovědecká fakulta

Studijní program: Filosofie a dějiny přírodních věd



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Nádory v dějinném a kulturním kontextu v novověku

Tumours in historical and social context in the modern period

Disertační práce

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SUMMARY:

The PhD thesis called *Tumours in historical and social context in the modern period* is an attempt to describe a change of medical thinking in modern period; science and medicine turns from antique humoral pathology, explaining all diseases as an imbalance of the four body humours, to pathological anatomy and experimental physiology. In the point of view of pathological anatomy, the viscera of diseased person are no more “screen” or “mirror” of the disease, but it becomes directly the “stage” or “theatre” of the acting disease. This shift in the thought may be labelled as movement from *humoralism* to *localism* or *ontologism*; the disease isn't just abnormal amount of some natural juice any more, but becomes new original entity. This change undergoes the understanding of tumours and cancerous disease as well.

Instead of antique understanding tumours as precipitates of black bile, the cell theory occurs in the 19th century. This theory explains tumours as a mass of cells undergoing excessive proliferation, escaping the influence of organic regulation. This mass is usually nourished by the organism without satisfying its needs, thus, it is usually harmful for the body.

This thesis analyses especially authors, writings, ideological background and conditions underlying this paradigmatic shift. It is rather a *microhistorical* thesis, studying main paradigm changing works of famous European physicians in 18th and 19th century. The ideas leading to paradigmatic shift or switch are analysed from the point of view of present western medicine. The thesis asks questions and asks about possible causes of this turn of thought.

As results of the great medical works examination, there were two leading causes of understanding tumours as autonomic parasitic entities. One was the inclination to systematic research in pathological anatomy at autopsy halls, in the line with development of light microscopy and of histological inquiry. The other cause was particularly the social change in the Europe of the 19th century. The absolutistic monarchies underwent change into citizen society; this turn implied the concept of organism as “cell state”, it means a sum of collaborating units living individual and shared life. The tumour application of this idea is obvious in context of the history of 19th and 20th century.