

# The Clock and the Mirror



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出版者:Princeton University Press

出版时间:2009-07-21

装帧:Paperback

isbn:9780691144337

Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576), renowned as a mathematician, encyclopedist, astrologer, and autobiographer, was by profession a medical practitioner. His copious writings on medicine reflect both the complexity and diversity of the Renaissance medical world and the breadth of his own interests. In this book, Nancy Siraisi draws on selected themes in Cardano's medical writings to explore in detail the relation between medicine and wider areas of Renaissance culture. Cardano's medical advice included the suggestion that 'the studious man should always have at hand a clock and a mirror' - a clock to keep track of the passage of time and a mirror to observe the changing condition of his body. The remark, which recalls his astrological and autobiographical interests, is emblematic of the many connections between his medicine and his other pursuits. Cardano's philosophical eclecticism, beliefs about occult forces in nature, theories about dreams, and free transitions between academic and popularizing scientific writing also contributed to his medicine. As a physician, he greeted two different types of medical innovation in his lifetime with equal enthusiasm: improved access to the Hippocratic corpus and Vesalian anatomy. Cardano presented himself as a practitioner with special gifts. Yet his medical learning remained rooted in the Galenic tradition that he often criticized. Meanwhile, he negotiated a career in a medical community characterized by personal and social rivalries, a competitive

medical marketplace, and strong institutional and religious pressures.

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