Physiognomy and Natural Temperament in the Renaissance

In the sixteenth century, scholars and naturalists became increasingly convinced that external physical characteristics could predict behavior and personality. Most famously, Neapolitan magus Giovanni Battista della Porta shared this secret way of seeing the natural world in his 1586 *De humana physiognomonia.* Theorists like Porta believed that anyone equipped with knowledge of physiognomy might, in principle, use animal features to understand someone's character at a glance, detecting both the virtuous and the vicious. A classic example of grand theories of nature gone terribly awry, by the end of the Renaissance, physiognomy became increasingly tied to a racist vision that limited human potential to external form.

This panel will examine the late Renaissance diffusion of physiognomic theories. It engages with the sharply divergent reactions to the promise and peril of physiognomy and the use of external characteristics as a heuristic key to nature. As a deterministic theory, physiognomy seemed to threaten free will. Acerbic religious divides centered in part on the role of free will in human salvation consequently influenced whether physiognomic ideas were condemned or accepted. Moving between Italy, Switzerland, Spain, and Iberian overseas empire, these papers trace the creation of physiognomic ideas and their diffusion across an early modern world intent on fostering greater natural and social order. This panel seeks to address theories of physiognomy through the overlapping histories of art, religion, science, and empire.

The physiognomic theory of a Calvinist physician Guglielmo Grataroli's *De predictione morum naturarumque hominum* (Basel, 1554)

Alessandra Celati (Histories of Medicine and Religion, Stanford University/University of Verona)

In 1554, the Italian Calvinist physician Guglielmo Grataroli argued that human temperament could be predicted according to physical features. Scarcely studied so far, Grataroli's *De predictione morum* anticipated some of the physiognomic works that would gain prominence during the second half of the sixteenth century. This paper will offer a first exploration of Grataroli's work. Moreover, as part of my ongoing research on the relationship between early modern science and the Reformation, it will inquire into physiognomy's place in the mental frame of a physician whose religious views were informed by the doctrine of predestination and the denial of free will.

Book of Nature, Book of Beasts: Physiognomy and Natural History in the *Bestiario de Don Juan de Austria* (c.1570)

Mackenzie Cooley (History of Science, Stanford University)

Physiognomists analytically divided animals into their physical features, understood those features in relation to the animal's essential character, and used those animal parts as guides to explain variation in human temperament as a function of external appearance. The more physiognomists knew about animals, the better they could understand the influence of their traits on humans; physiognomy was thus tied to natural history. This paper explores this connection through the little-studied manuscript *Bestiary of Don Juan of Austria* (c.1570), which played

with the boundaries of the bestiary tradition and natural historical treatises by integrating New and Old World animals.

Francisco Pacheco and the Edge of Physiognomy
María Lumbreras (History of Art, The Johns Hopkins University)

Few early modern portrait-books were as adamant in their rejection of physiognomic theories as was Francisco Pacheco's *Libro de retratos*, an arresting collection of portrait drawings and biographies compiled in Seville between 1599 and 1649. This paper considers Pacheco's struggle to coordinate physical and moral description against the religious, legal, and ethnic instrumentalization of natural temperament in early modern Spain. Enlisted as a natural science in the increasingly bureaucratized procedures of identification, physiognomy posed serious problems to Pacheco's memorializing project. The artist's response, however, capitalized on physiognomy's descriptive fissures: Pacheco used them to redefine drawing's epistemic possibilities in novel ways.

Commentator: Professor Brian Brege (Syracuse University)