

A Short Introduction to Natural Philosophy

A Short Introduction to Natural Philosophy

1718-1720

Mss.500.Q3

American Philosophical Society

2001

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Questebrune, John
Title	A Short Introduction to Natural Philosophy
Date [inclusive]	1718-1720
Call number	Mss.500.Q3
Extent	1.0 Volume(s) 122 p.
Extent	1 vol. (122p.)
Location	LH-MV-E-15
Language	English
Container	1
Abstract	<p>A compendium of natural philosophical knowledge, written in 1718-1720 by John Questebrune, chaplain to the 6th Earl of Galway. The chapters treat the various parts of the physical world (earth, water, air, and fire), plants (including a great deal on medicinal plants), animals, and the human body and soul. The volume is embellished with decorative chapter headings and pen and ink and watercolor sketches depicting the terrestrial globe, the Ptolemaic and Copernican solar systems, the phases of the moon, and the human body in dissection.</p>

Preferred Citation

Cite as: John Questebrune, *A Short Introduction to Natural Philosophy*,
American Philosophical Society.

Background note

John Questebrune, a graduate of Dublin College, was domestic chaplain to the 6th Earl of Galway during the first half of the 18th century. The name Questebrune is listed among Huguenot refugees in England and Ireland.

Scope & content

John Questebrune's Short Introduction to Natural Philosophy, 1718-1720, is distinguished by the relatively equal weight given to discussions of the physical and the animal world. Beginning with a standard analysis of the elements, motion, the earth and solar system, working within the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, Questebrune proceeds to a detailed description of medicinal plants, animals, the human body, diseases, and therapeutics.

Written in Kilkenny, Ireland, between 1718 and 1720, the manuscript was subsequently owned by William Hamilton of the Woodlands, an Irish-born Philadelphian who had dual interests in the natural sciences and the Irish community. The manuscript is embellished with decorative sketches opening each of the seven chapters, as well as pen and ink and watercolor illustrations depicting the terrestrial globe, the Ptolemaic and Copernican solar systems, the phases of the moon, and the human body in dissection.

Questebrune's lengthy chapter on the medicinal uses of plants focuses on the "severall vertues" of plants and their "medicinal vertues," with minor commentary on their cultivation, and particularly of coffee, tea, and chocolate. His treatment of animals is more eclectic, and less detailed, but includes a valuable discussion of reptiles.

Perhaps the most important part of the Questebrune volume is his extensive discussion of the human body and its relations. Making reference to Paracelsus and occult philosophy, Questebrune provides a verbal dissection of the body (with an illustration to accompany), an analysis of conception and reproduction, and a fascinating discussion of sympathetic theory. In his treatment of diseases he provides receipts for "l'ongent divin," a "magnetick arsenical preservative from all Contagions even the Plague," "wound water," and digestives.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society 2001

Provenance

Custodial History

The Questeburne manuscript bears the bookplate and an ownership inscription of William Hamilton (of the Woodlands, Philadelphia), 1785. A native of Ireland, Hamilton had strong interests in the natural sciences and in Ireland.

Acquisition Information

Gift of J. Francis Fisher, 1834.

Processing Information

Catalogued by rsc, 2001.

Related Materials

Related Material

The APS houses several other treatises on early modern natural philosophy, including Charles Morton's ["System of Physicks"](#), , (New England, ca. 1700), David Evans' ["Aliquot Rudimenta Philosophiae"](#), (written in New Jersey in 1747), Joseph François Marie's [Philosophiae Quarta Pars Seu Phisica](#), , and an unidentified [Italian treatise](#) from the early 18th century.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Art

- Dissertations
- Educational Material
- Manuscript Essays
- Maps and Surveys
- Sketchbooks

Personal Name(s)

- Fisher, Joshua Francis, 1807-1873
- Hamilton, William, 1745-1813

Subject(s)

- Anatomy--18th century
- Astronomy--18th century
- Botany--18th century
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Conception--Early works to 1800
- Death
- Diseases
- Literature, Arts, and Culture
- Medicinal plants
- Mineralogy--18th century
- Natural History--18th century
- Occultism--Early works to 1900
- Physics--Ireland--Early works to 1800
- Religion and science
- Science and Technology
- Sympathy
- Tea

Other Descriptive Information

This volume compiles a wide array of scientific knowledge for the early eighteenth century. John Questerbrune wrote the volume between 1718 and 1720. It covers natural philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and the environment. The hand-written volume includes a series of sketches.

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Collection Inventory

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