

## Forms of Empirical Observation and Argumentative Structures in Julien Offray de la Mettrie's *Observations de médecine pratique* (1743)\*

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### Summary

In this paper I examine one of Julien Offray de La Mettrie's most interesting, but also most neglected, medical works, *Observations de médecine pratique* (1743). I attempt both to assess its place in the wider context of eighteenth-century medical Empiricism and Neo-Hippocratism and also to understand to what extent La Mettrie's call for a medical practice based on observation can be considered as an expression of the long-term intellectual and epistemological process that culminated in the birth of clinical medicine.

*Keywords:* La Mettrie, Empiricism, Hippocratism, Observation, Materialism

Historians of philosophy and scholars of both intellectual and, to a lesser extent, medical history have long considered the thought and works of Julien Offray de la Mettrie as an intriguing subject of investigation. La Mettrie's writings can be revealing in many regards: they show, on the one hand, how the materialistic discourse on human nature took shape and spread throughout France and the rest of Europe in the eighteenth century, and, on the other, how this discourse prompted the elaboration, corroboration and dis-

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