

# **The Anatomy of Melancholy Study Guide**

**The Anatomy of Melancholy by Robert Burton  
(scholar)**

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# Plot Summary

This is one of the first treatises on Melancholy—in contemporary language called emotional depression. Melancholy is a condition that can be less severe than clinical depression or as bad. Melancholy has diverse causes and a variety of treatments and cures are available. The author writes about these. This book is highly unusual in that the original author lived from 1577-1640 A.D. in England. During the introduction it is explained that this treatise is more of a composite than an original work in the pure sense of the term. It is a blend of the science of the day, which had not yet separated into different branches. There is lack of knowledge of many things, but the approach towards the cure is holistic.

Robert Burton is more a scholar and librarian than either a scientist or physician. The work seems to run the gambit from entirely serious to less so. It is written in the manner of a thorough treatise upon a given topic in contrast to anything less complete and exhaustive. The author is known to have modified and appended much that had already been written. This was the normal way to update works at the time; the insertion of newer materials mixed in with the old.

The author uses the main resources made available to him for the book. These show the traditions of knowledge that are prevalent and competing with each other at the time. One of these is that the author has great respect for astrology, but is well aware that this system had fallen out of favor. He is an educated man, living in a Christianized world. He has knowledge of many of the great physicians of history and realizes that readers might respect these references more. As such, he provides information about these, and about supernatural sources and insights suggested by the philosophers. Hence, he covers the main trends in knowledge and the application of it in this compendium of insight and instruction into the world of melancholia.



# **Book 1, The Anatomy of Melancholy : Chapter 1, The Introductory Material**

## **Book 1, The Anatomy of Melancholy : Chapter 1, The Introductory Material Summary and Analysis**

The author Robert Burton assures readers that he is not pursuing this work for the purposes of fame. He also does not advertise himself as the author of the work, but explains that this is the further development of the work of Democritus. He gives some explanation of Democritus and of Democritus Junior, who are unrelated. Burton vouches for Democritus as having provided one of the better viewpoints on melancholy that anyone has been able to come up with for the medieval period. Democritus is known to have had a melancholic temperament himself.

The book is a treatise on what melancholy is, what causes it and how to treat and cure it. Readers of today should see this as addressing two things that differ only in their magnitude: unhappiness and clinical depression. Melancholy, in its least severe form, is the tendency towards seriousness and feeling sad. The worst forms are deadly, and even lesser forms can be debilitating for lengths of time. Many times, proper treatment can resolve it. This book is, therefore, highly relevant to readers today.

The book is divided in an unusual manner. There are multiple sets of page numbers for the entire treatise. There is a set of introductory material and then there are "Partitions." During the summary, the Partitions will be called "books." There will only be some overlap between the subdivisions found in the published treatise and the summary. There are two notes to the readers, which have been discussed so far. There are also poems in the front of the book. These include poetry written in Latin, one of the main languages of the educated people of the medieval period in Europe, and English poetry. As readers are well aware, Latin and Greek have retained a special place in contemporary society, but do not function the way they did even a few centuries ago.



# Book 1, The First Partition : Chapter 2, Melancholia

## Book 1, The First Partition : Chapter 2, Melancholia Summary and Analysis

After a lengthy set of notes to the reader, including many insights into the egos involved, there is a chart that introduces the methodology for dealing with illness. It is basic analysis: you recognize the problem, you find out what is wrong and you take steps to heal, cure or otherwise solve the problem. This is the basic perspective.

Early in the First Partition is a complex diagram about melancholia, the disease. There is a complex diagram set out in the printed version of the book. It makes perfect sense, but may be slightly challenging to transpose the way it comes across. The types of melancholia are differentiated in more than one way. One of the big differences in how they are categorized is by the symptoms. For some, melancholy shows up as headaches. For someone there is a generalized despondency. Within all this, the diagram also includes the cases where the sufferer is a hypochondriac. In most cases, the person is not faking it.

Also in the diagram is a separation of causes of the ailment. Supernatural and natural causes are included as possible sources of the trouble. There is also reference to something called love-melancholy, with the information that the Third Partition of the book is dedicated to that one major kind of melancholy. There is a description of main inner and outer causes or sources of this. Inner causes can be matters such as temperament, or dietary troubles—an excess of garlic for example, or a blood disorder. Other causes can be entirely external—called Outward in the diagram. External causes included are: being socially harassed or ostracized, subjection to poverty or imprisonment. Idleness and excessive study are both also noted to cause depression, here called melancholy, in some people some of the time.



# Book 1, First Partition : Chapter 3, Melancholia Cont.

## Book 1, First Partition : Chapter 3, Melancholia Cont. Summary and Analysis

Unfortunately, it is not possible to include the diagram in the summary, however, it makes a wonderful cross-reference. The diagram itself is printed across 6 leaves of paper and would make an excellent large scientific poster the same way that the Periodic Table of the Elements can be hung for display. After it, placed neatly in the text, is the first prose discussion of part of the diagram.

The author introduces something which is a matter of contention amongst the people of today. Do bad things happen as punishments? Today, people tend to think in terms of victims—someone who suffers something bad without being the real cause of it. In other words, real "victims" are not being rightfully punished for misdeeds but are suffering from something that is not their fault. Robert Burton writes about divine justice, including in matters of suffering. He writes that sin actually does cause a lot of suffering and that many who have troubles really are suffering from their own wrongdoings. This type of thinking will seem reasonable to some readers whereas to others it seems to justify a way of thinking that blames victims for their troubles; it suggests that individuals have absolute control over what happens to them, something that is not true. The author then enters into instrumental causes of ailments. He calls these innumerable. He refers to the world and to the kinds of travails that beset humanity on Earth. Readers will find him worldly on this point. The prevalence of plagues and the numbers killed seems to have diminished in modern times but only due to the vigilance of medicine and hygiene combined. Robert Burton claims that in his age, hundreds of thousands are killed annually in Cairo, Egypt and in Constantinople by an annual plague. While this helps control the human population, it is also tragic. Robert Burton also refers to wild weather as being amongst the kinds of natural disasters humans face. He includes hailstorms and floods so intense as to wipe entire islands off the map, albeit temporarily.



# Book 1, The First Partition : Chapter 4, More on Melancholy

## Book 1, The First Partition : Chapter 4, More on Melancholy Summary and Analysis

Robert Burton writes that from his world view, frenzy, madness, and melancholy are distinct. He observes that some writers put these together, and call melancholy a form of madness. Most forms of melancholy are dispositional and relatively normal. For some, they become a matter of habit. The parts viewed as most involved are the brain and the heart.

The author also refers to lycanthropy. This seems to date the text, as this illness has since been dismissed or assumed to be something else. The sufferer falls under the delusion of being a wolf. Those who have lycanthropy also exhibit other signs. Their eyes are hollow. They tend to be a bit dehydrated and suffer from dry skin and to have scabby legs. They hide themselves from others during the day. They spend more time around grave yards than most even though they do not work as grave diggers. They are known to howl at the moon and to move about at night. When questioned they insist they are wolves. The author provides numerous notes to more ancient texts which provide details of this disease or disorder. He informs readers that it has been heard of at various times in history, including one strange reference that readers will naturally assume was a metaphor—that a large number of men turned into wolves for many years and later changed back into humans. Readers can only speculate—was this a form of delusion? Did these people have what Native American tribes call "wolf totem spirits" that had taken too much control of the people who had them? Did these people simply not know how to talk about their actual problem and try this eccentric behavior as a means of coping? Did everyone just overreact to men howling at the Moon and visiting cemeteries at night?

The majority of the chapter is dedicated to less bizarre behavioral and psychological aberrations. After this section on "Diseases of the Mind" (p. 140 & more), the author makes a necessary digression. The author provides needed background in anatomy and physiology in order to proceed with the discussion. Richard Burton wants readers to understand, and wants people to be able to make practical use of the knowledge available in this book. Readers should assume that Richard Burton believed many of the readers might be physicians themselves, learning to improve their trade.





# **Book 1, The First Partition : Chapter 5, Digression of Anatomy**

## **Book 1, The First Partition : Chapter 5, Digression of Anatomy Summary and Analysis**

This work really is a scientific treatise but, at the same time, the author takes care not to presuppose too much knowledge on the part of the reader. Readers will be more or less affected based upon their own level of education and the freshness of the topic at hand. This includes an explanation of chylus. This is a type of plehgm that emerges from the liver which is considered to have been derived from eating meat. This substance helps to keep the body lubricated. The humor most affected in this case is the cold, moist humor: the phlegmatic. He then goes on to describe the hot, dry humor cholera and its relationship to the gall, where it gathers together and helps to keep the body warm. After this he describes the melancholic humor as being something very dark, darker than coffee that is closely related to excretion of the spleen within the living person, and the excretion by the person in slightly more general terms. Blood is another of the hot humors of the body. At the time, there does not appear to have been the detailed information available or the conceptualization of blood and plasma as readers have access to nowadays. Urine, sweat and tears are other highly important bodily fluids. He then introduces spirit which is a subtle substance and proceeds from there. Robert Burton describes some parts of the body as spermatical; the idea is that these would be the first formed and the most fundamental parts of the human body. Readers will recognize the limited understanding of human reproduction.

Subsection 3 is "Similar Parts." There are 11 subsections in this discussion. Included are ones that earmark the location of the book in terms of the tradition of the Western Humanities and even Sciences. The author writes about the faculties, including the soul and the sensitive soul. These emerge from the discussions put forth by Aristotle and worked with to some extent by Thomas Aquinas. Men such as Robert Burton are able to use parts of the same discourse and to take it further; eventually Immanuel Kant takes hold of some of it. In the 18th and 19th century, the scientific elements branch off into the philosophic on one side, whilst the theological aspects are routed in a separate direction.



# Chapter 6, Causes of Melancholy

## Chapter 6, Causes of Melancholy Summary and Analysis

There is an entire section devoted to the Causes of Melancholy. One segment includes a thorough description and presentation of the species of melancholy. In the first of the sections about this, he describes at least one case where it is clear that there is some kind of melancholy but what type it is exactly is unknown. Robert Burton enters into religious melancholy here when he cites that God can be an actual cause of melancholia. The author also states a maxim that people still believe today: when the cause of a disorder or disease is removed, the symptoms will go away of their own accord. It is still possible to alleviate symptoms without curing the problem but it is not as good as a cure. He goes on to explain again about God's freedom to punish people, either directly or through his angels or by granting the Devil permission to do things to people. Readers will notice that the author is educated enough to be aware of ancient pagan deities, if nominally by name and simplistic image only.

When the author writes about whether or not demons and devils are able to influence the events, by causing illnesses including melancholy, contemporary readers may feel uncomfortable. Present day culture really does not handle such matters in a straightforward or address these kind of question in the mainstream. Science refuses to have anything to do with questions of angels or demons in general, commenting that things of that nature are religious and science does not cover that type of cause and effect relationship. This has been done as a sociological method that allows both science and religion to move forward without being seen as in constant conflict. Robert Burton actually braves the history of religion up to the 17th century, and shows how abstract ideas were often characterized through personifications called "deities." He also insists that in many cases, both angels and devils may be references to actual people after their deaths, where the living who remember them carry on some kind of relationship with them even though they cannot have a normal interpersonal dynamic. Others have claimed that angels and demons are the gods of religions that have evolved from dominant to subdominant with changes of the culture. Believers will recognize many of these arguments; Robert Burton explains that there have been people who have thought about this way for millenia.



# Chapter 7, Causes of Melancholy - the Demonaic causes

## Chapter 7, Causes of Melancholy - the Demonaic causes Summary and Analysis

The author supplies readers will the most prevalent theories about demons and angels. He shares the argument that they are viewed as corporeal. Burton asserts that there are two basic schools of thought on this: one is that angels and demons are qualitatively different and should not be lumped together except to remark that both are supernatural beings; two is that the angels and the demons are really two variant forms of the same thing, or at least the same kind of thing and that as such, much known about either amounts to much known about the other. Robert Burton goes on to describe what presented itself as a kind of "race" of demons. They were humanoid; they could pass themselves as humans but that their lifespan was for 700-800 years normally and that they were able to know a tremendous amount. They are described as being superior in powers to humans. "The least of them is better than our best King" (p. 184-185). They are mortal, living souls. The demons were said to have vast stores of wisdom and knowledge but that they would only share it under special conditions. Others claimed that there were other entities adept at deceptions and illusions and very impressive to others. Ultimately, Robert Burton is forced to admit something which is still true today: we do not really know for sure. There may be some who have experiences that caused them to think they have knowledge of demons, but we do not know for sure exactly what demons are and there is just enough information to speculate and draw conclusions but not necessarily enough for the kind of certainty we would prefer. Burton sets out nine ranks of evil spirits and claims that they should be viewed as able to inflict melancholy or the kinds of things that make it more probable—just as the pollution and airborne particles of the air devils can bring a plague. Readers should know that Burton ranks deceitful spirits, liars, as second only to false gods of the heathens. Equivocation, Burton assigns to deception. However, witches, stage magicians and sorcerers are lower in rank but one rank above plague-inducing clouds.



## Chapater 8, Causes of Melancholy - the Demonaic & the Dietary

### Chapater 8, Causes of Melancholy - the Demonaic & the Dietary Summary and Analysis

The author goes on to provide a further explanation of the rest of the devils and associated difficulties with them. He describes airy spirits and fiery ones. Much of this makes sense if people think in relation to the weather and natural events. Most people are also familiar with living people who are said to have "fiery temperaments," who are more emotional, or more easily provoked to anger. In the more extreme expressions of this temperament people may be abusive, or otherwise prone to violence or other forms of rage. Some will be like that their whole lives; others will either find that the fire eventually goes out or it flares up, like yesterday's coals turning into the source of the hearth fires the next day. It is also possible that these demons and angels are just the high society people of the time or something that the people they came across really were very impressed and admiring or in some way just didn't understand what was really happening from the perspective of the others. Readers may recognize as the "Star Trek in the Stone Age" syndrome where they meet people who think they are gods because it is true that they showed up out of the sky with technology as good as super powerful magic.

Given those details, what follows is a listing of other sections of the same section. He writes about how the stars affect melancholia, how witches can cause melancholia, then he moves into territory that will more familiar to contemporary North American readers: old age, factors inherited from the parents, bad diet/eating habits, the specific influences of meat, milk, fowl and fish on a person. He continues the dietary analysis when he writes about fish, herbs, sallets and roots in their connection with melancholy as a malaise. Bread and wine are also examined. The author touches upon matters such as water quality when he writes about standing as opposed to moving waters then moves into more behavioral issues concerning excesses: surfeiting and drunkenness. Then he writes about how retention of things in the body can cause trouble. The sedentary lifestyle and idleness are also known by the 17th century to sometimes cause this problem.



# Chapter 9, Cure of Melancholy

## Chapter 9, Cure of Melancholy Summary and Analysis

There is a separating leaf that has The Second Partition written onto it. After this there is a 3 page schemata titled "Synopsis." The diagram sets out the cures of melancholy. There is more than one way to cure it, and the proper cure depends upon what the real cause or causes are. After this, the real text begins again. He writes to readers that he will move from the general to the specific just as he did when he set out the causes of this disorder. The first section is headed up with Unlawful Cures Rejected. He simply acknowledges there are legal and illegal ways to treat various forms of the disorder and explains why he recommends that others follow legal procedures in order to do so. The second "member" as he sometimes calls it, begins with a heading devoted to legal cures and the first thing he does is acknowledge God. Next, he shows readers that he attributes all natural medicinal plants and herbs to have been provided by God for, amongst other things, giving cures to ailments. Burton explains that people should not go to the Christian Saints for their cure for melancholia.

Later in the following "Members," Burton divulges some recipes for cures. The cure is liable to depend upon the true causes of the melancholia. Artificial baths are first recommended by Alexander and he cites a man named Aetius as bathing daily. Rhasis the Arabian recommends bathing and then applying oils in a manner that today's people will tend to agree with but may not realize that this was a medicinal treatment to cure depression. What is currently called aromatherapy is recommended. Chamomile flowers and other herbs known to have soothing powers are also used. There are also boiled broths which can be used. There is a recipe that combines fasting with boiled ram's head and other boiled things to be used for 10 to 12 days along with herbs. There is a digression into Roman baths, separating the frequently washed from the rarely washed.



# Chapter 10, Digression of Air

## Chapter 10, Digression of Air Summary and Analysis

During the Cure of Melancholy section, Robert Burton digresses. Here he writes about a puzzling phenomenon. The idea that the races of man, which have often been categorized by various features, including but not limited to skin tone, emerged as an adaptation to their environment seems sound. The author shows that elevation and distance from the equator and temperature of a given region have all been surmised to have caused these differences. He then shows that there is evidence to the contrary and this is the real source of some confusion and skepticism regarding the true causes for variations in the coloring of human beings. This then proceeds into speculation about the global atmosphere. They have figured out that diseases and insects can be carried through the air, as can the necessary water and some other things. Humans have figured out that there is a change in the air with elevation but they can only speculate as to whether or not this follows to the edge of the world. Since then, this speculation has been confirmed and numerous additional, vitally important details have emerged. The truth has not so much changed, but humans now have more precise knowledge and information about some of these matters.

Just before he resumes his discussion of cures for melancholy he reiterates one comment. According to Christianity, good brings forth good, and evil begets or results in evil only. By this point in the entire treatise, the author has mentioned this a few times, here and there. The author has been writing in terms of rectification—to make right. Rectification of Air, of Exercise and of the Mind are all parts of his greater discourse regarding cures for the disorder melancholia. At the beginning of the Rectification of Mind he writes that gentle and careful speech are powerful enough to cure many sufferers of melancholy. Wise speech, not careless inconsiderate speech. There are times when supplanting one problem by the application of some other challenge or pain does the trick to cure melancholy. This method also works for some of the other maladies. It is not good for every case and Robert Burton explains that it must be used with discretion for best results. This is followed by Subsection III, Music a Remedy, wherein Burton explains that music and comedy can be therapeutic. Again, this has to be done properly, or else it may not have the desired affect.



# Chapter 11, Remedies Against Discontents

## Chapter 11, Remedies Against Discontents Summary and Analysis

This is the continuation of the Cure of Melancholy. The main sections considered here are: Mind Rectified by Mirth, Remedies Against Discontents, Against Melancholy Itself, Medicinal Physic. This Partition begins like the two that came before it. There is a schema at the front that sets out the differing forms of Love-Melancholy, and how to cure them. The author writes, soon thereafter, that love is a type of melancholia. This does not initially make sense. He goes on to write that love is a wonderful thing and that anyone who loves is also worthy of love. In subsection 2 he begins to explain the various types of love and the objects of love. He writes that love and hate are often found close together, and that both are powerful. He writes that the melancholies connected with love actually stem from the tendency towards excess and lack of moderation. Love is described as a desire for what is good, and often this relates to what is pleasurable although there may be exceptions to this. Burton shows his education or preserves the knowledge of the previous authors: he cites a few comments by predecessors, including Plato. Plato remarked on the vehemence of love, which has a way of overpowering all of the other passions and desires within a given individual.

The author writes that people love each another in three basic ways: the natural love that emerges because of the pleasure they bring one another; the joy that comes from conceiving and raising offspring; and the love of mutual agreement. This is then expanded upon, into the Pleasant Objects of Love followed by Honest Objects of Love. After this, he writes about Charity. This is followed by discourse on Love's Power and Extent. Burton refers to pagan gods of the ancient world. During this section, Burton points out that the god Jupiter took many guises for love and his quest to fulfill an attraction. Later, he writes about how there are cases of such a potent love, not of the sexual type, in which an animal intensely loved a human. He describes this by reporting signs of joy when the two were together and in extreme cases the animal grew sick and sad when apart from the man. He writes that this is rather bizarre since love, especially when it is sexual, does best between the same age group, species and occurs between members of the opposite sex. Exceptions occur of diverse types, but pose abnormal difficulties due to their irregularity. Then there are a few pages of Latin, which have been left undeciphered.



# Chapter 12, Causes of Love Melancholy

## Chapter 12, Causes of Love Melancholy Summary and Analysis

Member 2 continues the same discourse. There are subsections again, with headings placed under a type of section Burton calls Members. There is a description of a man who is wanton. He writes that he falls into love with and for every beauty but that he is so fickle that whoever is with him is the one he loves most, such that any woman who keeps him with her can have him, but any idea she has that she is especially loved by him is actually false. The entire matter is simply one of control, not of love; his love is honest but fickle as a passing breeze through trees. For the first time, the author gets into the causes of melancholy and here he cites idleness as causing troubles with love. Those who love and who also suffer from being idle are prone to problems, because they stir their passions without proper regulation while apart from the loved one, or loved ones. Robert Burton dares to bring up Alcibiades, a man known to have been friends to Plato: an aristocrat, too often drunk, a wonderful athlete, and passionate in agreement and discord surrounding Socrates, who was older and far uglier but still much beloved. Here, Robert Burton writes about how Alcibiades also went around with young women and that this was well known. Burton reports how Alcibiades kept the wrong diet and had far too much time on his hands, which led the energetic man into trouble after trouble.

Beauty is one cause of love, and of love melancholy. There is a section following the matters of diet and idleness about Beauty and how it causes love melancholy. He writes that there are some people who are so sensitive and intemperate in certain ways that they can fall in love with someone prior to meeting. Such people might be most prone to falling in love given a photograph, or by seeing someone attractive fleetingly, or through the internet in the current technological conditions. He writes about how even the most powerful and prominent of men submit themselves and will do most anything for a woman whom they love. This particular section is 22 pages long in the original book. Again, the introduction explained that Robert Burton actually found a text on this subject and expanded upon it. It is unclear which are Burton's additions and what is the preservation of material that was already there.





## **Book 3, The Third Partition : Chapter 13, Artificial Allurements**

### **Book 3, The Third Partition : Chapter 13, Artificial Allurements Summary and Analysis**

Subsection 3 begins. It reads that natural beauty is incredibly powerful in its own right; when this is furthered by intentional behaviors and attire, the effect is extremely intense. He is writing of men loving women during this section. Earlier in the book, he refers to the limitation of his knowledge and experience because of being a man. He describes cases where a man thinks he has fallen in love with a woman, or perhaps has a case of lust and soon turns against one with whom he was in love. He writes that if you put young people together in one place they will normally come to love one another from the familiar surroundings.

Next comes Bawds, Philters, Causes. There can be trouble with bawds, but at the same time the author asserts that at his time in history a certain amount of trickery and subtle craftiness is familiar to everyone. There is a brief anecdote about how a man was led by an older woman to a whore-house or something like it. This is some kind of legitimate warning about the ups and downs of women. It is written that there are cases when the Goddess of Virginity cannot endure the assaults made against her; these assaults may be made as much with pleasure and persuasion as by any coercion or force. There are stories about the corruption of institutions and questions of love. In this case it is about keeping monks and nuns too close together. The proximity made it impossible for them to avoid intimacies and there were women who dare not sleep in their own beds for fear of one of the friars coming through during the night. Burton moves on to unlawful means used to entice people into sexual activity and at least some forms of love. Often, when wanton, such behavior is more apt to lead to some kind of melancholy. Burton reminds readers that all manner of charms and witchcraft may well be used in the effort to secure love, whether it be right or wrong.



## Book 3, The Third Partition : Chapter 14, Symptoms of Love

### Book 3, The Third Partition : Chapter 14, Symptoms of Love Summary and Analysis

This is followed by Member 3: Symptoms of Love. Near the bottom of the first page of this section it reads, "As drops from a still,...doth Cupid's fire provoke tears from a true lover's eyes," (p. 133). Irregular heartbeat and sweating in an abnormal manner, and blushing are all physical symptoms of attraction or love. Other things can inspire similar reactions, but when viewed properly within a given context, love can be a correct "diagnosis" of these kinds of signs. If both the face and pulse change, but these transformations are not negative—as might be found in cases of antagonism or ordinary danger—then the changes are signs of love or attraction. Love and lust do not always bifurcate. The strongest signs of love are to be found when two who love one another are found together. In this case, Burton is writing of the romantic love rather than of the other extremely important kinds. The way they speak and react to each other are amongst the many signs and symptoms of their love. Physical affection is often enough included in this, but this is not the limit of expressions of affection. Fear and sorrow are both also symptoms of love. As these emotions are also signs of melancholy, it becomes easier to see how there is a connection between the two. He writes that love sometimes tends both to over-optimism and abject fear with pessimism thrown in just to cultivate the anxiety. Jealousy is also common to love.

The author proceeds to symptoms of love that are more extreme. In this stage or condition of love there is either a transcendent relationship—a union of mind, heart, energy formed or become more aware of, like listening to certain sounds and so taking less notice of others. Or else there is activity of the imagination so strong that it can at times be dangerous. This is most dangerous when sentiments or needs are either not mutual or if there is something else that needs to be communicated but is not getting through. A dreadful case of this would be when two people are impassioned about the same matter but strongly disagree with each other, yet one of the two at least, has the other very much in mind. Burton writes that love can be described as a type of spiritual fire, a wildfire able to transcend distances in unusual ways. He writes that the power of love to consume should not be underrated. This is as true in the love of God or love of a woman.



# Chapter 15, Prognostics & Cure of Love Melancholy

## Chapter 15, Prognostics & Cure of Love Melancholy Summary and Analysis

He writes that just as men will submit to and give everything to a woman they love in many cases, there are women who will go anywhere and will go through anything in order to accompany their man. This was the most common reason for cases of women who actually did go to war in the ancient world. A lover was going and there was no way a woman was going to not spend any time with him for six months. So she would go along.

Member 4 of Love-Melancholy begins with the prognostics. The author introduces the question of whether or not love is a permanent condition, even if it has passed into love melancholy or if it is curable. Burton describes love as causing a most astonishing array of behaviors and activities and feelings. He includes strange rage amongst these peculiar qualities that arrive because of this. This being a known fact, there are those who fear love, most especially one-sided love. Even when perfectly mutual, there can be some strange results, side effects and consequences of it. He writes that there are times when love is rightly feared; he cites the love of Antony the Roman General and Cleopatra of Egypt and what calamities their passion wrought. Burton has left out that it may well have been worse for Egypt had they not loved one another. Cleopatra, who beat out her own brother for control of Egypt, included sexual power in her means and methods for managing Egypt - Cleopatra's Egypt. Madness is next cited as a consequence of love. Burton writes that love may well not be curable, even in cases where someone wishes that it could be.

The author recounts a number of the symptoms and begins to describe the recommendations for cures. He writes that the cures should be made from the same sources that cure melancholy. The humors may need to be changed, or influenced this way or that, for the best outcome. Many readers will find that this old work of medicine is at times so apt as to be stunning, as good as the best medicine of today, whilst at other times it is so old fashioned and puzzling as to be comical. The style of writing shows education without being pretentious. It is well ordered and flows smoothly.



# Chapter 16, Cures of Love - Melancholy

## Chapter 16, Cures of Love - Melancholy Summary and Analysis

In the case of altering humors for the cure, then there will be physic for the prescribed treatment. There are some herbal remedies described in Latin and associated with the physician Alexander Benedictus. Confessing feelings to a friend is one recommendation given. He strongly suggests that a man who has feelings for a woman which he does not wish to fall before should avoid her company as much as possible. Of course this means to also refrain from all romantic behaviors. Readers today will find similar advice: stay away or behave professionally or in a restrained, inhibited manner towards such people to prevent accidental love affairs.

Burton also cites Montaigne, who wrote in the preceding century. Burton's life lasted from the 16th into the 17th centuries. Montaigne suggested that for some men, seeing the lover naked can cure the condition of love. This advice is rather like the use of antimony—for some it will work, and others will utterly lost as a result of it.

A chapter dedicated to Jealousy follows. Causes and methods for its alleviation are discussed. He writes that there is speculation that Southerners, and people of warmer climes are more prone to jealousy than Northerners. The next section is devoted to descriptions of symptoms of jealousy. This is followed by cures; this includes mitigating and ameliorating factors which can at least reduce the severity of what is suffered in the jealousy. Burton warns that jealousy often springs from suspicions based more in the activity of the frightened imagination than from facts. Saturn is described as a nightmarish monster, having indulged in the worst of vices. He was killed off by one of his sons Jupiter, and what proceeded from his removal but better than the evils Saturn had committed. Burton claims that Saturn was a man, if also a god. Now and then, there has been a prominent villain, whose reputation marked a family and a landscape with terror.

The final section of the book is Religious Melancholy. Here again, causes, and symptoms are described. After that, the author writes of defects. Here, the issue is the relationship of the individual to God. Melancholy for longing for God and the sufferings from guilt may be the true causes of melancholy in these cases. This is followed by a section called the Definition of Despair. Like the rest, this is followed by discussion of the symptoms and then the best possible known cures are written about. Therein, the book ends. It fails to provide the clear recipes for cures and remedies but gives enough information to be helpful for readers who want to be able to recognize and to effectively treat or cure melancholia in any of its many forms. There is a set of Notes at the end.



# Characters

## Robert Burton

This is the man credited as the author of the work. However it would be more accurate to call him its compiler. There was a manuscript about melancholy that existed. During his decades spent working as a librarian, Robert Burton amended this document. His additions were significant. As a result of this, he is credited with the authorship but in reality, he is but one of the authors of this work. This is explained in the Introduction by William Gass.

Robert Burton was an Englishman. He lived 1577-1640. He was a well educated fellow, within the benefits and limitations of his time and place. Compared to today, he probably was literate in Latin and Greek and maybe French as well as English; he probably had also read Plato and Aristotle of the Greeks but his entire life was prior to Sir Isaac Newton's. This characterizes how much scientific information we have today that was absent at the time. The source of the knowledge was probably there, but he would have had to read the works of alchemists and the more obscure parts of Aristotle to have an inkling of contemporary physics, chemistry, or even biology. Much of his writing about melancholy comes from the science available at the time. This means that his work is holistic—which is a strong point. It has not been weakened by elements of modern theories. At the same time, one can only guess at how they would interpret "brain scanning machinery" which organic chemists, psychiatrists and biophysicists of today might use to find the source and cure for the same ailment.

The man was well respected in his lifetime and he had a career as a librarian. His work shows that he was justified in being proud and thinking well of himself and it is a relief to see that he kept perspective and was humble.

## Rhasis the Arabian

This man comes up during the discourse on the symptoms and progress of melancholy. He is referred to as being a highly respectable physician/psychologist and theorist in psychology. The author does not give details of the man's reputation and career but only reports that he contributed to the knowledge of the melancholic disorders. Rhasis has written one of the forerunners of what is now commonly referred to as the DSM-3 or DSM-4: diagnostic evaluation of symptoms. Rhasis described 3 degrees of melancholic symptoms.

The first of these is *Falsa cogitatio*. These are false but unpleasant thoughts which plague the melancholic patient. These typically include the exaggeration of their own anxieties in their thinking about them.

Second is *Falso cogitatio loqui*. These are words, gestures, not just thoughts or ideas but ways of talking themselves that are often unhelpful. Sometimes, the ill-treatment



towards themselves may have been encouraged by their having suffered from being badly treated by someone else. This includes nonverbal and verbal matters; the Arabian includes not eating food or not sleeping well as signs of this type.

The author does not provide the same Latin phrase for the third ailment, but Rhasis tells people that when the melancholic acts in accordance to the distorted and disrupted thinking from either or both of the first two stages, this behavior is all a sign of the Third degree of melancholy.

## **William Gass**

This is the author of the Introduction. He is a scholar in his own right. This gentleman is a scholar of the 20th century, rather than the 16th and 17th centuries. He is responsible for explaining to readers the context for the treatise. This is helpful to readers. Little information about William Gass is given. He is only overtly involved with the Introduction of the book.

## **Aristotle**

This is one of the ancient Grecian philosophers; he is actually Macedonian but spent much of his life living in Athens whenever politics allows this. There are times when it does not. He is mentioned early in the book; as an educated man, Robert Burton naturally also knew of him. For this book, Aristotle is most important for his role as a father of the modern sciences, through natural philosophy.

Aristotle helped to develop the foundations for advancements in medical practice, improving the organization of information most relevant to maladies and their cures. The author does not spend time on him beyond this.

## **Democritus Junior**

Democritus Junior is one of the authors of the material found in this treatise when Robert Burton came upon it and set to work. Democritus Junior is known to be automatically compared to Democritus the elder, of great renown. Democritus is so admired that there is almost a stigma associated with anyone who dares to even imagine being on the same level, let alone actually being as great or greater than this historical figure. Robert Burton has to assure people that he is not claiming to be as great as Democritus but that Democritus Junior is. He acknowledges that the Junior has made an outlandish claim and yet at the same time he urges readers to consider the possibility that Democritus Junior is actually correct rather than simply arrogant.



## King Persius

This man is mentioned during the section devoted to the effects of poverty and want on melancholy. The author is showing how social status rise and loss associated with changing fortunes or loss of wealth, or the perpetuation of poverty tends to worsen conditions associated with melancholy. In some cases, this can cause melancholy because of how much it is apt to sow discontent within poor people. One reason is how much less readily their opinions are heard.

King Persius is noted for having written a letter to a friend of his when he had fallen on hard times, but his friend, a Roman General, would not answer him.

## Hercules

Despite approximately 1800 years of time gap, the author has heard of the hero Hercules. The author brings up Hercules while writing about how emotional losses can cause melancholy. In this case, he is explaining that the grief caused in some by the death of a loved one is so intense that the person who initially survived ends up dying soon thereafter, due to their "life bond." The author does not recount the historical tales of Hercules but only the fact that even for heroes, loss can be terribly hard to bear.

## Claudia Valesia

This woman is mentioned while the author describes the grief caused by the loss of friends. He does not mandate that anyone fall into dreadful melancholy, but only explains and offers numerous examples that this is a common reaction. This woman is mentioned on the very page following that in which Hercules was mentioned despite great distances of other kinds being between them.

Claudia Valesia is an aristocrat. She is an adult princess. Her brother is King Henry the Second of France. She is also a Duchess for part of her life, as she married a Duke. Robert Burton or his predecessor-author is showing how intense the grief was at her death because as a consequence, there were grieving practices for an entire year. Singing and dancing in public was banned for just one year, and then again for an entire year. The senators of the area all wore black as a token of their grief at her absence.

## Vesalius

This man is referred to during the digression on anatomy. He was known to have been an anatomist. He actually did things to living people in order to learn more about the human circulatory system. He was either so cruel that he would do this or else it was that he was compassionate but stout enough that he found out things that surgeons need to know to be able to heal people. Sadly, the same information can be used for the purposes of torture.



## Women

He mentions individual women by name during the course of the book. He also devotes an entire section of text to Women's Melancholy, thus acknowledging that though women are human beings as well, there are definite differences between them and men. He refers to the reality that he feels that there are a number of ailments involving women. However, he asserts that his treatise is about melancholy regardless of whether he is handling women or men.

He argues against mandating celibacy and singleness for maidens and for widows, suggesting that this can contribute to the sufferings imposed by melancholy. He does not do this in any vulgar manner, in fact, he reminds readers that he himself is just a cloistered scholar living a monastic lifestyle. He apologizes explicitly to readers if his mention of this sensitive issue gives rise for embarrassment. He writes of the goddess Pallas and the god Jupiter, and of how Pallas was embarrassed when Jupiter spoke of love.

## Sarmiento the Spaniard

This man is mentioned during immediate causes and symptoms of melancholy. The author brings him up following a discussion of symptoms. He is writing about a type of melancholy where distorted thinking has grown so severe as to cause hallucinations. He writes that these people actually see and hear things that are not there—hallucinations. In this case, he is writing about symptoms, which in contemporary terms are symptoms of a different mental illness from melancholy even though it continues to be admitted that there is some connection. Extreme psychological reactions to real events are characteristic of mental illness in the same way that if someone attempts to treat an injured part as if it were not injured there is a strangely intense level of suffering associated with normal activity.

## Pythagoras

This man is named just after Sarmiento. Pythagoras is said to have been able to "see things written in the Moon." Well, augury was a method of making predictions that had grown outdated and outmoded by the time of Robert Burton. Burton refers to this to contrast interpretation and divination from delusions and hallucinations as symptoms of mental illness.

## Melancthon

This man is an important figure in the book. He is not referred to all of the time, but during the digression into anatomy he looms large. Like Rhasis the Arabian he was an eminent physician and scientist.





# Objects/Places

## Leicester, England

This is a city in the country of England. Robert Burton is from this city. It does not feature largely in the book except that it provides some background information. The city is mentioned during the Introduction provided by William Glass as a means of acculturating the individual to the treatise.

## Oxford, England

This location is listed because it is where Robert Burton received his higher education.

## Goods

This is an intentionally general term. It refers to all manner of possessions be they public or private in nature. They have an entire section devoted to them. Loss of Goods is described as one potential cause of melancholy. The author writes about them in terms of public losses through his descriptions of times when a city was sacked. He writes that many grieved when their city was "sacked"—invaded, plundered and looted by what was often a foreign army. He writes about what the Venetians did to the French as one example.

## Inward

This is important in terms of types of melancholy. The author writes that there are two main divisions of melancholy: inner and outer. Subsection V he goes into this in more detail as he discusses "Causes of Melancholy from the whole Body", (p. 381). Examples of inward causes are: protracted ailments, hemorrhoids, bloody noses, monthly issues, agues, impurities of difficulties of the liver or spleen. Added to these can be problematic complications caused by dietary or climatological conditions.

As a result of its technical usage, inward here is listed as if it were an object. The mind, the imagination and reason both are also covered by this term "inward" or "inner" for the purposes of Robert Burton's book.

## Outward

This is a technical term used in this book. It refers especially to "Outward forms of melancholy." Essentially, these are those various kinds caused mainly by events surrounding the individual and may well involve people, animals or goods connected with the sufferer. These include all the types of grief associated with losses of others;



these can be deaths or separations, but in the course of this book the author mainly writes about death and love-melancholy.

## Fear

While not an object in the usual sense, it is very important in this book. Fear is viewed as one of the primary causes of melancholy. It is also sometimes a symptom of the same disorder. Fear can be shown as a contributing factor because it is a source of stress. This is written about explicitly on page 419 and thereabouts during the section called Symptoms of Melancholy, Immediate Causes Thereof.

## Sorrow

This is a primary cause and sign of depression, ergo, melancholy. A certain amount of this is normal but in the melancholic this emotion, along with fear, tends to get a more powerful hold on the sufferer than is recommended. Since it is so prominent in melancholia, it is viewed as an object and technical term within this context.

## Notes

This treatise actually contains multiple books. The author was a real scholar and this shows in the Notes. They are essentially bibliographical notes. There is more than one set of these in this multiple volume tome. There are 3 sets of these, placed at the end of each Partition of the book. They are conscientiously detailed and clear.

## Liver

This internal organ is highly relevant to this nonfiction book. Its state of being is closely associated with the humors of the body. The author believes that the humors influence whether or not a person will be disposed towards melancholia. This does not mean the individual is guaranteed to suffer from melancholy but it does mean that he or she is more susceptible to it than others are. This organ is mentioned intermittently throughout the text, beginning with the initial schema about melancholia, its nature, causes, treatments and cures.

## Spleen

The spleen, like the liver, is an important internal organ. This organ also relates to the various humors of the body. Of course, when it is in excellent condition the likelihood of overall health is better than it is when there is something awry with it. This internal organ is included in the book: it is mentioned whenever its systems and processes prove relevant to a given aspect of melancholia.



# Themes

## Melancholy

This work is a massive treatise on the malaise of melancholy. At least of the authors preceding Robert Burton had all too much experience with melancholy. Melancholy is the old name for an ailment contemporary psychologists call depression. There are diverse forms of this. There is a sense in which this work is simply an old medical document. As such it is about the history of medicine and psychology.

There are general types of melancholy. The author goes into these in each of three major Partitions of the book. The First Partition contains a description of melancholy in general terms. This is in part to make it easier to recognize. He also covers most probable causes of the illness or condition. This analysis is followed by basic treatment plans. The Second Partition is primarily concerned with curing the ailment. Treatment regimens are explained in much greater detail. The proper treatment includes an assessment of what the real underlying cause of the problem is.

There is a Third Partition. This one is dedicated a special form of melancholy known as Love-Melancholy. The onset of love melancholy can lead sufferers to need anti-depressant medication to help maintain psychological and emotional stability in stressful conditions. This is how serious the matter is.

## Religious Melancholy

This is a condition hardly even heard of today. In fact, with all the information increasingly available about melancholy, a large portion of people will deny religious melancholy. What is this? The author devotes a great deal of the text to this one type, as seen above. This is actually a subsection of love-melancholy. Robert Burton distinguishes love for women and love for God. Centuries later, Carl Jung and Anna Freud were amongst the psychologists to do two important things: 1) theorize about the female perspective, 2) accept the limitations of the male perspective and encourage women to do the work necessary to make sense of these things from the female viewpoint. Women theorists have made some headway in these matters since. In some cases, there is a difference so great that it is incredible. In other regards, it seems that males and females are not so different at all. A quick survey of real life by either man or woman will see this. Given that, Robert Burton confined himself to theorizing about what he knew—being a man and men.

The religious melancholy is about the individual's relationship with God. He writes about the beauty of God and of the ambivalence about seeing Him. On the one hand, people want to see God, and yet there is great fear and trembling. The sight of God is described as overwhelming, awe-inspiring, terrifying. Now and then it happens to someone, goes well and the story ends up in Scripture. For the rest, it remains purely a



matter of speculation—of hope and of fear. People simultaneously wish for it, and are terrified of anything like it. The author carries on for a few pages about the beauty of God and about how much he does want the love of His real and potential followers. This writing includes quotations and references to Christian Saints and other prominent writers within Christianity.

## Medieval/Renaissance Medicine

This treatise is dated. The author has amended the body of knowledge on this subject. He has done this as a major project; part of his life's work. As such, this work serves as an excellent example of what the medical profession of the time was like. Readers will find some of it to be rather pathetic; at the same time, much of it makes a great deal of sense. Once readers get a sense for the terminology of the time and the limits of the technology available for treatment, they will see the value of Burton's contributions.

The medicine of the time included an understanding of what are called "humors." This is a way of describing some of the systems of the body, especially those that carry fluids. The condition of these and what makes them run the most smoothly is one area of general medicine. The author includes discussion of this in his analysis of the over all assessment of melancholia on the whole. There are some diagrammatic lay-outs in the book. They are schematized, but have written words; no images are used. These include references to the humors and the affected areas.

The author writes about astrology. He writes that for those susceptible to melancholy, there is some heightened sensitivity to the motions of the nearest planetary bodies over an above sensitivity to other aspects of life's forces. Burton adds that astrologers have figured out how to read the birth charts well enough to indicate health concerns. For the best of expert astrologers, having a chart is as good as people hope a DNA read-out will be: every indication towards temperament, inclinations, talents and trouble spots is made discernible to those able to understand it. This includes clear indicators in a birth chart of whether or not an individual tends towards melancholy or susceptible to it. The simplest indicators are given to be effects of the planet Saturn and those born under its greatest influence. Often those born during the winter, or in Capricorn, are said to be susceptible to this. This does not mean that someone will suffer from melancholy but means that you might do well to take preventative measures against it, in order to stave it off. Robert Burton recognizes the changing times and admits that many readers will frown upon the astrologers and likely will not listen to them as they have fallen into ill repute.

Robert Burton includes diet and behavior in his analysis of melancholy. He has incorporated suggestions and remedies during the course of the book, explaining why certain foods or beverages improve or worsen conditions. These he combines with other recommendations for patients, or for doctors to use with patients.

# Style

## Perspective

The author was an Englishman of the 16th and 17th centuries. He was literate in Latin, and Greek as well as English. He is liable to have also known one or more other languages.

The author was not the sole author of the treatise. His self-perception was that he had furthered the work. This is akin to having conducted additional research in a field and being able to add one's findings. However, the culture was so different in Burton's day that the way to do this was simply to add to a written treatise on the same topic. There is something about this method that is still used, as scholars add to bodies of work, even though in other respects academic convention is very different from the ways of the 16th and 17th centuries.

The author was an educated man. He had a career as a librarian and was interested in the well being of humanity.

## Tone

The tone of the work is highly informative. It is educational. It is meant to be able to be used as a medical reference book by professionals and as a great resource for people who are not doctors. The treatise is designed to prepare people to be able to practice at least some preventative health maintenance. It is also designed to enable people to implement treatments and even cures for what is ailing someone. In this sense it is well organized enough to be used as a medical reference book. It could be re-worked to be better organized for that purpose: what is not clear is whether or not more efficient methods of presentation had been established at that time in history or whether these are genuine inventions of the past few hundred years.

The writing is scholarly. While editors have modernized the work, there is the suggestion that the original style of the writing has been preserved. The author is eloquent. It is quite clear that he is a highly educated man. In fact, during the Introduction, William Glass points this out in a number of ways.

The work can be read purely for enjoyment. Like many other works, this is not "the lightest reading in the world," and is probably only pursued by the brave.

## Structure

This book is actually a three volume work compiled into one. Each of the books is called a Partition, making it less confusing. A print of the image used on one of the covers or

frontspieces of a much older version of the book is shown in the front. There are also some poems. One of the poems is in Latin. English translations have been provided.

Prior to the First Partition is an Introduction by William Gass. Then there are the 3 books. Each Partition contains divisions. The Table of Contents has shown them as chapters, which is true, but it is obvious from the lay-out of the book that the author was coming from a tradition which has changed a great deal since then.

There are sections, the name of which is posted along the left hand page of the book. This is done consistently throughout. On the upper right hand page is the title for the subsection being covered. These are also neatly labeled within the book. The sections and subsections are also numbered.



## Quotes

"Of all the habits that were hard to break being bookish was perhaps the most difficult," (p. viii).

"Robert Burton may have momentarily put aside his pen on December 5, 1620, to declare his work done; however, since sales were solid and five fresh editions needed, he let his baby go from gigantic to gargantuan," (p. ix).

"Yet in some sort to give thee satisfaction, which is more than I need, I will show a reason, both of this usurped name and title, and subject," (p. 15).

"Before I proceed to define the disease of melancholy, what it is, or to discourse further of it, I hold it not impertinent to make a brief digression to make an anatomy of the body and faculties of the soul, for the better understanding of that which is to follow, because many hard words will often occur as myrach, hypochondries, hemrods, etc., imagination, reason, humors, spirits, vital, natural, animal, nerves, veins, arteries, chylus, pituita; which by the vulgar will not so easily be perceived, what they are, how cited, and to what end they serve," (p. 146).

"Blood is a hot, sweet, temperate, red humor, prepared in the meseraic veins, and made of the most temperate parts of the chylus in the liver, whose office is to nourish the whole body, to give it strength and color, being dispersed by the veins through every part of it," (p. 149).

"'It is in vain to speak of cures, or think of remedies, until such time as we have considered the causes,' so Galen prescribes Glauco: and the common experience of others confirms that those cures must be imperfect, lame, and to no purpose, wherein the causes have not first been searched, as Prosper Calenius well observes in his tract *de atra bile* [Latin phrase appears in italics in original] to Cardinal Calesius," (p. 177).

"Natural causes are either primary or universal, or secondary and more particular," (p. 206) [In this book, there are multiple books. Here, the page number is rather accurate, but later on what has the page number 266 may be the 456th page of the volume as a whole.]

"But these men you will reject peradventure, as astrologers, and therefore partial judges; then hear the testimony of the physicians, Galenists themselves. Crato confesseth the influence of stars to have a great hand in this particular disease," (p. 208).

"But I am over-tedious in these toys, which howsoever, in some men's too severe censures, they may be held absurd and ridiculus, I am the bolder to insert, as not borrowed from circumforanean rogues and gipsies, but yet out of the writings of worthy philosophers and physicians, yet living some of them, and religious professors in



famous universities, who are able to patronize that which they have said, and vindicate themselves from all cavillers and ignorant persons," (p. 209).

"Avarice often leads astray men of the highest position, and those who ought to outshine all others in virtue," (p. 329).

"...those who are cold and dry; a melancholy man must not meddle with it but in some cases. Plutarch in his book de san. tuend. accounts of it as one of the three principal signs and preservers of health, temperance of this kind: 'to rise with an appetite, to be ready to work, and to abstain from venery,' tria saluberrima, are three most healthful things," (p. 34) [This comes as part of a new section.]

"...many cannot sleep for witches and fascinations, which are too familiar in some places," (p. 100).

"Against fearful and troublesome dreams, *incubus* [*incubus italicized in text*], and such inconveniences, wherewith melancholy men are molested, the best remedy is to eat a light supper, and of such meats as are easy of digestion...not to lie on his back, not to meditate or think in the day-time of any terrible objects, or especially talk of them before he goes to bed," (p. 101).

"There will not be wanting, I presume, one or other that will much discommend some part of this treatise of love-melancholy, and object (which Erasmus in his preface to Sir Thomas More suspects of his) 'that it is too light for a divine, too comical a subject' to speak of love-symptoms, too phantastical, and fit alone for a wanton poet, a feeling young lovesick gallant, an effeminate courtier, or some such idle person," (p. 3). [Again, beginning of a later section.]

"Fifty thousand Englishmen lost their lives willingly near Battle Abbey, in defence of the country," (p. 31).

"But the best conjectures are taken from such symptoms as appear when they are both present; all their speeches, amorous glances, actions, lascivious gestures will betray them; they cannot contain themselves, but that they will be still kissing," (p. 137).

"So Venus did by her Adonis, the Moon with Endymion, they are still dallying and colling, as so many doves, *Columbatimque labra conserentes labiis*, and that with alacrity and courage," (p. 137).

"This likewise should we now have done, had not our will been corrupted; and as we are enjoined to love God with all our heart, and all our soul: for to that end were we born, to love this object, as Melancthon discourseth, and to enjoy it," (p.316).

"The Fathers are very much in commendation of it, and, as Calvin notes, 'sometimes immoderate'. The mother of health, key of heaven, a spiritual wing to rear us, the chariot of the Holy Ghost, banner of faith, etc.," (p. 342).





"Only take this for a corollary and conclusion, as thou tenderest thine own welfare in this and all other melancholy, thy good health of body and mind, observe this short precept, give not way to solitariness and idleness. 'Be not solitary, be not idle'," (p. 432). [This is the final conclusion].

## Topics for Discussion

Do you think this book is still relevant regarding melancholy/depression?

Do you think its right to call Robert Burton the author rather than Democritus Junior?  
Support your answer.

Are any parts of this book a joke? If you think so, which parts were comedic and which parts were meant seriously?

What is the most common physical cause of melancholy?

What is the kind of melancholy that most stands out in your mind from this book?