



**rijksuniversiteit
groningen**

faculteit der letteren

The memory remains, doesn't it?

Revisiting Covid-19 from a speculative historical perspective

Rina Knoeff

HISTORY & CULTURE

CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

The epic COVID-19 memorial on the National Mall, in one stunning photo

4,882 photos taken over 30 hours. More than 670,000 flags representing American lives lost. An incalculable measure of grief.





VIROLOGICA MARC VAN RANST

Wetenschap
tussen waarheid,
welzijn en
waan



‘He should not have written *Virologica* much later, he noted. “I started forgetting things. That surprised me too: how quickly you first lose the details and then the bigger picture.” Neither could he have written it much earlier. “I had to be able to distance myself a little from the Covid time.”’

De Volkskrant, 11 May 2025

Why we need to remember



Remember to cope



Remember to prepare



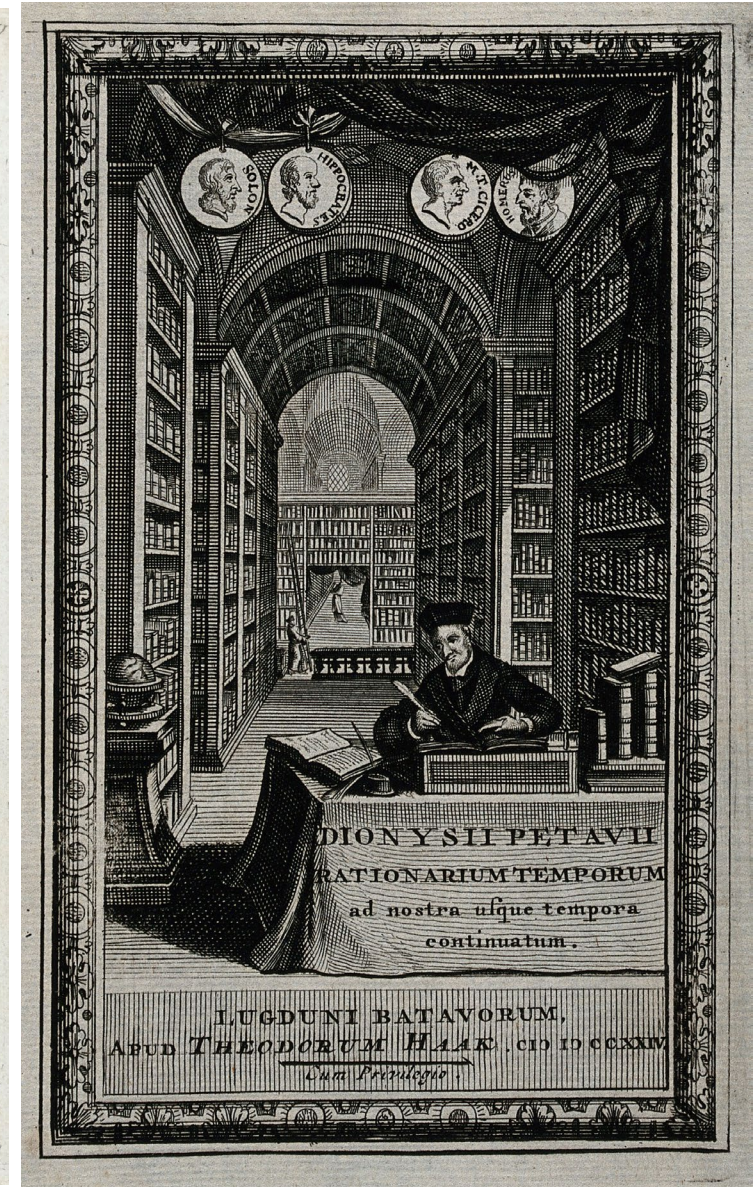
Remember to improve



Clio in the car of history: Chariot Clock, National Statuary Hall, US Capitol

History in medicine (and vice versa)

- Hippocrates: Medicine centred on individual case histories
- Denis Pétau: Individual cases make up the history of the world



Historia

Systematic observation of details

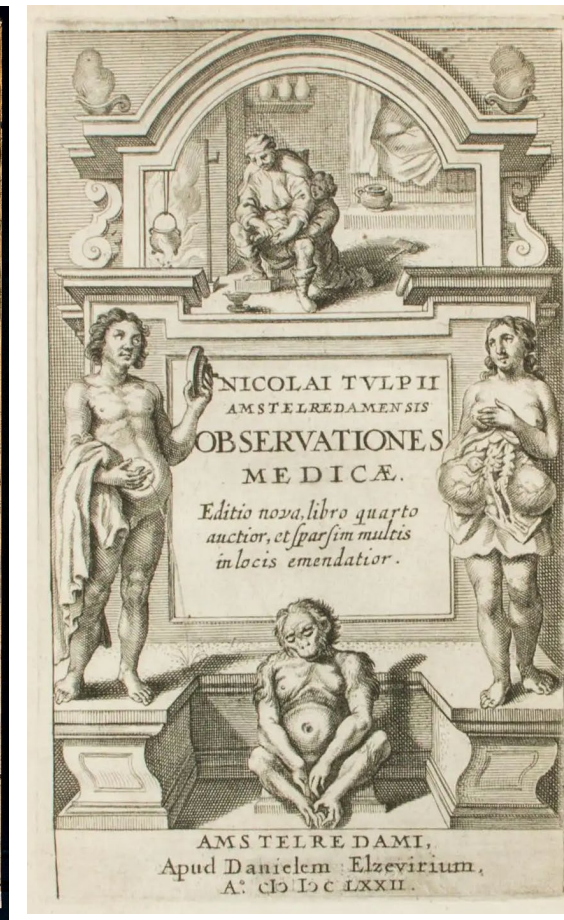
Epistemological practice:

- To report observations
- To increase knowledge
- To legitimize actions

“We are all born under the circumstance that life is short. Therefore, mortal men must hand down orally or in writing to their descendants all that they have seen or heard.”

Petrus Camper (1758)





I N
HIPPOCRATIS APHORISMVM
SECUNDÆ SECTIONIS
VICESIMVM QVARTVM
COMMENTARIVS

MARSILII CAGNATI
VERONENSIS,
MEDICI ROMANI,

ET IN ROMANO GYMNASIO MEDICINÆ
(quam Theoricam vocant) de priore loco publice
interpretantis.



ROMÆ
Apud Ascanium, & Hieronymum Donangelos.
M. D. XCI.

Historia in policymaking

“Just as history is very useful for the good government of public affairs because it is said to be the *mistress of life* [*magistra vitae*], so also is it extremely useful for curing illness. We learn this sufficiently from the example of Hippocrates, which teaches that written descriptions of epidemics [*historias epidemicas*] should not be taken lightly.”

Marsilio Cagnati, *Fumanellus, seu dialogus de gymnastica* (1650)



Societal unrest

“Shortly before the plague actually broke out, the boys in Delft had shown a morbid desire to play funeral games: They delighted in digging pits and carrying coffins there in procession.”

Pieter van Foreest in Fruin,
Verspreide geschriften (1886)

Pestziekte in Holland.



Gloria patri et filio
et spiritui sancto.

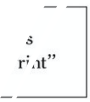
Sicut erat in princi-
pio et nunc et semper
in secula seculorum. amē.

De immiscans Ant.

domine delicta nostra vel peccata
nostra neque vindictam su-
mas de peccatis nostris parce do-
mine populo tuo quem redemisti
sanguine tuo, proprio ne me-
mini nascens nobis. lect.

Mechanisms for unity (Sam Cohn)

- Communal rituals:
processions, protests
- Charitable donations to
the afflicted
- new forms of cooperation
easing of class, ethnic,
sectional, and racial
tensions
- Culture of remembrance



. DEATHS NEAR 100,000, AN INCALCULABLE LOSS

Were Not Simply
Names on a List.
They Were Us.

Members alone cannot possibly
ensure the impact of the coronavirus
on America, whether it is
the number of patients treated,
obs interrupted or lives cut short.
As the country nears a grim mile-
stone of 100,000 deaths attributed
to the virus, The New York Times
scoured obituaries and death no-
tices of the victims. The 1,000 peo-
ple here reflect just 1 percent of the
toll. None were mere numbers.

Patricia Dowd, 57, San Jose, Calif., auditor in Silicon Valley • **Marion Krueger**, 85, Kirkland, Wash., great-grandmother with an easy laugh • **Jermaine Ferro**, 77, Lee County, Fla., wife with little time to enjoy a new marriage • **Cornelius Lawyer**, 84, Bellevue, Wash., sharecropper's son • **Loretta Mendoza Dionisio**, 68, Los Angeles, cancer survivor born in the Philippines • **Patricia Frieson**, 61, Chicago, former nurse • **Luis Juarez**, 54, Romeoville, Ill., traveled often in the United States and Mexico • **Merle C. Dry**, 55, Tulsa, Okla., ordained minister • **Alan Lund**, 81, Washington, con- ductor with "the most amazing ear" • **Black N Mild**, 44, New Orleans, bounce D.J. and radio personality • **Michael Mika**, 73, Chicago, Vietnam veteran • **John Cofrancesco**, 52, New Jersey, administrator at a nursing facility • **Donald Raymond Haws**, 88, Jacksonville, Fla., administered Holy Eucharist to hospital patients • **Fred Walter Gray**, 75, Benton County, Wash., liked his bacon and hash browns crispy • **JoAnn Stokes-Smith**, 87, Charleston, S.C., loved to travel and covered much of the globe • **Ronald W. Lewis**, 68, New Orleans, preserver of that city's performance traditions • **John-Sebastian Laird-Hammond**, 59, Washington, D.C., member of a Franciscan monastery • **Paul Redd**, 62, Chicago, squeezed in every moment he could with his only son • **Larry Rathgeb**, 90, Westfield Hills, Mich., engineer • **Robert**, 56, Chicago, followed in his father's footsteps as a pipefitter • **Robert**, 73, San Juan, Puerto Rico, triathlete and marathoner • **Donna**, 72, Rydal, Pa., co-wrote about computing • **Kevin**, 84, Seattle, active in the music world • **Mike Longo**, 83, Chicago, jazz pianist, composer • **Walter Robb**, 91, New York, General Electric Co.

real jokester • **Michael Sorkin**, 71, New York City, champion of social justice through architecture • **George Valentine**, 66, Washington, D.C., lawyer who mentored others • **James Quigley**, 77, Chicago, rebel of the family • **Sherman Pittman**, 61, Chicago, dedicated his life to his church and his neighborhood • **Susan McPherson Gottsegen**, 74, Palm Beach, Fla., loyal and generous friend to many • **Andreas Koutsoudakis**, 59, New York City, trailblazer for TriBeCa • **Bob Barnum**, 64, St. Petersburg, Fla., leader in Florida Pride events • **Noel Sinkat**, 64, Olney, Md., nurse planning for retirement • **Thomas E. Anglin**, 85, Cumming, Ga., created many wonderful memories for his family • **Robert Manley Argo Jr.**, 75, South Bay, Calif., member of Del Amo Flyers • **Michael McKinnell**, 84, Beverly, Mass., architect of Boston's monumental City Hall • **Huguette Dorsey**, 94, Somerville, N.J., coached several championship-winning junior high girls basketball teams • **Lyne Sier**, 68, Roselle, Ill., grandmother who was always full of ideas • **Louvenia Henderson**, 44, Tonawanda, N.Y., proud single mother of three • **Carol Sue Rubin**, 69, West Bloomfield, Mich., loved travel, mahjong and crossword puzzles • **Marion Lucille Kujda**, 92, Royal Oak, Mich., would use chalk and oil paints to capture family portraits • **Alice Chavdarian**, 92, Michigan, loving, generous and adventurous spirit • **Bassey Offiong**, 25, Michigan, saw friends at their worst but brought out their best • **Bobby Joseph Hebert**, 81, Cut Off, La., a 33-year career with the Louisiana Department of Transportation • **Minette Goff Cooper**, 79, Louisiana, loved big and told people she loved them all the time • **Jessica Beatriz Cortez**, 32, Los Angeles, immigrated to the United States three years ago • **Marie Canonia**, 84, Inwood, N.Y., iconic figure in the Inwood community • **April Dunn**, 33, Baton Rouge, La., advocate for disability rights • **Cedric Dixon**, 48, New York City, police detective in Harlem with a gift for interrogation • **William Helmreich**, 74, Great Neck, N.Y., sociologist who walked New York City • **Harvey Bayard**, 88, New York, grew up directly across the street from the old Yankee Stadium • **Maxwell M. Mozell**, 90, Syracuse, N.Y., founded the Association for Chemoreception Sciences • **Timothy J. Liszewski**, 60, Columbia, S.C., active member of the South Carolina Progressive Network • **Eastern Stewart Jr.**, 71, Annapolis, Md., veteran with a gift for peacemaking • **Freda Ocran**, 51, New York City, nurse with a zest for travel and knowledge • **Douglas Hickok**, 57, Pennsylvania, military's first virus casualty • **Luiza Ogorodnik**, 84, Skokie, Ill., emigrated from Ukraine • **Thomas A. Real**, 61, New

jazz trumpet virtuoso • **Cristina**, 64, New York City, downtown New York City, with a cult following • **Robert H. Westphal**, 75, Fond du Lac, Wis., statesman in the construction industry • **Clair Dunlap**, 89, Washington, pilot still teaching people to fly at 88 • **Marylou Armer**, 43, Sonoma Valley, Calif., veteran police detective • **Regina D. Cullen**, 81, Shrewsbury, Mass., small in stature but strong in spirit • **Sandra Santos-Vizcaino**, 54, New York City, beloved public school teacher • **Frank Gabrin**, 60, New York City, emergency room doctor who died in husband's arms • **Sterling E. Matthews**, 60, Midlothian, Va., cancer survivor who served as a deacon • **Alby Kass**, 89, California, lead singer of a Yiddish folk group • **Roger Eckart**, 78, Indiana, retired firefighter and old-school barber • **Martin Douglas**, 71, New York City, maestro of a steel-pan band • **Daniel Spector**, 68, Memphis, mentor to other Memphis artists • **Mary Minervini**, 91, Oak Lawn, Ill., sign-language interpreter • **Salomon S. Podgursky**, 84, Morristown, N.J., loved to figure out how things worked • **Dale E. Thurman**, 65, Lexington, Ky., tailor known for his exacting work and strong opinions • **Ellis Marsalis**, 85, New Orleans, jazz pianist and patriarch of a family of musicians • **Richard Passman**, 94, Silver Spring, Md., rocket engineer in the early days of supersonic flight • **David Driskell**, 88, Hyattsville, Md., champion of African-American art • **Bucky Pizzarelli**, 94, Saddle River, N.J., master of jazz guitar • **Tarlach McNallais**, 57, New York City, Belfast-born fighter for L.B.G.T. and disability rights • **Antonio Checo**, 67, New York City, social worker • **Albert Petrocelli**, 73, New York City, fire chief who answered the call on 9/11 • **Adam Schlesinger**, 52, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., songwriter for rock, film and the stage • **Frederick Brown Starr**, 87, Greensboro, N.C., liked the mental challenges of business • **Douglas Alan Roberts**, 69, Vancouver, Wash., authority on aviation • **Muriel M. Going**, 92, Cedarburg, Wis., taught her girls sheephead and canasta • **Beverly Collins**, 83, Portland, Maine, longtime registered nurse and hospital volunteer • **Scott Meltzer**, 60, Wyoming, Minn., worked as an engineer with Comcast • **Florencio Almazo Moran**, 65, New York City, one-man army • **Jennifer Robin Arnold**, 67, New York City, Broadway costume dresser • **John Nakawatase**, 62, Lincolnwood, Ill., coach and Scout leader • **Jesus Roman Melendez**, 49, New York, famous in family circles for his birria beef stew • **Ralph Plaisance**, 87, Massapequa, N.Y., "we called him the Grand Poobah" • **Audrey Malone**, 68, Chicago, sang gospel music as a member of the Malone Sisters • **Terrence George**

Bailargeon, 72, Dennisport, Mass., true outdoorsman • **Viraf Darukhanawala**, 77, Hoffman Estates, Ill., worker at O'Hare International Airport • **Chester Dwulet**, 68, Burlington, Mass., proud Union Ironworker of Local 7 for 45 years • **John Timothy Barr**, 76, Rochester Hills, Mich., trustee for the Retired Detroit Police and Firefighters Association • **Julie Butler**, 62, New York City, veterinarian who served Harlem • **Lila A. Fenwick**, 87, New York City, first black woman to graduate from Harvard Law School • **Vincent Lioni**, 60, New York City, Met Opera violist and youth orchestra conductor • **Ann Youngerman Smoler**, 87, New York City, had a passion for social justice • **Thomas Waters**, 56, New York City, armed the affordable housing movement with data and analysis • **Luke Workoff**, 33, Huntington, N.Y., his relentless passion was for his family and friends • **José Díaz Ayala**, 38, Palm Beach, Fla., served with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office for 14 years • **Antonio Nieves**, 73, Chicago, always seemed to be busy with some home project • **Jeanne Hammond Byrnes**, 97, Danbury, Conn., received numerous awards for her accounting skills • **Alice Coopersmith Furst**, 87, Kentfield, Calif., in the first class of girls admitted to the Bronx High School of Science • **Bobby Lee Barber**, 64, Buckley, Wash., Seahawks season-ticket holder • **Thomas A. Adanavich**, 78, Sheboygan, Wis., especially proud of his Lithuanian heritage • **Kyra Swartz**, 33, New York, volunteered for pet rescue organizations • **Rhoda Hatch**, 73, Chicago, first in her family to graduate college • **Regina Dix-Parsons**, 75, Schenectady, N.Y., stalwart church gospel singer • **Lakisha Willis White**, 45, Orlando, Fla., was helping to raise some of her dozen grandchildren • **Barbara Yazbeck Vethacke**, 74, St. Clair Shores, Mich., she was known to many as Babs • **June Beverly Hill**, 85, Sacramento, no one made creamed potatoes or fried sweet corn the way she did • **Kimaree Nguyen**, 33, Everett, Mass., writer who inspired her Brooklyn high school students • **Kamal Ahmed**, 69, New York City, hotel banquet worker and Bangladeshi leader • **Raymond Cope-land**, 46, New York City, sanitation worker living his fullest days • **Israel Sauz**, 22, Broken Arrow, Okla., new father • **Lester Eber**, 82, New York, worked for over six decades in the wine and liquor industry • **Harry P. Misthos**, 87, San Francisco Bay Area, Calif., loved the ocean and enjoyed swimming and boating • **Leo Srebnik**, 98, Seattle, preferred bolo ties to neckties, suspenders to belts • **Robert Barghaan**, 88, New York City, could fix almost anything • **Patricia H. Thatcher**, 79, Clifton Park, N.Y., sang

spirit • **Jack Butler**, 78, Indiana, lived in the house he grew up in • **Susan Grey Hopp Crofoot**, 97, Westwood, N.J., took great joy in writing little ditties under her pen name, Penelope Pen-wiper • **James David Gewirtzman**, 72, New City, N.Y., spent some of his happiest hours hiking in the Adirondacks • **Henry F. Graff**, 98, Greenwich, Conn., Columbia University historian of U.S. presidents • **Mari Jo Davitto**, 82, Thornton, Ill., people were her hobby • **Yaakov Perlow**, 89, New York City, leader of the Novominsker Hasidic dynasty • **Joseph F. Kelly**, 81, New York City, did two tours through the Panama Canal to Antarctica • **John Prime**, 73, Nashville, country-folk singer who was a favorite of Bob Dylan • **Perry Buchalter**, 63, Florida, quiet hero • **Monica Maley**, 74, Rehoboth Beach, Del., loved animals, had dogs and cats, and rode horses • **Thomas Tarbell Russell**, 83, Longmeadow, Mass., mentored by the computer science pioneer Grace Hopper • **Ruth Skapnick**, 85, Roseville, Calif., backyard birds were known to eat from her hand • **Faraly Havir**, 92, Minnesota, her favorite thing was meeting new people • **Torin Jamal Howard**, 26, Waterbury, Conn., gentle giant, athlete and musician • **James O'Brien Johnson**, 74, Joplin, Mo., pastor of Mt. Sinai Church of God in Christ • **Joseph W. Hammond**, 64, Chicago, started working to look after his aging parents • **Morris Loeb**, 90, Northbrook, Ill., endlessly curious, never really finished • **Dante Dennis Flagello**, 62, Rome, Ga., his greatest accomplishment was his relationship with his wife • **Tommie Adams**, 71, Chicago, moved antiques for more than 25 years • **Myra Helen Robinson**, 57, Detroit, more adept than many knew • **Roger McKinney-Wagner**, 73, Lowell, Mass., professor at the Salter School • **Sean Christian Keville**, 47, New Providence, N.J., enjoyed talking sports with family • **John Herman Clomax Jr.**, 62, Newark, one of the few African-American corporate bond traders on Wall Street • **José Torres**, 73, New York City, restaurateur favored by salsa music's stars • **Stuart Cohen**, 73, New York City, Brooklyn cabbie who found a home in Buddhism • **Johnnie D. Veailey**, 76, Country Club Hills, Ill., teacher's aide • **Mary M. Desole**, 93, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., member of the Literacy Volunteers of America • **Vera Flint**, 97, Beverly, Mass., face behind the counter at a family-owned grocery store • **Mike Field**, 59, Valley Stream, N.Y., first responder during the 9/11 attacks • **Chianti Jackson Harpoel**, 51, Baltimore, social worker and then a political fundraiser • **Conrad Duncker**, 99, Chicago, longtime dentist • **Peter Kalkis**, 91, Chicago, worked mostly factory jobs to support his family • **Clara Louise**

II, 69, Fremont, Ohio, known throughout Ohio for his knowledge of local history • **Harley E. Acker**, 79, Troupsburg, N.Y., discovered his true calling when he started driving a school bus • **Ar-lola Rawls**, 81, Chicago, caretaker of her neighborhood • **Roger Liddell**, 65, Flint, Mich., brought smiles to everyone he interacted with • **Luther Coleman**, 108, Evergreen Park, Ill., man who seemed to know everything • **Denise Camille Bucek**, 72, Bristol, Conn., loved writing birthday and holiday cards, poems and lists • **Charles Constantino**, 86, Menlo Park, N.J., worked 40 years for The New York Times • **Ben Dherty**, 83, Boston, stockbroker who founded Doherty Financial Services • **John Horton Conway**, 82, New Brunswick, N.J., mathematician known as the "magical genius" • **Stanley Chera**, 77, New York City, developer and friend of the president • **Robby Browne**, 72, New York City, Realtor and philanthropist who socialized with celebrities • **Wynn Handman**, 97, New York City, acting teacher and a founder of the American Place Theater • **Adam Kovacs**, 72, New York City, cartoonist and an expert on musicals • **Peter Brown**, 53, New Jersey, manager of the S.W. Brown & Son Funeral Home • **Irene Gasior**, 94, Pennsylvania, great-grandmother with a flair for pizzelles • **Stanley L. Morse**, 88, Stark County, Ohio, trombonist who once turned down an offer to join Duke Ellington's orchestra • **Margaret Laughlin**, 91, Massachusetts, had a mystic's direct sense of wonder and oneness • **Cynthia Whiting**, 66, La Plata, Md., re-tiree determined to spoil her granddaughter • **Steve Jolitt**, 75, Rockville, Md., I.T. manager with "an eye for beautiful and unusual things" • **Gerald Glenn**, 66, Richmond, Va., police officer turned pastor • **Maclaur Jacoby Jr.**, 93, Washington, D.C., inspiring math teacher • **Doris Mae Burkhart Kale**, 98, Pennsylvania, excelled in the kitchen • **Josephine Posnanski**, 98, New Jersey, loved to dance • **Phil Langley**, 83, Frankfort, Ill., member of Harness Racing Hall of Fame • **Vinton Timely Mason**, 86, Beaumont, Mich., co-owned the Bark-and-All-ging company • **Maria Garcia-Rodelo**, 52, Nevada, would walk her children to school every morning • **Fernando Miteff**, 60, New York City, graffiti artist with a generous spirit • **John Watson**, 73, Philadelphia, anywhere he went, he took pictures • **Joyce Posson Winston**, 93, North Bergen, N.J., editor at the Ladies' Home Journal • **John B. Lynch**, 76, Wilmington, Mass., lifelong educator • **Orlando Moncada**, 56, Bronxville, N.Y., left Peru and grabbed hold of the American dream • **John Schoffstall**, 41, Terre Haute, Ind., volunteer youth football coach • **Theodore Gaffney**, 92, Washington,

Conclusion

REMEMBER TO REMEMBER!

- Distinguish between a virus and an epidemic
- Epidemics are about people
- Focus on lived experience
- Science and politics are entangled