

The Infamous Letter of Dr Jaco

by [Antoni Camplese](#) (August 2025)



Portrait of a Man (Italian School, 17th)

The following is the text of a handwritten manuscript tucked into the pages of a book found in 1985 in the basement of Schoyer's Books, an obscure seller of antique editions in Pittsburgh PA. The book was a 19th century English edition of a work thought to have been lost. Originally published in Trieste in 1667, it was titled *Eine Zeitschrift der Peststadt* (A Journal of the Plague City). The letter was composed on paper that, upon testing, matched a type produced in 17th century Venice.

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On the Establishment of a True Church of Science
Or, an Open Letter on behalf of Medical Progress, & the Great
Work for the Public Weal

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Dear fellow citizens of our august city,

Have you ever seen one of the special people exhibited at fairs or at court, and wondered from whence come these exuberant variations of Nature? Well, my friends, these are no mere anomalies—they are human beings such as us, but also the work of Man—a humble man—the very man, in fact, who now addresses this epistle to you.

Allow me to introduce myself: My name is Doctor Jaco Agonistes. Even if you have never heard of me, you are likely to have seen one of my creations. For I am not just a surgeon, but an artist, an artist who works in the medium of the human body.

Many years ago, as a student, I came to the conclusion that the work of Nature, though wondrous, remains unfinished. Even we, the greatest of Nature's works, are imperfect. We recognize this only too well. For example, why are we, the noblest and most intelligent of creatures, endowed with great Minds, but hindered with bald skins that leave us exposed to

climatic buffeting? Why are we left defenseless without claw and fang? Why are our reflexes slower, our eyesight less sharp, our senses of Hearing and Smell, duller than that of other denizens of Natures' realm?

In my assiduous attempts to improve our humble condition, I came across divers methods of augmenting the human animal—resulting in wondrous improvements. I found ways to make soft fur grow on the skin to keep us warm in Winter; to create fins for swimming as swift as the dolphin.

You may hear criticism from those who claim that my treatments are immoral or cruelly conceived. Ignore these mockers. These are calumnies that shall be blasted by the truth of Science, the Great Work being evidence of that sacred trust. For my struggle arises from Compassion, especially for children, that a chosen Few—usually lifted up from amongst the destitute—might live exceptional lives.

These slanderous liars ignore my astounding successes and relatively few, admittedly tragic, failures. It is true that the treatments may involve a modicum of pain, but the Wise readily agree that nothing good can be got in this world without some measure of suffering, and besides, this distress is negligible compared to the blessing that the Great Work bestows. It is a Grace, I say, to be given wings like angels or other Creatures of the Air, or the Serenity that obtains of living beneath water.

But not everyone may be so blessed. The techniques are time consuming and require a unique skill—humility bars me from daring to suggest genius—yet I may say a unique and unatched skill with which to date I have been unable fully to transmit to any apprentice. You may have heard of those who would imitate my work, those you call the Comprachicos, low traders in children. You may see their works hobbling and babbling in the piazzas. My friends, do not confuse their failed and bumbling attempts to replicate my achievements with the True

Work, effected via skill that has taken years to perfect.

You, too, might have thought wistfully: were I of a mind, I would submit to the Treatment myself. I would become one of these superior Beings, made by God yet improved by the poor hands of this humble servant of Science. Sadly, these Transformations are possible only through a treatment that must start early in Life, and lasts many years. It is a Privilege not given to All. In short, the Work must start with children, who are our Future. While it is not possible for you to be transformed, who knows what new worlds may belong to the children!

I want you to imagine for a moment what that promise might hold. As simply one example of my creations, behold—and I here apologize for a lack of humility, but other words fail to describe adequately—the wonder and beauty I’ve created: a girl who swims and rests under water perpetually; what the ancients called a Mermaid. For countless eons men have dreamt of this Beauty, told of it in Myth and Legend; sailors have quested and drowned for its sake; philosophers have held it up as an Ideal, a facet of the Divine to be sought by Mortals. Make no mistake, what men call Destiny may await your child, and if you only act in time, for you who are so lucky to read this, it may already be within your grasp!

Let us pause, for I sense trepidation. I heartily commend your concern for your young ones. Indeed, it takes courage to send a child off to a superior life. To be clear, you shall not see them during years of treatment, and at the end you may not recognize them. Yet the most outstanding parents have the courage and clarity of Mind to see an opportunity to be exceptional while their neighbors merely plod along as mediocrities.

Naturally there are those who attack my Work with words such as “unnatural” and “abominable.” These are mere words, and the people who use them, cowards who wrap themselves with piety to

cover their ignorance. There are even claims that my treatments are not true Transformation, but mutilation, that some reverse with Time, or some simply do not work at all. I am but a mortal doctor, a humble sewer of parts. I do not claim divine powers. What errors I have made, I have made in good faith, in the pursuit of the Great Work of improving the human condition.

Ere I end this missive, let me tempt you with a taste of greater things to come. This was meant to be kept secret, privy to the most powerful, but having ventured thus far, I cannot hold back: I shall tell of my latest work. This truly will change everything we know about Humanity. It began with a boy, pale and quiet, who rarely speaks a word. All who have met this child know he is truly special. And they cannot help but feel a sad affection, perhaps an entirely new emotion, for which we yet have no word. For this youth is not merely a boy, he is all Boys; he is in fact anything you would want him to be. In the course of keeping this boy I made, admittedly, a mistake in his diet, a slight miscalculation which changed his Nature in so profound a way as to make him malleable as clay—a Wax Boy, as it were. This Wax Boy can literally be molded into whatever shape you want, animal or vegetable. And once molded, by some profound and subtle metaphysic, he takes on the character of the form which he has assumed.

Though it not be well-known, many children are unhappy in the body they have and dream of an Ideal Self. I have learnt this based on many accounts and conversations I myself have had with children. The young have astounding imaginations and thus create realms into which they may escape their banal surroundings, but this does not alter the affliction of their reality. Imagine the desolation of a child born into the wrong form—a veritable changeling. An adopted orphan once related to me how in a dream his true nature was reveal'd as a lost wolf pup brought up by foster parents. He thought only of wolves, and hoped for the day when his wolf family would take him in.

Yet by the Providence of Science in only eight years I was able to change his form to that of a wolf. While he can no longer speak to tell us how he feels, I sense his contentment. Modifications in form to make right such contradictions is thus Noble Change that will bring children happiness and fulfillment.

I admit, it is often frustrating that some refuse to grasp the enormity of my discoveries. I endeavour not to sound full of Pride when I suggest that the Work represents among the most significant achievements in human history. Only the most sage and virtuous among those reading this missive will understand. Think of it—a child can take whatever stature or character wish'd for, molded with scientific method into their ideal form.

The problem we face is that a person's ideal form is not what they are born with. Who knows what it be? So often parents presume to know what is best for their child as they raise him, indeed what the child should become. But heed, the day is late; we already dwell in the Future. We must trust the wisest among us. Yes, I foresee a time when a council of scientific and medical experts shall determine the Ideal for each citizen. But I digress.

I have describ'd many advancements in the development of youth, yet my work also extends in the process of aging. For who wants to grow old, suffer ailments, slow deterioration of the body, then succumb to disease? It is said to be the natural Way of things—but as scientific inquiry has shown, death is simply unnecessary.

Thus I have effected sevral experiments toward the extension of life. Allow me first to dispel misconceptions about what works versus what does not.

After painstaking experimentations I found that transplantation of various animal organs into humans is only

useful for replacing a failing organ—not for improving the form of that body, which was my aim.

Transfusion of blood from the young to the old held promise, but the effects are fleeting, and it needs prodigious amounts of youthful blood. Adding various chemicals to the blood likewise proved counterproductive.

Having eliminated these options, I have landed upon a viable method, an extract of blood and certain youthful organs which constitutes a vital elixir, with an astounding effect of revivifying and reversing the vagaries of age.

My intemperate opponents have criticized my experimentations, hiding behind false piety and claiming to draw on their clumsily manufactured ethics. They accuse me of ghoulish methods: imbibing human blood, cannibalism, and if these be not enough, also graverobbing, asking from whence are these fresh organs harvested? Dreadful fictions! My methods are of the highest ethical calibre, only the critics are jealous of my success in procuring donors.

As for phantasmical tales of organs harvested from the living, pay them no mind. It is the stuff of lurid dime novellas. Think now, who would pay for such a venture? And who would deal with such morally vile persons as execute the bloody plan? Like all conspiracies, it is the idle chatter of cranks.

Having establish'd that we can effect superiority in our development, it is a moral imperative that we proceed to ameliorate our condition. Here is a modest proposal.

Some say we are given the natural use and function of the body by a benevolent Deity; yet I am not so certain. Over many years have I observed the ravages of disease. Considering the pitiable limitations of our natural born immunity, we are no match for illness and plague.

But fear not, my friends. Through largely successful

experimentation (putting aside inconvenient yet negligible failures), I have found that bodily immunity can be enhanced through a series of injections into the blood. The results speak for themselves. The few survivors of a prior plague remain as testament to this groundbreaking method.

Therefore I assert that our city would benefit from a medical regime based on Science. A true Church of Science, if you will. Only then can we institute the Great Work. Yet to secure the blessings of Science, Truth must be protected from the ignorant. Science must be firmly established to safeguard society, and its watchmen an Elect to whom we can resort in time of confusion, when dissention arises among the unwashed, or among pseudoscientific malcontents like my critics.

Rest assured, I have no ambitions in this regard. I pledge never to seek office in such a regime; though if asked, perhaps I could be persuaded to serve as a mere advisor, possibly Chief Medical Counsel. In any event I am but a humble servant of medicine.

For once I dream'd of a Prometheus-like angel defying a tyrannical and distant Creator to hand down these weapons of Medicine. When this angelic being handed me the serpent-coiled staff, I beheld a great darkness, a vast front of cloud in the distant sky. I innerly sensed the coming of a great plague. No one knows when it shall arrive; we only know that it comes. But take heart! I am at the ready. Humbly I am at your service, sent to heal and lead.

Yr obdt svt in the Great Work
for the greater glory of establish'd Science,

Dr Jaco Agonistes, Surgeon Extraordinaire.

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Antoni Camplese writes about culture, technology, and spirituality. He resides in Williamsport PA and is currently collaborating with Carl Nelson of Magic Bean Books on an upcoming collection of stories.

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