

Medical History

<http://journals.cambridge.org/MDH>

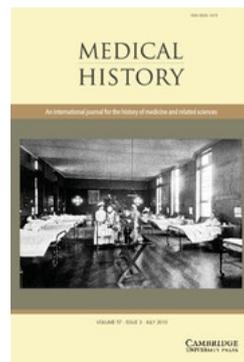
Additional services for **Medical History**:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Galen, Galien. Tome II: Exhortation à l'étude de la médecine. Art médical, ed. and trans. Veronique Boudon, Collection des Universites de France, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2000, pp. 454, Fr400 (hardback 2-251-00483-1).

Vivian Nutton

Medical History / Volume 45 / Issue 04 / October 2001, pp 560 - 562

DOI: 10.1017/S0025727300068642, Published online: 16 November 2012

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0025727300068642

How to cite this article:

Vivian Nutton (2001). Medical History, 45, pp 560-562 doi:10.1017/S0025727300068642

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

Book Reviews

questions. He claims to offer more convincing explanations of extraordinary achievements than the usual fall-back option of attributing whatever it is that we may term “genius” to some mysterious, magical, undefined “special innate gift”. Howe thus adds his contribution to the nature versus nurture debate. Can people be born geniuses? The simple answer, in Howe’s account, is no. The whole work is dedicated to proving that sophisticated inborn capacities cannot exist, and concludes that the difference between creative problem-solvers and ordinary people lies far more in the degree of effort rather than in the presence or absence of any innate ability. Yet throughout the book, Howe is careful to point out that his approach to analysing genius does not seek to detract from the idea that geniuses are special.

Howe is a Professor of Psychology at Exeter University. As a scientist, he is attracted by the desire to quantify and explain; he admits that he is daring to tread where others have deemed the terrain impossible. Defining the terms of reference, especially the term “genius” itself, in such a project is exceedingly difficult. Howe determines to consider in his study any individual whose claims to genius have received a substantial measure of support—i.e. those about whom the term “genius” may be popularly used. In his analysis Howe advocates employing the disciplines of biography (using evidence of the genius’s early advances and circumstances to reveal the origins of his or her genius), and psychology (which he defines as the ways in which people are affected by their biology and their influences). This psycho-biographical approach he admits is necessarily limiting. Detailed biographical information on a person’s early childhood is distinctly scarce for many of the early historical geniuses. Thus he is compelled to confine himself to a survey of obvious characters principally from the nineteenth century (such as

Charles Darwin and George Stephenson), and the twentieth century (for instance Albert Einstein).

This book does not pretend to explicate how contemporaries may have employed the term genius to describe the prestigious people of their times. Hence, while undoubtedly of great value for a psychologist, the place of this book in the library of a medical historian is unclear. Howe’s intention was not to write history; he looks back on the past two centuries with the values and knowledge of the late twentieth. Yet it does have uses for the historian: it is an enjoyable, fluently-written survey, providing interesting overviews of the early lives of some of the most famous figures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In his own terms, Howe has explained genius, but to use the term historically as he defines it is anachronistic. The reader should keep in mind that Howe’s book is and was intended to be a product of late-twentieth-century psychology and the study of biography, rather than an accurate reading of the term “genius” in history.

Caroline Essex,

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History
of Medicine at UCL

Galen, Galien. *Tome II: Exhortation à l'étude de la médecine. Art médical*, ed. and trans. Véronique Boudon, Collection des Universités de France, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2000, pp. 454, Fr 400 (hardback 2-251-00483-1).

The Budé edition of Galen has started off with a big bang with two introductory treatises of very different types and with very different problems for an editor. That Mme Boudon has managed to resolve them and to offer her readers enlightenment on so many aspects of Galen, and of textual

Book Reviews

criticism, is a magnificent achievement that few can match.

The first treatise, the *Protrepticus*, no longer survives today in a Greek manuscript, or in an oriental translation, and an editor can do little more than correct the Greek of the 1525 Aldine from a knowledge of Galen's style and of good Greek. A new discovery in Hebrew, however, gives an idea of the opening of the second part of the book, which is otherwise totally lost to us. Mme Boudon takes a more conservative line than most editors, usually wisely, although, very occasionally, her notes show that she has not appreciated the force of the argument for change. This does not mean that previous suggestions are necessarily right, although I am convinced that Schöne's deletion of the first line of the book's title is the best way of dealing with Greek that is both cumbersome and, in context, irrelevant. What is required, and is provided in the Introduction, is a survey of the literary genre of the exhortation to the arts, and an appreciation of the epideictic skills of a Roman intellectual. One minor point: on p. 53, n. 117, it is the death of the Strasbourg, not the British, Adelphus that is reported in 1555, so Mme Boudon's objection to the identification of the owner of the Codex Adelphi with John Friar, d. 1563, fails.

By contrast, the edition of the *Art of medicine* is a tour de force of patient labour across several languages and cultures. Galen intended this treatise as the quintessence of his medical ideas, and it became, from at least the sixth century onwards, the most studied text of all those in the Galenic Corpus. In order to establish a Greek text, Mme Boudon has had to investigate versions, abridgments and commentaries in Syriac, Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew, to say nothing of forty Greek manuscripts containing this text in whole or in part. For sheer complexity, only Alexanderson's edition of *Crises* bears comparison, and the details of manuscript readings in the apparatus and the commentary mask the

extent of the work that has had to be done. Mme Boudon throws light on the ways in which this Galenic text was interpreted over the centuries, down to the Renaissance, and, for the first time ever, scholars have a sound textual basis for their arguments. Mme Boudon shows how the recent doubts on the authenticity of this treatise can now be set at rest because they were the result of a defective transmission of Galen's words.

The translation is scrupulous, the notes highly informative, and the introduction and running commentary explain just how Galen structures this book on logical grounds to accord with his "method of teaching" announced in his opening words. The book itself is tightly organized with a generally clear sequence of thought. There are no longeurs—or entertaining stories—and one can see why, to get proper benefit from it, the ancient or medieval reader needed the help of a teacher to expound all that might be intended in a few crisp Galenic lines. If, at times, one feels oppressed by Galen's taut sequences, one is also brought to appreciate just how well he managed to encapsulate his clinical doctrines in a single long book.

Whereas with the *Protrepticus* the basic spadework had already been done, this edition of the *Art* is real pioneering stuff. What is remarkable is the sane judgement with which Mme Boudon has picked her way through Arabic glosses and Byzantine mistakes to give a text that carries conviction. That I am not entirely persuaded by her decisions at 370,17 and 387,8 also shows how cogent are her other choices. Similarly, the few comments that follow represent amplifications, not corrections. Page 309, *Quod animi mores* could have been written after the *Art*, and hence "déjà" is wrong. Pages 389 and 443, a survey of what appears to be the Arabic version of *Dissection of dead bodies* was published by M Ormos in the proceedings of the 1989 Galen conference. Page 191, Budge's belief that the *Syriac book of medicine* was itself translated from the

Book Reviews

Greek is here followed, despite Schleifer's demonstration that its "Greekness" derived from its incorporation of large chunks of Galen in Syriac translation. Misprints are amazingly few, and none should cause problems, except perhaps for page 169, n. 48, read "Vasquez Bujan", and for the uncoordinated placing of (3) on page 331.

All those concerned in the production of this book deserve the heartiest of congratulations. Whether one is interested in Galen as a writer of Greek and a literary figure or as a medical guru in his own day and across the centuries, this edition offers a magnificent starting point for further research.

Vivian Nutton,

The Wellcome Trust Centre for the History
of Medicine at UCL

Mark Grant, *Galen on food and diet*,
London and New York, Routledge, 2000,
pp. ix, 214, illus., £15.99 (paperback 0-415-
23233-3).

This new selection of translations from Galen arouses mixed feelings in this curmudgeonly reviewer: gratitude for the accessibility of some of the more interesting texts in the Galenic Corpus, constant irritation at the many minor errors and misunderstandings. Mark Grant, an experienced cook as well as a classics teacher, has chosen to turn into English a variety of treatises relating to diet, in both the narrow sense of foodstuffs and the wider one of bodily constitution. *On the powers* (better, properties?) *of foods* is filled with fascinating glimpses of life in the countryside of ancient Greece, and shows Galen's great skill as an observer and an expositor. None of these treatises has previously been available in English, and the translator can only be congratulated, not least on the felicitous way in which Galen's rebarbative Greek has been turned

into something more elegant. His experience with other ancient texts to do with foods and cookery gives his identifications of the names of plants authority.

But there are also many mistakes, some of them serious. On pages 70–3, for example, at 6.458 K. (alas, no references are given to enable those with Greek to cross-check easily), Grant fails to note an essential comparative: "there are even people who can digest beef easier than rock fish" (for Galen, the most digestible of all). At 459 K., technicalities are misunderstood: read, "bile which should flow to the bowels from the liver goes back up to the belly". At 461, pronouns are misunderstood; read, "everything boiled in water takes something from it [the water] and in return contributes something of its own property". The omission of a phrase at the top of 465 then makes nonsense of Galen's careful claim that our digestive processes may be affected by our natural constitution, an acquired condition of the stomach, or the essential nature of the food that is being digested. Similar slips can be found throughout, to be detected only by very close reading and the belief that Galen did not write logical nonsense.

Other problems arise from Grant's decision to follow the old text of Kühn instead of a more modern edition. It is true that many errors in Kühn have little effect on the sense, but sometimes they do. So, at 515 K., the list of Bithynian cities is badly garbled in Kühn, and could have been easily corrected from Helmreich's 1924 CMG edition—or from a glance at any map of the region in Antiquity. At 518 K. mistranslation hides a point of crucial importance: the peasants of Upper Mysia always use einkorn and rice-wheat for their bread *because* their wheat is taken away to the cities (elsewhere Galen notes, under compulsion).

Despite what is said, on page 2, Galen never studied at Corinth; on page 3, these journeys are very unlikely to have been made in 161 (better, 166–7), and I would