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chosen to claim it for their own, and the meaning of many of its phrases has long been the subject of doubt and discussion. This beautifully produced edition will go far towards informing the German reader of the difficulties of interpreting the *Oath*, and will alert him to some of the dangers of an eager identification of ancient and modern. He will also gain from some of the commentators' subtle insights an appreciation of just how much new information can be gained by the application of scholarly reasoning to even the best-known of texts.

Yet he should also be warned of some of the interpretations put forward here. The author's passionate involvement with Hippocratic studies and his desire to restore the ethical basis of modern medicine by a return to the proven values of old do not always make for a sober judgement of probabilities. The sections on the religious beliefs of the Dorian communities are filled with exaggerations and circular argument, while not everyone will be convinced of the parallels supposed between the playwright Menander, fl. 300 BC, and the *Oath*. Even if one is prepared to date the *Oath* to c. 400 BC - which is likely but on present evidence totally beyond proof - then it is still necessary to explain away the evidence of Plato before the *Oath* can be accepted as the creation of Hippocrates the Asclepiad of Cos. The *Oath* represents a transition from a group of medical practitioners who kept their knowledge closed within the family to a looser situation in which those who wished to learn were taken in, almost adopted, into the family, which, in return, they were to consider as their own. Medical learning is thus still kept secret, available only to the family. Yet Plato, in one of the only contemporary references to Hippocrates, declares that he was a famous teacher of medicine for money. Lichtenthaeler rightly rejects the old attempt to reconcile the evidence of Plato with tradition by setting the *Oath* early in Hippocrates' career (and by implication allowing him to violate it in his old age), but his own suggestion, that all the many students of Hippocrates were all adopted into the Asclepiad family and all in turn continued to administer the *Oath* to their descendants and pupils, is equally unlikely. Plato's description of Hippocrates is as a medical sophist, dispensing his learning for cash for the benefit of mankind, a public performer very different from the quasi-secretive doctor of the *Oath*.

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PER-GUNNAR OTTOSON, *Scholastic medicine and philosophy*, Naples, Bibliopolis, 1984, 8vo, pp. 322, [no price stated] (paperback).

The historian of medieval medicine may appear to be faced with an equally unenviable choice. He may study the so-called Dark Ages, in which he will find a horrendous gaggle of semi-illiterate monks, usually Irish, or he may turn his eyes to Salerno, Bologna, Montpellier, and Padua, where his companions will be better educated, but no less trying in their endless sophistries. When faced with such alternatives, the medical historian has usually decided to abandon the enterprise and to leave medieval medicine to the hidebound or the foolhardy. Yet, as this Uppsala dissertation shows, he would thereby miss much of interest and importance for the understanding of the development of Western medicine.

Dr Ottoson has chosen to study the commentaries on one of the central texts of learned medicine from late antiquity to the seventeenth century, Galen's *Tegni*, the *Art of medicine*. The commentators range in date from Taddeo Alderotti, c. 1280, to Giovanni Sermoneta, c. 1410, and include the three great names of Pietro d'Abano, c. 1300, Torrigiano de' Torrigiani, c. 1310, and Jacopo da Forlì c. 1410. Dr Ottoson, in excellent and fluent English, shows how each commentator endeavoured to interpret the words of Galen to take account of his predecessors as well as of other intellectual and philosophical developments going on about him. He argues convincingly that the earlier commentators were convinced that by lecturing in this way they were also helping to improve the actual practice of medicine. But their own long training in logic often led them to interpret Galen's apparently contradictory statements in philosophical terms as a study of the universals of health and disease, rather than of the individual patient and his illness. At the same time, the format of the commentary led to the

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atomizing of medicine into a series of separate problems, in which, as Jacopo frequently showed, equally opposed positions could be maintained with equal success. His successors faced with this impasse reverted to an ever closer scrutiny of the logical methods involved in reaching these conclusions. Dr Ottoson's conclusion goes far towards explaining the appeal in the sixteenth century of the call by Montanus and others for a proper medical method that would bring these discrete pieces of medicine back to its original (Galenic) unity.

Second, the concepts used by these commentators, particularly that of temperament (*complexio*), were often beyond falsification by experience or experiment. If a drug failed to work, this was the result of an individual error of diagnosis or of prescribing, not of an inadequate general theory. Hence the discussions of the concepts could become more and more remote from the sick-bed, especially since, as every philosopher knew, experience was notoriously fallacious.

Dr Ottoson makes out a strong case, in part following the lead of Nancy Siraisi, for the late thirteenth century as an age of medical progress, or at least of excitement, followed by a slow descent into dullness and pedantry as the possibilities for change were gradually closed. This may well be true for the universities of N. Italy, and Dr Ottoson is commendably cautious about extending his conclusions beyond the Alps or even to Naples, where the work of Michele Fuiano suggests that lively debate continued well into the fifteenth century. Only further tedious and possibly unrewarding work on the manuscripts of lecture courses elsewhere in Europe will confirm the validity of the conclusions of this useful study, whose lucidity is itself a defence against the charge of medieval obscurantism.

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PAMELA BRIGHT, *Dr Richard Bright (1789—1858)*, London, Bodley Head, 1983, 8vo, pp. 313, £12.95.

In Pamela Bright's account of her distinguished ancestor, readers may enjoy a rare full-length biography of one of the "Great Men of Guy's" who embodied the early nineteenth-century clinical-pathological school in Britain. When one considers the great fame of Addison, Bright, and Hodgkin, the previous scarcity of substantive biographies seems almost inexplicable. Perhaps would-be writers had awaited the discovery of papers and documents, such as those available to Pamela Bright. A widely scattered and apparently huge mass of family papers provided her with the resources to write a finely grained portrait of Richard Bright, especially rich in details of home life and friends. Bright's polymath father and other family members came briskly to life. The Brights' intellectual connexions and varied friends and correspondents must have helped develop Richard Bright's love of natural history, chemistry, and illustration, all of which aided his later monumental medical and pathological work. Anecdotes and episodes of his student days and travels provide fascinating glimpses of the nineteenth-century doctor in the making.

Earlier brief articles about Bright, found in the usual ceremonial histories and anthologies, suggest an almost angelic character: kindly to students and colleagues, tireless in search of truth, devoted to patients rich or poor. Indeed, there seems little evidence to refute this image, and Bright appears to have justly attracted admiration and affection. But Miss Bright's book offers a fuller, more complex person. Bright as a youth occasionally suffered intense self-doubt and indecision. There is a suggestion of moodiness and even periods of melancholia. Puzzling are the lengthy separations from his second wife and his family, which Bright frequently contrived during his middle years (on other occasions, he seemed much gratified by time spent with them). He worked very hard. He surely had more than even the typical Victorian gentleman's desire to be useful and productive, the result being an unquestionably varied and detailed cumulation of clinical and pathological observations contributed to medicine.

The discussion of Bright's work, however, will disappoint readers of this journal. His model investigations which established the entity of nephritis, conducted in part in a surprisingly "modern" sort of "metabolic ward" during the summer of 1842, are, of course, noted. Proper