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TEXTS AND DOCUMENTS

AN ANCIENT COMMENTARY ON THE HIPPOCRATIC OATH

FRANZ ROSENTHAL

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No more extensive fragments than those preserved by Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah are known to this day. They were translated into French by B. R. Sanguinetti just a century ago.³ Sanguinetti had no special interest in the passages from the *Commentary* but happened to come upon them while translating long sections from the beginning of Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah's work. Therefore, he paid little attention to the Greek sources and significance of the *Commentary*. His publication, which would have caused a sensation in the scholarly circles of an earlier date, passed practically unnoticed, and references to the *Commentary* have been infrequent in subsequent years.⁴

¹ The scholarly occupation with Eutychius dates back to the early years of the seventeenth century, cf. C. F. de Schnurrer, *Bibliotheca Arabica* 144-47 (Halle 1811).

² In *Joh. Beverovicii epistolica quaestio de vitae termino, fatali, an mobili? Cum doctorum responsis. Pars tertia, et ultima. . . . Seorsim accedit. . . . Item eiusdem argumenti alia, à Joanne Elichmanno, M.D., ex mente & monumentis Arabum & Persarum contexta* 150-52 (Leiden 1639). Cf. my remarks in *Orientalia N. S.* 10, 107 f. (1941). A copy of the work is preserved in the New York Academy of Medicine (catalogue no. S.117).

On the basis of Elichmann's work, the *Commentary* was briefly referred to in one of the later editions of D'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* 480 f. (Maestricht 1776), s. v. *Ketab alaiman*, an entry which is not found in the first edition (Paris 1697). Cf. also J. Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, ed. by G. Ch. Harles, 2, 589 f. (Hamburg 1791), and J. G. Wenrich, *De auctorum Graecorum versionibus* 104 (Leipzig 1843).

³ In *Journal Asiatique*, V, 3, 242-47, 252, 267; 4, 195-204 (1854).

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For a long time, I had been hoping that the complete text of the work might be discovered, and since the treasures preserved in Arabic manuscripts are as yet imperfectly known, this hope might still come true. However, no manuscript has so far become available, and many of the old difficulties remain. Nevertheless, the preserved fragments are, it seems, unique documents of Antiquity in many respects, and they inform us about an important chapter in the study of the history of medicine. They are thus sufficiently interesting to warrant their renewed collection and the study of the problems of authorship, textual history, and meaning connected with them. The collection and translation of the fragments is the proper task of the Orientalist and has been attempted in the following pages. Their final analysis remains the task of the historian of medicine and the classicist. The few remarks made here in this direction were necessitated by the fact that without a knowledge of the sources, a correct translation is often impossible, and they are tentative in every respect.⁵

A. TESTIMONIA.

1. Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, *Risālah*, no. 87 (ed. by G. Bergsträsser, in *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* vol. 17, no. 2, 1925).

The statement from Ḥunayn's work is reproduced, in a somewhat shortened form, in *Fihrist* 288_{of}. Flügel; 401 (Cairo 1348), and al-Qifṭī 94_{10f}. Müller-Lippert. In Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 99₂ Müller, the passage is reduced to the mere title and the remark that the work consisted of one book. No reference to the *Commentary* is found in Ḥunayn's brief treatise on the works which Galen did not mention in his *Pinax* (ed. by G. Bergsträsser, in *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* vol. 19, no. 2, 1932).

The form of the title used here by Ḥunayn is the most authentic one there is. However, in introducing the fragments, the various later authors use slightly different forms which are easily recognized in the literal translations given them in the following pages.

Sciences de St. Pétersbourg 1869, 174, fn. 35; *idem*, "Die arabischen Übersetzungen aus dem Griechischen," in (*Virchow's*) *Archiv für pathologische Anatomie* 124, 119 (1891); G. Bergsträsser, *Ḥunayn ibn Ishāq und seine Schule* 24 f., 73-75 (Leiden 1913), who includes a detailed investigation of the linguistic character of the fragments in Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah; M. Meyerhof, "Über echte und unechte Schriften Galens nach arabischen Quellen," in *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl.* 1928, 538.

⁵ It occasionally proved necessary for me to confess that I did not know a Greek parallel for some detail or doubted its accuracy. Such statements were made after as much research and reflection as I was able to devote to the points in question. However, everybody who has ever worked on Graeco-Arabic literature must have had the same experience at one time or another: Statements that at first glance look "un-Greek" and like an incontrovertible proof of the alleged Muslim ignorance of things Greek, turn out to be literal translations of some Greek original. Thus, under further scrutiny, my negative statements might easily become liable to revision.

The words *sharḥ* and *tafsīr*, both meaning "commentary," are used interchangeably; once, they are both used together in the title (fr. B 3 b).

The plural "covenants (*'uhūd*)" is used by al-Birūnī (fr. B 2 a, B 2 b, and B 3 c). Instead of "covenant," the word "oaths (*aymān*)" is used in fr. B 1 b, B 1 c, B 3 b, and B 3 g. "Oaths and covenant" appears together in fr. B 2 e and B 3 a. The seventeenth-century bibliographer, Ḥājjī Khalifah (*Kashf az-ẓunūn*, no. 9928, 5, 57 Flügel), used "oaths." The use of two words goes back to the title of the Arabic translation of the Hippocratic *Oath*.

His (Galen's) *Commentary on the Book of the Covenant* (*'ahd*) of *Hippocrates*: This work consists of one book (*maqālah*). I translated it into Syriac, adding a commentary of my own on passages considered difficult. Ḥubaysh translated it into Arabic for Abū l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Mūsā. It was also translated by 'Īsā b. Yaḥyā.⁶

B. FRAGMENTA.

1. On the origin of medicine.

a. Ibn al-Maṭrān, *Bustān al-aṭibbā'*, as quoted by Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah 1, 6₁₅₋₁₇ Müller; transl. in *Journal Asiatique* V, 3, 252 (1854).

The text does not appear in the manuscript of Ibn al-Maṭrān's work consulted by me, Army Medical Library (Cleveland, Ohio), ms. A 8 (cf. D. M. Schullian and F. E. Sommer, *A Catalogue of Incunabula and Manuscripts in the Army Medical Library* 299, New York, n. y. [1948]). This throws some doubt upon the accuracy of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's reference. However, the *Bustān al-aṭibbā'* is a collection of unconnected quotations and discussions, and our passage might have been omitted from the manuscript by accident, or it might have belonged to another recension. The content agrees with the detailed discussion in fr. B 1 b.

Ibn al-Maṭrān said: This statement (on the origin of medicine as quoted by Ibn al-Maṭrān from Abū Jābir al-Maghribī)⁷ is all disorganized and confused, even though Galen said in his *Commentary on the Covenant* that this craft is revelational and inspirational.⁸

b. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah 1, 4₁₄₋₅₁₆ Müller; transl. in *Journal Asiatique* V, 3, 242-47 (1854).

The identical text appears in Ishāq b. Ḥunayn, *Ta'rikh al-aṭibbā'* (ed. by F.

⁶ Both translators are well known as members of Ḥunayn's school of translators; Ḥubaysh also was the son of his sister. For 'Īsā, cf. also P. Kraus and R. Walzer, *Galen Compendium Timaei Platonis* 18-20 (London 1951, *Plato Arabus* 1).

The person for whom Ḥubaysh made his translation is often mentioned by Ḥunayn as one of his sponsors. He is one of the Banū Mūsā and a brother of Muḥammad b. Mūsā, for whom Ḥunayn likewise produced many translations, cf. M. Meyerhof, in *Isis* 8, 714 f. (1926).

⁷ No information is available about this man. For no conceivable reason, Sanguinetti identified him with the alchemist Jābir (Geber).

⁸ That is, belonging to, or derived from, revelation and inspiration.

Rosenthal, in *Oriens* 7, 62₈-64₂; 73_{19-74bottom}, 1954). There are only slight divergences, in particular, some statements not found in Ishâq's work. Ishâq obviously used the *Commentary* as his source for this part of his work, though he does not mention it. I had previously thought that Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah had wrongly attributed the fragment to the *Commentary*, while actually using the *Ta'rikh al-aṭibbâ'*; this, however, is impossible.

Fihrist 286 Flügel; 398 (Cairo 1348), and al-Qifṭî 11₄₋₁₁, 92₀₋₂₀ Müller-Lippert, derived their information from Ishâq b. Ḥunayn, while Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah used the *Commentary* directly; he may have depended upon some lost intermediary, but this seems unlikely. The text is no accurate quotation, as is fr. B 2 e, cf. fn. 9.

In his *Commentary on the Book of the Oaths by Hippocrates*, Galen mentioned that the investigation, among the ancients, concerning the first inventor of the craft of medicine was not an easy one. Let us first begin with setting down what he has mentioned, together with our additions to it,⁹ for the purpose of giving a complete survey of all those different opinions. This is as follows:

The opinions concerning the invention of medicine are divided into two primary sections. Some people say that it is primeval, and others that it is created.¹⁰ Those who believe in the createdness of the bodies say that the craft of medicine is created, for the bodies for which medicine is employed are created. Those who believe in primevalness believe in primevalness as far as medicine is concerned and say that the craft of medicine is primeval and has never ceased to be, since it is like one of the primeval things that have never ceased to be [like the creation of man].¹¹

The opinions of the representatives of (the theory of) createdness are (again) divided into two sections. Some of them say that medicine was created together (i. e., at the same time) with man, since it is one of the things that constitute the well-being of man.¹² Others, and they are the majority, say that medicine was invented afterwards.

⁹ It seems that Ḥunayn is speaking here, referring to his additions. It remains doubtful how far Ḥunayn's additions, and possibly even some outside material, have been merged with the text of the *Commentary* in this fragment. It should be noted, however, that some of the passages which are most suspect of being Ḥunayn's additions or outside material were omitted by Ḥunayn's son, Ishâq, in his *Ta'rikh al-aṭibbâ'*. This is proof that Ishâq knew them to be additions to the original text.

For passages that do not seem to belong to the *Commentary*, cf. below, fn. 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

¹⁰ The statement that medicine always existed, even before the creation of man, is remarkable and to my knowledge not attested elsewhere in classical literature.

¹¹ The words enclosed in square brackets appear to be a variant reading, inserted in this place by mistake, of the words "created together with man" found in the next paragraph.

¹² Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum* 32 E (2, 63 f. Diehl), as translated by E. J. and L.

Those (latter) are again divided into two sections. Some say that God gave (the craft of medicine) to mankind through inspiration. The representatives of this theory follow the opinions of Galen, Hippocrates, all the Theorists, and the Greek poets.¹³ Others say that man invented it (himself). They are the Empiricists, Methodists, Thessalus the Sophist,¹⁴ and Philinus.¹⁵

They (again) differ with regard to the place where it was invented, and how it was invented. Some say that the people of Egypt invented it. They confirm this (assumption) through (the story of) the drug which is known in Greek as *elenî* (*helenion*), that is, elecampane (*râsan*).¹⁶

Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 154 f., fr. 314 (Baltimore 1945): "... wherefore the theologians ascribe to Asclepius the one kind of health, namely that which results from the whole process of healing whatever is contrary to nature . . . ; the other kind of health they (sc., the theologians) assume to have been created before Asclepius and to be coexistent with the creation of things, which they derive from Peitho and Eros because everything comes from reason and necessity. . . . The demiurge, as is clear from this, is the source of health, of the Asclepiadic as well as the demiurgic."

¹³ Galen's alleged opinion on the problem may be studied in the *Introductio* ascribed to him (14, 674 Kühn; Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 184 f., fr. 356): "The Greeks ascribe the invention of the arts either to the children of the gods or to certain men akin to them to whom the gods first imparted every art. Thus also the art of medicine, they say, Asclepius first learned from Apollo, his father, and transmitted it to mankind; for this reason he is believed to be the discoverer of it. Before the time of Asclepius, the medical art did not exist among men, but the men of old had some experience with herbs and drugs. . . ."

The role of Asclepius as a divine or semi-divine transmitter or inventor of medicine was generally recognized and accepted in Antiquity; the Empiricists and Methodists would have hardly denied it, nor would it have been necessary for them to do so. It is, however, quite logical to ascribe to Theorists the belief in a divine origin of medicine, and to describe Empiricists (and Methodists) as stressing the human share in the invention.

The express reference to Galen shows that this passage cannot have been derived from the work ascribed to him. It may go back to Ḥunayn's notes. In fact, in the *Ta'rikh al-aṭibbâ'*, Ishâq b. Ḥunayn omitted this sentence as well as the concluding sentence of the paragraph, certainly because they did not belong to the original *Commentary*.

¹⁴ Thessalus, the well-known leader of the Methodist school, is called here *al-mughâlîṭ*, literally: "The person who tries to lead someone else into error." He might owe this unflattering epithet to the invectives hurled against him by Galen (cf. *De methodo medendi* 10, 7 ff., 124, 250 ff. Kühn; *De compositione medicamentorum per genera* 13, 393 Kühn). One of those epithets might have been rendered by the Oriental translators through *mughâlîṭ*. There also is a passage in Galen, *De atra bile* 5, 105 Kühn, in which he accuses some of the Methodists of using *sophismata*.

Otherwise, it is tempting to assume a corruption within the Arabic text. *Al-ḥiyālî*, meaning "Methodist," was misread *al-jadālî* "dialectician, sophist," and *al-jadālî*, then, was replaced by a word of a corresponding meaning, namely, *al-mughâlîṭ*.

¹⁵ The Arabic letters more closely correspond to Philon, but Philinus fits the context as a famous Empiricist, cf. Pseudo-Galen, *Introductio* 14, 683 Kühn. The identification with Philinus was already suggested by Sanguinetti.

¹⁶ This information ultimately goes back to the verses *Odyssey* 4, 227 f. about Helen

Others say that Hermes invented all the crafts and philosophy and medicine.¹⁷

Others (again) say that the people of Cos (?)¹⁸ invented it with the help of the drugs which the midwife composed for the wife of the king and by which she was cured.

Others (again) say that the people of Mysia and Phrygia invented it, for those people were the first to invent flute (music).¹⁹ With those

in Egypt being taught the knowledge of effective drugs. The commentaries on Homer and later Greek authors maintain that the *helenion* was named after Helen. The detailed story alluded to appears to be the one reported subsequently, cf. below, fn. 26. The duplication may again betray the influence of Ḥunayn's notes. This, however, is uncertain, since Ishâq b. Ḥunayn, at least, preserves the repeated reference.

The Egyptian invention of medicine is advocated in the catalogue of first inventors in Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* I, XVI, 75 (2, 48 Stählin; Edelstein, *Asclepius* I, 185 f., fr. 358), and elsewhere.

Cf. also 'Ubaydallâh b. Bukhtishû', *ar-Rawḍah al-ṭibbīyah* 55 (Cairo 1927).

¹⁷ On Hermes as a physician, cf. S. Eitrem, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie* 8, col. 788, s.v. *Hermes*. According to an isolated report, the god was connected with Hygieia, cf. Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* 16 (p. 21 Lang). Cf. also, Galen, *Protrepticus* 1, 4 Kühn: *Hermên . . . ergatên . . . technês hapases*.

The Hermetic tradition associating Hermes and Asclepius may have contributed to ascribing the invention of medicine to the versatile genius of Hermes. It credits the God with the composition of forty-two books, of which thirty-six were devoted to Egyptian philosophy and the remaining six to medicine, cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* VI, IV, 37 (2, 449 f. Stählin). The magical papyri describing Hermes as the healer of all human diseases (K. Preisendanz and others, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* 1, 194/5 and 2, 139 f., Leipzig 1928-31) also belong to the Oriental Hermetic tradition, as suggested by Eitrem, *loc. cit.* Cf. also Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 17 Müller, on the "third Hermes."

The famous ninth-century astrologer Abū Ma'shar considered Hermes the inventor of medicine, according to ash-Shahrazûrî, *Nuḣḣat al-arwâḥ* (cf. the modern Persian translation of the work, published in Tehran 1938, vol. 1, p. 61).

¹⁸ Following others, I advocated the reading "Cos" when editing Ishâq b. Ḥunayn's *Ta'rikh al-aṭibbâ'*, and I still believe that it is the correct reading. The later reference to Cos, which is not found in the *Ta'rikh*, may have formed no part of the original *Commentary*, cf. below, fn. 21. However, no such story as the one reported here appears in connection with Cos in classical literature, as far as I know.

Assuming that the reference to Hermes does not belong to the original text or is not in its original place, one might see in this paragraph a continuation of the story of the *helenion* and find in it another elaboration of the legend of Helen in Egypt. In this case, a correction of *Qwkwes* to *Thwnes* or *Thwns* "Thonis," would be possible.

¹⁹ The importance of Phrygia in the history of Greek music is well known. Mysia could hardly be changed to Marsya(s), one of the legendary Phrygian inventors of the flute. It certainly is the correct reading. In addition to being mentioned next to Phrygia as the result of geographical association, Mysia, like Phrygia, belongs into the ancient history of music as the alternative home of the legendary Olympus, the principal inventor of the flute, cf. Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, s.v. *Olympos*, no. 26. While the power of music as medicine of the soul is a theme which spread from Pythagorean speculation far into classical thinking, the above connection of music and medicine in general seems unique.

rhythms and melodies they used to cure the pains of the soul, and the pains of the soul are cured by the same (means) by which the body is cured.

Others (again) say that the inventors of medicine were sages from Cos, the island on which Hippocrates and his ancestors—that is, the family of Asclepius²⁰—lived. Many of the ancients mention that medicine made its (first) appearance on three islands in the middle of the fourth zone, one of them called Rhodes, the second Cnidus, and the third Cos.²¹ Hippocrates came from the (last-mentioned island).

Some have the theory that medicine was invented by the Chaldaeans.²²

Others (again) say that its inventors were Yemenite sorcerers, whereas some prefer to maintain that they were sorcerers from Babel or from Fârs (Persia).

Some say that its inventors were the Indians, whereas others prefer to maintain that they were Slavs (?).

Others (again) say that its inventors were the people of Crete after whom the *epithymon* is called “Cretan *epithymon*.”²³

²⁰ This is the usual Arabic translation of “Asclepiads.”

²¹ The reference to the three original island homes of medicine occurs again in the *Commentary* in connection with the biography of Hippocrates, cf. below, fr. B 3 f and B 3 g. There it would seem to have its original position, even if those fragments do not belong in their entirety to the *Commentary*.

The reference to the fourth zone also is somewhat suspect. In general, this paragraph gives the impression of not being part of the original *Commentary*. It is not found in Ishâq b. Hunayn.

Rhodes is singled out as lying in the center of the fourth zone by Agapius of Manbij, in his *History* (ed. by L. Cheikho, in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Arabici* III, 5, 25 and 88, Beirut-Paris-Leipzig 1912). In the latter passage, Agapius states that his information is derived from Ptolemy's *Canon*.

²² Here and in the following lines, we have a rather strange string of candidates for the honor of having invented medicine. Ishâq b. Hunayn refers only to the Persians, Indians, Slavs. Possibly, none of all these groups figured in the original *Commentary*. However, with one exception, all of them might have been credited with medical knowledge somewhere in ancient works. The one exception appears to be the Slavs, and it seems strange even for Hunayn to have mentioned them. Possibly, we have here an ancient textual corruption.

According to Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 30, 1.2, magic originated from medicine, cf. F. H. Cramer, *Astrology in Roman Law and Politics*, 188a (Philadelphia 1954).

²³ If this statement is derived from the Greek original, it could hardly mean anything but that the variety of epithymum (*Cuscuta epithymum*, “dodder”) growing in Crete, through its outstanding medicinal qualities, inspired the Cretans to invent the art of healing. Arabic physicians, at least, know the Cretan dodder; it is mentioned by 'Alî b. Rabban at-Ṭabari, *Firdaws al-ḥikmah* 5 and 227¹⁹ (Berlin 1928). Dioscurides IV, 177 (2, 327 Wellmann), states, though, that the plant is found in the greatest abundance in Cappadocia and Pamphylia.

For relevant information on *epithymon*, cf. M. Meyerhof and G. P. Sobhy, *The*

Others (finally) say (that it was) the people of Etruria (?).²⁴

Of those who say that medicine comes from God, some say that it comes through inspiration by dream visions. They argue in favor of that by referring to the fact that quite a few people saw drugs in their dreams and then employed them while they were awake. Those drugs cured them of severe diseases, and they have cured all who employed them (later on).²⁵

Some people say: God gave (the craft of medicine) to mankind through inspiration by experience, and there has been a (gradual) growth and consolidation (of medical knowledge) in this respect. They argue in favor of that by referring to the fact that there was a woman in Egypt who was very sad and sorrowful and afflicted by anxiety.²⁶ In addition, she had a weak stomach. Her chest was full of bad humors, and she had no menses. Now, she happened to eat elecampane (*râsan*) many times, because she had a desire for it. As a result, all her complaints disappeared, and she became healthy again. All those who had one of the complaints which she had and who employed it were cured by it. As a result, people employed experience against all other things.

Those who say that God created the craft of medicine argue in favor of that by referring to the fact that such an exalted science cannot be invented by the intellect of man. This theory is the theory of Galen, and this is the text of what he mentions in his *Commentary on the Book of the Oaths by Hippocrates*.

abridged version of "The Book of Simple Drugs," vol. 1, part 1, p. 179 ff. Cairo 1932, *Publ. of the Faculty of Medicine of the Egyptian University* 4).

²⁴ The Arabic text has Ṭūr Saynâ' "Mount Sinai." The letters, however, might as well be read Tyrsenia, or, with a very slight correction, Tyrrenia. If the passage goes back to the Greek original of the *Commentary*, the reading Etruria would certainly be preferable, though a reference to the Sinai Peninsula might even then not be impossible. The Etruscans were known to Aeschylus as a *pharmakopoion ethnos* (fr. 452, Paris 1843, from Theophrastus, *Hist. plant.* IX, 15, 1), and Martianus Capella VI, 637 (p. 311 Dick), says that Etruria is famous for its drugs, cf. K. O. Müller, *Die Etrusker* 2, 343 f. (Breslau 1828). I owe this reference to H. Hoenigswald.

²⁵ The reference is to the famous practice of incubation which is taken up by the *Commentary* in fr. B 1 c.

²⁶ Cf. above, fn. 16. The story of Helen in Egypt and the *helenion* is known to us in two principal versions. According to one of them, Helen used the plant to exterminate snakes: there seems to be no possible connection with our text (cf. Aelian, *Hist. an.* IX, 21, quoted by Eustathius 1493). The other version is more to the point, and the report of it found in Diodorus I, 97, is particularly relevant: The *helenion* cures all kinds of evils and causes oblivion, and the women of Diospolis (Thebes) used it as a drug to cure anger and sadness.

The plant is mentioned as productive of urine and menses by Dioscurides I, 28 (I, 33 Wellmann). Cf. also Paul of Aegina III, 60, 5 (I, 276₂₂ Heiberg).

c. Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 10₁₋₅ Müller; transl. in *Journal Asiatique* V, 3, 267 (1854).

In his *Commentary on the Oaths by Hippocrates*, he (Galen) says: People in general bear witness to the fact that it was God who gave them the craft of medicine through inspiration in dreams and visions delivering them from severe diseases. Thus, we find an innumerable large number of people to whom their cure came from God, some (obtaining it) through Serapis, and others through Asclepius in the city of Epidaurus, the city of Cos, and the city of Pergamon—the last-mentioned one being my own city.²⁷

2. On Asclepius.

a. Al-Bīrūnī, *Ta'rikh al-Hind* 17₁₋₆, transl. 1, 35 Sachau. Cf. below, the passage of fr. B 2 e marked by fn. 88.

Galen says in his *Commentary on the Covenants of Hippocrates*: As to the sacrifices in the name of Asclepius, we have never heard that anyone offered a he-goat to him, because yarn spun from its hair cannot be softened and because too much eating of its meat causes epileptic seizures on account of its bad chyme.²⁸ They offer roosters (to him), as it was done by Socrates.²⁹ For this divine man (Asclepius) obtained for man-

²⁷ In the following lines, the Arabic text contains the information that in general all temples of the Greeks and other (non-Muslim) peoples served for the cure of severe diseases through dreams and visions. This summary and vague statement hardly goes back to the original *Commentary*; it might at best be an echo of Ḥunayn's notes.

²⁸ In some localities, it was customary to sacrifice goats to Asclepius. In the majority of his cult places, however, goat sacrifices were strictly avoided, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 299 ff., fr. 532-35; 2, 189. According to Servius, *In Vergilii Georgica* II, 380 (3, 1, 251 Thilo, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 300, fr. 535), goats are offered to Asclepius because they do not suffer from fever. In this connection, it should also be remembered that according to the legend, a goat nourished the infant Asclepius exposed in the mountains (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 13, fr. 7; 2, 67, from Pausanias). However, the reasons indicated in the *Commentary* for the avoidance of goat sacrifices are not known from classical sources.

According to Hippocrates, *De morbo sacro* 6, 356 Littré, superstitious cures for epilepsy included, among other things, abstention from goat's meat and the avoidance of goat skins for bedding and clothing. The author adds that if this were true, the Libyans who sleep on goat skins and eat goat's meat should be unusually susceptible to the disease, which is not the case. The alleged susceptibility of goats to epilepsy and the danger of the disease being transmitted to human beings through eating goat's meat were maintained by other ancient authors, such as Plutarch, *Quaestiones Romanae* 290 A, and Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* VII, VI, 33 (3, 25 Stählin). Cf. F. J. Dölger, *Ichthys* 2, 365-68 (Münster 1922), and O. Temkin, *The falling sickness* 11 (Baltimore 1945).

Ibn Qutaybah, *Uyūn* 462 Brockelmann; 2, 74 (Cairo 1343-49/1925-30), reports that goat's meat is supposed to engender worry, melancholy (cf. Galen, *De locis affectis* 8, 183 Kühn), forgetfulness, brain disorders in children, and corruption of the blood. He then goes on to describe the bad effect of the use of sheep (*ḡa'n*) meat upon epileptics.

Cf. also al-Jāhīz, *Ḥayawān* 5, 137 (Cairo 1905-7).

²⁹ Cf. Plato, *Phaedo* 118 A. Strangely enough, Sachau corrected Socrates to Hippo-

kind the craft of medicine which is better than the inventions of Dionysus—wine—and Demeter—the grain from which bread is prepared; therefore, the grain is called after (Demeter),³⁰ and the vine after (Dionysus).—³¹

b. Al-Birûni, *Ta'rikh al-Hind* 283₁₀₋₁₃, transl. 2, 168 Sachau. Cf. below, lines 39-45 of fr. B 2 e.

Galen says in his *Commentary on the Covenants of Hippocrates*: It is a well-known fact concerning Asclepius that he was raised to the angels in a column of fire.³² The same is also said about Dionysus and Heracles and others who worked zealously for the benefit of mankind.³³ God is

crates. He appears to have been under the impression that the following "divine man" refers to Socrates, whereas it clearly refers to Asclepius. It may be noted, however, that Ibn al-Maṭrân, *Bustân al-aṭibbâ*, ms. cit. (fr. B 1 a), fol. 110a, states that "the divine (man)," in Greek usage, refers to Hippocrates (and Socrates is known as "the ascetic").

For the numerous testimonies concerning the sacrifice of roosters to Asclepius, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 296-99, fr. 523-31.

³⁰ The masculine pronoun is used here with reference to Demeter. The change from the feminine to the masculine suffix might have occurred in the process of translation from Syriac into Arabic. However, it is strange that Ḥubaysh (or 'Îsâ b. Yahyâ) should have been unaware of the sex of the deity.

According to the material collected by Edelstein, all three gods are rarely mentioned together, but cf. Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* I, 38 (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 189, fr. 367).

³¹ The parenthetic information is derived from Ḥunayn's notes.

³² "Angels" is a Christian interpretation of Greek *theoi*, cf. P. Kraus and R. Walzer, *Galen Compendium Timaei Platonis* 48 (London 1951, *Plato Arabus* 1). It probably can also represent Greek *daimones*.

Asclepius is commonly considered to have been killed by lightning. "Column of fire" is a biblical term and was possibly substituted for lightning by the Syriac translator.

In the introduction of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*, this idea has been transferred to Aristotle. The verse addressed to Lycurgus (cf. fn. 33) also appears there referring to Aristotle. Cf. the edition of the Arabic text by 'Abd-ar-Rahmân Badawî, *Fontes Graecae doctrinarum politicarum Islamicarum*, 67 f. (Cairo 1954); English transl. in vol. 5 of the works of Roger Bacon, ed. by R. Steele, p. 176 (Oxford 1920).

³³ Asclepius, Dionysus, and Heracles are repeatedly mentioned together in this connection by ancient authors, among others Cicero and Porphyry, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 111 f., fr. 239-41. Cicero actually uses the word "benefits."

Without any further specification, Galen is mentioned as the authority for the following statement in al-Birûni, *Risâlah* 25₁₀-26₂ Kraus (Paris 1936): "Galen says: Dionysus and Asclepius had in the past been human beings; God then made them angels because the one taught mankind medicine, and the other invented the wine and viniculture for them."

Since elsewhere in the *Risâlah*, al-Birûni quotes the *Commentary*, one might assume that this passage is also derived from it. However, it comes from Galen's *Protrepticus* 1, 22 Kühn (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 113, fr. 245). In fact, al-Birûni, *Ta'rikh al-Hind* 16₁₇-17₁; transl. 1, 35 Sachau, quotes the same passage and correctly indicates its provenience. The Arabic text, however, is slightly different. Thus, instead of "angels," it has "to become gods (*ta'allahâ*)."

said to have done this with them in order to destroy their mortal terrestrial part through fire and, afterwards, attract to himself their immortal part and raise their souls to heaven.³⁴

The same passage of the *Protrepticus* also is the source of a note by Hunayn to the Arabic translation of Galen, *On Medical Experience* XXXIII, 7, p. 80, transl. 152, Walzer (Oxford 1944). In this work, as he does elsewhere (cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* I, 179, 263, fr. 338 and 458), Galen refers to "our ancestral god," though in this case, the Arabic text has *al-mathâlah* "exemplar" instead of "god." Hunayn now explains that "he means Asclepiades (!) whom he sometimes calls 'exemplar (*mathâlah*),' and sometimes 'guide (*dalâlah*),' because he became a god after he had in the past been a human being." It would be interesting to check the Arabic translations of Galen's other references to his "ancestral god." One of the passages (*De sanitate tuenda* 6, 41 Kühn) appears to be preserved in translation, cf. H. Ritter and R. Walzer, "Arabische Übersetzungen griechischer Ärzte in Stambuler Bibliotheken," in *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akad. d. Wiss., phil.-hist. Kl.*, 1934.812. However, al-Qiftî 9_{III}. Müller-Lippert, quotes a passage from the beginning of *De sanitate tuenda* which runs as follows: "What ought to confirm the truth of medicine in the opinion of people in general is the divine medicine observed in the temple of Asclepius." This seems to be a very free Arabic rendition of the passage from *De sanitate tuenda* in which Galen speaks about his "ancestral god." Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* (cf. below, fn. 38 and fn. 67) has: "One must not deny the (fact of the) cure of sick people who enter the temple(s) of Asclepius." However, since the whole passage of Bar Hebraeus appears to have been derived from al-Qiftî, this statement, too, would seem to be a paraphrase of the just quoted passage from Galen.

The continuation of the mentioned passage from al-Birûnî's *Ta'rikh al-Hind* further illustrates the pitfalls often encountered in attempts to determine the provenience of quotations. After the quotation from the *Protrepticus*, al-Birûnî quotes the *Commentary* (fr. B 2 a). Then, he adds two more quotations from the "same book" by Galen, and one would think that he refers to the *Commentary*. The text runs: "The plain statement of Galen in this book is that if it is true that Asclepius had in the past been a human being and God then considered him worthy of being made an angel, everything else is nonsense. And in another place of it he says that God said to Lycurgus: I am in doubt as to whether I shall call you a human being or an angel, though I am more inclined toward the latter." Now, the second passage is derived from the *Protrepticus*, *loc. cit.*, as it was recognized by Sachau. It is also quoted, in a quite different form, by al-Qiftî 9_{III-13} and Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah I, 15_{II-16}, as derived from the *Protrepticus*. For the first passage, Sachau again compared the *Protrepticus* (*ei d' ouk etheleis emoi peithesthai, ton ge theon aïdesthêti ton Pythion*), but there is little similarity. On the other hand, the quotation is reminiscent of a passage of the *Commentary* (B 2 e, ll. 37-39). It is not impossible that both quotations in al-Birûnî do go back to the *Commentary*, and the verses concerning Lycurgus may have been used by Galen on two occasions. However, since this remains a highly uncertain assumption, I preferred leaving these quotations in the doubtful column. It might be helpful in this connection to compare an Arabic translation of the *Protrepticus*; however, only an abridgment appears to have been preserved, in the same manuscript which also contains the Arabic translation of Galen's *Ethics*, Cairo, ms. Taymûr, *akhlâq* 290, no. 8, cf. P. Kraus, in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the Egyptian University* 5, 5 (1939).

³⁴A moral explanation of the idea of deification appears in Porphyry, *Epistula ad Marcellam* 7 (Edelstein, *Asclepius* I, 111 f., fr. 241). The concept of a purification through fire and the resulting preservation of man's immortal soul is not mentioned in

c. Al-Birûnî, *Ta'rikh al-Hind* 109₉₋₁₄, transl. 1, 222 Sachau. Cf. below, lines 5-13, as well as the passage marked by fn. 86, of fr. B 2 e.

Opinions similar to (those of the Indians about the egg of Brahma) were held by the Greeks in connection with Asclepius who invented the craft of medicine. For, according to Galen, when they represent him, they place into his hand an egg, as a sign of the spherical shape of the earth and a symbol of the universe.³⁵ This is to indicate that the whole world needs medicine.

Asclepius is not inferior in rank to Brahma, for they mention that he is a divine power whose name is derived from its activity, namely, the prevention of dryness,³⁶ because death occurs when there is a preponderance of dryness and coldness. On the other hand, with regard to his physical origin, they say that he is the son of Apollo as well as the son of Phlegyas and the son of Coronis—which is the planet Saturn.—All this because of the power of trinity.³⁷

this connection in classical sources, but it does not seem farfetched to recall concepts such as that of the Stoic *ekpyrôsis*, cf. *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* 2, 191 Arnim, and Arnim's index *s. v.*

³⁵ Round objects such as bowls can be seen on pictorial representations of Asclepius and his daughter Hygieia. However, the object that comes closest to an "egg" is the "cone of cultivated pine" which Pausanias II, 10, 3 (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 351, fr. 649), noticed in the hand of a statue of Asclepius in Sicyon. An object of this sort was almost certain to give rise to different interpretations. In fact, the author of the *Commentary* may be more correct than Pausanias or the guide who explained the art objects in Sicyon to him.

Empedocles (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* A 50 Diels) compared the cosmos to an egg, and the Egyptian and Orphic world egg might be mentioned in this connection. The Orphic world egg is considered identical with existence (*to on*) by Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum* 30 C-D (1, 428_{int.} Diehl), and Damascius, *De primis principiis* 1, 317, Ruelle. Cf. R. Eisler, *Weltenmantel und Himmelszelt* 410 ff., 476 (Munich 1910), and W. H. Roscher, *Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* 6, 479 ff., *s. v. Welt-schöpfung* (Leipzig-Berlin 1924-37).

The Muslims also knew about the concept of an egg-shaped world through Pseudo-Plutarch, *De placitis philosophorum* 886 D, cf. the edition of the Arabic translation by Badawî, *Aristotelis De anima*, 126 (Cairo 1954).

³⁶ For this etymology, cf. Porphyry, *Quaestiones Homericae* 232 Schrader (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 125, fr. 269). It was widely known among the Muslims, cf. Ibn al-Ma'rân, *Bustân al-aṭibbâ'*, *ms. cit.* (fr. B 1 a), fol. 109b, and F. Rosenthal, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62, 73 f. (1942).

Al-Birûnî adds Ḥunayn's explanation, cf. below, line 7 f. of fr. B 2 e.

³⁷ The identification of Coronis with Cronos is certainly due to al-Birûnî himself. He also originated the suggestion that the three "fathers" of Asclepius reflect the concept of the divine trinity. The *Commentary* has nothing of the sort. Al-Birûnî's tremendous knowledge and extraordinary powers of combination demand admiration even if, as in this case, they occasionally mislead him.

d. Al-Qifṭī 9₅₋₁₀; 10₁₇₋₁₁₂ (cf. below, fn. 67); 15₁₈₋₁₅₂ Müller-Lippert. These quotations from the *Commentary* occur in al-Qifṭī's biography of Asclepius which draws upon a number of sources, and al-Qifṭī does not always make it sufficiently clear which source he uses in a given passage. Fortunately, Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah has a long and continuous quotation from the *Commentary* (fr. B 2 e) to which al-Qifṭī's excerpts can be referred, and this has been done in preference to giving a separate translation, cf. below, the passages marked by fn. 39, 55, 59, 66, 69, 74, 77, and 82.

Al-Qifṭī 9₁₃₋₁₉ further quotes the *Hippocratic Oath* for some information concerning Asclepius that is not contained in it. Though the information partly is in conflict with that of the *Commentary* as shown by fr. B 2 e, it would seem to go back to some gloss to the *Oath*, and somehow might have formed part of the *Commentary*.

In his *Book of the Oaths and Covenant*, Hippocrates mentions that in Greek this name—Asclepius—is derived from splendor and light,³⁸ and medicine is the craft of Asclepius. Only those who follow Asclepius' life of purity, modesty, and fear of God may concern themselves with medicine, and it must not be taught to the wicked and the evil souls. Only the noble and divine—meaning those who know God—may study it. And Hippocrates further mentions in this book that (Asclepius) was raised into the air in a column of fire.

e. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah 1, 17₃₂₋₂₁₇ Müller; transl. in *Journal Asiatique* V, 4, 195-204 (1854).

In his *Commentary on the Book of the Oaths and Covenant of Hippocrates*, Galen mentions, in connection with Asclepius, what follows:

The³⁹ information we have about the story of Asclepius is twofold. The one view is allegorical, and the other natural.⁴⁰ The allegorical view

³⁸ No such derivation of the name of Asclepius is known or explainable from the Greek.

This sentence, and the first half of the following one, are quoted by Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* 6 Bedjan (Paris 1890); transl. by E. A. W. Budge 5 f. (Oxford 1932). Bar Hebraeus has: "... is derived from beauty, splendor, and medicine." However, this is no reason for translating the Arabic text of al-Qifṭī by: "... is derived from splendor, light, and medicine, the craft of Asclepius." For Bar Hebraeus appears to quote al-Qifṭī directly, and there can be no question of a common source in this particular case, even if Bar Hebraeus occasionally preserves old material (cf. G. L. Della Vida, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 70, 182 ff., 1950). Cf. also above, fn. 33, and below, fn. 67.

³⁹ This paragraph appears in al-Qifṭī 9₇₋₁₀.

⁴⁰ The first interpretation of the figure of Asclepius operates on the assumption that he was not an actual person but has to be explained allegorically. The "natural" interpretation accepts him as a human or divine being. Cf. fr. B 2 c.

Al-Birūnī, *Ta'riḫ al-Hind* 48₁₁, transl. 1, 97, Sachau, refers to this passage in connection with a quotation from a commentary on the *Phenomena* of Aratus where the same distinction is made with regard to the interpretation of the figure of Zeus. The quoted

considers (Asclepius) a divine power whose name is derived from its activity, namely, the prevention of dryness.⁴¹

Ḥunayn says: Death occurs only when there is a preponderance of dryness and coldness which together dry out the mortal body. Therefore, the profession that protects bodies requiring their fixed amount of heat and humidity to remain alive has been given a name indicating an absence of dryness.

Galen says: They say that he is the son of Apollo, and the son of Phlegyas and Coronis who both took care of him,⁴² and that he is composed of a mortal part and an immortal one.⁴³ This statement indicates that he is concerned with human beings, because they are of his kind. He is also said to have an immortal nature that is better than the nature of man. This name—Asclepius—was derived by the poet from the actions of medicine.⁴⁴ He is said to be the son of Phlegyas, because this name is

commentary is preserved in Latin translation and published by E. Maass, in *Commentariorum in Aratum reliquiae* 176 f. (Berlin 1898), where the text reads: *quaeritur autem, quod Iovis meminisse de fabulatione seu natura*, or, according to another version: *et quaeritur, cuius Iovis meminerit, utrumne fabulosi an naturalis*. The Greek original no doubt used *mythos*, or *mythologēma*, for *fabulatione* (*fabulosi*). The Arabic word used in the commentary on Aratus is *ramzī*, whereas the *Commentary* uses *laghz*. Cf., further, Porphyry, *Quaestiones Homericæ* 200 Schrader: *mythikōs gar Zeus entautha ho aithēr*, and, in particular, the *Tabula Cebetis* I and XXXIII, where Greek *mythos* appears as *laghz* in the Arabic translation (cf. Miskawayh, *Jāwīdhān Khiradh* 321 ff., Cairo 1952). [Cf. also Olympiodorus, *In Metecora* 164₂₄ Stüve.]

However, Greek authors use a great variety of terms in the sense of allegory. Heraclitus who probably wrote his *Quaestiones Homericæ* in the first century A. D. and who shows the great popularity, in his time, of the type of allegorical interpretation we find in the *Commentary*, uses not only *allēgorikōs* but also expressions such as *symbolikos* or *ainigmatōdes allēgorein* (p. 37 Oelmann). For Maximus Tyrius, *Philosophoumena* IV, 5, a *mythos* is something in between *ainigma* on the one hand and *logos* on the other. Cf. also, from the commentaries on Aratus, *op. cit.* 335: *metebē epi ton kat epōnymian Dia ton physikon, hos estin aēr* (where “physical” is used in a sense different from “natural” in the *Commentary*), or *op. cit.* 332: *ē kata men tas epōnymias ainittetai auton*. A derivation of *ainigma* (or some other of the mentioned terms) could have been the Greek original of *laghz*, instead of *mythos*.

⁴¹ Cf. above, fn. 36.

⁴² A possible reading of the transmitted text, adopted here, is *muhadhhibayhi*, lit. “his two improvers.” The most acceptable sense would be foster-parents; however, *muhadhhibayhi* could hardly mean this. The text is uncertain, and it seems that the solution of the problem has to be sought in some mistranslation of the Syriac text. Cf. also fr. B 2 c. Unfortunately, al-Bīrūnī does not indicate what he found in his text in the place of *muhadhhibayhi*, or how he understood the word.

⁴³ Cf. fr. B 2 b.

⁴⁴ Sanguinetti suggested that “the poet” was Homer, since he was aware of the fact that the Arabs knew that the Greeks referred to their most famous bard as “the poet,” without mentioning his name. Cf. Ibn al-Maṭrān, *Bustān al-aṭibbāʾ*, *ms. cit.* (fr. B 1 a),

derived from the word for "burning heat."⁴⁵ That is: Son of the heat giving animal power.

Ḥunayn says: He was called by this name, because life is the result of the preservation of the natural heat in heart and liver whose name is derived from "burning heat," because it belongs to the class of fire.⁴⁶

Galen says: He is said to be the son of Coronis, because this name is derived from being sated and gaining health.⁴⁷

Ḥunayn says: He was called by this name to indicate that in the course of the process of digestion,⁴⁸ man can become really sated with food and drink only with the help of the craft of medicine, for the preservation of health is achieved only through this profession, as is its restoration once it is gone.

Galen says: He is said to be the son of Apollo, because physicians must possess some of the ability of the diviner,⁴⁹ for it is not unnecessary for

fol. 110a, who states that for the Greeks, "the poet" was Homer, and "the poetess" Sappho (the source for this statement is Galen, *Quod animi mores corporis tempora-menta sequantur* 4, 771 Kühn). However, the statement in question does not occur in Homer, though it should be noted that the scholia to *Iliad* 4, 194 f. have the appropriate etymology. In these scholia and elsewhere, the name of Asclepius is derived from applying (*askein*) gentle (*ēpia*) medicines, or from "applying and making the limbs gentle" (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 125, fr. 270 and 270a; cf. 1, 12 f. and 1, 124, fr. 6. and 268, from Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* 33 [p. 70 Lang]: "Asclepius derived his name from healing gently [*apo tou ēpiōs iāsthai*]"). No doubt there were poets who expressed the same idea in verse.

⁴⁵ Phlegyas, from *phlegō*, "to burn," an etymology which has been provided here with the proper medical interpretation.

⁴⁶ The text (Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 18_n) should read: <wa>*shtaqqa*. The antecedent of the relative pronoun could be "life," but it certainly is "natural heat." The latter term would be represented in Greek by *thermon*, and not a derivation from the root *phlegō*. However, Ḥunayn does not think in Greek terms at the moment.

Phlegma, "phlegm," it is true, comes from *phlegō*, but the phlegm has no connection whatever with "natural heat." Moreover, it is quite generally classified as cold, and only very exceptionally as hot, as by Philolaos (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* A 27 Diels, from Menon, *Iatrica* XVIII, 41-6, in *Suppl. Aristotelicum* 3, pars 1, 32 f., Berlin 1893) and Prodicus (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* B 4 Diels, from Galen), cf. C. Fredrich, *Hippokratische Untersuchungen* 40-43 (Berlin 1899, *Philologische Untersuchungen* 15), and Galen, *Über die medizinischen Namen* 13₂₇₋₂₈, 16₁₀, transl. 26, 30 Meyerhof-Schacht (*Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akad. d. Wiss., philos.-hist. Kl.* 1931, no. 3).

⁴⁷ Coronis is assumed here to be connected with *korennymi*, "to satiate." Cf. also fr. B 2 c.

⁴⁸ In the *Lesarten* of his edition of Ibn Uṣaybi'ah, A. Müller considered the reference to digestion an old gloss.

⁴⁹ Apollodorus of Athens, in the second century B.C., stated that Asclepius, like his father Apollo, "superintended divination and augury" (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 149 f., fr. 301), and according to Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* III, 44 (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 188 f., fr. 366), Asclepius inherited the mantic skill of his father which enabled him to find the proper drugs and cures.

a good physician to have some knowledge of the things that might happen later on.

Ḥunayn says: This refers to medical prognostication.

Galen says: Now, the time has come for us to speak about the pictorial representation, garments, and influence of Asclepius.⁵⁰ The statements we find written concerning his deification are more like idle talk than the truth.⁵¹ It is a well-known fact concerning him that he was raised to the angels in a column of fire.⁵² The same is also said about Dionysus and Heracles and similar (men) who worked zealously for the benefit of mankind. In general, God is said to have done this with Asclepius and all the others like him in order to destroy his mortal terrestrial part through fire and, afterwards, attract to himself his immortal part and raise his soul to heaven.

Ḥunayn says: Galen explains here how the assimilation of man to God⁵³ takes place. He says that when a human being annihilates his bodily desires—which are meant by “his mortal terrestrial part”—through the fire of endurance and abstention and when, after driving his rational soul away from those desires, he adorns it with the virtues—which are meant by “being raised to heaven”⁵⁴—, he is similar to God.

Galen says: He⁵⁵ is represented (in sculpture) as a man with a beard and long locks of hair. Investigation of the reason why he is represented with a beard while his father (Apollo)⁵⁶ appears without one (has led to the following hypotheses):⁵⁷ Some people say that he was represented and fashioned in this manner because that was how he was when God

⁵⁰ For a very condensed summary of the following discussion, cf. Ibn Nubâtah, *Sarḥ al-ʿuyûn* 1, 220 (Cairo 1305, in the margin of aṣ-Ṣafadi, *Al-Ghayth al-musajjam*).

⁵¹ Cf. above, fn. 33.

⁵² Cf. fr. B 2 b and B 2 d.

⁵³ Since the time of Plato and all through the Middle Ages, the “assimilation of man to the divine” was a central theme of philosophy and also served as a definition for it. The symbolic value of the deification of Asclepius thus finds here the highest appreciation.

⁵⁴ The explanatory parenthesis apparently does not refer to “rational soul.” Grammatically and syntactically, this would be possible.

⁵⁵ This sentence appears in al-Qifṭī 13_{16r}.

⁵⁶ The Arabic text reads “his son,” which has the same consonant skeleton as “his father.” The reading makes no sense, but it is easy to see how it could gain acceptance.

⁵⁷ The problem greatly agitated the ancients, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 358 f., fr. 683-85; 2, 219 f., but none of the explanations given in the *Commentary* appears in classical literature. Edelstein, on his part (*op. cit.* 2, 220), comes to the conclusion that the growing preponderance of bearded representations of Asclepius came about “because the mature figure was held to be the more appropriate representation of the deified physician.” In a sense, he thus aligns himself with the second explanation from the *Commentary*.

lifted him up to himself. Others give as the reason for it the fact that his craft requires modesty and maturity.⁵⁸ Some people again give as the reason for it the fact that by virtue of (his mastery of) the craft of medicine, he surpassed his father in mental power.

Looking ⁵⁹ at him, you will find him standing with his garments tucked up. This pose indicates that physicians must (be ready to) philosophize at all times.⁶⁰ Those of his limbs which it would be shameful to expose are observed to be covered, and those which are needed for the practice of medicine are naked and exposed.⁶¹

He is represented holding in his hand a curved staff with branches, made from the marsh mallow tree.⁶² This indicates that by employing the craft of medicine, a person may reach the age in which a staff (to lean on) is needed.⁶³ Or it indicates that a person endowed by God with certain gifts deserves to be given a staff, as one was given to Hephaistus, Zeus, and Hermes.⁶⁴ We find that Zeus (!)

⁵⁸ Cf. fr. B 2 d.

⁵⁹ The text from here to the words "is needed" (marked by fn. 63) appears in al-Qifti 13_{rr}-14_a.

⁶⁰ The identity of philosopher and physician was a favorite idea of Galen and widely accepted.

⁶¹ Representations of Asclepius often show his right side uncovered. Cf. also the relief representing the god Amphiaraus using his naked right hand for medical ministrations (frontispiece in R. Herzog, *Die Wunderheilungen von Epidauros*, Leipzig 1931, *Philologus*, Supplement 22, Heft 3). Another reproduction in G. Sarton, *A History of Science*, 389 (Cambridge 1952).

According to the biography of Hippocrates by Soranus 12 (p. 177 Ilberg), the physician was represented with his garment covering his head, and one of the explanations was that he wanted to have his hands free for operations and therefore tucked up the garment where it was hanging over, and put it over his head.

⁶² The "branches" correspond to the knots (*nodosus*) of the classical sources, cf., for instance, Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 361 f., fr. 691. I doubt, however, whether the Arabic word could mean knots.

The common varieties of the marsh mallow plant (*althaia*) are hardly the proper material for a serviceable staff, but this would not deter a speculative mind bent on finding some suitable medical symbolism in the staff of Asclepius. For a symbolic staff of bay wood, cf. below, fn. 83.

For *khiṭmī*, cf. I. Löw, *Aramäische Pflanzennamen* 308 (Leipzig 1881); *idem*, *Die Flora der Juden* 2, 230-33 (Vienna-Leipzig 1924). For the medicinal qualities ascribed to it, cf. fn. 68.

⁶³ A different interpretation of the staff is given by Cornutus, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 12 f., fr. 6.

⁶⁴ The scepter of Zeus and the caduceus of Hermes are characteristic attributes of these deities. Hephaistus may be represented carrying a staff, and his lameness is said to signify his need for some wooden support such as a stick, cf. Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* 18 (p. 33 Lang), and Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae* 41 Oelmann. However, he could hardly claim a staff as his characteristic attribute; this

With that staff consoles ⁶⁵

Whomever he likes, and ⁶⁶ then also wakens with it those who are asleep.

This staff is represented as made from marsh mallow trees, because they completely drive away any disease.⁶⁷

Ḥunayn says: The marsh mallow plant is a drug causing moderate calefaction. It is thus suited for being a medicament of many uses, both when used by itself and when mixed with other matters that are either hotter or colder than it. This was explained by Dioscurides and others who discussed it.⁶⁸ For ⁶⁹ this reason, we find the Greek word for it

would rather be the hammer. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* IV, 57 (I, 44 f. Stählin), speaking about the characteristic attributes of the various gods in pictorial representations, mentions as that of Hephaistus his "craft (*technê*)."

The original text may have mentioned the attributes of each god that characterized his special "gift" and were held by him in his hand, and the translator then simplified his task by calling all of them "staff." It would have been difficult for him to distinguish in his language between the various Greek words meaning "staff," such as *skêptron* and *kêrykeion* (and numerous others, such as *rhabdos*, *baktêria*, etc.), and if the attribute of Hephaistus was not exactly a "staff," he might have chosen to disregard the fact.

The scepter made by Hephaistus for Zeus and given by the latter to Hermes (and then passed on to various Greek heroes, cf. *Iliad* 2, 101 f.; Pausanias IX, 40, 11) cannot be meant here, although the same gods happen to be mentioned.

⁶⁵ The common Arabic idiom used here literally means "cools the eyes." It thus is even closer to Greek *ommata thelgei*, in the Homeric verse (*Iliad* 24, 342-44; *Odyssey* 5, 47 f.; 24, 3 f.) concerning the staff of Hermes, quoted above in translation from Arabic:

. . . *rhabdon, têi t' andrôn ommata thelgei*
Hôn ethelei, tous d' aute kai hypnôontas egeirei.

The reference to Zeus, instead of Hermes, is a mistake.

⁶⁶ Al-Qiftî 14₃₋₇ sets in again and continues for six lines (. . . than it).

⁶⁷ Cf. al-Qiftî 10₁₁₋₁₁₂: "According to Hippocrates, the staff of Asclepius was made from the marsh mallow tree, and a snake was represented around it. Galen says: It was made from marsh mallow (wood) to stress the importance of temperance, since the marsh mallow is temperate and neither too hot nor too cold. He used to pay constant attention to temperance and, therefore, thought that he could use only a staff made from a temperate tree. A snake (*ḥayyah*) was represented around it because it has the longest life of all animals. It was, therefore, made a symbol of science which is imperishable." This appears to be a summary of the discussion in the *Commentary*. The first two sentences (with the omission of the reference to the snake) are quoted by Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum* 6 Bedjan; transl. 6 Budge, cf. above, fn. 38.

⁶⁸ Cf. Dioscurides III, 146 (2, 154-56 Wellmann). According to 'Alî b. Rabban aṭ-Ṭabari, *Firdaws al-ḥikmah* 402_{1st}. (Berlin 1928), the marsh mallow dissolves hot swellings.

Reference to this passage concerning the marsh mallow staff is made by Bar Hebraeus, *Ta'rikh mukhtaṣar ad-duwal* 120 Ṣâlḥânî (Beirut 1890).

⁶⁹ The following twelve lines, to ". . . future," appear in al-Qiftî 14₇₋₁₆.

(*althaia*) derived from the word for medical treatments.⁷⁰ The name is meant to indicate that the marsh mallow possesses many uses.

Galen says: The curved form of the staff and its many branches indicate the great number of subdivisions and branches of the craft of medicine. We also find that the staff was not left without further adornments. Upon it, there is represented a long-lived animal, wound around it—a snake.⁷¹ This animal is brought into connection with Asclepius for a number of reasons. One of them is the fact that the snake is a sharp-sighted animal which is much awake and never sleeps.⁷² Thus, the student of the craft of medicine must not be detracted by sleep, and he must possess the keenest possible mind in order to be able to warn (his patients) in advance of present (conditions) and (those) likely to arise in the future. Thus, Hippocrates is found to refer to this activity (of the physician) as follows: "I am of the opinion that the best thing for a physician to use is foresight; for if he has foreknowledge and warns the patients in advance of their present (condition) and those of the past and the future. . . ." ⁷³

There also is another explanation of the snake represented upon the staff held by Asclepius. Namely, this ⁷⁴ animal—the snake—is said to have a very long, even an eternal life. Those who employ the craft of medicine are able to live long, and we thus find that Democritus and Perdikkas (?),⁷⁵ by employing the precepts of the art of medicine, lived

⁷⁰ *Althaia* is considered derived from *althainô*, "to cure," cf. Dioscurides III, 146 (2, 154-56 Wellmann): *dia to polyalthes kai polychrêston einai*.

⁷¹ *Tinnin*, "dragon, large snake," translates Greek *drakôn*, cf. the following note.

⁷² For the derivation of *drakôn* from *derkomai*, "to see," cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* I, 149, 366, fr. 301 and 701 f.; further, I, 361 f., fr. 691, where the snake is said to be the guardian of the Asclepius temple on the Tiber island, because it is the most vigilant of animals. According to Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* 20 (p. 37 Lang), snakes are symbols of Athene, because they look frightening and are vigilant and sleep little (*agrypnos*).

⁷³ Sanguinetti recognized that this quotation is derived from the beginning of Hippocrates, *Prognostics* 2, 110 Littré: *Ton iêtron dokei moi ariston einai pronoian epitêdeuein. Proginôskôn gar kai prolegôn para toisi noseousi ta te paronta kai ta progegonota kai ta melionta esesthai* (. . . *pisteuôito an málloin ginôsklein to tôn noseuntôn prêgmata*). It should be noted that the quotation breaks off after the subordinate clause, in the middle of the sentence. Possibly, the words "and so on" were originally found in the text.

⁷⁴ The following two lines, up to . . . "live long," appear in al-Qiftî 14₁₆₋₈.

⁷⁵ Democritus of Abdera is mentioned as one of the longevous philosophers in Lucian, *Makrobioi* 18. The other name is corrupt. Herodotus, as Müller read it, has nothing to recommend himself as a *makrobios*, and it would be equally difficult to explain the occurrence of Herophilus, the teacher of Hippocrates, or Prodicus (both suggested by Sanguinetti) in this context. Heraclitus might be a possible if unsubstantiated correction. However, since Democritus is linked with Hippocrates through the latter's apocryphal biography, the second name might point into the same direction and, perhaps, should be

a very long life. This animal—the snake—sloughs off its skin, called by the Greeks “old age.”⁷⁶ Likewise people, by employing the craft of medicine, are able to slough off old age, the result of disease, and regain health.

Asclepius⁷⁷ is represented with a laurel wreath upon his head because the laurel tree banishes grief.⁷⁸ Therefore, we find Hermes, when he is called “the venerable,”⁷⁹ (represented) with such a wreath. For physicians must keep away (grief) from themselves.⁸⁰ Asclepius is thus provided with a wreath that banishes grief.

Or it is because the (laurel) wreath is common to the craft of medicine as well as divination,⁸¹ and people, therefore, were of the opinion that the wreath used for physicians and diviners should be one and the same (kind of) wreath.

Or⁸² it is because the (laurel) tree also possesses some healing power. Poisonous vermin are found fleeing from the places where it is put.⁸³ The

corrected to Perdiccas. Some sources maintain, probably correctly, that Perdiccas II reigned forty-one years and thus, he might have been considered a *makrobios*.

⁷⁶ *Gêras*, “old age,” doubles for the “old skin” of snakes in Greek. This fact is often referred to in explanation of the symbolic meaning of the snake of Asclepius, cf. Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 10-14, 148 f., 367, fr. 5 f., 301, and 704.

⁷⁷ This paragraph appears in al-Qifti 14₁₈₋₂₂.

⁷⁸ Cf. Festus, *De verborum significatu*, 98 Lindsay (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 361 f., fr. 691): “He is crowned with laurel, because it is a tree possessing many medicinal uses.”

⁷⁹ The Greek equivalent is not clear to me, and the interpretation of the passage, therefore, remains doubtful. “Venerable” suggests Greek *aidaios* and may have resulted from the misunderstanding or interpretation of a reference to an *aidoion*-shaped herma.

Wreaths commonly occur in the cult of Hermes (cf. S. Eitrem, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie* 8, col. 703, s.v. *Hermai*; K. Preisendanz and others, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* 1, 146/7, Leipzig 1928-31), and the laurel is occasionally though not prominently mentioned in connection with the deity (cf. S. Eitrem, *op. cit.* col. 795, s.v. *Hermes*).

⁸⁰ In the beginning of *De flatibus* 6, 90 Littré, Hippocrates refers to the fact that physicians cure other people of disease and grief, while they themselves, having to observe so much human misery, “harvest manifold grief.” The *Commentary* presents a transformation of this idea.

⁸¹ According to Cornutus, *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* 32 (p. 68 Lang), the laurel is characteristic of Apollo, because among other things, it can be related etymologically to prophecy (*daphnê*—*diaphainô*). Cassianus Bassus Scholasticus, *Geoponica* XI, 2, calls it the symbol of mantic, and he also states that it produces health. According to Artemidorus, *Oneirocritica* II, 25 (p. 119 Hercher), it indicates “for physicians and diviners their respective crafts because of Apollo.”

⁸² This and the following sentence are found in al-Qifti 14₂₂₋₁₅.

⁸³ According to *Geoponica* XI, 2, the demons shun places where the bay-tree is found. It is also described as a preventive medicine (*alexipharmakon*) used against suspected enemies, in the proverb: “I am carrying a staff made of laurel wood (*daphninên phorô baktêrian*),” cf. Suidas, s.v. *daphninên*.

However, the poisonous effect on vermins is generally ascribed to the oleander, or

same applies to the plant called *conyza*,⁸⁴ and also to the fruit of the (laurel) tree called laurel-berries; used as a salve, they have an effect similar to that of castor.

When they represent that snake,⁸⁵ they place into his ⁸⁶ hand an egg, hinting at the fact that the whole world needs medicine. The symbol of the universe is the egg.⁸⁷

We must also speak about the sacrifices offered to Asclepius in order to achieve nearness to God.⁸⁸ Thus, we say: Nobody ever offered any he-goat to God in the name of Asclepius, because yarn from the hair of this animal cannot be softened like wool and because those who eat too much of its meat easily come to suffer from epileptic seizures, for the nourishment generated from it has a bad chyme, is dried out, coarse, bitter, and tending toward bilious blood.

Galen says: ⁸⁹ In fact, there are people who offer roosters to God in the name of Asclepius. They also are of the opinion that Socrates offered such a sacrifice to him. Such was the condition of this divine man (Asclepius) who taught mankind the craft of medicine (and gave it to them) as a permanent possession that was better than the inventions of Dionysus and Demeter.

Ḥunayn says: The "invention of Dionysus" refers to wine, for the Greeks are of the opinion that the first inventor of wine was Dionysus. The name is used by the poets to allude to the power that changes the sap in the vine and prepares it for becoming wine which generates joy when it is drunk. The "invention of Demeter" is bread and all the other grains from which bread is prepared. Therefore, there are people who

"rose-laurel" (Greek *rhododaphnê*, Arabic *diflâ*, going back to *daphnê*), cf. Meyerhof and Sobhy, *op. cit.* (above, fn. 23), vol. 1, part 3, p. 515 ff. Somehow, the qualities of the "rose-laurel" might have been transferred to the laurel.

⁸⁴ Cf. Dioscurides III, 121, 2 (2, 132 Wellmann): "The stalk (of *conyza*) with the leaves, spread out and burnt, is able to chase away animals and repel mosquitoes; it also kills fleas." Its effect upon animals is also mentioned by Theophrastus, *Hist. plant.* VI, 2, 6.

⁸⁵ Sanguinetti suggested that the correct reading might be "wreath," instead of "snake."

⁸⁶ As the text stands, the antecedent of the pronoun could only be the snake; however, fr. B 2 c proves the correctness of the above translation and precludes any correction to, for instance, "its mouth," or the like.

⁸⁷ Cf. fr. B 2 c.

⁸⁸ For this and the following paragraph, cf. fr. B 2 a. Cf. also below, p. 84.

⁸⁹ This introduction would seem to suggest that at least part of the immediately preceding text belongs to the notes of Ḥunayn; this, however, is not the case. Sanguinetti omits the words "Galen says," but A. Müller, in his edition, gives no indication that the words are missing from any of his manuscripts.

call the grain Demeter. The poets also use the name of (Demeter) for the earth that produces grain. The invention of Asclepius refers to health without which nothing useful or pleasurable could be acquired.

Galen says: For the inventions of those two are of no use as long as the invention of Asclepius does not exist.

The chair upon which Asclepius sits represents the power through which health is gained.⁹⁰ It is "the noblest power," as some poet says.⁹¹ We find that all poets praise and glorify this power. One of them says:

O you⁹² who are superior in nobility to all benefactors, in (the enjoyment of) your goodness I want to be the remainder of my life.

Another poet said:

O you who are superior in nobility to all benefactors, it is you whom I ask for consideration before all other good things.⁹³

⁹⁰ While it is well known that Asclepius may be represented sitting (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 345, fr. 630), with his daughter Hygieia standing next to him (*op. cit.* 1, 354, fr. 663), I fail to see how his throne could be considered a symbol of Hygieia, the "health-giving power." Neither *hedra* nor *thronos* suggests any etymological connection.

⁹¹ Cf. the famous *skolion* of uncertain authorship (Simonides, Epicharmus), beginning: *Hygiainein men ariston*. It is first attested in Plato, *Gorgias* 451 E. Cf. *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, fourth ed., 3, 645 f. Bergk.

⁹² *Ayyuhâ*, instead of *innahâ*, here and in the following quotation. This is the first line of the celebrated hymn to Hygieia ascribed to a certain Aripbron (*Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, fourth ed., 3, 595-97 Bergk): *Hygieia, presbistâ makarôn, meta seu naioimi to leipomenon biotâs*. "Benefactors (*abrâr*)" renders *makares*, and a translation corresponding to this Greek word might be better than "benefactors," especially since *abrâr* is used for the "virtuous" in Paradise already in the Qur'ân, and an Arabic author might refer to "the blessed (*abrâr*) angels chosen by God to be near him," cf. Miskawayh, *Tahdhîb al-akhlâq*, 16 (Cairo 1322).

In Greek literature, this hymn is also quoted anonymously, and it cannot be decided whether this and the other quotations here were quoted anonymously in the Greek original, or whether the difficult names were dropped in the process of translation.

The statement that "health is one of the things that are superior in nobility" also occurs in the Arabic translation of Galen's *Ethics*, edited by P. Kraus, in *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the Egyptian University* 5, 42_n (1939).

⁹³ For grammatical reasons, it would hardly be possible to translate: "I ask to be considered worthy of you. . . ." Moreover, the verse seems to correspond to the second line of the hymn of Aripbron: *Sy de moi prophrôn synoikos eiês* (transmitted with slight variations). The translator may have tried to give some clumsy literal interpretation to *prophrôn*. At any rate, this is a quotation from another hymn to Hygieia beginning with the same invocation as that of the hymn ascribed to Aripbron, and then continuing with a line corresponding to the second line of Aripbron's hymn. Considering the close relationship between the hymns of Aripbron and Licymnius (see fn. 95), this is by no means a surprising or unusual situation.

Then, there is the general statement:⁹⁴ "Are not all the good things, such as wealth, children, or royal authority, which are considered equal in power by all human beings,⁹⁵ something auxiliary and enjoyable only by virtue of health which is the benefactor worthy of the name? For health is the highest degree of good,⁹⁶ not something good in the second degree, as some philosophers, known as Peripatetics and Stoics, have thought.⁹⁷ For all the other virtues that are of paramount concern to

⁹⁴ Though the beginning of this quotation is derived from a poem (see fn. 95), we have here a rather lengthy excerpt from a prose lecture on the virtues of health, extending over nineteen lines. A close, if much briefer, parallel is found in Plutarch, *De virtute morali* 450 A-B: "Neither 'the gift of wealth or children' nor 'royal authority that makes men like the gods' (is considered equal to health), and eventually, men consider virtue useless and senseless in the absence of health." Cf. also below, fn. 98.

⁹⁵ Sanguinetti understood the text to mean that all the goods mentioned can be equally acquired by all human beings but have no value without health. However, anyone reading the text as transmitted, without giving any thought to its possible Greek original, would understand it as follows: "Which good things, such as wealth, children, or royal authority are considered equal in power (to health) by all human beings? Is not all this. . . ." But the passage obviously is a translation of another line of the hymn of Ariphron (duplicated in the hymn of Licymnius, *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, fourth ed., 3, 599 Bergk, and cf. also the quotation from Plutarch, above, fn. 94): *Ei gar tis* (Licymnius: *Tis gar*) *ê ploutou charis ê tekeôn ê tâs isodaimonos anthrôpois archês* (. . . *sethen de chôrîs outis eudaimôn ephy*).

The words "considered equal in power by all human beings" are nothing but a poor rendering of *isodaimonos anthrôpois*. In the Arabic text, they are used with reference to all three goods mentioned, whereas in the Greek text, they refer to royal authority alone. This mistake may be due to the Arabic translator from the Syriac, or our Arabic text may be corrupt. By inserting the relative pronoun *alladhî* after "royal authority," the relative clause would become restricted to royal authority, while the sense would otherwise remain unchanged.

⁹⁶ An author as late as Suidas (*s. v. hygieia*) defines health as *tôn anthrôpinôn agathôn to kalliston*.

⁹⁷ The Stoics consider health an *adiaphoron*. As such, it is something in between (*metaxy*) good and evil. Good and evil actions (*praxeis*) need it for their realization, and one might pretend to consider it something good. Cf. *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* 3, 16, 27, 175 Arnim, and the many references in the index of Arnim's work, *s. v. hygieia*. For Galen, cf. *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis* 5, 597 Kühn.

Referring to the afore-mentioned *skolion* (fn. 91), Aristotle considered it a quite generally accepted popular opinion that being healthy is the best thing that may happen to man (*Rhetoric* 1394 b. 13, cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* IV, V, 23 [2, 258 Stählin]). For Peripatetic philosophy, however, health is merely one of the goods whose relative position within the scale of goods is frequently discussed, cf., for instance, the commentaries by Alexander of Aphrodisias on the *First Analytics* and the *Topics* (*Comm. in Aristotelem Graeca* 1-2, Berlin 1883-91, index, *s. v. hygieia*).

It may be noted that Neo-Platonism, the most powerful philosophical movement of late Antiquity, could not possibly have considered health as the *summum bonum*. The Neo-Pythagorean Hierocles, *Commentary on the Golden Verses* (verse 17 ff.), mentions "health, wealth, and ruling power" as relative goods. Similarly, the *Tabula Cebetis* VIII (Miskawayh, *Jâwîdhân Khiradh* 237, Cairo 1952), enumerates wealth, rank (*doxa*),

human beings during their whole life derive their nobility from health.⁹⁸ Thus, we find that men who want to show courage and energy and go to war against their enemies and defend their friends and fight for them can do so only by employing their physical strength (which depends upon health).⁹⁹ Justice, that is, seeing that everybody receives what is due to him,¹⁰⁰ doing what is to be done, preserving the laws, and following always the right opinion and course of action, cannot materialize in practice without (the possession of) health. Salvation, too, is considered to be the result of health and to materialize through it.¹⁰¹ In general, if someone, because he holds a certain opinion or wants to practice idle, misleading sophistry, attempts to say that his intention is not to go after health, such a statement would be just words. If he admits the truth, he will say that health in reality is the highest degree of good." This

good health ('*âfiyah*, but the Greek original has *eugeneia*, "noble birth"), children, and ruling authority as ambivalent goods. In *Tabula Cebetis* XXXIX, where the ambivalence of wealth is discussed, the Arabic text adds a reference to health.

For the general disinclination of ancient philosophers to accept the glorification of health, cf. L. Edelstein, in *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 26, 309 f. (1952).

⁹⁸ Cf. also Aelius Aristides 2, 357 Keil, on Serapis: ". . . Health . . . without which it is not possible to enjoy either the virtues (*tois agathois*) of the soul or any other happiness." Further, *idem* 2, 335 Keil (Edelstein, *Asclepius* 1, 157/160, fr. 317), speaking about Asclepius: ". . . using health as the one common remedy for all difficulties (pains) and activities (of the crafts and professions)."

⁹⁹ The idea that health might be a higher good in war than in peace is expressed by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his commentary on Aristotle's *Topics* 52_a Wallies.

¹⁰⁰ Justice is *tou kat' axian hekastôi aponemêtikê*, cf., e. g., Ioannes Philoponus in his commentary on the *First Analytics* 344₂₅. Wallies; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* VII, 64 (1, 127 Stählin), and elsewhere. Aristotle's own phrasing (*Rhetoric* 1366 b 9 f., cf. also *Nicomachean Ethics* 1130 b 9) is somewhat different and, in addition, pays attention to the relation of *dikaiosynê* to *nomos*.

A definition of justice that is quite similar to the one found here appears in Pseudo-Aristotle, *De virtutibus* 1250 b 15-19.

Justice defined as what is proper is Platonic, cf. *Gorgias* 507 B. Discussing justice, Elias, *Prolegomena in Philosophiam*, 19 Busse (*Comm. in Aristotelem Graeca* 18, part 1, Berlin 1900), however, defines *phronêsis*, and not justice, as "doing what is proper."

¹⁰¹ *Khalâş* represents Greek *sôtêria*, and although the translation "salvation" has been chosen here, the author does not think of the theological significance of the term, nor does he want to convey the idea, often encountered among Muslim mystics, that worldly well-being is necessary for the proper performance of the worship of God. He thinks of good health as needed for survival (*sôtêria* "preservation") in any difficult situation. Cf. Maximus Tyrius, *Philosophoumena* VII, 2: "But let Dionysius afflict the Syracusans with his disease of tyranny, and the people, though themselves healthy, will be too weak to effect their salvation (*sôtêrian*)."
Philo, *De ebrietate* 2, 197 Cohn-Wendland, says that ". . . in our bodies disease causes dissolution, and health salvation (*hygeia de sôterias aitia*)."
Cf. also Lydus, *Liber de mensibus* IV, 22 (p. 81 Wünsch): "Health is the power that controls the opposite qualities (in the body) so as to effect (its) salvation (*kata ton sôstikon logon*)."

power was considered suited for being (represented as) a chair for the man in charge of the craft of medicine. The word for this power also has its correct derivation in the Greek language. It is derived from the word for humidity,¹⁰² because our health can materialize only through humidity. Some poet somewhere indicated this fact by saying: "Humid man."¹⁰³

Looking at the pictorial representation of Asclepius, you will find him sitting and leaning upon men represented around him. This is necessary because he must be steady and not leave the company of people.¹⁰⁴ A snake wound around him is represented with him. The reason for it was mentioned before.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² *Hygieia* is here considered derived from *hygrotês*. Already Hippo (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* A 11 Diels, from Menon, *Iatrica* IX, 22 ff., in *Suppl. Aristotelicum* 3, pars 1, 17, Berlin 1893, or Hipponax) of Croton had spoken about "a proper humidity according to which we have sensations and through which we live; when this humidity behaves properly, a living being is healthy (*hotan men oun oikeiôs echêi hê toiautê hygrotês, hygieinai to zôion*).¹⁰³ The dominant theory, of course, considers health as the result of the proper mixture of the four humors.

¹⁰³ This quotation certainly has nothing to do with Thales' famous theory that man (like everything else) originated from water, which was well known to Hippocrates and Galen, cf. Galen's commentary on Hippocrates, *De natura hominis* 15, 21 Kühn. The Arabic suggests *hygros anêr*, or some similar words, as the Greek original. Our Greek dictionaries (Stephanus, Passow, s.v. *hygros*) quote *hygros* in connection with men and women as occurring in Hippocrates, but there it means "soft." As a matter of fact, *hygros*, as an adjective modifying man, might have been used in its literal meaning of "humid" in some didactic poem on medicine or physics, but general poetry would have thus used it only to express one of its numerous metaphoric meanings. We may assume that the author of the *Commentary* (or his source) seized upon some poetical passage containing the words *hygros anêr* or the like, and found in it a confirmation of his combination of *hygiês* with *hygros*, even though the poet himself had not intended to use *hygros* in its literal meaning. [The reference of the Greek dictionaries may be to Galen's *Commentary on the Aphorisms* 17, part 2, 578, 583, 586 Kühn. Cf. also, from the same work, p. 410: *ex hygrou gar hê genesis hêmîn*.]

Another explanation may be suggested, though no proof is possible at present. In a poem quoted by Plato, *Protagoras* 346 C, Simonides praises the "sound man (*hygiês anêr*).¹⁰⁴ Somewhere, his words may have been distorted to *hygros anêr* and in this form come to the attention of our source. A misreading of Empedocles (*Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* B 38 Diels): *êd' hygros aêr Titan êd' aithêr*, can hardly be assumed.

For the ancients who spoke Latin, it would have been tempting to combine *humidus* and *homo*, though *homo* was usually combined with *humus*.

¹⁰⁴ Group representations of the sitting Asclepius and, for instance, his daughters are known. However, the interpretation of the seated position as steadiness and of the people around Asclepius as symbolizing the necessary sociableness of the physician is not found in any other source.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. above, p. 70 f. This paragraph evidently deals with some different pictorial representation of the God which, however, again included the snake. The preserved text appears to have been shortened.

3. Concerning the biography of Hippocrates.

a. Eutychius (Sa'id) b. Biṭriq, *Annals* 264 f. Selden-Pocock (Oxford 1658); 76 Cheikho (Beirut-Paris-Leipzig 1906, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, Scriptores Arabici* III, 6).

In the time of (Artaxerxes Longimannus), the sage Hippocrates, the master of the craft of medicine, lived in the land of the Greeks in the city of Cos. Sa'id b. Biṭriq, the physician, says:

Proof of this is the information given by Galen in his *Commentary on the Book of the Oaths and Covenant of Hippocrates* to the effect that the Persian king wrote to Hippocrates and offered him much money if he would come to him. However, Hippocrates did not accede to his request and did not go to him, because he did not consider it fair to cure the Persians who were the enemies of the Greeks.¹⁰⁶

In his translation of this book from Greek into Arabic, Ḥunayn b. Ishāq mentions that Hippocrates did not go to Artaxerxes, with the nickname of Longimannus. It is said that in the days of this king, the disease called *al-mw'rq*¹⁰⁷—or, according to another manuscript, pestilence (*al-mûtân*)—befell the Persians, and he therefore wrote to the governor of the city of Cos and asked him to give Hippocrates one hundred hundredweights¹⁰⁸ of gold and send him to him with honor and respect, so that he might cure the Persians of the disease that had befallen them. However, Hippocrates did not accede to his request, because he did not consider it fair to help and cure the enemies of the Greeks.

¹⁰⁶ The story is best known from the Hippocratic *Letters*, 9, 312 ff. Littré, a collection of documents whose date is uncertain but in no case later than the first century A. D., cf. L. Edelstein, in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie, Supplementband* 6, cols. 1290-1345, s. v. *Hippocrates* (1935), and, for the history of the text of the *Letters*, cf. G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* 404-8 (Florence 1934). The original text of the *Commentary* restricted itself to a bare version, and Ḥunayn added some details.

In his biography of Hippocrates, al-Mubashshir, *Mukhtâr al-ḥikam*, adds the name of the alleged governor of Cos, calling him Filâtûs. He clearly is the Paitos of the *Letters* (who, according to Pasquali, represents some Roman Paetus). Cf. also Abû Sulaymân as-Sijistânî, *Ṣiwân*, in the paragraph devoted to Hippocrates, fol. 38b of the Istanbul ms. Murad Molla 1408.

As an example of supreme patriotism, the story was deservedly popular and always appears in connection with the biography of Hippocrates in Arabic literature. Cf. also Ibn Nubâtaḥ, *Sarḥ al-'uyûn* I, 230 (Cairo 1305, in the margin of aṣ-Ṣafadi, *al-Ghayth al-musajjam*). It was no less popular in the West. At the time of the French Revolution, for instance, it was the subject of a painting executed in 1792 by Girodet-Trioson (1767-1824) for the Medical School in Paris (cf. R. Mouterde, in *Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph* 26, 75-78, 1944-46).

¹⁰⁷ Possibly, a distorted transcription of Greek *loimikê*.

¹⁰⁸ Qintâr, "hundredweight," renders Greek *talanton*, "talent."

b. Al-Mas'ûdi, *Tanbîh* 131₁₁-132₁ De Goeje (Leiden 1894, *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum* 8).

Between Galen and Hippocrates are about six hundred years, for Hippocrates lived about one hundred years before Alexander in the days of the early (Achaemenid) Persian king Artaxerxes—whom I believe to be Bahman b. Isbandiyâdh b. Kay Bishtâsb b. Kay Luhrâsb.¹⁰⁹

This is mentioned by Galen in his *Commentary and Interpretation of the Book of the Oaths of Hippocrates*, which was translated by Hunayn b. Ishâq. He tells that this Artaxerxes wrote to his governor in the city of Cos in the land of the Greeks who at that time were his subjects, and commanded him to give (several) hundredweights of money to (Hippocrates) and send him to him with great honor, for an illness called pestilence had seized the Persians at that time. However, Hippocrates refused, because he did not consider it fair to cure the Persians who were the enemies of the Greeks.

c. Al-Birûni, *Risâlah fî fihrist kutub Muḥammad b. Zakariyâ' ar-Râzi* 23₁₀-24₂ Kraus (Paris 1936).

Further (such chronological information) is the statement that Hippocrates lived in the days of Ardashîr Bahman, whose name, in the books of the western (historians), is Artaxerxes, with the nickname of Longimannus. At the time of his siege of Rûmîyah,¹¹⁰ (Ardashîr) asked the governor of Cos for (Hippocrates), according to the information given by Galen in his *Commentary on the Covenants of Hippocrates*.

d. Al-Qiftî 91₅₋₁₁ Müller-Lippert. It is doubtful whether this and the following fragment go back to the *Commentary*, but since there is a good amount of probability that they do, they have been included here.

In the treatise which he translated on the authority of Hippocrates,¹¹¹ Galen mentions that Ardashîr invited (Hippocrates) to come and treat him for a disease that had befallen him, but Hippocrates refused, because Ardashîr was an enemy of the Greeks. (He also mentions) that each of two kings invited Hippocrates to come and treat him, and he complied

¹⁰⁹ Cf. A. Christensen, *Les Kayyanides*, in *Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, hist.-filol. Meddelelser* 19, 2, 118 ff. (1932).

¹¹⁰ According to the *Letters*, Hippocrates sent his reply to the Persian king via the latter's governor of the Hellespont. This might have given rise to the idea that an expedition against Byzantium was connected with the story. Rûmîyah might also stand for Rome.

¹¹¹ This might be construed as a reference to the *Letters* if it were not for the fact that the suffix used with *risâlah*, meaning either "treatise" or "letter," can refer only to Galen.

with their request, because their way of life was a good one. But when they were cured of their disease, he did not stay with them, because he abstained from the world and worldly people.¹¹² When Ardashîr's disease became severe, he is said to have offered a thousand hundredweights of gold to Hippocrates if he would come to him and cure him of his disease. However, Hippocrates refused and did not accede to his request.

e. Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 27_{s-20} Müller. Cf. B 3 d.

Hippocrates had no desire of serving a king for the purpose of acquiring wealth or of increasing his property beyond his necessary requirements.¹¹³

In this connection, Galen says that Hippocrates did not accede to the request of a powerful Persian king, known to the Greeks as Artaxerxes, the Persian Ardashîr, the ancestor of Dârâ b. Dârâ.¹¹⁴ In the days of this king, an epidemic befell the Persians, and (the king) wrote to his governor in the city of Cos and expressed the wish¹¹⁵ that he hand over a hundred hundredweights of gold to Hippocrates and send him (to him) with very great honor and respect. This money was to constitute an advance payment, and he was to guarantee him fiefs of the same value. He also wrote to the king of the Greeks and asked him for his help in dispatching (Hippocrates) to him. He guaranteed him an armistice of seven years, as soon as he would dispatch Hippocrates to him. But Hippocrates did not consent to leaving his place and going to the Persians, and when the king of the Greeks insisted that he go, Hippocrates said to him: "I do not sell virtue for money."¹¹⁶

When he treated king Perdiccas for some diseases he was suffering from, he did not stay with him all the time, but went away to treat the indigent and the poor in his own place and in other cities, even small ones. He personally traveled around and visited all Greek cities.¹¹⁷ He eventually composed for them a book on *Airs and Countries*. Galen says: This attitude of his caused him to think little not only of wealth but also of ease and quiet, to which he preferred work and exertion in behalf of virtue.

¹¹² One of the kings was Perdiccas, and the other may have been the unexplained king Demetrius of the *Letters*, unless the legend of Hippocrates' liberation of Athens from the plague is alluded to as a service rendered to some "king." But it is also possible that the two kings refer to Perdiccas and the just mentioned Ardashîr, and the source of the statement may be the passage from Galen referred to in fn. 117.

¹¹³ This passage is quoted by al-Ghuzûlî, *Maṭâli' al-budûr* 2, 94 (Cairo 1299-1300).

¹¹⁴ That is, Darius III who was defeated by Alexander.

¹¹⁵ *Leg.: bi-madînatî <Qû> fa-arâda an. . .*

¹¹⁶ Hippocrates, in a letter to Demetrius, says that the Persian king does not know that "wise words have more power over me than gold" (9, 318 Littré).

¹¹⁷ Cf. Galen, *Quod optimus medicus sit quoque philosophus* 1, 58 Kühn.

f. Al-Birûnî, *Risâlah fî fihrist kutub Muḥammad b. Zakarîyâ' ar-Râzî* 26₂₋₆ Kraus (Paris 1936). The fragment very probably is derived from the *Commentary*. Cf. fr. B 1 b (above, fn. 21) and fr. B 3 g.

Galen says: The family of Asclepius¹¹⁸ had in the past been bound by oaths and covenants preventing them from teaching medicine to outsiders. They had restricted (the instruction in it) to their children in the medical schools on the islands of Rhodes and Cnidus¹¹⁹ and in the city of Cos, and had passed it on orally to their heirs. Eventually, however, Hippocrates feared that the craft might be lost, and he therefore fixed it permanently in writing.

g. Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'ah 1, 24₁₉₋₃₁ Müller. Possibly, only the middle paragraph is derived from the *Commentary*. Cf. above, fn. 21, and the preceding fragment. Cf. also Ibn Ridwân, *an-Nâfi' fî ta'lîm ṣinâ'at at-tibb*, referred to by J. Schacht and M. Meyerhof, *The medico-philosophical controversy between Ibn Butlan of Baghdad and Ibn Ridwan of Cairo* 21 f. (Cairo 1937. *Publ. of the Faculty of Arts of the Egyptian University* 13).

Hippocrates looked into the craft of medicine, and noticing that it had already disappeared from most of the places in which Asclepius had established medical instruction, he became afraid that it might be completely wiped out.

The places in which the craft of medicine was studied were, according to the information mentioned by Galen in his *Commentary on the Book of the Oaths by Hippocrates*, three in number: One was in the city of Rhodes, the second in the city of Cnidus, and the third in the city of Cos.

(Medical) instruction in the city of Rhodes had disappeared, because the masters had no heirs. (Medical instruction) in the city of Cnidus was (nearing) extinction, because those who were heirs to it were just a few persons. In the city of Cos, where Hippocrates resided, (medical instruction) still persisted, (but only) a few remnants remained of it, because

¹¹⁸ Cf. above, fn. 20.

¹¹⁹ The text has a wrong "Cyprus."

The three islands are mentioned together by Galen (*De methodo medendi* 10, 5 Kühn) as the respective homes of the Asclepiads. The obscure school of Rhodes is said there to have contributed much less to the progress of medicine than the other two.

Cf. also the passage from Galen, *On Medical Experience* XXII, 2, pp. 53, 128, and 161 Walzer (Oxford 1944), where Diogenes, arguing with someone who contends that there is no motion, refers to the sailors who always shout: "Who wants to go to Rhodes, to Cnidus, to Cos, to Lesbus!" A quotation of the same passage in a Latin translation of some other work by Galen omits Lesbus.

In Arabic tradition, the story of the three island homes of medicine and their gradual deterioration became the best established and most commonly mentioned fact of medical history.

those who were heirs to it were few. Now, Hippocrates looked into the craft of medicine and found that it had almost disappeared, because there were few children in the family of Asclepius to inherit it. Therefore, he was of the opinion that he (should) spread it everywhere on earth, hand it over to the rest of mankind, and teach it to those who were deserving of it, so that it might not disappear. He said that "benefits should be liberally extended to all who deserve them, whether they be one's relatives or not."^{119a} He took in strangers and taught them the craft of medicine. He established the written *Covenant* for them and made them swear the oaths contained in it. (They also had to swear) that they would not oppose his injunctions nor teach anyone the science of medicine unless he declared before that he would abide by this *Covenant*.

C. CONCLUSIONS.

1. Hunayn's work.

The earliest user of the *Commentary* was Hunayn's son, Ishâq, in his *Ta'rikkh al-aṭibbâ'* (cf. above, B 1 b). However, Ishâq did not reveal his source. The oldest express quotation comes from Eutychius (877-940), who is closely followed in time by al-Mas'ûdî (d. 956-57). Our next source is al-Bîrûnî (973-1048), followed, it seems, by Ibn al-Maṭrân (d. 1191). Then, we have al-Qifṭî (1172-1248) and Ibn Abî Uṣaybi'ah (d. 1270). As far as we can judge, all these authors made independent use of the *Commentary*.

Hunayn himself states that he translated the *Commentary* from Greek into Syriac and added notes of his own. The addition of notes was his custom in his translations,¹²⁰ though here, the notes seem to have taken the form of a running commentary. In some quotations, the distinction between the original text and Hunayn's notes is clearly indicated. This is important because a certain amount of confusion between text and notes must be expected. In this connection, the fragment from Eutychius (fr. B 3 a) is particularly instructive. It shows that the name of the Persian king who invited Hippocrates to visit him was not indicated in the *Commentary* itself, but was added by Hunayn. Other quotations dealing with

^{119a} In the *Testament (waṣâ'yâ)* of Hippocrates (cf. Ritter-Walzer, *op. cit.* [above, fn. 33], 806), Hippocrates exhorts physicians "not to withhold medical instruction from those who want to study the craft of medicine and are deserving of it" (quoted from 'Alî b. al-'Abbâs al-Majûsî, *al-Kâmil I*, 8, Bûlâq 1284, cf. the Latin translation).

¹²⁰ Cf., for instance, Galen, *On Medical Experience*, above, fn. 33.

the same story give the wrong impression that the name was found in the original text.¹²¹

Not only may there be occasional doubts as to the accuracy of the quotations and the distribution of the transmitted text upon *Commentary* and notes, but there also is the difficulty—always encountered in collections of fragments—of determining the exact extent of a quotation. Fortunately, in some cases, beginning and end are clearly marked. An insoluble problem, on the other hand, is the one of tracing possible quotations not expressly indicated as derived from the *Commentary*. Originally, I had felt that a large part of the Arabic biographies of Asclepius and, in particular, Hippocrates might go back to the *Commentary*. I am no longer convinced that this is the case. At any rate, at the present state of our knowledge, such an assumption could not be proved. Therefore, great reluctance has been shown to include anything that is not clearly marked as coming from the *Commentary*, either by express reference or through parallel quotations.

Ḥunayn's statement as to his own share in the work cannot be doubted. He had a Greek text which he translated into Syriac, with the addition of some notes of his own. Some traces of the Syriac translation may still be discerned in the Arabic text, and others may turn up upon further study.¹²² The Syriac work, then, was twice translated into Arabic, respectively by Ḥunayn's nephew Ḥubaysh and by another proficient translator from Ḥunayn's school. We cannot decide whether the two translations substantially differed in any respect, nor, it seems, which one was used by our sources.^{122a} It would seem quite certain, however, that only one of the two translations was used by all of them. Eutychius' statement (fr. B 3 a) that Ḥunayn translated the *Commentary* from Greek into Arabic (instead of Syriac) is an easily understandable inaccuracy. If the fault is not that of Eutychius, it is possible that the text used by him mentioned the name of Ḥunayn as that of the translator, but contained no further details.

2. The Greek original.

Ḥunayn is well-known for the meticulous accuracy of his statements concerning his translation activities. Thus, we can be sure not only that he possessed a Greek text of the work which he translated, but also that he

¹²¹ Cf. also fr. B 2 c. Al-Birûnî, however, did not intend to quote either *Commentary* or notes literally.

¹²² Cf. above, fn. 30, fn. 32; further, fn. 42, and fn. 95.

^{122a} Bergsträsser' investigations (cf. fn. 4) are inconclusive, and not even today does there exist enough material to solve the problem on the basis of stylistic criteria.

believed it to be a work by Galen. It may have been a rather lengthy text; for our quotations, concerned as they are with the history of medicine, would seem to belong to the introductory material and refer to the first paragraph of the *Hippocratic Oath*. On the other hand, the *Commentary* might have been restricted to a number of glosses to some selected passages of the *Oath*.

Galen does not mention the *Oath* in his preserved works, but this does not entitle us to assume that he did not know about its existence. However, no Greek or Latin source credits him with the composition of a commentary on the document. This fact by itself is no conclusive proof that he did not write one.¹²³ And as far as Ḥunayn was concerned, he was well acquainted with the style and ideas of Galen and would not have hesitated to express his doubts concerning the Galenic authorship of the work if he had felt any. It is true that the historical, mythological, and poetical material of the *Commentary* was not characteristic of Galen's ordinary style,¹²⁴ but the lost portions, even if they were not very extensive, ought to have contained a good deal of medical opinions which might have proved—or disproved—the Galenic character of the work to Ḥunayn. Thus, Ḥunayn's acceptance of Galen's authorship has some weight and might counterbalance the silence of Greek and Latin authors. The final decision rests with the fragments themselves. Could they have originated with Galen, or do they disagree with his known ideas and literary style? In the former case, we would have the *possibility* of Galenic authorship; the actual authorship might still belong to some other scholar before, in, or after the time of Galen. In the latter case, we would have the *certainty* of non-Galenic authorship, and we would then be free to search for the period most likely to have been the one in which the work was composed.

Anyone attempting to deal with the thorny problem of the *Commentary's* authorship is in a much better position now than he would have been a few years ago. For in 1945, Emma J. and Ludwig Edelstein published their exhaustive collection of Greek and Latin references to

¹²³ Cf. E. Orth, *Eine unbekannte Schrift Galens*, in *Philologische Wochenschrift* 54, 846-48 (1934). Vice versa, even where the title is mentioned in the list of Galen's writings, the preserved work might not be genuine, cf. W. Diller, in *Hermes* 68, 170 (1933).

¹²⁴ Attention should be called to Ḥunayn's famous statement, when confronted with a quotation from Aristophanes in a work of Galen, that he was familiar with the style of Galen, but not with that of Aristophanes, cf. Galen, *Über die medizinischen Namen* 17 f., transl. 32 Meyerhof-Schacht (in *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akad. d. Wiss., philos.-hist. Kl.* 1931, no. 3).

Asclepius, which has often been quoted in the footnotes to the preceding pages. Nothing of any real importance appears to have escaped the authors, and their clear and comprehensive presentation makes it easy to study and evaluate the classical sources.¹²⁵ Comparing their material with the section on Asclepius from the *Commentary*, we can be certain of an important, if wholly negative, result: There is no single Greek or Latin source that could be related directly to the *Commentary*. One of the most striking features of the *Commentary* is its interpretation of the symbolic attributes of Asclepius as indicative of the attitude and behavior of the model physician. Nothing exactly comparable appears in the Edelsteins' collection where it would be found if it existed in the preserved classical literature; the text interpreted by them in a similar sense (*Asclepius* 2, 221 f., cf. also the conclusion, p. 231) is much less explicit. Thus, we have to proceed, as well as we can, with the help of inference and deduction.

The first question we must ask ourselves is whether our fragments betray any Christian influence. That they do is perfectly obvious; but it is no less obvious that this Christian influence is due to the Christian translators, and not to the author of the Greek original. The hand of the translator may be observed in passages that attribute medical cures to *God through Serapis and Asclepius* (fr. B 1 c); that mention sacrifices offered to *God in the name of Asclepius* (fr. B 2 a and fr. B 2 e), *in order to achieve nearness to God* (fr. B 2 e); and that describe Asclepius as having been raised to the *angels through God* (fr. B 2 b and fr. B 2 e). These slight modifications of the original text are by no means arbitrary and insignificant embellishments by someone using a foreign linguistic medium. They constitute a Christian interpretation of pagan forms of thinking, and they were badly needed in order to make those forms understandable and acceptable in a Christian age. The need for such interpretational changes was urgent and the result of practical considerations rather than theological scruples. For example, when Galen speaks about his "ancestral god" (cf. above, fn. 33), this seemed not only most shocking nonsense, but how could one trust as a physician, let alone accept as the supreme medical authority, anyone who held such childish beliefs? Scholars may have realized that the external forms of a civilization did not invalidate its solid scientific achievements, but the vast majority of students, physicians, and educated readers did not make such fine distinctions. Greek speaking professors, therefore, preferred to use prudence in dealing with

¹²⁵ In connection with the *Commentary*, a collection of the artistic monuments referring to Asclepius would have been helpful.

unpopular ideas, and translators, thinking of the audience they wanted to win for their particular subjects, would act wisely by incorporating the generally accepted conventions of interpretation in their work, even if at times they made bold and came out with a straightforward translation.

In the passages just mentioned, the Christian interpretation of the translator is easily recognized. It is somewhat different with the statement that the discussion concerning Asclepius' deification is "more like idle talk than the truth" (fr. B 2 e, above, fn. 51). This statement could reflect the attitude of a Christian author opposing pagan polytheism. However, it is clear from the context and from a passage of Galen quoted in al-Birûnî's *India* (above, fn. 33) that it is not Asclepius' deification as such that is considered nonsensical, but certain theories held about it. The author of the *Commentary* states unequivocally that Asclepius became a god, though he also maintains that he was not always a god but had been a human being. This was a theory quite commonly advocated by the ancients. Christian authors eagerly seized upon it. However, they rationalized that the ancients merely imagined that some benefactors of mankind had become gods, or were using allegorical language. No such qualifications appear in the *Commentary*.

The author of the *Commentary*, in fact, must not only be absolved of having used any obviously Christian elements, but his work is strictly pagan in spirit. The reality of the entire Greek pantheon with its mythology is taken for granted, and the possibility of the primevalness of the world is admitted without a word of protest. It would thus seem certain that the *Commentary* was the work of a pagan author. However, it might be safer to say that it was the work of an author who wrote as a pagan would have written; for we do not know how a Hellenistic physician who also was a Christian might have handled the task of lecturing on early medical history. He might have merely reported pagan opinion without commenting upon it.¹²⁶ At any rate, though there can be no absolute certainty, it would seem permissible to consider the sixth century as the latest possible date for the composition of the original work. As a *terminus post quem*, the first century A. D. is suggested by the apparent use of the Hippocratic *Letters* (cf. above, fn. 106). In any event, the *Commentary* is not likely to go back to earlier times, even though this possibility cannot entirely be ruled out.

Objective criteria for narrowing down these time limits are not avail-

¹²⁶ A tenth-century Christian author, such as the historian Agapius of Manbij (cf. above, fn. 21), for instance, accepts the Greek gods as historical beings and synchronizes them with biblical personalities.

able. If the fragments would reveal the presence of strong and characteristic Neo-Platonic influences, the lower limit would be preferable, but their mere absence (cf., in particular, above, fn. 97), especially in a work not concerned with philosophy, means nothing. Nor can a specific date be assigned to the transference of the symbolism of Aesculapian attributes to the moral behavior of physicians in general, as attested in such detail in the *Commentary*. Only a physician dealing with medical iconography might have elaborated on this topic, and no such author has been preserved for us in Greek or Latin.¹²⁷ The idea as such could have been conceived at any time within the indicated time limits, as well as at an earlier or later date.

Nearly all close parallels that do exist between the *Commentary* and classical literature concern details known in the second century A. D. (and, in some cases, considerably earlier than that). Most of the comparative material is derived from authors such as Cornutus, Galen, Pausanias, Festus, who either lived in, or used sources of the first and second centuries.

There is nothing in our fragments that points directly to Galen, but they also contain nothing that could not have been said by him. Much of the material, it is true, consists of quotations and records the opinions of others. Thus, to mention one example, Galen, speaking as a physician, discusses health in terms quite different from the commonplaces of the *Commentary*. However, he would have felt no hesitation to quote the ringing phrases of famous poets or writers on the subject upon suitable occasions. Then, it might be tempting to consider the style of the *Commentary*, which is succinct and factual, and contrast it with Galen's well-known prolixity. Again, the available material is too limited for a valid stylistic comparison, and the successive translators might have followed the frequent practice of abridging their original. That Galen would not have been interested in the subject matter of the *Commentary* could not be seriously maintained by anyone who has read, for instance, his *Protrepticus*.

In sum, it appears that the *Commentary* was composed between the second and sixth centuries A. D. In the absence of any contrary indications, the second-century limit deserves preference, certainly as far as the original conception of the material contained in the *Commentary* is concerned. Galen's authorship can be neither confirmed nor rejected, and

¹²⁷ Medical authors contribute only a very small amount of material to Edelstein's *Asclepius*. Galen discusses the iconography of Tyche and Hermes in the beginning of the *Protrepticus*. Cf. also above, fn. 61.

our indecision in this respect, I venture to suggest, would continue even if the fragments were available in their original Greek and ascribed to Galen. Since Galen's reputation has been overpowering at all times, his name might have been used as a label for someone else's work, as, in fact, it frequently was. Moreover, if Galen had written a commentary on the *Oath*, it would have been considered a work of paramount importance and would hardly have failed to leave tangible evidence of its existence in Greek or Latin tradition. It is for these reasons that we should exercise caution and refrain from insisting upon Galen's authorship. Be this as it may, the *Commentary* remains the most serious and well-informed work on the mythological history of medicine down to the time of Hippocrates that has come to us from Antiquity.