I. Doctors and laymen
Textual Therapy
On the relationship between medicine and grammar in Galen¹

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Summary

In this paper we will explore some ancient ideas about the relationship of grammar and medicine. There are two grounds for expecting that the great doctor-philologist Galen would talk of (deficient) texts in terms of patients to be healed. One is the ancient grammatical tradition classifying medicine and grammar as sister disciplines. The other is the extensive tradition of using biological and medical metaphors for language and texts. However, it will turn out that medical overtones are significantly absent from Galen’s rhetoric about philology and from his own linguistic metalanguage. Instead of comparing the remedying and corrective activities of the doctor and the textual critic, he connects medicine (and to some extent texts) with weaving and architecture. In fact, this corresponds to his own, alternative classification of the sciences. We seek an explanation for this state of affairs in Galen’s general anxiety to be taken for a philologist or grammarian rather than a serious doctor. This may have led to a refusal to dignify grammar by applying medical terminology to it. However, the aversion he claims for the grammarian can be shown to be mostly a rhetorical posturing, since Galen does talk about medical and grammatical practice in similar and revealing terms: curing a patient and fixing a text require moral courage, and this sets these activities apart from morally irrelevant ones such as house-repair and clothes-mending.

Introduction

In Antiquity (as now), the education of an upper-level doctor did not begin as medical education. Just like other children, the future doctor

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