

MEDICAL ETHICS IN A WRITING OF GALEN

MEDICINSKA ETIKA U GALENOVIM RUKOPISIMA

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SUMMARY

The aim of this critical analysis is to present the medical ethics of Galen in his treatise "The Best Physician is Also a Philosopher).

Galen opens with the example of Hippocrates as a paradigm of his medical ethics, and continues by saying that the knowledge of the human body must be profound.

In the third part of the treatise he stresses the importance of logic, precise use of language, study of the texts by Hippocrates and other medical writings, and dwells on conflicts between theory and medical practice.

In the fourth part, he proposes that a physician should have perfect self-control, scorn money and the pleasures of the flesh, and should live a laborious life.

Galen's ethics expounded in this treatise outlines ideals a physician should follow, ideals that have remained valid to this day.

Key words: *medical ethics, Galen, physician, philosopher.*

Ethics deals with the right and wrong in human behaviour. Medical ethics deals with the right and wrong in the behaviour of physicians in their professional life and particularly in their relationship with patients. Medical ethics has its origin in ancient Greece; it is embodied in the Hippocratic tradition whose values are reflected in the writings of Galen, and which have been preserved to this day.

Galen (Galenus), 131-200 AD, was a famous physician who received philosophical and medical training from leading schools in the country. In addition, Galen wrote extensively, not only about anatomy, physiology,

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Claudius Galenus (130 - 200)

and medicine in general, but also about logic. Not only was Galen a man of great intellectual talents, but also a man of strong moral fibre. His moral character and philosophical education are reflected in his short treatise “The Best Physician is Also a Philosopher”.

The aim of this article is to present the medical ethics of Galen as it appears in this treatise.

Galen opens with the example of Hippocrates as a paradigm of his medical ethics, and continues by saying that the knowledge of the human body must be profound. In the third part of the treatise he stresses the importance of training in logic, study of the texts by Hippocrates and other medical writings, and dwells on how theory meets medical practice.

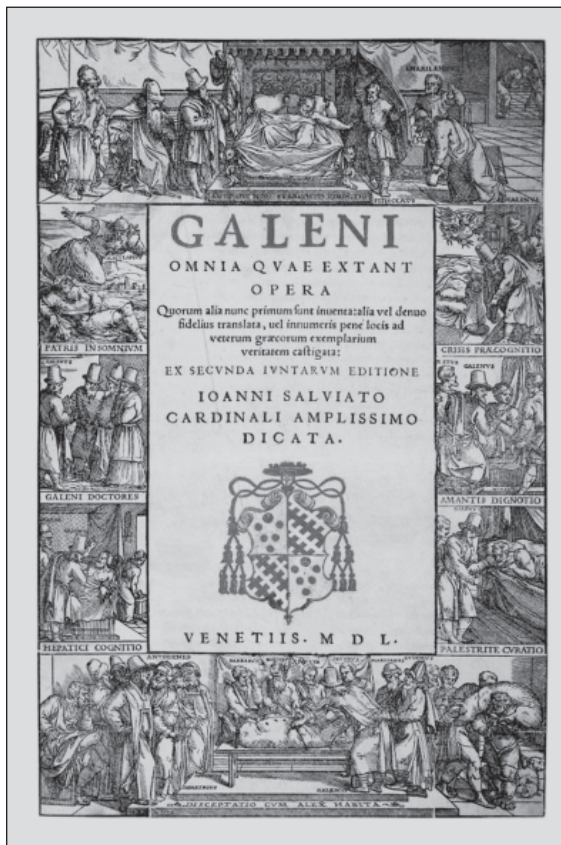
The one who wishes to be a physician has to work very hard to master the work of his predecessors and study medicine. It is impossible for a physician to be industrious if he drinks or eats in excess or abandons himself to sexual pleasures. Instead, he should scorn money and pleasures of the flesh, and live a hardworking life.

In addition, Galen as a follower of Hippocrates and his medical ethics, accuses the physicians of his time that even though they respect and admire Hippocrates, they do not study his writings, they do not understand what he says, and they do not implement theory in practice. Furthermore, Galen encourages his colleagues to take on medical research,

as had Hippocrates done before, travelling to various places to conduct medical research and gain experience.

Finally, Galen says that the physician must be trained in all branches of philosophy, and particularly in logic, which is the science of how to think. Logic will help the physician to use deduction and reach conclusions in medical research. Physics, on the other hand, is the science of what is, the knowledge of the Nature in the widest sense, and Ethics is the science of what to do; its ideals are self-control, scorn for material wealth, for the weaknesses of the flesh, and finally to live a hardworking life.

If a physician should follow these precepts, he would be a Philosopher.



Galen Omnia que extant opera. Ex secunda Iuntarum editione.
Venetiis, 1550-1551

Galen's ethics in this treatise does not investigate the relationship between the physician and the patient, but focuses on the physician alone. The aim of the treatise is to encourage physicians of all times to follow and profess Hippocrates' ethics in education, in medical practice, and in personal life. In the long run, this would also bring benefit to the patient.

In conclusion, this treatise outlines the professional ideals of Galen, ideals that remain valid to this day.

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SAŽETAK

Cilj je ove kritičke analize predstaviti Galenovu liječničku etiku koju iznosi u svojoj disertaciji Najbolji liječnik je istobno i filozof.

Svoju disertaciju Galen započinje Hipokratovim primjerom, koji je paradigma liječničke etike. U drugom dijelu objašnjava da je potrebno izvrsno poznavati ljudsko tijelo.

U trećem dijelu naglašava važnost logike, precizne uporabe jezika, proučavanja Hipokratovih i inih medicinskih rukopisa te raspravlja o kušnjama teorije pred praksom.

U četvrtome dijelu izlaže da liječnik mora zadržati potpunu samokontrolu, s prezirom gledati na novac i na slabosti povezane s tjelesnim užicima te da treba imati naporan i plodonosan život.

Galenova etika izložena u ovoj disertaciji opisuje ideale kojima liječnik treba stremiti, ideale koji vrijede i danas.

Ključne riječi: *medicinska/liječnička etika, Galen, liječnik, filozof*