

BOOK REVIEW

How To Be Healthy: An Ancient Guide to Wellness *by Katherine D. Van Schaik*

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The author is an American radiologist with a PhD. in ancient history from Harvard University. This book is one of a series entitled: *Ancient Wisdom for Modern Readers*, conveying some works of classical antiquity from authors such as Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca and others.

Dr Van Schaik's book covers some aspects of Galen's work. Galen was a towering figure in ancient Greek medicine, a prolific writer and an enthusiastic apostle of Hippocrates. The author selects short excerpts from some of Galen's treatises and provides a brief introductory commentary for each, followed by her own, occasionally liberal, translation into English on the opposite page, of the displayed Greek text. She makes an exception for the treatise 'On The Exercise With A Small Ball', ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑ ΜΙΚΡΑΣ ΣΦΑΙΡΑΣ ΓΥΜΝΑΣΙΟΥ/ DE PARVAE PILAE EXERCITIO, for which she includes the entire manuscript. Galen declares here that he dislikes imbalance (ἀμετρία) and argues that a workout with the small ball ensures the balanced exercise of all parts of the body. Galen makes a rather uncomplimentary reference to Milo of Croton (κάκεινον τὸν Μίλωνα) a celebrated athlete and several times Olympic champion; probably, because Galen objects to the athletes' trainers interfering in matters medical. He considers, in another treatise, the study of diet and exercise to be in the exclusive domain of the physician.

Galen listed the books and treatises he wrote in a catalogue that survives to this day. His essay ΠΕΡΙ ΑΛΥΠΙΑΣ (On the avoidance of sorrow), considered lost for over 500 years, was discovered in 2005, entirely by chance, by Antoine Pietrobelli in the library of the Vlatadon Monastery in Thessaloniki, Greece. This essay is written by Galen in the form of an epistle to a friend explaining how he avoided grieving "λυπεῖσθαι" from the loss of his books, rare drugs and surgical instruments during a great fire in Rome. The Greek text included in Van Schaik's book, with the exception of the ΠΕΡΙ ΑΛΥΠΙΑΣ, is sourced from C.G. KÜHN's edition of Galen published in Leipzig in the 19th century which also included a Latin translation.

Dr Van Schaik's book is a valuable contribution. The introduction is very well written and informative, especially for those unfamiliar with Galen and ancient Greek Medicine. It details Galen's early life and medical training, including a graphic description of his appointment, by the chief priest, as physician to the gladiators in Pergamum. It will be particularly useful to medical students and is highly recommended.

Spyros Retsas
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