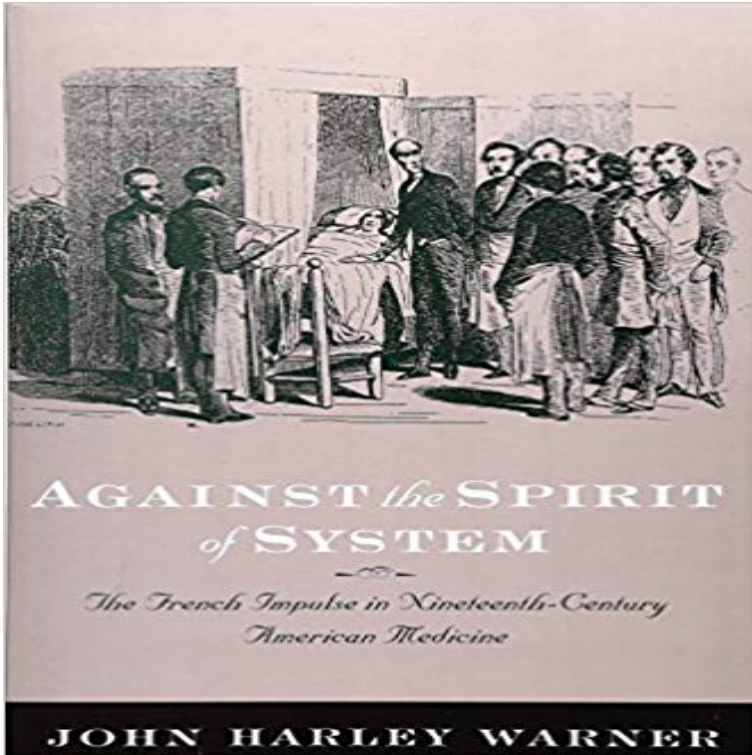


Against the Spirit of System: The French Impulse in Nineteenth-Century American Medicine



In this wide-ranging exploration of American medical culture, John Harley Warner offers the first in-depth study of a powerful intellectual and social influence: the radical empiricism of the Paris Clinical School. After the French Revolution, Paris emerged as the most vibrant center of Western medicine, bringing fundamental changes in understanding disease and attitudes toward the human body as an object of scientific knowledge. Between the 1810s and the 1860s, hundreds of Americans studied in Parisian hospitals and dissection rooms, and then applied their new knowledge to advance their careers at home and reform American medicine. By reconstructing their experiences and interpretations, by comparing American with English depictions of French medicine, and by showing how American memories of Paris shaped the later reception of German ideals of scientific medicine, Warner reveals that the French impulse was a key ingredient in creating the modern medicine American doctors and patients live with today. Impressed by the opportunity to learn through direct hands-on physical examination and dissection, many American students in Paris began to decry the elaborate theoretical schemes they held responsible for the degraded state of American medicine. These reformers launched an empiricist crusade against the spirit of system, which promised social, economic, and intellectual uplift for their profession. Using private diaries, family letters, and student notebooks, and exploring regionalism, gender, and class, Warner draws readers into the world of medical Americans while investigating tensions between the physicians identity as scientist and as healer.

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