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## [Greek medecine in its relation to religion and magic - suite]

**Auteur : Foucault, Michel**

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acter of Greek medicine in regard to the explanation and to the treatment of diseases. In doing this I cannot base my argument on any continuous ancient debate of the subject; no such book is preserved. It is necessary to rely on single phrases to be found in the different writings and to take them as a clue to the underlying general ideology. This is a laborious procedure. A vast material must be collected and the judgment must be always restricted and modified. But no other way is left for an approach to the problem which is so important for the adequate interpretation of Greek medicine.

### I. THE EXPLANATION OF DISEASES

By the Hippocratic as well as by the later physicians, the causes of illnesses are held to be first of all the effect upon the human body of cold, warmth, sun, air, and climate. This, no doubt, is a natural explanation and to many physicians it means this and nothing more. A follower of Anaxagoras in the fifth century B.C., an Epicurean or Skeptic in the Hellenistic centuries and later, each considers the celestial phenomena as appearances of nature, devoid of God.<sup>10</sup>

But this, to be sure, is not the only, not even the most usual meaning expressed by those conceptions. The Hippocratic book on the Sacred Disease states: "This disease . . . comes from the same causes as others, from the things that come to and go from the body, from cold, sun, and from the changing restlessness of winds. These things are divine, . . ."<sup>11</sup> Later, for physicians who follow Plato and Aristotle, the divinity of sun and stars and climate is unquestionable; nor are the forces of the lower world, air and water, deprived of divinity.<sup>12</sup> The Stoic physicians firmly believe in the divine character of the forces of nature. On the other hand, the interpretation of the gods as natural powers is very common and very Greek. Some declare that "the Phoenicians had better notions about the gods than the Greeks, giving as an instance that to Asclepius they assign Apollo as father, but no mortal woman as his mother. Asclepius . . . is air, bringing health to mankind and to all animals like-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the corresponding medical theories p. 210.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, l. c., II, p. 183: *Αὕτη δὲ ἡ νοῦσος . . . γίνεται ἀφ' ὧν καὶ αἱ λοιπαὶ, ἀπὸ τῶν προσιόντων καὶ ἀπιδόντων, καὶ ψυχῆος καὶ ἡλίου καὶ πνευμάτων μεταβαλλομένων τε καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀτρεμιζόντων. ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ θεία, . . .*

<sup>12</sup> E.g., Plato, *Laws*, X, 899b; Aristotle, *On the Heaven*, 288a 4–5.

wise; Apollo is the sun, and most rightly is he named the father of Asclepius, because the sun, by adapting his course to the seasons, imparts to the air its healthfulness." But the answer is that: "The argument was as much Greek as Phoenician; for at Titane in Sicily the same image is called both, Health and . . . thus clearly showing that it is the course of the sun that brings health to mankind."<sup>13</sup> All these instances reveal how utterly different are the ancients' conceptions of natural phenomena from those of modern times.

If this is so, the adequate interpretation of the terminology used in Greek medicine becomes very difficult. In his book on the Sacred Disease the author employs nothing but the terms sun and cold and winds and no theological vocabulary whatsoever. It is only in the differentiation of his conception from that of the others that he refers to the elements as divine.<sup>14</sup> Were it not for reasons of polemics, then,—that he wants to make clear his position against those who declare special diseases to be divine—he would scarcely even mention his belief in the divinity of the elements. Thus, natural and religious expressions are used as equivalents.<sup>15</sup> Whether this is so or not depends in every case on the philosophical and scientific outlook of the man who is writing.

As for dogmatic physicians of the Hellenistic schools the religious connotation of their words can safely be assumed. For they are more or less related to the Platonic, Aristotelian or Stoic philosophy. Only Em-

<sup>13</sup> Pausanias, *Achaia*, XXIII, 7 (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, with an English Translation by W. H. S. Jones, Loeb Class. Library, III, 1918, p. 309): . . . ὁ ἐγνωκέναι τὰ ἐς τὸ θεῖον ἔφασκε Φοίνικας τὰ τε ἄλλα Ἑλλήνων βέλτιον καὶ δὴ καὶ Ἀσκληπιῷ πατέρα μὲν σφᾶς Ἀπόλλωνα ἐπιφημίζειν, θνητὴν δὲ γυναῖκα οὐδεμίαν μητέρα. Ἀσκληπιὸν μὲν γὰρ ἄερα γένει τε ἀνθρώπων εἶναι καὶ πᾶσιν ὁμοίως ζῶσις ἐπιτήδειον πρὸς ὑγίειαν, Ἀπόλλωνα δὲ ἥλιον καὶ αὐτὸν ὁρθότατα Ἀσκληπιῷ πατέρα ἐπονομάζεσθαι, ὅτι ἐς τὸ ἀρμόζον ταῖς ὥραις ποιοῦμενος ὁ ἥλιος τὸν δρόμον μεταδίδωσι καὶ τῷ ἀέρι ὑγίειαν . . . οὐδὲν δὲ τι Φοινίκων μάλλον ἢ καὶ Ἑλλήνων ἔφην τὸν λόγον, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν Τίτανι τῆς Σικωνίων τὸ αὐτὸ ἀγαλμα Ὑγίαν τε ὀνομάζεσθαι καὶ . . . δῆλα ὡς τὸν ἡλιακὸν δρόμον ἐπὶ γῆς ὑγίειαν ποιοῦντα ἀνθρώποις. This opinion is the more important since Peripatos and Stoa had a conciliatory attitude toward common religion, the latter even trying to combine the popular belief with its philosophical theory. I am, however, only concerned with the problem of what Greek gods mean to the different periods and groups of men, not with the question of whether they were originally nature-gods or not.

<sup>14</sup> Cp. I; cp. 22.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Herodotus, II, ch. 24, where the author says in one statement (Herodotus, with an English Translation by A. D. Godley, Loeb Class. Library, I, 1926, p. 301): "During the winter the sun is driven by the storms from his customary course and passes over the inland parts of Libya. Now to make the shortest conclusion, that is all that need be said; for to whatever country this God is nearest, or over it, it is to be thought that that land is the thirstiest and that the rivers in it are diminished."

