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

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piricists and Methodists of those centuries can be said to think in purely natural terms. For they are followers of the new Academy or of the Pyrrhonian Skepsis. But what about the Hippocratic physicians whose philosophical standpoint is hardly known, what about the average physician who is a practitioner and not a trained scientist with a philosophical background?

The Hippocratic author, expressing his opinion that sun and cold and winds are divine, does not give any proof of his assumption. Apparently he is not concerned with objections which could be raised against such a belief. At first glance it seems to follow that he is making a statement generally accepted in his time. But no doubt, in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., when this book and all the other Hippocratic writings were probably written, there were men who believed that the sun and moon and all the natural appearances are only corporeal bodies. To them the processes going on in the world are not influenced by God. This disbelief, as it is called by Plato, is widespread even in the fourth century B.C.¹⁶ At the same time, however, the average Greek, asked whether God exists or not, truthfully asserts the existence of the gods. He points to the evidence of the earth, the sun, moon, and stars as instances of deity and divinity. Concerning all the celestial phenomena, concerning the years and months and all the seasons, he does not deny that "all things are full of gods," as Thales said. According to him nobody is foolish enough to disregard this belief.¹⁷ In other words, the disbelief in the divinity of those powers of nature is restricted to a certain group of people, to the enlightened, but it is not at all self-evident nor is it the attitude of the average man. For this attitude is relatively new and rather suspicious: "The first man to put in writing the clearest and boldest of all doctrines (concerning the natural explanation of the phenomena) was Anaxagoras. But he was no ancient authority, nor was his doctrine in high repute. It was still under seal of secrecy, and made its way slowly among the few only, who received it with a certain caution rather than with implicit confidence. Men could not abide the

¹⁶ Plato, *Laws*, X, 866e; *Sophistes*, 265c.

¹⁷ Plato, *Laws*, X, 886a; d/e; 899b/c. It is remarkable that Plato says, whether in earnest or in jest, that these theories are familiar in Athens but unknown in Crete (886b). They are certainly in contrast to the old religious attitude. For "it seems the first men in Greece thought those only to be gods whom many of the barbarians honour to-day—sun, moon, earth, stars and heaven." *φαίνονται μοι οἱ πρῶτοι τῶν περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τοὺς μόνους τοὺς θεοὺς ἡγεῖσθαι οὕτως νῦν πολλοὶ τῶν βαρβάρων, ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ γῆν καὶ ἀστρα καὶ οὐρανόν.* (Plato, *Cratylus* 397c).

natural philosophers and 'visionaries,' as they were then called, for that they reduced the divine agency down to irrational causes, blind forces, and necessary incidents."¹⁸ The Hippocratic author is quite right, then; his conviction does not need any detailed proof. For it is still more usual to understand the natural powers as divine than as merely natural; the opposite theory is the one which, in general, has to be demonstrated. It is the philosopher who must ascertain the divine character of the world against those thinkers who disagree with such an opinion; the ordinary man may still speak of it as carrying its own evidence.

From this fact it follows, of course, that in the Hippocratic writings one cannot possibly interpret all the natural terms as devoid of any religious meaning. It is not necessary to dwell on the fact that it is from the book on the Sacred Disease that the statement about the divinity of the natural quality derives, from this very enlightend and critical treatise as it is usually called.¹⁹ All the same, the assumption is justified. With the exception of a few books the Hippocratic writers in general do not renounce the divinity of nature, even if they do not mention it expressly. They are, apparently, not atheists, as they would have to be if they embraced the opposite theory.²⁰ Even less can it be assumed that

¹⁸ Plutarch, *Nicias*, ch. 23 (Plutarch's *Lives*, with an English Translation by Bernadotte Perrin, Loeb Class. Library, III, 1915, p. 291): 'Ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος σαφέστατον τε πάντων καὶ θαρραλεώτατον περὶ σελήνης . . . λόγον εἰς γραφὴν καταθέμενος Ἀναξάδορας οὐτ' αὐτὸς ἦν παλαιὸς οὔτε ὁ λόγος ἰνδοξος, ἀλλ' ἀπόρητος ἐτι καὶ δι' ὀλίγων καὶ μετ' εὐλαβείας τινὸς ἢ πίστεως βαδίζων. οὐ γὰρ ἠρέχοντο τοὺς φυσικοὺς καὶ μετεωρολόους τότε καλουμένους, ὥς εἰς αἰτίας ἀλόγους καὶ δυνάμεις ἀπροσώτους καὶ καταναγκασμένα πάθῃ διατρέποντας τὸ θεῖον. The possible forerunners of this disbelief are discussed very briefly, its novelty being stressed also in Plato's *Laws*, X, 886c/d. I am well aware that Aristophanes (Peace, v. 410 sq.) says the Greeks are given into the hands of the barbarians because they do not sacrifice to sun and moon. But it is quite a different problem whether sacrifices were made to these powers or whether these phenomena were considered to be divine at that time. And certainly Socrates, a contemporary of Aristophanes, did not want to investigate the meteorological phenomena, because they are *divine*, but was interested in *human* things alone, namely in ethical problems (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I. I. 12).

¹⁹ Cf. e.g., U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Griech. Lesebuch*, I, 2, Text, Berlin, 1926, pp. 269–70: "Der aufgeklärte Arzt bekämpft die übernatürliche Natur der Krankheit . . . Aber nicht minder liegt dem Verfasser an der Einheitlichkeit der Naturauffassung, an der Wissenschaft, die auch für seine Beurteilung der Heiligen Krankheit massgebend ist." Cf. also Jones, I. c., II, p. 129.

²⁰ The merely natural explanation of the heavenly bodies was reason enough for calling the philosophers atheists (Plato, *Laws*, XII, 967c). Yet, as far as I can see, there is no proof for Heide's assumption that the physicians also are named in antiquity a godless crew, certainly not because of their attacks against magicians (cf. *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. XLV, 1910, Footnote 47).

