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

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### Présentation de la fiche

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Theophrastus, although a Dogmatist and an Aristotelian, emphasizes the value of experience. He states that especially natural science, the objects of which are the bodies of the physical world, must start from experience; according to him it is perception which provides the material for human thought.<sup>96</sup> Thus, Theophrastus becomes interested also in things which are called fairy-tales by earlier thinkers. But he is the first who is unbiased enough not to think impossible from the outset what other people declared to be nonsense without any further inquiry. The discovery and utilization of sympathetic effects is a scientific advance not made until the fourth century B.C.<sup>97</sup> This fact explains why sympathetic remedies are still unknown to the Hippocratic physicians. Moreover, it shows that from the point of view of ancient medicine the use of such things cannot be determined as deviation from the true method. It is on a scientific principle quite different from that of magic that the use of sympathetic remedies is based in antiquity.

Later, with the rise of the Neo-Platonic philosophy and of the Christian religion, a change took place. The Neo-Platonists explained

period before the fourth century B.C. But it is Theophrastus who gives sympathy its place in natural science. Since he acknowledges its effect apparently on account of philosophical argumentations it is not the Stoics who have the first system of sympathy (contrary to Stemplinger, l. c.).

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Zeller, l. c., II, 2, 1879, pp. 813-14 and Überweg-Prächter, Die Philosophie d. Alterums<sup>12</sup>, 1926, p. 403, where the relation between Theophrastus and Strato is stressed.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Theophrastus, Inquiry into Plants, IX, 18, 4, 10; and in contrast to his statement Aristotle, History of Animals, 605a, 4-6, τὰ δ' ἐπιμυθεύμενα πέπλασται μᾶλλον ὑπὸ γυναικῶν καὶ τῶν περὶ τὰς ἐπιδόας. I cannot deal with the problem whether the ninth book of the Inquiry into Plants is genuine or not. H. Bretzl, Botanische Forschungen des Alexanderzuges, 1903, p. 366, denies the authenticity of the last part "dessen nicht theophrasteischen Geist jeder (Botaniker) beim ersten Durchlesen fühlt." Rehm und Vogel, Exakte Wissenschaften, l. c., 5, 57, agree with him. But G. Senn, Das pharmazeutisch-botanische Buch in Theophrast's Pflanzenkunde (Verhandlungen d. Schweizer Naturforschenden Gesellschaft, Zermatt, 1923, II, Teil, pp. 201-02), opposes this opinion just as a botanist. The material at least is, according to him, genuine and the assumption of a "Pseudotheophrast" unnecessary. Manifold wordings of the book are now also proved by O. Regenbogen, Hermes 69, 1934, pp. 75 sq.; 190 sq., as far as the first books are concerned. Nothing indicates that the material, even if it is not collected by Theophrastus himself, does not go back at least to his school. So much is certain, that the interest in sympathetic remedies is rather an indication in favor of Theophrastus than against him. The rejection of incantations and of superstition (IX, 19, 3) in general is also in accordance with the attitude of Theophrastus. At any rate, it is not justifiable to omit the passages concerning sympathetic remedies, as is done in the edition of A. Horst in the Loeb Classical Library, 1916, p. 310.

sympathy not by physical but by psychic causes.<sup>98</sup> What had been physical thereby became spiritual. The Christian belief, on the other hand, separated God from nature; nature was no longer an animate being. Thus, effects which were in earlier times natural and empirical later became mysterious. And since they were supposed to be mysterious they were looked upon with suspicion or were forgotten by the physicians. Theodorus Priscianus says in the beginning of his book on physical remedies: "Nature is everywhere performing a great mystery," but "you will forgive me my work, oh my forefathers. The crude generation of our times is ignorant of the procedure of your investigations."<sup>99</sup> And it is Alexander of Tralles, a late physician of the decadent age, who states: "I should like to use all kinds of remedies, but because of the stupidity of the many of to-day who blame those who do it, I shrink from applying them."<sup>100</sup> The physician employing sympathetic remedies is now considered to be a sorcerer. In earlier centuries he was a scientist.<sup>101</sup>

In surgery, dietetics and pharmacology then Greek medicine is rational and hostile to magic. The same is true in regard to the use of music as a remedy for pains. The Sicilian physicians, like others, resorted to music as Caelius Aurelianus relates: "Others have approved of the use of songs, as the brother of Philistion also remarks in the XXII book on remedies, writing that a certain piper had played his melodies over parts of the body which, quivering and throbbing, were relaxed

<sup>98</sup> E. Zeller, l. c., III, 2<sup>3</sup>, 1881, p. 558.

<sup>99</sup> Theodorus Priscianus, Euporiston, ed. Valentin Rose, 1894, p. 250, 14: est enim in omni mundo natura quae operetur grande secretum; 250, 17-20: dabit mihi veniam operis, patres priores. disputationum enim vestrarum rationes . . . aetas mundi rudis ignoravit. Cf. Pliny, N. H. XIX, 186: opus occultum, the hidden work.

<sup>100</sup> Alexander v. Tralles, ed. Puschmann, I, 1878, p. 573: ἐγὼ δὲ φιλῶ πᾶσι κεχρησθαι. διὰ δὲ τοὺς πολλοὺς τοὺς ἐν τῷ νῦν χρόνῳ ἀμαθεῖς ὄντας καταμέμψεσθαι τοῖς χρωμένοις τοῖς φυσικοῖς, ἐφυγον συνεχῶς χρῆσθαι τοῖς φύσει δρᾶν δυναμένοις. . . .

<sup>101</sup> It is significant for the derivation of the sympathetic remedies from experience concerning natural facts that they are usually called φυσικά or ἐμπειρικά. My attention was first drawn to this fact by a lecture of O. Temkin on Magic and Experience in which he emphasized the significance of these expressions (cf. also M. Neuburger, Gesch. d. Medizin II, p. 26). It is again in the magical papyri that the mysterious character of those things occurs first, the derivation of the healing power from nature being stressed. Here too, for the first time nature is revered as a deity who is not identical with the god governing the world but a demon who performs miraculous effects. Cf. K. Preisendanz, Philologus, 67, 1908, p. 474.

