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What is medical about medicine? The problem of pleasure.

Scholars of early philosophical ethics and popular morality in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE have long known that pleasure was a serious matter of concern in the Greek world of this period. Pleasure often appears as the predominant threat to the masculine ideal of being master of oneself, and the question of the relationship between pleasure and the good proves an enduring dilemma in the ethical tradition. As Lesley Dean-Jones has observed, the texts in the Hippocratic Corpus, while primarily interested in the functional aspect of sexual activity (and other forms of pleasure), are largely compatible with this general cultural context insofar as they accept that pleasure requires the exercise of *sophrosynê*, while denying the capacity for choice and restraint to women.ⁱ

Dean-Jones' arguments about the different treatment of male and female pleasure in the medical writers are convincing. In this paper, I wish to inquire further into the question of male desire and motivation. I hope to use the problem of (masculine) pleasure to introduce a point of divergence between medical literature and nascent philosophical ethics. In so doing, I aim to probe the question, if not of what is Hippocratic about the Hippocratic Corpus, at least of what is "medical" about the texts gathered therein.

Excessive eating, drinking, and sexual indulgence—the triad of "consuming passions" identified by James Davidson—appear as causes of disease in a number of our extant Hippocratic treatises.ⁱⁱ What is interesting, however, is that despite the role played by these behaviors, the medical writers tend to adopt a quasi-Socratic approach to the control of these behaviors if they deal with the issue at all. By this I mean that the important thing for these writers is knowledge of what to eat or drink, whether this knowledge is held by an expert physician or acquired by the patient himself. The idea that the patient's desires or motivations may require therapy is not entertained. Thus, despite the remarkably physicalist approach of many medical writers to cognition and emotion, the springs of a patient's conscious behaviors appear largely outside the scope of their therapy (with the possible exception of *On Regimen I* 35-36). It is their reticence about motivation and desire that clears space for a therapy of the soul in writers like Democritus, Plato (particularly in the middle and late dialogues), and Aristotle.

My paper will focus primarily on analyzing several instances in the Hippocratic treatises where questions of desire (for food and drink, as well as for sex) and pleasure arise, including the relationship between humoral depletion and *himeros* discussed in *On Diseases IV*, the rather oblique references to *hêdonê* in *On Ancient Medicine*, and the references to qualities of the *psuchê* in *Airs, Waters, Places*; I will touch, too, on the contribution in *On Generation/On the Nature of Child* to the physiology of pleasure. I close with a necessarily cursory

look at the crucial role played by pleasure and the desire for pleasure in a few early examples of philosophical ethics that take the soul as an object of therapy. These examples show that the site of pleasure was not clearly located in either the body or the soul in this period, an ambiguity that may have contributed to the gradual strengthening of divisions between medicine and ethics.

ⁱ L. Dean-Jones, "The politics of pleasure: female sexual appetite in the Hippocratic Corpus," *Helios* 19 (1992), 77-8.

ⁱⁱ J. Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes. The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens*. (New York: 1998).

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Fighting and mastering disease: metaphors and masculinity

It is well known that political metaphors are a notable feature of classical Greek medical discourse, beginning with Alcmaeon's use of the terms *isonomia* and *monarchia* in his theory of health and disease causation and continuing on to discussions found in Plato and the various writers whose ideas are addressed by Anonymous Londinensis.¹ Such metaphors include notions of domination, opposition and victory. It has also been pointed out that, in its early stages, Greek medical discourse showed little interest in internal diseases.² In this paper, I argue that the Hippocratic focus on internal diseases and the growth of political metaphors as explanatory models for internal pathologies paralleled a development in the gendering of disease and the experience of illness. Archaic descriptions of disease, when they occur at all, show a population—male or female—subject either to wasting away from disease or to attacks by the arrows of divinities; the response is either to placate the deity, to suffer pain and distress, or to receive help from healers applying gentle remedies or cutting and burning. Even in the case of these latter, harsh, remedies, the discourse does not speak of active resistance. But in the Hippocratic Corpus, we see the treatment of disease turned into a struggle, in which the patient and the healer work together to oppose the disease (cf. esp. *Epidemics I*, 11: ὑπεναντιοῦσθαι τῷ νοσήματι τὸν νοσέοντα μετὰ τοῦ ἰητροῦ). I would like to suggest that the metaphor of “combatting disease” (still so much a part of our contemporary discourse) is part of a new direction in Greek approaches to disease, one which matches up the struggle with internal disease and the mastery of the body with the work of the fighter on the battlefield and the active participant in political life. Such an approach enabled Hippocratic doctors to support contemporary ideologies of masculinity, which maintained that men—in contrast to women—were invulnerable, strong, masters of their bodies, always capable of performing their masculine roles. In fighting disease, the man weakened by bodily disfunction, could nonetheless claim to be performing a masculine role.

¹ Cf. particularly G. Cambiano, “Pathologie et analogie politique,” 441-458, in Lasserre and Mudry, *Formes de Pensée dans la Collection Hippocratique* (Geneva 1983) and Vegetti, M. (1983) “Metafora politica e immagine del corpo negli scritti Ippocratici,” also in Lasserre and Mudry, *Formes de Pensée*: 459-69.

² So I. M. Lonie, “Literacy and the Development of Hippocratic Medicine,” in Lasserre and Mudry, *Formes de Pensée dans la Collection Hippocratique* (Geneva 1983), 153.

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“Love is like the Measles”
Hippocratic and non-Hippocratic approaches to lovesickness.

This paper will examine the similarities and differences between Hippocratic and non-Hippocratic approaches to the diagnosis and treatment of lovesickness or *eros*. Lovesickness is well recognised and accepted as a *nosos* in a wide variety of non-Hippocratic texts of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Genres as diverse as history, drama and philosophy, including Plato’s most explicitly medical text, *Timaeus*, treat *eros* in the same category as other diseases, with causes, symptoms and treatments similar in type to those of other somatic *nosoi*.¹ Lovesickness was no mere literary device or poetic metaphor. There is abundant evidence to suggest that lovesickness was diagnosed and treated in the real world by a range of healers, from midwives and sorcerers to rootcutters and drugsellers.

Yet this widely accepted *nosos* does not appear in the Hippocratic corpus of the classical period. Conditions with a number of similarities to unrequited *eros* do appear, most obviously the so-called ‘disease of young girls’. Lovesickness also appears in post-classical medical texts, including Galen’s commentary on the Hippocratic *Prognostics* and Soranus’ *Vita Hippocratis*, later incorporated into the Hippocratic corpus, in which the father of medicine himself is said to have diagnosed and cured the condition.² *Eros per se*, however, is not included in the classical Hippocratic texts.

This paper will examine the fundamental features of *eros* as it is depicted in a variety of non-Hippocratic genres in order to synthesise a sort of clinical picture. I will consider its causes, symptoms and signs, course and prognosis, treatment, and the characteristics of both the sufferers and those healers who treated it. I will argue that the treatment of *eros* was strongly associated not with *iatroi*, but with folk healers, particularly female healers. I will compare this clinical picture with Hippocratic *nosoi*, characterised by symptoms reminiscent of non-Hippocratic descriptions of *eros*, most especially fever and mental confusion. I will argue that the Hippocratics redefine *eros* and legitimise certain aspects of it as other illnesses, particularly the disease of young girls, more firmly situated within their own domain.

¹ For example Xen. *Cyr.* 5.1.12, Ar. *Thesm.* 1116-1117, Eur. *Andr.* 220, 956, *Hipp.* 131-140, 170-249, Pl. *Symp.* 207a, *Ti.* 86d.

² Gal. *Hippocratis Prognosticum commentarii* 1.4, Kühn 18.2, Sor. *Vita Hippocratis secundum Soranum* 2.4-10.