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The Authorship of the Hippocratic “de arte”

Though it may seem to be a troublesome task to decide one’s attitude on the well-known problem, the profession of the author of Hippocratic “de arte”, it is still important for a prospective commentator of the work. He should have made a decision on this issue before he begins writing the introduction and the commentary on some controversial sentences, such as II.1 and IX.1 (paragraph numeration by Jouanna). Is he to form his interpretation on a belief that the work is from the view point of a sophist-philosopher(Gomperz and his followers)?

Though Jouanna (Jouanna 179-183) offered a considerable amount of argument against the view, I think we have not yet reached a decisive point on this issue. On the other hand, no one has denied the rhetorical quality of the work. But where could we place the quality within the problem of the authorship? This is also an important issue for a prospective commentator. On this we have not reached an agreement, either. Here I would like to make the following points to assist a prospective commentator.

1: It is beyond dispute that “de arte” has the appearance of a well-built speech. However, rather astonishingly, it lacks any reference to the audience. It has no vocatives to the audience, no second-person communications. Even the imaginative speeches by Antiphon the rhetorician (Tetralogia 1-3) do not lack them entirely. The fact makes me doubt the meaning of the form as a speech. The form might have been a convenient device to realize the author’s purpose, whichever it might have been.

2: The famous sentence, which made Gomperz believe that the author is a sophist (IX-1), is in reality only a variation of transitional formulae (Bundy, Lys.3.44, Isocr.5.33). Main components of the sentence are usual ones of formulae to build up a transition within a literary work and a focalization towards the next topic within audience’s attention. Gomperz’s search into the philosophical affiliation of the author may lose some part of the ground.

3: The theory on existence and perception (II-1) has stirred up loud arguments on the author’s position within a history of philosophy. But in my view, this manifestation should be considered mostly in connection with the later part of “the speech” (IX-2~XII), where illness seen and unseen is described. The author’s principle expressed there is that, since there is certainly an illness, it must be seen (visible ones), or, if not seen, it should be seen by other means of perception (gnomes opsis). This is just the same as the theory in II-1, with a difference of viewpoint: We cannot perceive the non-existent (II-1)/The existent can be perceived in any wise(IX-2~XII). The principle is in complete harmony with the empiricism of medical scientists. We can find other variations within the Hippocratic Corpus (e.g. Nat.Hom.2).

4: Within a contrast between an incompetent patient and a competent medical doctor (VII-3), three important activities of Hippocratic writings, or activities of medical doctors – documentations of cases (Epid., Morb., etc.), prognosis (Progn. Etc.) and searches for better diet (VM etc.) – are compactly described. More than that, they are organized within a vivid daily situation for doctors. This is a typical case of the writing in question. We can say that in this work almost all the important activities of ancient medical doctors are well organized within one topic, to argue for medicine as a *techne*.

My provisional conclusion on the author's, or rather the writing's identity, is as follows: this is a work of a theoretically and rhetorically well-equipped medical practitioner. Its purpose is rather to give a theoretical support to the activities of practical doctors than to argue against real criticism of medicine.

Bibliography

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On the (distinctively Hippocratic?) Art

Scholarship on the polemical works of the *Corpus Hippocraticum* (henceforth, merely *Corpus*) tend to trace the theoretical fault lines that divide an admittedly diverse lot of ancient medical authors. The fifth-century BCE treatise *On the Art* (*Peri technês*), however, is an exception. Instead of polemicizing certain disputes within the medical *technê*, it rallies the medical profession against external critics who question its legitimacy, perhaps even its very existence. Thus, if we are concerned about what, if anything, is distinctively “Hippocratic” about Hippocratic medical texts, *On the Art* offers a useful starting point from which to launch our inquiry. *On the Art*, in attempting to defend medicine as a whole, studiously avoids mention of the differences between physicians—an oft-cited fact in the case against medicine’s legitimacy (e.g., *Nature of Man* and *Regimen in Acute Diseases*). Indeed, assuming the author desired his polemic to be of interest to the widest possible audience, we may infer that the treatise focuses on the commonalities shared by practicing physicians of the time. It stands to reason that, if there were conscious selection criteria applied during the compilation of the *Corpus* (criteria which *On the Art* met), the theoretically non-partisan view of medicine contained therein may well accord closely with the compilation criteria themselves. Supposing that candidates for such criteria may be extracted from *On the Art* (the task of the present essay), these candidates may be further tested to determine whether they adequately distinguish Hippocratic medical texts as a group from other ancient medical works. If they do, then the best explanation for the composition of the *Corpus* is that it is the product of deliberate discrimination.

After analyzing the conception of medicine that informs the argument in *On the Art*, I suggest that its author identifies the following as intrinsic to the legitimate practice of medicine.

1. *The recognition that regimen is central to diagnosis and treatment* (c. 5). In most, if not all, cases of illness, the triggering cause is deviation from an ideal regimen. Likewise, medical treatment will employ not only pharmaceutical cures but also adjustments to patient regimen (c.6).
2. *The commitment to causal explanation*. There is an intelligible (in principle, at least) cause for every event in the medical domain. Indeed, it is this law of causal sufficiency that makes medicine possible at all (c.6), and knowing the causes of a disease is said to be virtually indistinguishable from curing it (c. 11).
3. *The comparison of present cases to past cases* (c. 7). In recommending a certain course of treatment, the physician will rely on the experience of similar cases he has encountered.

4. *The development of a complete physiological and anatomical theory that includes internal organs and systems* (c. 10). Since the physician must understand the causes of a disease, and since many diseases obviously affect the internal regions of the body, the physician must construct a picture of the body's internal structure and function.
5. *The development of a medical semiotics* (c. 11). In order to make a diagnosis, the physician must have a working picture not only of the human body generally but of the particular patient's body. In order to discern its inner workings, the physician must employ some method that allows him to infer the patient's internal state from external signs and symptoms. For obvious reasons, a sign will more often than not take the form of some bodily fluid, and there is a tendency in *On the Art* to place both semiotic and pathological importance on fluids.

It will be apparent that, if indeed these constitute in whole the criteria for what counted to the compilers of the *Corpus* as genuinely Hippocratic medicine (and they may not), we are left less with a theoretically coherent collection than we are with one that is unified by its meta-theoretical or methodological commitments. The advantage will be that individual treatises from the *Corpus* will likely exemplify one or more of these criteria without directly contradicting or contravening others. The potential disadvantage will be that the criteria might be satisfied *too* easily, so that it will be difficult to explain on what theoretical or methodological grounds ostensibly non-Hippocratic approaches to medicine are to be excluded.

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“Towards a Hippocratic Anthropology?
On Ancient Medicine and the Origins of Humans”

Greek thinkers took an interest in what we would call cultural anthropology at least as early as the fifth century BCE. Presocratic philosophers, such as Empedocles, Protagoras, and Democritus, all weighed in on the question of what humans must have been like in a hypothetical primordial state. Questions about human origins took on a more urgent tone among contemporary medical writers, however, whose evolving theories of disease and therapeutics had obvious practical ramifications. The early chapters of the Hippocratic *On Ancient Medicine* (*VM*) offer in particular a striking attempt to explain medicine as a *techne* by tracing its origins to the physical deficiencies of the earliest humans. Scholars have often situated such theorizing within the context of contemporary presocratic and sophistic *Kulturgeschichte*, while noting *VM*'s distinctive emphasis on the role of diet and cooking in improving the human condition. But can we also say that there is anything specifically “Hippocratic” about *VM*'s notions of human *physis* in its originary form? This paper will suggest that we can, and will argue that *VM* reflects a broader Hippocratic interest in human origins, characterized by a clinical agenda and distinct from other contemporary approaches to the topic, which tended to be more speculative and less rigorously formulated. Moreover, whether or not we can confidently consider *VM*'s notions of humans in a primitive ‘state of nature’ as idiosyncratically Hippocratic in the Classical period, I will argue that it certainly seemed so to Galen. Galen is not traditionally considered to have shown much interest in *VM*, but I will suggest that when he writes about gymnastics, dietetics, the definition of medicine, and humans in various ‘natural states’ (e.g., in *Usefulness of Parts* and *Thrasylbulus*) his thinking was informed in various ways by the fundamental polemics of *VM*, which had, for Galen at least, become canonically Hippocratic.