

【論文】

Psychopathological Arguments in the Hippocratic Treatise *On the Sacred Disease*

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They (the Eleatics) expressed their views in this way about the truth for these reasons. However, although these consequences may logically follow, yet it comes almost near to madness to believe so in view of the facts. For, even among those who are mad, there is no one who seems to be so far out of his or her senses as to suppose that fire and ice are one and the same. There is no difference indeed between what *is* beautiful and what seems to be so for some people because of their madness.

Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, I 8, 325a16–23

Introduction

In what follows, I discuss how ancient Greek doctors contributed to the advancement of medical knowledge regarding those who were afflicted with serious mental diseases, such as schizophrenia and depression, with a specific focus on psychopathological arguments developed by the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* (*Morb.Sacr.*).¹ Through an analysis of pathological accounts given by the Hippocratic author of psychic disturbances which he attributes to abnormal conditions in the brain as the central organ of the human body, I will make it clear that his psychopathological arguments, scientific as they might indeed be, owe much to his own religious concept of divinity.

Before discussing the main topic in this article, I want to offer a sketch of some of the features of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* and its place in the large number of medical treatises that

¹ I follow the Greek text of this treatise, edited by Jacques Jouanna in his Budé edition, for all the passages to be cited in this article from the treatise. J. Jouanna (éd.), *Hippocrate, tome II, 2^e Partie, La maladie sacrée* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003). Passages will be cited from the treatise with reference to the page and line numbers in the edition of É. Littré, *Hippocrate, Œuvres complètes d'Hippocrate, traduction nouvelle avec le texte grec en regard*, 10 tomes (Paris, 1839–1861), reprint. A. M. Hakkert (Amsterdam, 1973–1978), tome 6, pp.350–387. In Littré's edition, chapters of the treatise are divided in a different manner from the Loeb edition by W. H. S. Jones, *Hippocrates II* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1923). The chapters of the Jones' edition will be indicated in round brackets.

constitute the Hippocratic Collection (Corpus Hippocraticum) that has been transmitted from antiquity until today.² This treatise has been of much interest to modern scholars as one of the most polemical medical texts in the Hippocratic Collection.³ The Hippocratic author starts his arguments with an open criticism of those who held that a particular kind of disease called 'sacred' (i.e. epilepsy) occurs due to the intervention of supernatural entities. These people believed that they themselves had a special knowledge for treating patients by means of religious rites, such as purifications, incantations, and prohibitions of some particular kinds of food and other aspects of their daily lives. The Hippocratic author, on the other hand, strongly denounces their explanation as to the cause of the disease and their principles regarding its treatment as contradictory, because, he argues, they called the disease 'sacred' or 'divine' in the sense that, since it is due to supernatural intervention, it may well be regarded as being beyond human control, although they usually made use of remedies invented by humans to cure people suffering from it.⁴

In opposition to their pathological account of the disease by an appeal to supernatural intervention, the Hippocratic author insists that it has its nature (φύσις) and its exciting cause (πρόφασις), which is also the case with all other diseases. Then, he provides a rational and scientific account of the disease, arguing that it originates from the brain which has not been purged enough to be in its normal condition. This is especially the case with people of phlegmatic constitution. In chapter 3 (6) of his treatise, the Hippocratic author gives a detailed description of the vascular system in the human body responsible for distributing the flow of pneuma (πνεῦμα). When this flow is blocked by the flux of phlegm that runs down into the vessels from the brain flooded with it, there occur bodily abnormalities such as paralysis and spasms, and psychic disturbances like lack of intelligence (φρόνησις), which he considered to be characteristic symptoms of the disease.⁵

The Hippocratic author's pathological account of the disease, as outlined above, is theoretically based on his theory of the structure and functions of the brain. He puts it forward in his arguments from chapters 14 (17) to 17 (20) of the treatise. In the opening paragraph of chapter 14 (17), the Hippocratic author argues that the brain is the centre of all psychic states and activities, such as emotion, intelligence, thinking, sense perception, and moral and aesthetic judgments, and that it is also responsible for all psychic disturbances,

² The Hippocratic Collection that we have today is an amalgam of medical treatises and documents written by many authors of various intellectual backgrounds, including the ones written by doctors in the fifth and fourth centuries, which may well be regarded as having constituted an original core of the Collection. By 'Hippocratic treatises' in my phraseology, I mean a group of medical texts which have been ascribed with some historical certainty to the doctors as members of the Hippocratic medical school at Cos. On this grouping of 'Hippocratic treatises', see Jacques Jouanna, *Hippocrates*, translated by M.B. DeBevoise (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1999), p. 65.

³ See J. Jouanna (2003), Notice, pp.7–9. I owe much of the sketch below to the discussion in my recent article entitled 'Psychological Arguments in the Hippocratic Treatises *On the Sacred Disease* and *Airs, Waters, Places*', *Japan Studies in Classical Antiquity (JASCA)*, Vol.2 (2014), pp.47–66.

⁴ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.1 (2–4) [VI 354, 12–364, 8. Littré].

⁵ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.3 (6) [VI 366, 10–25. Littré].

such as madness (μάνια), delirium, wandering of thought, and so on.⁶ It may deserve noting here that the Hippocratic author does not seem to limit his psychopathological arguments to particular kinds of psychic disturbances as principal symptoms of epilepsy, but is obviously extending his arguments to all kinds of mental derangements, which, he insists, occur when the brain has fallen into an abnormal condition.⁷

It is most probable that there were many people suffering from serious mental diseases, such as schizophrenia, depression, and obsessional neurosis, in the ancient Greek world from the time of Homer (c.750 BC), who was the first in the history of ancient Greek thought to use the verbal form of madness (μάνισθαί) in the sense that one may be seriously out of his or her senses, and not thinking in the right way.⁸ These people inevitably drew enormous attention of family members, neighbours and friends in the community, especially because the eccentric words and behaviours resulting from their mental disorders seem to have been really astonishing or even frightening to them. Of course, there was a group of people who had identified themselves as healers of people seriously afflicted with particular kinds of mental derangements, as indeed is confirmed by the opening paragraph of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease*, where the Hippocratic author criticizes those who claimed to be experts in the treatment of those suffering from epilepsy by means of religious rites, such as purifications, incantations, and so on. But it was not until Greek medicine was established by Hippocrates (c.460–375 BC) as a science of healing based on empirical observation and rational thinking that these people were regarded by Hippocratic doctors, for the first time in the history of medicine, as ‘patients’ for whom they were required to have special experience in diagnosis and treatment. In fact, there is evidence found in the medical documents entitled *Epidemics*, Books V and VII in the Hippocratic Collection, which enable us to confirm the fact that Hippocratic doctors had increasing interest in those who suffered from a variety of mental diseases, as in the case of a patient named Parmeniscus who had been afflicted with a serious depressive disorder for a long time before he was treated by a Hippocratic doctor.⁹ However, the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* differs in his approach to these types of diseases from the writers or editors of *Epidemics*, Books V and VII, who intended to report as

⁶ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.14 (17) [VI 386, 15–388, 6. Littré].

⁷ In chapter 2 (5) of the treatise [VI 366, 1–2. Littré], the Hippocratic author insists that epilepsy occurs only to phlegmatic people, not to those who are bilious, while, when discussing those who suffer from madness in chapter 15 (18) [VI 388, 12–16. Littré], he attributes it to both kinds of humours (i.e. bile and phlegm). We may conclude, therefore, that the Hippocratic author is enlarging his psychopathological arguments to all kinds of mental derangements, including epilepsy and its principal symptoms. See on this point also W.H.S. Jones (1923), p. 132.

⁸ See for example *Iliade*, Book VIII, 360, where the goddess Athena uses the verb (μάνισθαί) in this sense to blame her father Zeus for his behaviours, which she understands to be inconsistent or even eccentric.

⁹ See *Epidemics*, V 84 [V 252, 5–6. Littré] = VII 89 [V 446, 7–17. Littré]. There are some other interesting clinical cases of patients suffering from mental diseases, as for example the ones of Nicanor and Democles, who were afflicted with an obsessional neurosis. See *Epidemics*, V 86 and 87 [V 250, 10–17. Littré] = *Epidemics*, VII 81 and 82 [V 444, 13–21. Littré].

accurately as they could on individual cases of patients suffering from some particular kinds of mental diseases.¹⁰ Rather, his intention seems to have been to provide a comprehensive picture of all kinds of psychic disturbances, including the principal symptoms of epilepsy, which he believed to occur due to abnormal changes in the physical condition of the brain. The crucial point here is that his psychopathological arguments are theoretically based on his theory of the structure and functions of the brain which, he strongly argues, is responsible for all psychic states and activities of a human being as the central organ of his or her body. Thus, the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* was the first in the history of medicine to make psychopathological arguments in a scientific way. It should be noted, on the other hand, that his arguments might well presuppose his own religious concept of divinity, as completely opposed to the traditional one that was common and widely shared by most people in the ancient Greek world.¹¹

In my discussion below, I will confirm this with a specific focus on his pathological accounts of psychic disturbances, including the principal symptoms of epilepsy. In doing so, I will shed new light on some of the religious aspects of ancient Greek medicine, which, I am convinced, constituted one of intellectual foundations for Hippocratic doctors.

Pathological Accounts of Psychic Disturbances by the Hippocratic Author

It is significant that pathological accounts given by the Hippocratic author of various kinds of psychic disturbances are theoretically based on his encephalocentric theory of the structure and functions of the brain, which is responsible for all kinds of psychic phenomena, whether normal or abnormal, as he argues in the following passage of the treatise.¹²

¹⁰ *Epidemics*, Books V and VII contain a number of reports on individual patients treated by Hippocratic doctors, who practiced as itinerants in many places in Greece in the fourth century BC. One may well assume that an author had composed the original text, from which others may have derived the material that constitutes the second part of *Epidemics* V (ch.51–106) and the whole *Epidemics* VII to edit the collections of individual cases, which we have as *Epidemics* V and VII today. For a more detailed explanation on this point, see J. Jouanna (éd.), *Hippocrate, Œuvres complètes, tome IV, 3^e Partie, Épidémies V et VII* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003), Notice, pp. 18–75.

¹¹ For the concept of divinity in this treatise, see, among others, Harold W. Miller, 'The Concept of the Divine in De Morbo Sacro', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 84, 1953, pp. 1–15, Philip van der Eijk, 'The Theology of the Hippocratic Treatise On the Sacred Disease', *Apeiron*, 23, 1990, pp. 87–119, and J. Jouanna (2003), Notice, pp. 22–39.

¹² The author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* may well be regarded as having played an important role in a history of debate about the central organ of the human body as an advocate of encephalocentrism, while Aristotle argued for his own cardiocentric model of animals, including human beings, with a criticism of those who propounded an encephalocentric model of the human body, including, among others, the Hippocratic author. See my article entitled 'Aristotle on the Debate about the Central Organ of the Human Body in the 5th and 4th Centuries BC', *Historia Scientiarum: International Journal of the History of Science Society of Japan*, Vol.22–1 (2012), pp. 1–21.

One needs to know that there arise our pleasures, joys, laughter and jests from no other organ from which there also arise our sorrows, pains, anxieties and tears. And by that organ in particular, we are intelligent, we think, we see and hear, and we distinguish between the ugly and beautiful, between the bad and good, and the pleasant and unpleasant, by discerning the ones according to custom, by perceiving the others according to utility, and by distinguishing sometimes between pleasant and unpleasant according to opportunities, for there are not always the same things that are pleasant to us. It is the same organ by which we also get into madness and become delirious, and dread and fear arise in us, sometimes in the night, sometimes even in the daytime, and also inopportune wanderings of thought, aimless concerns, negligence in customs, and acts that are contrary to habit. And we suffer all these things from the brain, when it is not healthy but becomes hotter or colder, moister or drier than its nature, or when it has suffered any other affection to which it was not accustomed contrary to its nature.¹³

In this passage, the Hippocratic author provides a comprehensive description of several kinds of psychic phenomena, ranging from sense perceptions and various emotional reactions to moral and aesthetic judgments. He also includes many types of psychic disturbances in his description of these phenomena, and attributes all of them to the brain as the central organ of the human body. I draw specific attention to the last sentence of the passage cited above, because on the theoretical basis of his encephalocentric model of the human body as a general principle of his psychopathological arguments, the Hippocratic author goes on to give an account of each one of the psychic disturbances enumerated here, beginning with madness.

And we get into madness with its moistness. For if the brain becomes moister than it is in its natural condition, it is forced to move, and when it moves, neither sight nor hearing are stable, but we see and hear now one thing, now another thing, and the tongue speaks in accordance with such things as we see and hear on any occasion. But as long as the brain is stable, a man is intelligent for that time.¹⁴

According to the Hippocratic author, madness is due to the moistness of the brain, which occurs when it is flooded with an excessive amount of phlegm. The overflow of this humour in the brain, he argues, will seriously impede one of its important functions, which he defines in a passage of chapter 16 (19) of his

¹³ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.14 (17) [VI 386, 15–388,6. Littré]. In the latter part of chapter 14 (17) and further, in the next chapter, the Hippocratic author will be giving an account of each one of the psychic disturbances in such an order as he enumerates them in the passage cited above.

¹⁴ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.14 (17) [VI 388, 6–11. Littré].

treatise as 'the interpreter to us of the phenomena originating from the air'.¹⁵ In this definition of the brain, the Hippocratic author seems to assume a psychophysiological model of sense perception, which might well be described as follows. When our sense organs receive stimuli from external objects, these stimuli are transformed into sensory impressions, which are then transmitted by the flow of pneuma running through the vessels to the brain, whereby they are transformed into our perceptual experiences of seeing or hearing particular objects. When, on the other hand, the brain is forced to move due to the overflow of phlegm there, it can no longer transform the sensory impressions into normal perceptual experiences. The Hippocratic author seems to be identifying such abnormal cognitive processes, especially when he says in the passage cited above that 'we see and hear now one thing, now another thing, and the tongue speaks in accordance with such things as we see and hear on any occasion'.

We should note that these psychic disturbances, which the Hippocratic author describes here, do not seem to be limited to epilepsy and its principal symptoms, but may include ones, such as hallucinations, that arise specifically in those who suffer from schizophrenia.¹⁶ This is to be confirmed by the fact that the Hippocratic author goes on to classify madness into two types, which he attributes to two kinds of humours (i.e. phlegm and bile) respectively. He argues that those who are mad due to phlegm are quiet, and do not shout nor make a disturbance, while those who in madness scream, and are harmful and restless, and are always doing something inopportune. His distinction in this context of arguments between two types of madness may deserve attention, because in his former arguments about epilepsy, the Hippocratic author insisted that the disease only arises in people with a phlegmatic constitution.¹⁷ It may be concluded, then, that the Hippocratic author is here enlarging his psychopathological arguments to all kinds of mental derangements.

There is another significant aspect in his psychopathological arguments in chapter 15 (18) of the treatise. The Hippocratic author specifies some particular kinds of psychic disturbances, such as dread and fear, distress and anguish, and so on, as symptoms discerned in those who descend temporarily into madness, distinguishing them from those suffering from chronic madness. The Hippocratic author then goes on to give a detailed account of each of these symptoms based on the theoretical grounds of his encephalocentric model of the human body as a general principle of his psychopathological arguments in the treatise.

¹⁵ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.16 (19) [VI 390, 10–13. Littré]. In the same chapter, the Hippocratic author attributes to the brain the other important function of it as 'the messenger for comprehension' to transmit its instructions to particular parts of the human body, such as eyes and ears, hands and feet, which are required to act in accordance with the judgment of the brain. See *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.16 (19) [VI 390, 13–16. Littré].

¹⁶ It is most important to point it out that the Hippocratic author was the earliest in the history of psychiatry to provide a detailed description of hallucinations.

¹⁷ See text to n.7 above.

If, on the other hand, there are terrors and fears occurring to the patient, these are due to an abnormal change in the brain. It changes abnormally, when it is heated. It is heated by bile, when it rushes into the brain from the body through the blood vessels. And the fear besets the patient until the bile goes away into the vessels and the body. And it ceases.¹⁸

In this passage, the Hippocratic author attributes psychic disturbances like dreads and fear to the abnormal change (μετάστασις) in the brain as a result of the heating effect of bile, which he supposes to run through the blood vessels (τὰς φλέβας τὰς αἱματίτιδας) into the brain from the whole body. As regards distress and anguish, which may arise most specifically in those who suffer from a depressive disorder, the Hippocratic author explains that they occur when the brain is cooled unseasonably and contracts unusually due to the chilling effect of phlegm.¹⁹ In this context of his psychopathological arguments in the treatise, the Hippocratic author also refers to the effect of blood itself with a view to give an account of the intriguing cases in which those who suffer from mental diseases happen to have fearful dreams when sleeping. These occur, the Hippocratic author argues, when the brain is exceedingly heated by the blood rushing in abundance into the brain. This symptom ceases, when the blood is dispersed again from there into the blood vessels.²⁰

Thus far, my discussion of the psychopathological arguments by the Hippocratic author of the treatise has focused on his accounts of particular psychic disturbances, which he thinks constitute principal symptoms of some serious mental diseases, including not only epilepsy but schizophrenia, depression, and so on. The most crucial point as concerns his psychopathology in general is, as I hope to have made clear through my discussion above, that these psychic disturbances arise in those who suffer from mental diseases, because the brain, which is the central organ of the human body, has fallen into an abnormal condition that runs contrary to its nature (παρὰ τὴν φύσιν). This abnormal condition occurs, when it becomes hotter or colder, or moister or drier than its nature, or when it has suffered any other affection to which it was not accustomed in its natural state. We may well conclude from this, therefore, that these psychic disturbances are consequences of abnormal changes in the physical condition of the brain. I think it to be a crucial point for us to make an approach to the concept of divinity, which I contend is a significant factor in understanding the intellectual foundations of the Hippocratic author, whose concept of divinity ran counter to traditions of ancient Greek religion.

¹⁸ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.15 (18) [VI 388, 17–21. Littré].

¹⁹ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.15 (18) [VI 388, 21–390, 1. Littré].

²⁰ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.15 (18) [VI 390, 2–9. Littré].

The Concept of Divinity in the Hippocratic Treatise *On the Sacred Disease*

In the opening paragraph of his medical treatise, the Hippocratic author puts forward his pathological doctrine that the disease called 'sacred' has its nature (φύσις) and its exciting cause (πρόφασις), as is the case with all other diseases, by introducing it as an argument against those who held that the disease occurs due to the intervention of supernatural entities.

The case with the disease called sacred is as follows. In my opinion, the disease is not more divine in any respect and more sacred than other diseases, but as the other diseases have each its nature and its exciting cause, so this disease also has its own. However, people thought it to be something divine because of their incompetence about it and of their astonishment at the fact that it does not resemble the other diseases.²¹

In the second sentence of this passage, which may deserve noting, the Hippocratic author argues that the disease called sacred 'is not more divine in any respect and more sacred than other diseases' (οὐδέν τι...τῶν ἄλλων θειοτέρη εἶναι νοσῶν οὐδὲ ἰερωτέρη), but it has its nature and its exciting cause, just as the other diseases do, with the explicit implication that it is as divine and sacred as other diseases are. I think that W.H.S. Jones was mistaken in translating it in his Loeb edition as 'it is not any more divine than or more sacred than other diseases'.²² His translation would not be compatible with the author's view, when he resumes his arguments in the following passage at the beginning of chapter 18 (21) of the treatise.

The disease called sacred originates from the same exciting causes as from the other disease also do, i.e. from the things coming into the body and going out of it, which are the cold, the sun, and the winds changing and constantly moving. These things are divine, so that one should not think, distinguishing this disease from the other diseases, that it is more divine than the other diseases, but that they are all divine and all human. In fact, each has a nature and power of its own, and none is difficult to manage and without any means of treatment.²³

In this passage, the Hippocratic author expresses his own view most explicitly on diseases in general, arguing that all kinds of diseases, including epilepsy, which was then called 'sacred', are both divine and human (πάντα θεῖα καὶ πάντα ἀνθρώπινα). It may necessarily follow from this that he tries to retain room for the concept of divinity as being an explanatory element within his pathological accounts of

²¹ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.1 (1) [VI 352, 1–5. Littré].

²² W.H.S. Jones (1923), p.138.

²³ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.18 (21) [VI 394, 9–15. Littré].

various psychic disturbances, far from eliminating it from his psychopathological arguments, as W.H.S. Jones supposed that the author had done, when translating the first paragraph of the treatise.

What, then, does the Hippocratic author mean by arguing that all diseases are both divine and human? Again, I draw attention to the passage cited above from chapter 18 (21) of the treatise, where he defines the cold, the heat of the sun, the winds changing and constantly moving, and so on, as being divine to the effect that the influences of such natural environments are far beyond human control, so that all diseases, including epilepsy, may well be regarded as having divine origins. According to the Hippocratic author, all diseases originate from the effects of these natural phenomena, which he claims to often function as exciting causes that provoke abnormal changes in the physical condition of the human body. When, on the other hand, the Hippocratic author defines all diseases as being human, he means that all diseases may be cured by the use of remedies and other means of medical treatment invented by humans, except for some serious cases of patients who suffer from serious chronic diseases that are far beyond the limits of medical treatment.²⁴

It turns out, then, that the concept of divinity, as thus understood by the Hippocratic author, is completely different from that of those who held that the disease is 'sacred and divine' in the sense that it is due to the intervention of supernatural entities. This is not the case at all, the Hippocratic author insists in the opening paragraph of his treatise, because it has its nature (φύσις), just as all the other diseases also do. In the passage cited above from chapter 18 (21) of the treatise, he puts it forward again in more general terms, saying that each disease has a nature and power of its own (φύσιν καὶ δύναμιν ἐφ' ἑωυτοῦ). It is significant to note that the Hippocratic author introduces the concept of nature as being different from the exciting cause (πρόφασις), because it is a key concept in his psychopathological arguments for his position that the origin of a disease comes from its essential nature.²⁵ His intention to introduce the concept of nature was undoubtedly to provide a critical response to those people who had attributed the 'sacred' disease to the intervention of supernatural entities, such as gods, ghosts, and so on. Provided that each disease has a nature of its own, provoked by some influences from external factors, such as the cold, the heat of the sun, and the winds, which the Hippocratic author defines as being 'divine' exactly in the sense that they are far beyond

²⁴ See for example ch.2 (5) of the treatise [VI 364, 9–15. Littré]. The Hippocratic author insists that even the disease called 'sacred' is no less curable than the other diseases, unless it has been so deeply fixed into the body for a long lapse of time as to be more powerful than the remedies to be applied for its treatment.

²⁵ It has been generally supposed in modern Hippocratic scholarship since É. Littré (1839–1861) that these two terms (φύσις, πρόφασις) may constitute one and the same concept in the pathology of the Hippocratic author. W.H.S. Jones (1923), p. 139 and H.W. Miller (1953), p. 3 translated them as 'a natural cause'. Hermann Grenzmann, *Die hippokratische Schrift Über die heilige Krankheit* (Berlin, 1968), p. 67 translated them as 'eine natürliche Ursache'. However, these two terms are conceptually different from each other, because πρόφασις means 'external exciting cause' to provoke some abnormalities in the physical condition of the brain, while φύσις, which derives from the verb φύειν ('bear', 'produce'), may mean an abnormal condition within the body as an origin of a disease intrinsically constituting its essential nature.

human control, there will be no room left for 'supernatural' entities to intervene in the occurrence of diseases resulting from abnormal changes in the physical condition of the human body.

Thus far, I have set forth my conceptual analysis of the nature and exciting cause of disease, which I think to be crucial for understanding the concept of divinity underlying the Hippocratic author's psychopathological arguments of the treatise. But I cannot finish this discussion here, because there is another intriguing aspect in his concept of divinity, which may deserve even more attention for elucidating his intellectual background and his opposition to traditions of ancient Greek religion. This is indicated in the following passage of the treatise.

I do not hold, however, that the human body, which is the most perishable, might be defiled by the god that is of the greatest holiness. But should it happen to be defiled or affected in any other way by anything else, it will be purified and sanctified by the god rather than being defiled. In fact, it is the divinity that is what purifies, sanctifies and cleanses us from the greatest and most impious of our sins, and we ourselves fix boundaries to the sanctuaries and precincts of the gods, so that nobody may cross them, unless he or she is pure, and when we enter there, we sprinkle ourselves, not as defiling ourselves, but to purify ourselves from a defilement, if there is any that we have already contracted. Such is my opinion about the purifications.²⁶

In this passage, the Hippocratic author is developing his arguments against those who held that the disease (i.e. epilepsy) is 'sacred' because it occurs due to the intervention of divine entities, together with his strong claim that their concept of divinity itself is completely mistaken. According to the Hippocratic author, such religious rites as purifications and incantations, which were used as remedies for the treatment of the disease may imply that they thought that these sufferers had been 'defiled' or 'polluted' (μιαρός). This is not the case at all, he insists, because gods, who are *essentially* divine and holy, cannot be the cause of any defilement or pollution. The notion of divinity thus conceptualized by the Hippocratic author in the passage cited above may remind us of Socrates (469–399 BC), who expressed his own view on Apollo at Delphi in relation to the oracle concerning him, as it is described by Plato in the following passage of his most famous work *Apology*.

When I heard about the oracle's answer, I said to myself, what does the god (i.e. Apollo) mean? Why does he not use plain language? I am only too conscious that I have no claim to wisdom, great or small. What can he mean by asserting that I am the wisest man in the world? He cannot be telling

²⁶ *Morb. Sacr.*, ch.1 (4) [VI 362, 16–364, 8. Littré].

a lie, because it would not be right for him.²⁷

It should be noted above all that in this passage Socrates strongly denies that the god Apollo could be telling a lie, when sending him the oracle as a divine message which announces that Socrates is the wisest in the world, because, he believes, telling a lie is completely incompatible with the essential nature of divinity. Such a rationalistic view of the god as being intellectually and morally perfect may be traced back to as early as Xenophanes of Colophon (c.570–478 BC). In fact, he was the earliest in the history of ancient Greek theology to develop the idea of a supreme divinity without any connections to human affairs, as opposed to the traditional images of Homeric and Hesiodic gods and goddesses that had been popular for centuries in the ancient Greek world, as it is confirmed by a famous fragment of his work.

Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods everything that is a shame and reproach among men, stealing and committing adultery and deceiving each other.²⁸

It is true, indeed, that Xenophanes went far beyond the tradition of anthropomorphism in ancient Greek religion to define the essence of divinity from the point of view of monotheism as being a supreme entity that is able to see, hear and think as a whole.²⁹ Socrates and the Hippocratic author as well were more conservative, it seems, in view of the naming of gods and goddesses and religious rites in general. On the other hand, the Hippocratic author shared almost the same concept of divinity with Socrates as regards its essential nature, which may well be regarded as having been completely different from the one prevalent in the ancient Greek world.

Conclusion: Ancient Greek Medicine and the Traditions of Ancient Greek Religion

Thus far, I have discussed how ancient Greek doctors contributed to the advancement of medical knowledge regarding those who were afflicted with serious mental diseases, such as schizophrenia and depression, with a specific focus on the psychopathological arguments developed by the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease*. Through my discussion, I hope to have elucidated the fact that the Hippocratic author gave pathological accounts of psychic disturbances, which might well be evaluated as

²⁷ See *Apology*, 21b, translated into English by Hugh Tredennick, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (edd.), *The Collected Dialogues of Plato including the Letters*, Bollingen Series LXXI (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 7.

²⁸ Hermann Diels & Walter Kranz (Hgg.) *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 6. Aufgabe, 3 Bde (1951 / Zürich, 2004) [=DK] 21 (Xenophanes) B11. I follow the English translation given by G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield (edd.), *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 168.

²⁹ See DK21 (Xenophanes) B23–24.

being scientific in the exact sense of the word, because the Hippocratic author attributed all of them to physical abnormalities in the brain which he considered to be the central organ of the human body. At the same time, I have drawn attention to the fact that his psychopathological arguments presuppose his religious concept of divinity which stood in opposition to the traditional images of gods and goddesses that had predominated from the time of Homer and Hesiod.

I have made it clear that there are two aspects that constitute the concept of divinity in the psychopathological arguments by the Hippocratic author. He argues that all diseases, including epilepsy, are 'divine and human' against those who believed that epilepsy is 'sacred and divine' in the sense that it is due to the intervention of supernatural entities. In this definition of all diseases as 'divine', the Hippocratic author means that each disease has its own nature, provoked by external factors, such as the cold, the heat of the sun, and the winds, which he claims to be 'divine' in the sense that they are far beyond human control. Thus, there is no room for 'supernatural' entities to intervene in the occurrence of diseases, because they occur as consequences of abnormal changes provoked by external factors in the physical condition of the human body.

I have also focused on another aspect of his concept of divinity, which, I am sure, is more intriguing and more crucial for an understanding of his intellectual background and his attitude towards the traditions of ancient Greek religion. According to the Hippocratic author, those who held that people suffer from the disease called 'sacred' due to the intervention of supernatural entities like gods and goddesses, and who claimed to treat them by means of purifications, incantations, and so on were implying that these sufferers had been 'defiled' or 'polluted' by these entities. The Hippocratic author strongly rejected their concept of divinity, insisting that gods are *essentially* divine and holy, so they cannot be the cause of any defilement or pollution. The Hippocratic author argued that the gods should be regarded as the only entities that are entitled to purify those polluted or defiled by means of the holiness of their essential nature. I would insist that it was a real challenge for the Hippocratic author to introduce such a religious concept of divinity into his psychopathological arguments of the treatise, because he was targeting not only those who had identified themselves as healers of the people who were suffering from the disease called 'sacred', but also all the Greeks who had held this concept of divinity for centuries.

It was generally believed by the majority of people in the ancient world, including Greece and its surrounding areas, that disease may play a role as an ethical message sent by particular gods and goddesses in order to punish an individual or an entire community that had committed a morally serious crime. The earliest version of this notion is found in the opening paragraphs of the Homeric *Iliade*, where the epic poet describes Apollo as spreading a deadly plague among the Achaean soldiers as his revenge on their commander Agamemnon, who had maltreated a local priest of the god.³⁰ Of course, this notion of disease continued to

³⁰ See *Iliade*, Book I, 8–52. In her famous treatise entitled *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1978), pp. 39–40, Susan Sontag referred to it as representing this notion of disease.

have much impact on the mentality of the people living in the classical period of the 5th and 4th centuries BC, even after Greek medicine was established by Hippocrates as a science of healing based on empirical observation and rational thinking. As a matter of fact, this situation did not drastically change and enter a completely new stage as a consequence of the establishment of Greek medicine. It was within the context of these intellectual circumstances that the author of the Hippocratic treatise *On the Sacred Disease* developed his psychopathological arguments presupposing his rationalistic concept of divinity. We may therefore legitimately draw the conclusion from these facts that his concept of divinity was one of the most critical responses from Greek doctors to all those who may have shared the traditional notion of disease, which they thought to be incompatible with the practice of medicine as a science of healing and the medical profession in general.

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