

The Lasting Significance of Hippocratic Medicine.

E. M. Craik,
The University of St. Andrews.

1939年スコットランド生まれ。専門はギリシア文学および古代医学。セント・アンドルーズ大学でサー・ケネス・ドーバーに師事，ケンブリッジ大学文学修士，セント・アンドルーズ大学文学博士。ギリシア文明におけるドーリス系要素の研究から始め，悲劇，喜劇，修辭学，文化史，女性史に多くの業績をあげる他，「ヒポクラテス集成」研究では世界をリードする。1997年より2002年京都大学文学部教授。

First, let me say what a great pleasure it is to be back in Kyoto, which now seems to me a second home. I am very grateful to the organizers of this conference for their kind invitation, especially to my good friends and former colleagues Professors Uchiyama and Nakatsukasa. It is a very great honour to find myself the first speaker in such a distinguished company of Japanese scholars and foreign visitors.

I begin with a little reminiscence. When I was teaching at Kyodai, I offered a so-called pocket seminar (for first year students in various faculties, such as economics and engineering, with only a few from *bun-gakubu*) on western civilization. It was easy to indicate and illustrate the ways in which Greece of the classical period was the *fons et origo* of European civilization. The lasting significance of the Greek language is evident from a glance at any etymological dictionary for English, German or the romance languages; and I know that Professor Babiniotis will soon talk more eloquently than I can on this topic. As to literature, the Greeks gave Europe epic, lyric, drama, the novel and history (for I regard the historians Herodotos and Thucydides as literary stylists). As to philosophy, the names of Plato and Aristotle resonate even to those who are unfamiliar with the concepts they formulated; concepts of the widest range in education, ethics, logic and many other fields. As to politics, the democratic constitution of classical Athens remains an ideal, though one per-

haps more often aspired to and cited than understood. As to science, the mathematics of Euclid, the mechanics of Aristotle (philosopher!), the geography of Strabo, the astronomy of Ptolemy all provided launching points for the later developments of Roman science and, in some cases through the Arabic tradition, western scientific thought.

Medicine had a similar transmission; and medicine is an aspect of science. Science is undoubtedly different from the other aspects of civilization just noted. It is different especially from literature. Literature is subjective and aesthetic; science aims to be objective and accurate. It may even be doubted whether science can be regarded as classic. There is no canon of scientific works, resembling a canon of literary works. It is in the essence of scientific discovery that it will one day be refined or superseded. Although medicine can be viewed as an aspect of science, it is certainly not an exact science. I suggest that it is a peculiar aspect with its own momentum and its own fashions, prone to revivals as well as to new developments. I suggest that the medicine of certain eras can be regarded as classic; and that the Hippocratic Corpus, which became canonical, a medical canon, has a good claim to be so considered. Ancient medicine was both scientific and unscientific, or quasi-scientific. It was rooted in philosophical speculation on the nature of man and of the universe; and in its early development was much concerned with

the nature of the medical *techné* (ART).

The idea of progress is fundamental in modern science; the Hippocratic doctors debated simply whether medicine was already completely discovered (ART; ANCIENT MEDICINE). The idea of objective right, or correct, and wrong, or incorrect, is fundamental to scientific thought; the Hippocratic doctors debated rather subjective right and wrong for a particular situation, or *kairos*. This debate continued in the work of the rhetorician Isocrates; similarly debate on the place of luck in medicine continued in Plato. Science depends on available techniques – measurement, the microscope – whereas the Hippocratics did not use such yardsticks at all. They did, however, use sight, touch, hearing, smell and sometimes even taste as diagnostic tools; e.g. hearing to detect presence of pus on the lungs. There are obvious parallels in much of this, especially with regard to diagnostic procedures, with traditional Chinese medicine. Of course I do not suggest influence or interaction, merely draw attention to similarities. TCM too can be considered classic and having a lasting significance. Both Hippocratic and Chinese medicine differ significantly from more scientific modern western medicine. Perhaps we can return to this point in discussion. I am sure I can learn much from colleagues here.

Aspects of Hippocratic Medicine

Anatomy Medicine is at its most scientific and impersonal with regard to ideas about the body. Accurate knowledge of the interior of the body depends on dissection. In the classical period human cadavers were not dissected; knowledge depended on comparative anatomy and dissection of animals (ON ANATOMY). In the Alexandrian era, there was dissection of human corpses and even vivisection was practised (of criminals). Galenos, who was more impressed by Hippocrates than by the subsequent tradition, and who devoted much energy to trying to isolate the genuine works of Hippocrates in the sixty plus treatises in the Hippocratic Corpus, dissected apes and made no great advance in this area of medicine. The Hippocratic contribution was not immensely significant here. However, in certain areas, their knowledge was extremely accurate. They knew much about bones and joints from treating injuries – fractures and dislocations – sustained in gymnasium and palaistra (ARTICULATIONS,

FRACTURES; Petrequin a nineteenth century practitioner and commentator was very impressed by the Hippocratic account.). There is surely some lasting significance here. When I broke my wrist in Kyoto a few years ago, and was treated at the Baptist Hospital, I re-read the treatise on fractures and reflected that the young doctor I had just met was acting precisely in accordance with Hippocratic precepts.

Physiology Ideas on the composition of the body were based on the notion that tubes containing fluids (blood, air and moist matter which might include noxious stuff inducing disease) linked solid parts or organs (heart, liver, spleen etc.). There was much debate on whether the heart or the head was more significant. There was no awareness of the circulation of the blood. This rather primitive proto-physiology has of course been refined beyond recognition in western medicine. [It may, however, sound familiar in relation to ideas of the relationship between Qi, blood and body fluids; and of their action on the organs of the body.]

Pathology The names and the nature of disease were much debated (DISEASES 1–3, AFFECTIONS, INTERNAL AFFECTIONS). In modern medicine, debate still centres on the mutation of one disease into another and the different forms a disease can take; and the distinction made by the Hippocratics between acute and chronic conditions is still maintained. The aetiology of disease (SACRED DISEASE etc.) was regarded as bodily flux, caused by some sort of imbalance, and especially by digestive imbalance. When the body could not deal with the food ingested (too much or too hot/cold/dry/wet) there was flux from the belly to the head then from the head to some other place in the body – typically to eyes, ears, nose, chest, back, hip-joints. Disease was caused by internal blockage or fixation, commonly indicated by external swelling. These ideas may seem simplistic; but the body is in fact composed largely of water; bodily swelling is often indicative of an underlying problem; any kind of internal blockage is a bad thing. To that extent, these ideas ought not to be dismissed, even by doctors who think in much more sophisticated terms. In TCM, 6 exogenous factors, 7 external factors, improper diet and exercise.

Therapy The means of treatment are by cauterization, by cutting and by regimen, *diata* (PLACES IN MAN; REGIMEN 1–4). Cautery has scarcely survived in

modern medicine [but parallel in moxibustion of TCM - question whether points treated by cautery in SIGHT relate to points treated for eye problems today]; cutting and especially internal surgery has become much more important, through the use of anaesthetics. As to *diata*, much emphasis was placed on eating the right foods and doing the right amount of bathing and exercise; the idea of striking the right balance was crucially important. Modern holistic medicine owes much to these Hippocratic ideals. [cf. TCM.] Another modern catchphrase is environmental health; here too the Hippocratic doctors paved the way (AIRS, WATERS, PLACES).

Terminology The words used for drugs and for surgical procedures are the origin of modern medical terminology. In some cases, Latin is an intermediary [written prescriptions]. This is a particular aspect of the significance of the Greek language, with which I began.

Ideology Views of the nature of medicine have conditioned the modern physicians view of his craft, defined in Hippocratic terms as relief of suffering caused by disease - cure or palliative (ART). Nil nocere was the watchword; the first principle of treatment was to do no harm. Prognosis crucially important to the extent that the ancient doctor would not treat hopeless cases (PROGNOSTIC).

Ethics Here, above all, Hippocratic medicine has had a lasting significance (OATH). The ideal of medical confidentiality was articulated. There was debate on the questions of abortion and euthanasia, eschewed by the doctor. Trust in the physician was of paramount importance. Other deontological works (SURGERY) stressed the importance of cleanliness in the person and in the place of work [fundamental points sometimes forgotten even in the modern high tech hospital].

Conclusion

I have been arguing for the lasting significance of Hippocratic medicine. The argument may have been quite superfluous, in that no medical theorist or practitioner in Europe has been unaware of the Hippocratic treatises and their significance. Indeed, the myth of Hippocratic pre-eminence has sometimes gone too far. This myth, of the supremacy of Hippocrates - the greatest doctor of all time, the father of medicine - began soon after Hippocrates lifetime and endured for centuries. The reality is that not all, perhaps not any, of

the treatises in the corpus were written by the historical Hippocrates, of whom we know little more than that his life spanned the fifth century BC, roughly contemporary with Socrates; that he was born on the island of Cos and worked in the region of Thessaly. Some treatises were written long after his lifetime (HEART); some probably before it (PLACES IN MAN, SIGHT).

There are dangers in regarding any medical writer as having the last word. Here we come back to science. Because Hippocrates did not treat of the circulation of the blood, Harveys great discovery met with scepticism. Riolan tried hard, with useless ingenuity, to accommodate it to Hippocratic vascular theory. Similarly, in science, it was hard to get the scientific establishment to accept that the earth went round the sun, not vice versa. Various medical disasters have been perpetrated in the name of Hippocrates [in the field of gynaecology especially - theory of hysteria; but also in other fields, including ophthalmology - sixteenth century misinterpretation of *atraktos* as *atraktulis* (SIGHT)].

Finally, I leave you with miscellaneous general thoughts on survivals or parallels. The drugs used in modern medicine come neatly packed in little boxes, but some have their origin in Hippocratic specifics; for example aspirin is just willow. Also certain simple substances, prescribed by the Hippocratics, are still effective, for example honey to heal wounds, vinegar as an antiseptic (ULCERS). The theory of humours, now discarded, has an analogue in modern treatment of tumours, which may be benign or malignant. And the Hippocratic ideal of balance is at the root of modern homeopathy. [as TCM]

We have seen many examples of the lasting significance of Hippocratic medicine. Medicine of all eras deals with universal and perennial questions, as the human body remains the same; the benefits of health the same; and the certainty of eventual death the same. Medicine has its limitations. Awareness of these limitations is a final constant. The best expression is the Aphorisms, "Life is short, the art (*techné*) long, the occasion (*kairos*) fleeting, experiment risky, judgement hard" (APHORISMS).