

Book Reviews

PAUL POTTER, GILLES MALONEY, and JACQUES DESAUTELS (eds), *La maladie et les maladies dans la Collection Hippocratique*, Actes du VI^e Colloque International Hippocratique (Québec, 28 Sept.–3 Oct. 1987), Québec, Éditions du Sphinx, 1990, 8vo, pp. 465, Can \$30.00 (paperback).

This collection of papers presented to the sixth *Colloque hippocratique* gives an accurate picture of the concerns and methods of Hippocratic studies today. New tools are available for assessment, but old questions remain on the agenda.

The ANACOS computer project of the Université Laval is used by Gilles Maloney, who explains its operation by analysing words for “disease” in the vocabulary of the corpus, and by Monique Moisan in a discussion of narcotic drugs. However, Heinrich von Staden’s careful treatment of incurability may point to the limitations of this tool; while some treatises present a firm boundary between what is and what is not curable, in others the vocabulary of incurability has “mobile edges”, so that we cannot simply rely on looking at passages in which Greek words for “incurable” occur. A disease may be incurable—or less curable—as a result of its nature, because the patient delays in calling the doctor or because the medical assistance received was in some way faulty.

Other contributors set Hippocratic medicine firmly within its social and cultural context; Simon Byl shows the importance of understanding the place of women in order to appreciate the aetiology of female sterility, while Jacques Jouanna investigates the parallels between medicine and tragedy, in the imagery of disease as a savage and devouring external force. The relationship between external and internal causes of disease is the theme of several contributions, while others focus on such specific causative agents as humours or air. Another theme is the relationship between objective description and subjective interpretation; how did the authors of the Hippocratic texts organize their data? How did they classify them? This raises the vital question of what we mean by a disease, discussed here by Paul Potter and others.

Jackie Pigeaud considers the meaning of disease itself; how far, and in what sense, is it thought to be the fault of the patient? It is this which brings us back to the familiar question of the Great Plague of Athens and its omission from the Hippocratic corpus; Pigeaud proposes that, in hitting both good and bad, healthy and sickly, it so strongly resisted integration into contemporary explanatory models that the only possible response was a judicious silence.

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H. J. KÜHN (ed.), *Index Hippocraticus. Fasc. IV: Π–Ω. Addenda et corrigenda*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989, pp. 677–946, DM 178.00 (paperback).

The *Index Hippocraticus* is at last complete. Historians of ancient medicine can only rejoice, give thanks, and wonder how they managed before without its aid. Its careful scholarship, nowhere better exemplified than in the Addenda and Corrigenda, is already providing new insights into the structure and development of the Hippocratic Corpus, for its abundant provision of information about variant readings and the secondary transmission, especially for the less familiar texts, provides a much more solid base than earlier discussions and word-lists. The *Index* is of value for more than just the study of Hippocrates. Galen’s *Hippocratic glossary* contains under the letters φ and ψ a remarkable number of words or word-forms not found in the Hippocratic Corpus as we have it. Some clearly represent alternative dialect spellings, e.g. φλέος; while others are scribal variants either in the text of Galen or in his copy of the Hippocratic writings, e.g. φοινικινός. At 19.156.7 K. Galen correctly explains the word ψεφαρός as formed from the *recherché* ψέφος, “darkness”. As the *Index* shows, no Hippocratic text has either word. The most likely explanation for this singularity is that Galen found ψεφαρός written in his manuscript of Hippocrates in mistake for the almost as rare ψαφαρός, “friable”. Whether the gloss itself is by Galen, no mean lexicographer, or goes back still earlier must remain an open question. With the *Index* at our disposal, such philological minutiae can be put with confidence to the service of medical history, for, as more than one scholar has insisted, philology is itself at bottom a historical science.

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