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Asclepios, M.D.? The Ancient Greeks and Integrative Medicine

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Asclepios, M.D.? The Ancient Greeks and Integrative Medicine

April 23, 2013

HAB Senior Thesis

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Précis:

The healing at the Sanctuaries of Asclepios in antiquity was thought to occur due to divine intervention, so it is often assumed in modernity that any healing which took place was product of ancient spirituality or had no legitimate medical foundation. The practices in the temples are cloudy, with Pausanias, Aristophanes, Aelius Aristides, steles, and votive offerings providing the bulk of the evidence. Due to the limited evidence available of what occurred in these sanctuaries, evidence of healing at Asclepieia is analyzed through a modern Integrative Medicine lens, specifically showing how techniques similar to optimal healing environments, hypnosis, and imagery were heavily relied upon in antiquity, revealing the medical legitimacy of these practices at Asclepieia.

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY	5
ASCLEPIOS, GOD OF MEDICINE	11
ANCIENT INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE?	14
A LESSON FROM THE ANCIENT GREEKS	18
INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE	22
ASCLEPIEIA: THE SITES AND CHRONOLOGY	27
-Epidauros	28
-Kos	30
-Pergamon	31
-Athens and Corinth	33
OPTIMAL HEALING ENVIRONMENTS	34
MIND-BODY MEDICINE	43
-Hypnosis	46
-Imagery	53
ASCLEPIOS, M.D.	57
APPENDIX: ASCLEPIEIA SITE PLANS	59
-Athens:	59
-Corinth:	60
-Epidauros:	61

-Kos:	62
-Pergamon:	63
WORKS CITED	64

Asclepius, M.D.? The Ancient Greeks and Integrative Medicine

“The cure of a part should not be attempted without the treatment of the whole. No attempt should be made to cure the body without the soul, and if the head and the body are to be healthy, you must begin by curing the mind” (Plato, *Charmides* 156b-c).¹

Introduction and Methodology

Integrative Medicine is the latest movement in modern medicine in which Allopathic, or Western, medical practices are combined with complementary and alternative therapies, like acupuncture and meditation, to focus on healing. It takes into account the whole person: body, mind, and spirit. The goal of Integrative Medicine is healing, or “a movement towards a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity,” rather than curing, which is doing something to alleviate some condition or disease, using the best-known practices.² In this thesis, I explore how the ancient Greeks utilized mechanisms similar to those of Integrative Medicine towards the same goal of healing over curing, revealing the effectiveness of healing in antiquity.

Healing in the ancient world has its foundations in the worship of the god Asclepius, the son of Apollo. Asclepius’ worship grew in popularity in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, resulting in the building of his sanctuaries in every major city in Greece by the Hellenistic Period.³ What is known of the healing rituals at these sanctuaries is limited, as the primary sources come from Aristophanes’ comedy, *Plutus*, Pausanias’ *Descriptions of Greece*, and Aelius Aristides’ *Sacred Tales*, archaeological remains, votive offerings, and steles. Votive offerings were bronze or terracotta representations of the body parts cured at Asclepieia left by patients to thank the god,

¹ Translation by Lamb 1914:19.

² World Health Organization (WHO) 2003.

³ Pedley 2005:32.

and steles were stones carved with inscriptions as a way to make the stories of miraculous cures known to new visitors to the sanctuary.⁴ The healing at these temples in antiquity was thought to occur due to divine intervention, so it is easy to assume that any “healing” which took place was a product of ancient spirituality or mysticism, especially when viewed in comparison with the more scientific Hippocratic Medicine of the time. Due to the limited evidence available of what occurred in these sanctuaries, scholarship surrounding the god Asclepios is often speculative and a retrospective application of modern theories. Using this same approach, I analyze the evidence of healing at Asclepieia through an Integrative Medicine lens in order to show that the practices at these temples have current medical legitimacy.

Not all scholars agree that it is appropriate to apply modern theories to ancient practices in order to analyze them. Stam and Spanos argue that this is especially true in the case of the ritual practices at Asclepieia due to the lack of evidence surrounding them. These scholars suggest that since there is such a lack of evidence, many theories about the healing at Asclepieia are based on biased interpretations of the evidence available, resulting in the use of ancient evidence to support modern concepts that may not be applicable.⁵ Nevertheless, I attempt to apply modern theories to this evidence impartially. This thesis explains how ancient healers utilized key elements of Integrative Medicine to heal patients at Asclepieia. After a brief overview of my methodology, I introduce the healing god Asclepios and what is known about his worship. Then, I expound on the debate between mind and body throughout history, beginning with the ancient Greeks, to show how Integrative Medicine grew out of this discussion. Finally, I turn to the Mind-Body practices of Integrative Medicine to reveal that similar practices were part of the healing process at the Sanctuaries of Asclepios.

⁴ These stories give proof of cure, but do not give methodology, as noted by Walton 1894:66.

⁵ Stam and Spanos (1982:10) argue specifically against the idea that the ritual of incubation was much like our modern use of hypnosis.

One category of Integrative Medicine is Mind-Body Medicine, which promotes healing in the body by playing on mental, emotional, social, and spiritual factors that influence the mind. One modality of Integrative Medicine, which facilitates the healing process through the Mind-Body connection, is the creation of an Optimal Healing Environment, or OHE. The evidence surrounding Asclepieia suggest that these sanctuaries served as ancient precursors to such a defined environment. Two practices of Mind-Body Medicine used to promote healing are hypnosis and guided imagery. The practice of incubation and the use of theaters offer ancient correlates to these practices, respectfully. By explaining how patients at Asclepieia were healed using mechanisms similar to those of Integrative Medicine, it is revealed that this type of healing was highly advanced for its time, with strong medical foundations rather than a basis in a naïve assumption of divine intervention.

The evidence surrounding the healing process that took place at Asclepieia is limited, especially surrounding the healing rituals.⁶ The primary literary sources available surrounding the Sanctuaries of Asclepios are Pausanias' *Descriptions of Greece*, Aristides *Sacred Tales*, and Aristophanes' *Plutus*. In his *Descriptions of Greece*, Pausanias offers a narrative account of his travels throughout most of the country from his 2nd century AD perspective, around the same time that the Sanctuaries of Asclepios were their most popular.⁷ Pausanias writes this ten-book work in a simple, descriptive style to serve as a travel guide for his readers. He not only describes what he saw, but also includes the relevant myths and history surrounding the locations

⁶ For my purposes, I am focusing on the daily rituals that occurred every morning and evening at the Asklepieia. There were also festival rituals which took place on the 8th and 18th of each month, and larger festivals less often. At Athens, a yearly festival for Asclepios took place on the day before the Great Dionysia; every four years, a three-month long festival took place for the god at Epidauros (Hart 2000:74).

⁷ Habicht 1985:3. Specifically, Pausanias wrote during the second half of the 2nd century AD, likely in the 170s. He was likely born in the region of Lydia in Asia Minor around 115 AD (Habicht 1985:13). Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:255. In the second century AD, the worship of Asclepios was at its height, while Christianity was just beginning to gain popularity.

he visits.⁸ Thus, Pausanias provides a seemingly reliable source for the physical space of Asclepieia throughout Greece. However, due to the fact that his audience would have already known what occurs in these sanctuaries and it was not the purpose of his work, Pausanias' *Descriptions* offers little information about the workings of Asclepieia. Nevertheless, Pausanias' work is essential for our modern understanding of the landscape and myths that surrounded these sanctuaries.

To understand the healing rituals that took place at these sanctuaries, modern scholarship is forced to rely on Aristophanes' comedy, *Plutus*. While his exact birthdate is unknown, Aristophanes was likely born between 460 and 450 BC, although commonly given as 446 BC, and died in 386 BC. Thus, he lived through tumultuous times for the Athenians, including the Peloponnesian War. Aristophanes won many first prizes for his comedic works at major festivals throughout his life and so experienced much fame.⁹ His *Plutus* is the primary extant source for the ritual process at the Asclepieia. Produced in 388, the play focuses on the god Wealth as he seeks to be cured of blindness so that he can bring wealth to the just mortals who deserve it. He is taken to the Asclepieion of Athens to be healed because Asclepius was famous for curing the blind. A slave, Carion, who accompanied the god to the temple, recounts the ritual of incubation comically (Aristoph. *Plutus* 653-747).¹⁰ While it is presented in a comedy, Aristophanes' description of the ritual presents what is assumed to be an accurate depiction of what occurred within the temples of Asclepius.

The ritual as it is given by Aristophanes in the 4th century BC appears, understandably, different when it is presented by the orator Aelius Aristides in the 2nd century AD. Aelius Aristides lived from 118-181 AD primarily in Smyrna in Asia Minor. In his *Sacred Tales*, an

⁸ Habicht 1985:20.

⁹ Bloom 2002:14.

¹⁰ The nature of the ritual will be discussed below.

autobiographical work, he details his chronic illness and recovery, focusing primarily on his dreams between the years 144 and 155 AD.¹¹ Aristides, after being healed by the god at the Asclepieion at Pergamon, often wrote about Asclepius; his name appears slightly more than all the other gods put together in Aristides' preserved works.¹² This shows how deeply grateful Aristides was for being cured of his abdominal tumor in the same way that other appreciative suppliants offered thanks to the god. While Aristides presents his disease course and symptoms in a haphazard way in his *Sacred Tales*, as he was likely a hypochondriac, nevertheless, his descriptions of the cult practice at Pergamon will be used to help illustrate how the cult developed over time.

For my purposes, I focus on what occurred in Asclepieia during the Classical and Hellenistic Periods. While Pausanias and Aristides do not fit within this time period, they still provide invaluable sources for the worship surrounding these sanctuaries, particularly with such limited data available. I recognize that these depictions of the sanctuaries are significantly different than earlier periods, and so I attempt to apply them only when appropriate. While worship of Asclepius continued well into the 6th century AD, I focus on the earlier periods of the cult as it grew, rather than its decline.

Another important source for what occurred at sanctuaries of Asclepius is the votive offerings left behind by those giving thanks to the god for being healed. The most common type of votive found at Asclepieia are those depicting the body parts that had been cured by the god. Thousands of these votives have been recovered in archaeological excavations, but they offer no indication of what exact disease was suffered or how the god cured it. Oftentimes when a sanctuary had accumulated a great number of these, an inscription was made as a record of the

¹¹ Behr 1968: 117.

¹² Behr 1968:157.

offerings before they were buried in sacred pits, like at Athens.¹³ It appears that the wealthy were able to have custom votives or stone dedications made to better indicate what disease was suffered, but these offerings are rarer than the general body parts normally found.¹⁴ While votive offerings are important to determine the types of ailments that Asclepios was able to cure in his sanctuaries, the fact that they can offer no information regarding how the god was able to cure these diseases severely limits their utility for this study.

Suppliants also gave thanks to the god with steles, primarily found at Epidauros, which documented the cures that Asclepios performed. These steles, dated before the second half of the 4th century BC, would have had a place of prominence outside of the temple, so that all who entered were informed of the miraculous cures, which the god had performed inside. Pausanias tells us that only six steles survive until the time of his visit in the 2nd century AD, but only two survive to be excavated, containing 43 “cases” (Paus. *Descriptions* II.xxvii.3).¹⁵ It is due to the discovery of these tablets and their publication in 1883 that it is known how Asclepios was able to heal his suppliants, both directly and through the prescription of remedies to be performed by his priests.¹⁶ The other inscriptions follow a similar format in which the name of the suppliant and a description of their illness is offered before it is explained how the cure came about. Such an example of these texts are as follows:

Πάνδαρος Θεσσαλὸς στίγματα ἔχων ἐν τῷ μετώπῳ. οὗτος
 [ἐγκαθεύδων ὄψιν εἶδε· ἐδόκει αὐτοῦ τα[ι]νία καταδῆσαι τὰ στί-
 γματα ὁ θεὸς κα]ὶ κέλεσθαι νιν, ἐπεὶ [κα ἔξω] γένηται τοῦ ἀβάτου,
 [ἀφελόμενον τὰ]ν ταινίαν ἀνθέμε[ν εἰς τὸν ναόν· ἀμέρας δὲ γενο-
 [μένας ἐξανέστα] καὶ ἀφήλετο τ[ὰν ται]νίαν, καὶ τὸ μὲν πρόσωπον
 [κενεὸν εἶδε τῶ]ν στιγματάω[ν, τ]ὰν δ[ὲ τ]αινίαν ἀνέθηκε εἰς τὸν να-

¹³ Hart 2000:91.

¹⁴ Hart 2000:102.

¹⁵ Papadakis 1978:6.

¹⁶ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:143. Inscriptions had been found in Rome and published prior to the discovery of the Epidaurian steles, but they were scant and not well preserved.

[όν, ἔχουσάν τὰ γρ]άμματ[α] τὰ ἐκ τοῦ μετώπου
(IG, IV², 1, nos. 121-22.VI).¹⁷

Pandarus, a Thessalian, who had marks on his forehead. He saw a vision as he slept. It seemed to him that the god bound the marks round with a headband and enjoined him to remove the band when he left the Abaton and dedicate it as an offering to the Temple. When day came he got up and took off the band and saw his face free of the marks; and he dedicated to the Temple the band with the signs which had been on his forehead.¹⁸

For the purposes of this study, it has to be assumed that some individuals actually received cures at Asclepieia and in the way that the cures are described in these records, i.e. through the practice of rituals which assumed that the god was visiting his suppliants in their dreams.

It is impractical to think that all the miraculous cures which are described on the inscriptions did take, or could have taken, place. For example, Asclepius was said to have returned sight to a man who did not even have eyes left beneath his eyelids (IG, IV², 1, nos. 121-22.IX). Nevertheless, there must have been some healing which took place in order to account for the great popularity of the cult. Edelstein argues that it is due to the chronic nature of the diseases treated that Asclepius' suppliants were so faithful to him. He explains, "This much is certain: Asclepius' patients were easily satisfied, they were grateful even for small benefits."¹⁹ For this reason, I assume that some relief was provided by the god of medicine at his temples through techniques that will be discussed below.

Asclepius, God of Medicine

Asclepius was a mortal hero who became so powerful and renowned in his healing abilities that he was deified. Asclepius is first known in literature in Homer's *Iliad*, making a brief appearance when his sons are introduced in the *Catalogue of Ships*:

¹⁷ The text from the *Inscriptiones Graecae* (IG) which I quote was acquired through Edelstein and Edelstein's 1998 work. The translation of these inscriptions come from their work.

¹⁸ Translated by Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:231.

¹⁹ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:169.

οἱ δ' εἶχον Τρίκκην καὶ Ἰθώμην κλωμακόεσσαν,
οἱ τ' ἔχον Οἰχαλίην πόλιν Εὐρύτου Οἰχαλιῆος,
τῶν αὖθ' ἠγείσθην Ἀσκληπιοῦ δύο παῖδες
ἠητῆρ' ἀγαθῶ Ποδαλείριος ἠδὲ Μαχάων:
τοῖς δὲ τριήκοντα γλαφυραὶ νέες ἐστιχόωντο (Hom.II.2.729-733).

And they that held Tricca and Ithome of the crags,
and Oechalia, city of Oechalian Eurytus,
these again were led by the two sons of Asclepius,
the skilled leeches Podaleirius and Machaon.
And with these were ranged thirty hollow ships.²⁰

Asclepius, here described by Homer as a mortal ruler no more spectacular than any other human leader, as early as the 8th or 9th century BC, was known as having healing abilities, although nothing more is said about him in this work. In very little time, however, Asclepius was transformed from a single name in a long list of heroes to a god who became so revered that “no self-respecting city was without its own Sanctuary of Asklepios.”²¹

Asclepius is commonly thought to have been the son of Apollo, the god of healing, and a mortal woman, Coronis. The simplest Asclepian legend, like Homer’s *Iliad*, connects him with Triikka, a small village in Thessaly.²² He soon became associated with Apollo, however, because of his connection to healing.²³ In the 5th century BC, as medicine was becoming more popular as a *techne*, need for a god specific to medicine arose. Apollo, the traditional god of medicine, was chosen as the father of the new god of medicine, a role filled by Asclepius. Apollo did not serve the function of god of medicine well enough because he served other roles as well, such as the god of the hunt, music, and prophecy.²⁴ Not only were healing and medicine not his primary concerns, but Apollo was also a source of disease. The best example of this is Book I of the *Iliad*, in which Apollo brings a plague upon the Achaeans because one of his priests had been scorned

²⁰ Translated by Murray 1999:115.

²¹ Pedley 2005:32.

²² Walton 1894: 18.

²³ Walton 1894:19.

²⁴ Hart 2000:21.

(Hom. *Il.*1.43-53). For this reason, and since Apollo was often seen as indifferent to the concerns of mortals, Asclepius, having been mortal, was adopted as the “new” god of medicine.²⁵ His position was legitimized through myth by taking Apollo as his father.²⁶

Apollodorus, in his *Bibliotheca*, preserves a version of the myth of Asclepius based on Hesiod’s *Catalogue of Women*, in which a raven, at this time white, reveals to Apollo that Coronis, pregnant with the god’s child, took a mortal lover. Enraged, Apollo cursed the crow and turned him black before killing Coronis.²⁷ Apollo saved the baby from Coronis’ funeral pyre and gave him to Chiron, a centaur, to raise.²⁸ Chiron educated Asclepius in the healing arts and surgery until he was so skilled that the hero could raise men from the dead. It was said that Chiron had given Asclepius Gorgon blood, which had the power either to kill or resurrect, depending on which side of the Gorgon’s body it came from. The hubristic nature of this power caused Zeus to strike down Asclepius with a thunderbolt and begin a vendetta with Apollo (Apollod.*Bib.*III.x. 3-4).

Nevertheless, Asclepius was released from Hades to later become the most powerful figure in ancient healing. What likely began with local hero cult worship at Epidauros, developed through the popularity of its features and allowed Asclepius to become more famous than other heroes throughout the Greco-Roman world.²⁹ According to Alice Walton, “In many cases the Asklepios cult replaced an older hero cult and made room for the hero in the new shrine.”³⁰ However, Asclepius developed from a hero to a god in that he was associated those who received

²⁵ Hart 2000:6.

²⁶ Hart 2000:21.

²⁷ For this reason, all crows are subsequently black, having been burned by Apollo.

²⁸ Interestingly, Chiron was the traditional teacher of Thessalian heroes including Jason, Peleus, Achilles, and Heracles, thus preserving Asclepius’ Thessalian roots (Hart 2000:9).

²⁹ Walton 1894:11. Hero-gods, by their nature, were chthonic. Asclepius retained this feature even after he was worshiped as a full deity. This is likely due to his deification after death and the myth in which he raises a man from the dead, further associating him with death.

³⁰ Walton 1894:16.

his cures wished to build Asclepieia in their own native cities, propagating his worship.³¹ While most other hero cults were associated with a specific location, such as the birthplace of the hero, Asclepius was able to transcend these physical boundaries to be worshipped at multiple locations. This was likely due to the fact that no one location could rightly claim his birthplace because of his conflicting mythology of birth and burial.³² In another way, the worship of Asclepius spread further as he was incorporated into already existing sanctuaries for Apollo while he was being legitimized as the god of medicine.³³ Even more so, Asclepius was often depicted with a walking staff, which speaks to his mobile nature.³⁴

Ancient Integrative Medicine?

Being so mobile, the cult of Asclepius, likely having its first structural roots in the 6th century at Epidauros, spread throughout Greece in the 5th century to places like Corinth, Larissa, Olympia, and Athens.³⁵ During the 4th century, however, worship of the god Asclepius spread rapidly, with estimates of more than 200 new sanctuaries erected during this time period. This same time also saw the improvement and expansion of the already established Asclepieia at Athens, Corinth, and Epidauros. Expansion of the cult was so widespread that it reached Rome in the late 290s BC.³⁶ The popularity of the cult reached its peak in the 2nd century AD and continued well into the 6th century AD, until the Asclepieia gradually fell into disuse as Christianity gained acceptance.³⁷

³¹ Larson 2007:192.

³² Traditionally, hero cults were associated with the location of the hero's death, and thus were not often seen outside of this location.

³³ Hart 2000:21.

³⁴ Wickkiser 2008:53. Most doctors of this time period were depicted with walking staffs because they would travel from town to town offering their services. In another way, Asclepius was often represented as a serpent, and when new sanctuaries were set up in his name, a serpent was carried from one place to another, as if the god himself made the journey.

³⁵ Wickkiser 2008:36.

³⁶ Wickkiser 2008:37.

³⁷ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:257.

What is curious about this expansion is that it occurred at the same time that Hippocratic medicine was also becoming popular. Bronwen Wickkiser explains:

...just as medicine was delimiting and defining itself in the fifth century BC, early evidence for the cult [of Asclepios] appears. And in the late fifth century and fourth century, as Hippocratic treatises continued to emphasize the limits of medical practice, Asklepios' cult rapidly became one of the most popular healing cults in all of antiquity...³⁸

Wickkiser argues that at that time in the 5th century, Hippocratic medicine was attempting to define itself among the myriad of specialized healers claiming to have the best knowledge of medicine.³⁹ There were many groups that practiced medicine either as doctors, drug vendors, or purifiers, as well as those, such as priests and magicians, who healed by divine intervention.⁴⁰ In fact, most laypeople would have had some knowledge of medical practices, as medical knowledge was spread freely and many, particularly the lower classes, were accustomed to self-treatment.⁴¹ But, the people of the late 5th and 4th centuries would first turn to human interventions when facing illness, primarily the physicians of the time, if they had the means.⁴² The doctors of this time began to receive recognition for their work, which created a level of professionalism surrounding the position. As the Hippocratic school of medicine, surrounding the famous doctor born in 460 BC on the island of Kos, began to grow in reputation, it required that its doctors distinguish themselves from other groups practicing medicine and legitimize the school.⁴³ The school was so successful in its endeavor of legitimizing its practice of medicine that Hippocrates became known, both today and throughout antiquity as: *maximus ille*

³⁸ Wickkiser 2008:41.

³⁹ I am using the word medicine here in the context of healing that does not involve divine intervention, as healing within a sanctuary of Asclepios would.

⁴⁰ Wickkiser 2008:11.

⁴¹ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:165.

⁴² Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:139.

⁴³ Wickkiser 2008:21. Much scholarship has been conducted on Hippocrates and the Hippocratic Corpus. His Corpus can be found in the Loeb Classical Library; any text on ancient medicine provides good preliminary background information on Hippocrates. I recommend E.D. Phillips *Greek Medicine*.

medicorum et huius scientiae conditor (Sen. *Ep.*95.20). “This greatest of the physicians and founder of this science.”⁴⁴ The most obvious evidence of his continued reputation is the use of forms of the Hippocratic Oath by modern medical doctors.

Wickkiser, in her 2008 book *Asklepios, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-Century Greece*, argues that the Hippocratic doctors were able to accomplish this task so well because they were selective about which patients they chose to accept. She cites several passages from the *Hippocratic Corpus*, which itself helped to advance the professionalism of medicine in antiquity, that speak on the limits of medical practice at that time.⁴⁵ The Hippocratic authors note that there are some cases against which that medicine is powerless (*De Arte* 8). If a doctor is to attempt the treatment of a helpless case, he is not truly a doctor, but a fool because he does not recognize the limits of his art (*Hipp. De Arte* 8). Other works of the *Corpus* are more straightforward about the limits of medicine; *Diseases II* explains that if the “wasting disease” (φθίσις) is not treated at the onset, but seen later, “When the case is such, do not treat this patient” (*Hipp. Dis II.48*).⁴⁶ This prohibition was made as a way to distinguish the true doctors from the fake. As Wickkiser explains, “In the absence of any formal method of validating the quality of healers, the true and good doctor had a social and economic interest in distancing himself from pretenders and unskilled practitioners who might call themselves, or be called by others, doctors.” The easiest and most visible way to prove competency for a doctor was to accept only patients whom he could treat.⁴⁷ In this way, the *Hippocratic Corpus* reinforced this practice among its doctors, but left people who were determined to be helpless, i.e. those for whom the doctors did not have a cure, without medical care from Hippocratic doctors. The

⁴⁴This translation is my own.

⁴⁵ Wickkiser 2008:23-29. While even in antiquity it was known that Hippocrates, nor any one author, was not responsible for the entirety of the *Corpus*, it is taken here as the body of work surrounding this school.

⁴⁶ Translated by Potter 1988:245.

⁴⁷ Wickkiser 2008:27.

group that this affected most were those who had what was determined to be either a fatal illness or a chronic illness, as the ancients perceived chronic illness similarly to a fatal illness in that it was not able to be cured.⁴⁸

Having been turned away by “true” doctors for the treatment of their chronic or fatal illness, this population had several options for alternative treatment. One of these, and what Wickkiser argues was the most utilized for this purpose, was treatment at an Asclepieion.⁴⁹ This point is further supported by the fact that the majority of healing which took place in Asclepieia was that of chronic ailments. The majority of healing inscriptions at Asclepieia point to the god healing people of chronic conditions, like blindness, infertility, headaches, gout, and ulcers.⁵⁰ Caelius Aurelianus, a Roman physician from the 5th century AD explained in his medical treatise, *De Morbis Chronicis*, that Asclepius was the “first to overcome diseases that are hard to heal” (*De Morbis Chronicis*, Prae.2).⁵¹ This seems to suggest that Asclepius had more skill than human doctors and was able to surpass the well-known limits of Hippocratic medicine. Wickkiser notes, “The length of time that these patients suffered before consulting Asklepios suggest that they had previously sought other forms of healing and found them inadequate” and some inscriptions state explicitly that the Sanctuary of Asclepius was only sought after humans failed in treating the disease.⁵² For example, one inscription found in Rome from the 2nd century AD explains how a man was cured by the god after being abandoned by the treatment of mortals:

To Lucius who suffered from pleurisy and had been despaired by all men the god revealed that he should go and from the threefold altar lift ashes and mix them

⁴⁸ Wickkiser 2008: 25.

⁴⁹ Wickkiser 2008:30. Wickkiser also argues that doctors condoned visiting healing sanctuaries based upon Hipp. *Morb. Sacr.*II. There are also no specific passages in ancient text in which healing at sanctuaries is “categorically opposed” by doctors.

⁵⁰ Most of the inscriptions come from Epidauros.

⁵¹ This text comes from Edelstein and Edelstein’s 1998 compilation of testimonies (187-188) : “*dura curando primus superaverit vitia.*”

⁵² Wickkiser 2008:59.

thoroughly with wine and lay them on his side. And he was saved and publicly offered thanks to the god, and the people rejoiced with him (*IG*, XIV, no. 966).⁵³

Here it can be seen that the mortal physicians were limited in the help that they were able to offer their patient. For this reason, he had to seek treatment elsewhere, and he turned to the god Asclepios, who was known for being able to treat the conditions which human physicians were not.

Since ancient doctors knew the limits to their medical practice and the healing at Asclepieia focused largely on the diseases and conditions which the doctors could not cure, the two practices seem to complement each other.⁵⁴ The cult of Asclepios provided a “friendly ally” in the medical art, rather than a competitor, since they focused on the healing of two different populations.⁵⁵ This may explain why both Hippocratic medicine and the building of Asclepieia occurred at the same time in the 5th century BC. This can be seen most evidently at Kos, as Hippocrates was thought to have learned and practiced medicine at the Asclepieion there.⁵⁶ More importantly for this paper, however, is how we see this same model of complementary healing practices being utilized in Integrative Medicine of the 21st century.

A Lesson from the Ancient Greeks

The model of Integrative Medicine has its roots in the Mind-Body debate, dating back to ancient Greek philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle, and physicians, like Hippocrates, who debated over the connection of the *psyche* and *soma*.⁵⁷ The ancients seemed to understand that

⁵³ Translated by Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:251 (The Greek text can also be found here).

⁵⁴ Wickkiser 2008:61.

⁵⁵ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:139.

⁵⁶ Sherwin-White 1978:354. Kos is an unusual case because this Asclepieion had a large body of medical knowledge surrounding it. This knowledge was used alongside of the healing rituals, likely in the very first Integrative Medical center.

⁵⁷ I use soul, intellect, and mind interchangeably, as different authors present slightly different definitions of these entities. I view these processes collectively.

there was some sort of connection between these two parts of the body, but were not sure how to articulate their interrelatedness.

Superficial readings of Plato, specifically the *Phaedo*, promote the idea of a duality between body and soul.⁵⁸ Robinson argues that Plato concludes that “soul and body are distinct substances, the soul is one’s real self, the soul is our source of cognitive and moral activity.”⁵⁹ The soul and body are so distinct for Plato that the relationship in which the soul should join the body is itself unnatural, as the soul is then trapped within the body until death.⁶⁰ Plato said, “[the soul is] fastened and welded to the body and is compelled to regard realities through the body as through prison bars, not with its own unhindered vision, and is wallowing in utter ignorance. And philosophy sees that the most dreadful thing about the imprisonment is the fact that it is caused by the lusts of the flesh, so that the prisoner is the chief assistant in his own imprisonment” (Plato, *Phaedo* 82d-f).⁶¹ Although later in life he seems to grapple with such a stark distinction, Plato’s Mind-Body dualism had a profound impact on the view of this relationship subsequently.

Later, Aristotle unites mind and body directly in his theory ofhylomorphism, i.e. form and matter. For him, soul and body are complements of one another which cannot be separated, saying, ὅτι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ψυχὴ χωριστὴ τοῦ σώματος, ἢ μέρη τινὰ αὐτῆς, εἰ μεριστὴ πέφυκεν, οὐκ ἄδηλον (Aristotle *De Anima* 413a3-5). “From this it is clear that the soul is inseparable from the its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are (if it has parts).”⁶²

⁵⁸ I use Plato and Aristotle here because they were contemporaries of the building of many Asclepieia and the popularity of the cult.

⁵⁹ Robinson 2000:42.

⁶⁰ Robinson 2000:44.

⁶¹ Fowler 1999 (acquired from the Perseus Project).

⁶² Translated by Barnes 1984:657.

This is an unequal relationship, however, in that the soul is the vital life function.⁶³

Nevertheless, the body needs the soul to exist, but the soul also needs the body to function.⁶⁴

Aristotle, whose father was a physician and thus, strongly influenced by medicine, believed that “bodily agents can be both impeding and facilitating factors at all levels of ‘psychic’ activity.”⁶⁵

Thus, Aristotle recognizes a causal relationship between body and mind.

The Mind-Body connection was debated for some time during the Middle Ages in a monistic theological perspective, and then by Rene Descartes in the Renaissance, with huge impact.⁶⁶ Descartes had a great appreciation for medicine, citing the preservation of health as:

...undoubtedly the chief good and the foundation of all the other goods of this life. For even the mind depends so much on the temperament and disposition of the bodily organs that if it is possible to find some means of making men in general wiser and more astute than they have been up till now, I believe we must look for it in medicine... (Descartes, *Discourse on Method* VI.62).⁶⁷

Descartes clearly recognizes that there is an important connection between healing and good psychological functioning, thus a connection between mind and body. We see that this is due to an unhealthy body putting stresses on the mind.⁶⁸ Descartes, however, preserves a separation between the soul, what makes us who we are, and body. While scientific knowledge of the body can be obtained, Descartes maintains that there is no science of the soul, because it is not part of nature.⁶⁹ The implications of this philosophy were so extensive that they have not been challenged until recent history. Thus specifically in the realm of medicine, research focused itself on the diseases of the body separate from, and wholly disregarding, the psyche.

⁶³ van der Eijk 2000:63.

⁶⁴ van der Eijk 2000:64.

⁶⁵ van der Eijk 2000:60.

⁶⁶ Heckel 2000:118.

⁶⁷ Translation here as cited in Voss 2000:174.

⁶⁸ Voss 2000:174.

⁶⁹ Voss 2000:176.

In 1910, following this same philosophy, the “Flexner Report,” formally known as “Medical Education in the United States and Canada,” promoted research, education, and clinical practice as the three central tenets to a good Allopathic Medical education. It is due to this report and a focus on reductionism, i.e. the study of the body as a system of parts rather than as a whole, that medical knowledge increased so greatly in the last 100 years.⁷⁰ As the understanding of the cause of disease from a pathophysiological basis increased due to subspecialization, physicians are able to fix many health problems.⁷¹ The benefits of the advancements brought about by the focus on specialization are too numerous to measure. However, some patients, primarily those with chronic or multiple illnesses, fell through the gap in health care that was brought about by the created gap between mind and body.

As the field of psychology grew in the 19th century, the separation between mind and body slowly disappeared. In 1961, George F. Solomon coined the term *psychoimmunology* in a paper in which he analyzed changes in immune function of mice based on behavioral and social stressors.⁷² Nevertheless, it was not until 1975 that a formal science was defined as dedicated to exploring the relationship between mind and body, specifically within the context of disease treatment: psychoneuroimmunology.⁷³ Psychoneuroimmunology looks specifically at how things like stress can affect the rate of wound healing or cardiac disease from a physiological perspective. Modern science understands the connection between the mind and body more than in the past, but there are many phenomena that cannot yet be explained.

⁷⁰ Beresford 2010:721.

⁷¹ Rakel and Weil 2007:4.

⁷² Solomon and Moos 1964; reviewed in Ader 2000:170.

⁷³ Ader 2000:167.

Integrative Medicine

Integrative Medicine, specifically, the use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine, has grown dramatically since 1993 when its widespread use was first reported.⁷⁴ It was reported in 2007 that nearly 4 in 10 adults (38%) in the United States utilize Integrative Medicine.⁷⁵ In 2007 alone, American adults spent \$33.9 billion out-of-pocket on CAM therapies; this accounts for 11.2% of all out-of-pocket health care expenditures for that year.⁷⁶ As Andrew Miles explains, “If a growing number of patients are rejecting the sufficiency of orthodox medicine alone, it is not because it is ineffective, but rather because it has become inhuman and depersonalized.”⁷⁷ The American public often feels unsatisfied with the impersonal treatments of Allopathic medicine and recognized a need for a different type of care to complement these therapies.

Integrative Medicine is defined as “healing-oriented medicine that takes account of the whole person (body, mind, and spirit), including all aspects of lifestyle. It emphasizes the therapeutic relationship and makes use of all appropriate therapies, both conventional and alternative.”⁷⁸ In simpler terms, Integrative Medicine utilizes the best practices available in order to increase a person’s overall wellness. It is the latest movement in the shift towards “recognizing the benefits of combining the external, physical and technological successes of curing with the internal, nonphysical exploration of healing.”⁷⁹ This movement began out of the subspecialization of medical care, and really began to be recognized in medicine only within the last 30 years.

⁷⁴ Eisenberg et al. 1993:248.

⁷⁵ Nahin et al. 2009:1.

⁷⁶ Nahin et al. 2009:3.

⁷⁷ Miles 2009:942.

⁷⁸ Rakel and Weil 2007:4.

⁷⁹ Rakel and Weil 2007:4.

In order to explain what Integrative Medicine is, it is important to define conventional medicine. Conventional medicine, also known as Western Medicine and Allopathic Medicine, is “medicine practiced by holders of M.D. (medical doctor) and D.O. (doctor of osteopathic medicine) degrees and by allied health professionals, such as physical therapists, psychologists, and registered nurses.”⁸⁰ It is the medicine, commonly practiced in the United States, which holds the position that disease and illness have a biochemical basis.

The first phase of the movement towards Integrative Medicine occurred in the 1980s when the American public began seeking treatment through Alternative Medicine.⁸¹ Alternative medical practices are methods that are “used in place of conventional medicine” and not generally recognized by the medical community. The 1990s saw the introduction of some medical therapies, called Complementary Medicine, which are not recognized by the medical community which are “used with conventional medicine.”⁸² Since these two types of medical practices are tough to separate from one another by complicated nature of their use, the term “complementary and alternative medicine,” or CAM, came into popular use as both a way to combine the two types of therapies and to give more credibility to alternative medicine.⁸³ What exactly constitutes CAM is difficult to define because “the field is broad and constantly changing.”⁸⁴ Cohen et al. 2007 attempts to define CAM therapies as those that include “a broad range of modalities that historically had fallen outside of conventional care...but that increasingly are part of a web of professional care and self-care networks.” These practices

⁸⁰ National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) 2008.

⁸¹ Cohen et al. 2007:18.

⁸² NCCAM 2008.

⁸³ Cohen et al. 2007:19. “Alternative medicine” was, and is, highly criticized because of the connotation that it is not legitimate medical practice because it is not recognized by conventional medicine.

⁸⁴ NCCAM 2008.

include nutritional and herbal medicine, folk medicine, spirituality in medicine, and Mind-Body therapies.⁸⁵

CAM began to receive widespread attention from conventional medical professionals after a landmark 1993 article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* which revealed that 1 in 3 adults in the United States used “unconventional medicine” in 1990.⁸⁶ This article also reported that \$10.3 billion of the approximately \$13.7 billion paid for unconventional therapies was done so out-of-pocket, indicating that it is not only widely utilized, but patients felt it was so needed that they are willing to pay out-of-pocket expenses.⁸⁷ The majority of adults who utilized unconventional medicine did so for treatment of a chronic condition, and also sought treatment from a medical doctor for the condition concurrently (83%).⁸⁸ Thus, the pattern of “unconventional” medicine complementing conventional medicine was already well established within the population, but was just beginning to be recognized by the medical community.

In 1998, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) was established from what began as a research program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) seeking to investigate the evidence, or lack of evidence, for CAM therapies.⁸⁹ The establishment of the NCCAM reveals the importance of CAM to not only the public, but to the U.S. government as well. It also reveals a shift towards a more “scientific basis for the safety and efficacy of certain CAM therapies” while showing medical professionals how CAM therapies could be utilized with other traditional therapies.⁹⁰ Due to the increasing incorporation of the use

⁸⁵ Cohen et al. 2007:19. Aspects of these practices can be seen in ancient temple medicine, but Mind-Body practices are most important for my purposes. For more information on any of these practices, see Rakel and Fass 2006.

⁸⁶ Unconventional medicine was the first term for alternative medicine, but was discarded quickly due to its negative connotation.

⁸⁷ Eisenberg et al. 1993:249.

⁸⁸ Eisenberg et al. 1993:250.

⁸⁹ Cohen et al. 2007:2.

⁹⁰ Cohen et al. 2007:3.

of CAM therapies by medical professionals and the increasing emphasis on the safety and efficacy of these practices, the field of Integrative Medicine emerged.

Integrative Medicine, according to the NCCAM, “combines treatments from conventional medicine and CAM for which there is some high-quality evidence of safety and effectiveness.”⁹¹ This means that Integrative Medicine grades the evidence for each therapy, unconventional and conventional alike. Each therapy is given a grade of either A, B, or C, which corresponds to the amount of evidence of its efficacy, with A being the most efficacious. Therapies are also given a rating of either 3, 2, or 1, corresponding to the potential harm to the patient, with 3 having the most potential harm.⁹² In this way, “unconventional” therapies are brought under the same scrutiny as conventional medicine, thereby increasing the awareness and credibility of use among the medical community. It has become increasingly important, as CAM is utilized more often, that medical professionals guide patients in the use of CAM.⁹³ For this reason, the first fellowship in Integrative Medicine was started at the University of Arizona in 1997.⁹⁴ To date, there are 51 members of the Consortium of Academic Health Centers for Integrative Medicine, which not only conduct research, but also educate current and future medical professionals in Integrative Medicine practices.⁹⁵ It is easy to see how Integrative Medicine will continue to be further incorporated into Allopathic medical practices and will play an important role in the future of medicine.

It is important to note that Integrative Medicine is not just a new term for CAM, but a separate health movement, which is healing-oriented, rather than cure oriented.⁹⁶ The World

⁹¹ NCCAM 2008.

⁹² Rakel 2007:xviii.

⁹³ Cohen et al. 2007:20.

⁹⁴ Rakel and Weil 2007:5.

⁹⁵ CAHCIM 2012. For more on this see www.imconsortium.org.

⁹⁶ Rakel and Weil 2007:7.

Health Organization defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”⁹⁷ Rakel and Weil define “cure” as “doing something (e.g., giving drugs or performing surgery) that alleviates a troublesome condition or disease.” In this way, one can be cured without being healed, and healing may facilitate curing, as overall health is necessary for a cure to last.⁹⁸ Someone in good health is likely to overcome an illness or injury easily because her body is healthy. Conversely, a sickly person can be cured of an illness, like pneumonia, but if he is not in good health, then it is likely he will take longer to be cured and will likely get sick again. For this reason Integrative Medicine continues to be used, in large majority, for chronic conditions.⁹⁹ Given this similarity between Integrative Medicine and the ancient temple medicine of Asclepieia, it is possible that that the two systems operate using similar practices.

Lasting changes in health are the focus of Integrative Medicine. These are achieved through the central tenets of Integrative Medicine. These tenets are: relationship-centered care, the integration of conventional and complementary methods for treatment and prevention, the removal of barriers to activate the body’s natural healing response, the use of natural, less invasive interventions before costly, invasive ones when possible, engaging the mind, body, spirit, and community in the healing process, and emphasizing the fact that healing is always possible, even if curing is not.¹⁰⁰ In the same way, the god Asclepius did not promise cures to his suppliants, but rather willingly offered his aid.¹⁰¹ These goals are achieved through several different categories of Integrative Medicine including: natural products, Mind-Body medicine,

⁹⁷ WHO 2003.

⁹⁸ Rakel and Weil 2007:7.

⁹⁹ Barnes et al. 2008:13.

¹⁰⁰ Rakel and Weil 2007:7-11.

¹⁰¹ Pausanias describes a shelter outside of the sanctuary at Epidauros for those who were dying and women who were giving birth (*Descriptions* II.xxvii.6). Both these were forbidden within the sanctuary area. However, it is clear that the ancients understood that Asclepius was not able to cure everyone.

manipulative and body-based practices, and “other” practices/whole medical systems.¹⁰² This exploration will focus primarily on the category of Mind-Body Medicine, as I will show how the healing that took place in ancient Asclepieia was similar to the Mind-Body practices utilized by Integrative Medicine.

Asclepieia: The Sites and Chronology

In order to better understand what occurred at Asclepieia throughout the Greco-Roman world, it is important to look at the archaeological evidence of these sites. Literary evidence gives limited indications as to the locations of these sanctuaries, the types of buildings present, and how the buildings may have been used. Archaeological evidence provides weighty insight into these areas, as well as providing chronology of the founding and development of these healing spaces. The three largest and most important Asclepieia in antiquity were at Epidauros, Kos, and Pergamon. Pilgrims would travel from all over to be healed at these sites due to their renowned healing ability, despite the fact that there was, typically, an Asclepieion associated with their native city. Athens and Corinth are used here as examples of Asclepieia which were located within cities, but did not receive the influx of pilgrims like at the other, more famous locations.

¹⁰² NCCAM 2008. The natural products category includes herbal medicines, vitamins, minerals, and other “natural products,” including probiotics. This is the most popular use of Integrative Medicine among adults. Mind-Body practices “focus on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior, with the intent to use the mind to affect physical functioning and promote health” (NCCAM 2008). Mind-Body medicine includes practices such as meditation and yoga. Manipulative and body-based practices “focus primarily on the structures and systems of the body, including the bones and joints, soft tissues, and circulatory and lymphatic systems” (NCCAM 2008). It includes practices such as massage therapy and chiropractic. The “other” practices/whole medical systems practices constitute a bit of a “catch-all” for the rest of the practices utilized by Integrative Medicine. These practices include traditional Chinese medicine and healing touch, among many others.

-Epidauros

Epidauros was the most prominent site for pilgrims seeking a cure from the god Asclepios and was considered the center of the Asclepian cult.¹⁰³ Epidauros is considered the traditional burial site of the hero Asclepios and the first location of his hero-cult worship.¹⁰⁴ Epidauros likely claimed Asclepios as one of its own due to his increasing attractiveness in antiquity, wishing to claim this up-and-coming god. It was often the place from which new cult centers were established by bringing a serpent from Epidauros to the new site, as in the case of Athens in 420 BC. It is also the archaeological site with the oldest known evidence of the worship of Asclepios, dated in the 6th century BC, but worship of Apollo occurred there since prehistoric times.¹⁰⁵ The first sanctuary was modest, but after the cult gained popularity, was rebuilt in the second quarter of the 4th century BC.¹⁰⁶ Although it was sacked by Sulla in 86 BC, it was quickly rebuilt and recovered to be extremely prosperous in the 2nd century AD by the time Pausanias visited there in the year 150 AD.¹⁰⁷ After falling into disuse, being subjected to earthquakes and being devastated by wars, the archaeological evidence, which remained to be excavated beginning in 1870 by the Greek Archaeological School, consists primarily of basements and remnants of the main buildings.¹⁰⁸

The site itself was about five miles outside of the city of Epidauros, and about four miles from the coast.¹⁰⁹ The complex is situated in a natural hollow, a “sacred grove” as Pausanias

¹⁰³ Burford 1969:18.

¹⁰⁴ Hart 2000:6. Epidauros preserves a version of the legend that states that the daughter of Phlegyas (Coronis) bore Asclepios on “Epidaurian soil.” The woman then exposed the baby, but the child was saved and nurtured by a goat and protected by a dog. Later, when he was discovered, he was immediately recognized as divine and became renowned for his ability to heal and raise the dead (Paus. *Description* II.viii.25).

¹⁰⁵ Papadakis 1978:11.

¹⁰⁶ Burford 1969:15.

¹⁰⁷ Papadakis 1978:11.

¹⁰⁸ Papadakis 1978:12.

¹⁰⁹ Pedley 2005:165.

calls it (*Descriptions* II.xxvii.1), surrounded by wooded mountains.¹¹⁰ Present in the complex were many different structures; the function of some still remains unknown. The first structure which a pilgrim would have come upon was the propylon, approximately 20 meters wide, consisting of six Ionic (outside) and six Corinthian columns (inside), built in the 4th century BC.¹¹¹ This structure bore the inscription, “Pure must be he who enters the fragrant temple; purity means to think nothing but holy thoughts” (ΑΓΝΟΝ ΧΡΗ ΝΗΟΙΟΣ ΘΗΩΔΕΟΣ ΕΝΤΟΣ ΙΟΝΤΑ ΕΜΜΕΝΑΙ ΑΓΗΕΙΗ Δ ΕΣΤΙ ΦΡΟΝΕΙΝ ΟΣΙΑ).¹¹² The Temple of Asclepios was built around 380 BC and in the Doric peripteral (surrounded by a single row of columns) style, approximately 24.5 meters long by 13.22 meters wide. Within this structure was a famous cult statue of Asclepios, made of ivory and gold, depicting the god seated gripping a staff in one hand and a serpent in the other with a dog lying by his side (Pausanias *Descriptions* II.xxvii.2). The limestone temple was decorated with marble metopes and a brightly painted entablature.¹¹³ It also had decorative wood and ivory doors that would have stood as a focal-point of the structure.¹¹⁴ Interestingly, the temple was never closed, which was very unusual in antiquity when temples were typically only open to the public for feasts.¹¹⁵

Also present at Epidauos, like most Asclepieia, an *abaton* or *enkoimitirion* where suppliants slept while they waited to be visited by the god in their dreams. This structure was 70 meters long and 9.5 meters wide, also built in limestone. The structure was two stories in some places, and, importantly, it contained a sacred fountain in its Northeast corner which was likely

¹¹⁰ Papadakis 1978:21. Translation by Jones 1918:391.

¹¹¹ Papadakis 1978:18.

¹¹² Papadakis (1978:5) notes that this inscription is preserved by ancient authors only. Translated by Papadakis. Smell has been shown to contribute to an OHE. Pleasing aromas, like incense, have been reported to reduce blood pressure, slow respiration, and reduce pain perception (Schweitzer 2004:S-73).

¹¹³ Spawforth 2006:165.

¹¹⁴ Spawforth 2006:59.

¹¹⁵ Papadakis 1978:17.

used for purification rites. The miracle inscriptions were also found in the ruins of this structure.¹¹⁶

There were a variety of other structures present at the healing complex as well. The famous theater of Epidauros, built by Polycleitos the Younger in the middle of the 4th century BC and best known for its acoustics, was also contained within the complex. This large theater could hold around 14,000 spectators in 55 rows of seats, and was considered the most beautiful theater in ancient Greece. The site also had a gymnasium, odeon, stadium, xenon (hotel), a tholos of unknown purpose, several temples, and the Sanctuary of Apollo Maleatas, among other structures.¹¹⁷ With so many structures contained in this healing complex, it is easy to see how Epidauros remained relevant as a healing center well into the 6th century AD.

-Kos

The island of Kos is another site of an ancient Asclepieion which pilgrims sought out, but is better known as a medical school and the site of Hippocrates birth and education. The Asclepieion at Kos was not built until the 3rd century BC, completed in the year 242 BC, but it soon challenged the sanctuary at Epidauros in popularity.¹¹⁸ There is evidence to support the founding of the public cult of Asclepios came from both Triikka and Epidauros, although it is more likely that it came from the sanctuary at Epidauros through the ceremonial transportation of a serpent.¹¹⁹ The complex was severely damaged in an earthquake in the year 142 AD and again in 469 AD, after which rebuilding was unlikely. Christianity likely halted this cult worship soon afterwards.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Papadakis 1978:21.

¹¹⁷ Papadakis 1978:21.

¹¹⁸ Sherwin-White 1978:98. There is some evidence that worship of Asclepios at Kos before this date was done so privately.

¹¹⁹ Sherwin-White 1978:337.

¹²⁰ Sherwin-White 1978:346.

The site of the Koan Asclepieion is approximately two and a half miles southwest from the city in a grove on the side of a slope, facing north to the sea. This place was chosen because it had a good water supply, a necessity for the healing cult. This Asclepieion is unique in that it was only one complex with three different terraces, or levels, often cited as one of the best surviving architectural structures of ancient Kos. Built in the first half of the 3rd century BC, the upper terrace was the site of a cypress grove which was surrounded on three sides by a covered portico, likely an area where patients slept. The middle terrace held the Temple of Asclepius, noted as being a small Ionic structure, but still likely impressive as it was incorporated into the rest of the structure. Again, this temple housed a cult statue of the god for veneration. Also located on the second terrace was the Temple of Apollo and a springhouse for purification rites. The lowest terrace was the site of the propylon where suppliants would enter into the complex.¹²¹ Later, in the first half of the 2nd century, a larger Temple of Asclepius was built out of marble on the upper terrace 33.3 meters long and 18.8 meters wide. A large staircase connected the three different terrace levels in this unique healing complex.¹²²

-Pergamon

Pergamon's Asclepieion was founded in the early 4th century BC when "Archias, son of Aristaechmus" was so grateful for being healed of a sprain at Epidauros that he brought the worship to his native Pergamon (Pausanias *Descriptions* II.xxvii.8).¹²³ The original, modest sanctuary was located one and a half miles southwest of the city's acropolis at the site of a rock outcrop and a spring. It is likely that some deity was worshipped at this place prior to Asclepius, with evidence dating as early as the 6th century BC. Out of the private foundation, the cult became part of public worship around the second half of the 3rd century. The Asclepieion was

¹²¹ Sherwin-White 1978:342.

¹²² Sherwin-White 1978:344.

¹²³ Translated by Jones 1918:395.

destroyed by Philip V of Macedon in 201 BC, but was rebuilt to its largest size subsequently, likely due to an increase in the number of suppliants.¹²⁴ Worship continued at this healing complex until it was destroyed by an earthquake between 253 and 260 AD, but not rebuilt.¹²⁵ The site was excavated by the German Archaeological Institute beginning in 1932.

The site of the healing complex at Pergamon contained a large courtyard which was contained by porticoes (approximately 153 yards long by 111 and ½ yards wide) on all but the Western side, which date to the time of Hadrian after his visit in 124 AD.¹²⁶ There was a large Doric stoa (93 meters long by 12 meters wide) found in 1964 to the west of the courtyard also dating to this time period.¹²⁷ Although Hadrian updated some structures and built others, like a library and odeon, propylon and new temple, the old Ionic temple and spring were left relatively untouched in the middle of the courtyard area.¹²⁸ The theater at the site was built by the Roman Emperor Caracalla out of gratitude for being healed at this site and could seat 3,500 spectators in 29 rows.¹²⁹ The later Temple of Asclepius, founded by Rufinus around 140 AD, was strange by ancient terms in that it was a round room covered by a semicircular dome. The room was around 78 feet in diameter and contained seven niches holding statues of gods, with Asclepius opposite the entrance and his attendants around him. The center of this room, where the cult statue of Asclepius was to be expected, was empty, likely a powerful experience for a suppliant.¹³⁰ It is easy to see why Roman emperors sought out healing at such a structure as pilgrims, rather than seek treatment at a closer location.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Agelidis 2009:47.

¹²⁵ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:255.

¹²⁶ Agelidis 2009:49.

¹²⁷ Mellink 1967:170.

¹²⁸ Agelidis 2009:49.

¹²⁹ Berve 1963: 492.

¹³⁰ Berve 1963:494.

¹³¹ Pergamon is also famous as the site where Galen, the famous physician from the 2nd century AD, worked.

-Athens and Corinth

Athens and Corinth are representative of Asclepieia which were closely associated within their respective cities. They differ from the aforementioned Asclepieia in that they were typically visited only by the city's citizens, not by pilgrims. These sites are not large healing complexes, but rather typically contain only the temple and an abaton, with the surrounding area containing a theater and other structures that may have been used by suppliants in the healing process.

The Asclepieion at Athens was founded in 420 BC from the cult at Epidaurus and was excavated by the Greek Archaeological Society in 1876.¹³² It is located on the South Slope of the Acropolis near the Odeon of Herodes Atticus and the Theater of Dionysus. There is a Spring House (middle terrace) built into the slope of the acropolis which dates back to the 6th century BC, and thus was likely part of the worship of another god prior to the foundation of the cult of Asclepius. The complex is made up of three different terraces. The eastern terrace had a Doric stoa, which was the largest structure associated with the Asclepian complex.¹³³ Unfortunately, there is no good archaeological evidence indicating which space was used for incubation, but Aristophanes seems to suggest that the temple could be used as an *abaton* in his *Plutus* (659-663). The Temple of Asclepius was likely also located on the eastern terrace, although it may have expanded onto the middle terrace much later.¹³⁴ The temple was marked off by a small propylon on its southwest corner and also contained a bothros, or pit, which was either used as a reservoir or for sacrifices.¹³⁵

The Asclepieion at Corinth, excavated between 1929-1934 by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, was located away from center-city, next to the city's walls and to the

¹³² Allen and Caskey 1911:32.

¹³³ Allen and Caskey 1911:43.

¹³⁴ Aleshire 1989:32.

¹³⁵ Aleshire 1989:34.

east of a spring, which developed into the resort Lerna.¹³⁶ Lerna and the Asclepieion were closely associated structures, with a ramp connecting the two. Lerna became an elaborate fountain house, undoubtedly used in healing rituals.¹³⁷ Only 350 meters south of the sanctuary was a theater, and nearby there also stood an odeon and gymnasium, built during the 1st century AD. The archaeological remains indicate that Apollo was worshipped there before the 6th century BC, but was replaced by the cult of Asclepius in the late 5th century. A temple was built for Asclepius in the Hellenistic period due to his increased popularity.¹³⁸ The Temple of Asclepius, built after 44 BC, had a length of 15.18 meters and a width of 8.32 meters, and was on the site as an earlier temple, dated in the 4th century BC, but fell out of use after it was sacked by Mummius in 146 BC.¹³⁹ The *abaton* associated with this temple was situated to the west, at the same height as the roof of the Lerna, further connecting the structures.¹⁴⁰

While these sanctuaries of Asclepius served the same purpose as the larger complexes, the differences are obvious due to their more urban nature. They retained the essential elements of a temple, *abaton*, and water source, but were also able to incorporate the city's theaters, gymnasiums, and odeons, rather than have their own specific structures. Interestingly, these urban Asclepieia were situated away from the busy city centers, likely in order to create a sense of calm, even within a populated area.

Optimal Healing Environments

In the same way that ancient Asclepieia may have been set aside from populated areas in order to calm suppliants, Optimal Healing Environments (OHEs) are utilized in modern

¹³⁶ Lang 1977:9. It is not entirely certain how the cult was brought to Corinth, although likely in the same way as in Athens.

¹³⁷ Roebuck 1951:24.

¹³⁸ Roebuck 1951:22.

¹³⁹ Roebuck 1951:38.

¹⁴⁰ Lang 1977:11.

Integrative Medicine as a way to use the physical and nonphysical elements of a space in order to “enhance the body’s ability to heal.”¹⁴¹ An OHE is defined as an environment “in which the social, psychologic, spiritual, physical, and behavioral components of health care are oriented toward support and stimulation of healing and the achievement of wholeness.”¹⁴² As Jonas and Chez explain, “Healing is facilitated through the proper development of attitudes and intentions in both the provider and the recipient, use of personal self-care practices, creating healing relationships, applying the knowledge of health promotion and maintenance, and the appropriate integration of complementary and conventional medicine practices.”¹⁴³ Thus in an OHE, both the nonphysical elements and the physical elements promote the healing process. The physical components of an OHE can include everything from light, music, architecture, color, and other elements that may influence the promotion of healing in the physical space.¹⁴⁴

Optimal Healing Environments are important for engaging the mind, body, spirit, and community in the healing process, a key modality of Integrative Medicine. As Jonas and Chez explain, “expectancy and belief in recovery and wellness are key stimuli of both behavior and physiologic action toward healing” which can be facilitated by an environment, an OHE, “purposely oriented towards healing.”¹⁴⁵ The very opposite effect is often achieved in the modern hospital or clinical setting, often noted as “white coat hypertension,” when the anxiety of visiting a medical setting causes elevated blood pressure. An OHE seeks to use expectancy to decrease stress and activate the relaxation response through the use of space. Thus, Asclepieia can be considered OHEs in ancient Greece because they were areas set aside specifically for the purpose of healing.

¹⁴¹ Rakel and Jonas 2007:15.

¹⁴² Jonas and Chez 2004:S-1.

¹⁴³ Jonas and Chez 2004:S-1.

¹⁴⁴ Jonas and Chez 2004:S-1.

¹⁴⁵ Jonas and Chez 2004:S-3.

Wilbert Gesler explains that there are four types of “environments” that, together, contribute to the “healing sense of place.” These four environments are: natural, built, symbolic, and social.¹⁴⁶ The Asclepieia of ancient Greece had specific structures, rituals, and art associated with them, which, together, constituted an OHE by combining these four “environments.” The Sanctuary of Asclepios at Epidauros is used here as the archetypical Optimal Healing Environment in ancient Greece.

Pollio Vitruvius, a Roman architect from the 1st century AD notes the therapeutic effects of an environment on the healing process in his *De Architectura*:

Naturalis autem decor sit erit, si primum omnibus templis saluberrimae regiones aquarumque fontes in his locis idonei eligentur, in quibus fana constituentur, deinde maxime Aesculapio, Saluti, et eorum deorum, quorum plurimi medicinis aegri curare videntur. Cum enim ex pestilenti in salubrem locum corpora aegra translate fuerint et e fontibus salubribus aquarum usus subministrabuntur, celeriter convalescent. Ita efficietur, uti ex natura loci maiores auctasque cum dignitate divinitas excipiat opiniones (Vitru. *De Arch.*I.ii.7).

Finally, propriety will be due to natural causes if, for example, in the case of all sacred precincts we select very healthy neighbourhoods with suitable springs of water in the places where the fanes are to be built, particularly in the case of those to Aesculapius¹⁴⁷ and to Health, gods by whose healing powers great numbers of the sick are apparently cured. For when their diseased bodies are transferred from an unhealthy to a healthy spot, and treated with waters from health-giving springs, they will the more speedily grow well. The result will be that the divinity will stand in higher esteem and find his dignity increased, all owing to the nature of his site.¹⁴⁸

Here it can be seen that the importance of an Optimal Healing Environment was already recognized as an important factor in promoting healing and in increasing the reputation of the god Asclepios.

As a place set aside specifically for the purpose of healing by the god of medicine, Asclepieia were marked off as a *temenos*, or demarcated sacred land reserved as a sanctuary,

¹⁴⁶ Gesler 2003:2.

¹⁴⁷ This is the Latinized name for Asclepios.

¹⁴⁸ Translated by Morgan 1926:15.

showing that the space within was subject to rules of purity.¹⁴⁹ At Epidauros, suppliants were forbidden from being born or dying within the temenos, thus creating even more of a reserved space for healing (Paus. *Descriptions* II.xxvii.1).

Unsurprisingly, the natural elements of a place make up its “natural environment,” when considering the first of Gesler’s four “environments.”¹⁵⁰ Nature plays a large role in creating an OHE, as it is an almost universal symbol of spirituality, a key factor in an OHE.¹⁵¹ Sanctuaries of Asclepios universally utilized nature for their healing effects. Walton notes that the locations chosen for Asclepieia were those which had natural scenery that would have been pleasing to the god.¹⁵² At Epidauros, this location was a grove; at Kos, the location of the Asclepion was on a hill slope; at Pergamon and Corinth, the sanctuary was away from each city’s acropolis; at Athens, the temple was located on a slope of the acropolis. Nature and spirituality at Asclepieia would have been intrinsically intertwined. As sanctuaries, they are holy spaces within which a god dwells. Thus, by simply entering the space, a sense of relaxing spirituality would have been activated.

Fresh air has been noted as important for optimal healing. While Asclepieia were not uniform in their structures, they were all chosen in areas that received plenty of fresh air.¹⁵³ Some Asclepieia, like at Epidauros and Pergamon utilized open stoas, or extended double colonnades with a wall behind, which allowed patients a safe space for fresh air and interactions with nature.¹⁵⁴ Roger Ulrich outlined a “Theory of Supportive Healthcare Design” in his 2000 article, “Effects of Healthcare Environmental Design on Medical Outcomes,” which explains the

¹⁴⁹ Pedley 2005:29.

¹⁵⁰ Gesler 2003:7.

¹⁵¹ Schweitzer et al. 2004:S-72.

¹⁵² Walton 1894:36. Epidauros is situated in a natural hollow.

¹⁵³ Walton 1894:36.

¹⁵⁴ Walton 1894:40. Definition from Pedley 2005:75.

importance of providing access to nature as a positive distraction in the healing response.¹⁵⁵ Ulrich defines these “positive distractions” as “environmental-social conditions marked by a capacity to improve mood and effectively promote restoration from stress.”¹⁵⁶ The fresh air available to patients at Asclepieia would have been a positive distraction that promoted the healing response. Modern scholars are looking into the effects of fresh air in hospitals as it is well established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that indoor air “contains more pollutants, and often at higher concentrations, than outdoor air.”¹⁵⁷ Thus, hospital planners are working on new ways to increase ventilation of outdoor air by operable windows, when appropriate.¹⁵⁸ In this way, it seems that the builders of the Asclepieia recognized the importance of fresh air for the healing process as universal.

The stoas at Asclepieia not only allowed for patients to get fresh air, but also to receive natural light during their stays. At Epidauros, the stoa was used as an *abaton*, the place in which patients slept and waited for the god to visit them in their dreams.¹⁵⁹ Natural light has been shown to be important for Vitamin D production, mood, and body rhythms, among other physiological responses.¹⁶⁰ Thus, it is important for anyone, sick or not, wishing to promote health to receive natural light, when possible. Asclepieia utilized natural light when possible to activate the body’s natural healing response.

The stoas also allowed for patients to view nature while waiting to be visited by the god. Viewing nature has also been noted as important for the healing response and creating an OHE. This is seen in the modern discussion of the importance of windows, particularly those with a

¹⁵⁵ Ulrich 2000:51.

¹⁵⁶ Ulrich 2000:55.

¹⁵⁷ Stolwijk 1990:271.

¹⁵⁸ Schweitzer et al. 2004:S-75.

¹⁵⁹ Mee 2011:290. Patients also tried to sleep as close to the temple as possible, so it was easier for the god to visit them. This would have increased the sense of spirituality surrounding the event (Pedley 2005:32).

¹⁶⁰ Schweitzer et al. 2004:S-75.

view of nature, in hospitals for the promotion of healing. It has been shown that nature views in hospitals are correlated with shorter postoperative stays, reduced anxiety and pain, and a “restorative effect” on patients.¹⁶¹ Although modern medicine understands the importance of a clean and sterile environment for curing, it is also able to recognize the need for the infusion of nature in order to stimulate the healing process.

Not only is nature important for creating an OHE, but the “symbolic environment” can also play a role in these healing spaces. The “symbolic environment” of an OHE is made up of “concrete or abstract symbols” which have some meaning to the observer which activate the healing response by invoking their beliefs or expectations.¹⁶² At Epidauros, this response could have been aroused by the sight of bronze and terracotta votive offerings to Asclepios around the temple, thanking him for healing them.¹⁶³ This show of successful healing would have been a positive reinforcement as to why the patient chose to come see the god, rather than choose a different source of medical care. Also at Epidauros above the door read the maxim, “Pure must be he who enters the fragrant temple; purity means to think nothing but holy thoughts”

(ΑΓΝΟΝ ΧΡΗ ΝΗΟΙΟΣ ΘΗΩΔΕΟΣ ΕΝΤΟΣ ΙΟΝΤΑ ΕΜΜΕΝΑΙ ΑΓΘΕΙΗ Δ ΕΣΤΙ ΦΡΟΝΕΙΝ ΟΣΙΑ).¹⁶⁴ Thus, one had to prepare himself in an act of spirituality in order to enter the temple, as the space was laid out distinctly for the worship of the god. These symbolic elements would have helped make the space an OHE.

In another way, rituals have been noted to have an effect in creating a healing environment in that they help create a symbolic environment in an abstract way. The daily rituals

¹⁶¹ Schweitzer et al. 2004:S-76.

¹⁶² Gesler 2003:13.

¹⁶³ Spawforth 2006:104.

¹⁶⁴ Papadakis (1978:5) notes that this inscription is preserved by ancient authors only. Smell has been shown to contribute to an OHE. Pleasing aromas, like incense, have been reported to reduce blood pressure, slow respiration, and reduce pain perception (Schweitzer 2004:S-73).

that took place at the Asclepieia were symbolic in the language used and the actions carried out. Each Asclepieia was associated with a fresh water supply, typically a spring, which was used in purification rituals prior to entering the Temple of Asclepios. This is seen in Aristophanes' *Plutus* (Aristoph. *Plut.*657). Not only was this good medical practice of the time, in that it would have cut down on the spread of the disease within the temple, but it would have “cleansed the soul” and prepared the patient’s mind for the healing that was to take place within the temple space.¹⁶⁵ The ritual of cleansing was thought to be associated with every Asclepieia, not just at Athens where the *Plutus* is set, because these sanctuaries were often associated with bodies of water.¹⁶⁶

Following the cleansing ritual in one of these bodies of water, ritual sacrifice was offered to the god. According to the *Plutus*, these types of sacrifices included “honey-cakes” (πόπανα) and “bakemeats” (προθύματα) (Aristoph. *Plut.*660). The temples of Asclepios had altars for the purpose of offering such sacrifices to the god. While not much more is said of this ritual, it may have also contributed to the symbolic environment of the healing space. Thus, it seems that these rituals, and the ritual of incubation, would have played an important role in preparing the mind of the suppliant by contributing to a “symbolic environment.”

Art can also be used to influence the body’s innate healing response in an OHE according to modern researchers.¹⁶⁷ Grandiose visual art would have been especially prominent in ancient Asclepieia. The Temples of Asclepios themselves would have helped create an OHE because they were artistic structures and infused with architectural embellishments. The temple at Epiduaros was a limestone Doric temple that was decorated with marble metopes and a brightly

¹⁶⁵ Gesler 2003:9.

¹⁶⁶ Hart 2000:69. The only surviving description of the role of purification in the healing ritual at Asclepieia was found at Pergamon, but was heavily eroded. See Gultekin *The asclepieion of Pergamon* 1965 for full text of this inscription.

¹⁶⁷ Schweitzer et al. 2004:S-76.

painted entablature.¹⁶⁸ It also had decorative wood and ivory doors that would have stood as a focal-point of the structure.¹⁶⁹ The structure would have been seen by a pilgrim entering the complex until he had emerged from the propylon. This image of such structures within the grove was likely a striking one. It is likely that such a temple would have been pleasing to the ancient Greek eye and contributed to the healing atmosphere at Epidauros. Not only visually stunning, the temple and the other buildings within the sanctuary, like the theater or the gymnasium, would have all contributed to the “built environment” of the healing space at Epidauros. Such buildings would have likely created confidence and trust in Asclepios, further increasing the expectancy of the suppliant to be healed.¹⁷⁰ The architectural components could have easily been augmented by the symbolic import of their decorative elements.

Another important aspect of an OHE is the use of entertainment and performance art as “positive distractions.” Entertainment, as well as the rest of Ulrich’s “positive distractions,” is thought to work under the principle of stress reduction to promote healing.¹⁷¹ As this is the principle of Mind-Body practices in Integrative Medicine, it will be discussed later in light of the use of drama at Asclepieia.

The last “environment” which contributes to the healing space of location is the “social environment.” This is based on those providing the care to patients cultivating a positive atmosphere of respect and trust. This is the most difficult to discuss because it is impossible to fully recreate the social environment at an ancient Asclepieion. Nevertheless, Aelius Aristides provides some insight into the types of interactions which took place between suppliants and

¹⁶⁸ Spawforth 2006:165.

¹⁶⁹ Spawforth 2006:59.

¹⁷⁰ Gesler 2003:12.

¹⁷¹ Ulrich 2000:55.

priests in a way which was oriented towards healing. In his *Sacred Tales*, Aristides describes visiting the Asclepieion at Pergamon with a growth in his abdomen:

ἐνταῦθα οἱ μὲν ἰατροὶ πάσας φωνὰς ἠφίεσαν, οἱ μὲν τέμνειν, οἱ δὲ ἐπικάειν
φαρμάκοις, ἢ πάντως δεῖν ὑπόπτουον γενόμενον διαφθαρῆναι. ὁ δὲ θεὸς τὴν
ἐναντίαν ἐτίθετο, ἀντέχειν καὶ τρέφειν τὸν ὄγκον: καὶ δηλαδὴ οὐχ αἴρεσις ἦν ἢ
τῶν ἰατρῶν ἀκούειν, ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ (Aristides *HL* 1.61)

At this point, the doctors cried out all sorts of things, some said surgery, some said cauterization by drug, or that an infection would arise and I must surely die. But the God [Asclepius] gave a contrary opinion and told me to endure and foster the growth. And clearly there was no choice between listening to the doctors or to the God.¹⁷²

Since both the suppliants and priests, particularly early on in Asclepieia before the priests acquired medical knowledge, both parties would have a firm belief in the ability of the god to heal. Notice, too, that Aristides was in charge of his own care in that he felt comfortable refusing treatment from the doctors in order to be healed by the god. Thus, the relationship between patient and priest may have been one of equality because neither possessed more medical knowledge than the other in the face of Asclepius. The opposite may have been true for the relationship between a Hippocratic physician and patient in that the doctor possessed more knowledge than the patient so there was an imbalance in power. It is likely that a patient, when trusting in the authority of the physician, does not feel seen as a person, but rather a set of symptoms, putting him in a state of mind not well-oriented towards healing.¹⁷³ Asclepius, however, being present in his temple in the form of a statue, was seen as accessible to priest and patient alike, thus promoting a healthful state of mind for the healing rituals within the temple.

The Sanctuaries of Asclepius have many characteristics, natural, built, symbolic, and social, that today are recognized as contributing to an Optimal Healing Environment. This comes as no surprise as these were areas set aside specifically for the purpose of healing via worship of

¹⁷² I do not have the Greek text at this time.

¹⁷³ Raket and Jonas 2007:17.

the god. Similar environments are not unheard of in modernity. A familiar modern parallel to the healing space of an Asclepieion is Lourdes, in rural southwest France near the Pyrenees Mountains. In 1858, the Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl, Bernadette Soubirous, at this location, and told the girl to dig in the dirt of a grotto there. A spring emerged from where she dug, and soon the stories of miraculous cures in this spring drew pilgrims from all over the world to this place.¹⁷⁴ This place has been separated from the rest of the city of Lourdes with fences and gates which remain open twenty four hours a day for suppliants. The healing space also contains hospitals, administrative buildings, and a basilica, but retains a large amount of open areas.¹⁷⁵ As Lourdes remains a place for many pilgrims seeking miraculous cures, it is easy to see the place's shared characteristics with an Asclepieion: a healing space separate from daily life which was visited by a holy figure, a beautiful, natural setting, and the use of water for the purpose of miraculous healing. What is interesting about Lourdes is that it seems to operate under the same mechanisms of healing as an ancient Asclepieion. It seems then that the healing of this type cannot be attributed to some sort of feeblemindedness of an ancient population, but, rather, that there is some sort of universal mechanism at work in these Optimal Healing Environments. The Mind-Body connection is a strong candidate for the modality which these healing spaces play upon.

Mind-Body Medicine

Mind-Body Medicine is one of the central categories through which Integrative Medicine is utilized. As the term "Mind-Body" suggests, it plays upon the deep connection thought to exist between the mind and body and how the health of one can influence the health of the other.

Gordon explains, "This perspective acknowledges that what we do mentally and psychologically

¹⁷⁴ Gesler 2003:67.

¹⁷⁵ Gesler 2003:68.

affects the body. It also affirms the reciprocal effects of physiology on the mind.” Thus we have an ability to consciously influence our emotions, mental functions, and physiology positively through Mind-Body practices.¹⁷⁶ For much of the 20th century, it was thought that the body and mind operated independently of one another. This influenced the treatment of disease as a separate bodily function until very recently with the discovery that the immune and endocrine systems are very closely related with the central nervous system. This discovery of the Mind-Body connection has led to the field of psychoneuroimmunology, which studies the mechanisms by which these two entities, once considered separate, interact with one another.

Mind-Body Medicine in clinical practice works through practices which exercise control over autonomic nervous functions, like heart rate and pain perception. It seeks to use relaxation techniques in order to moderate stress, thus decreasing blood pressure, supporting immune function, and improving mood. In the same way that these functions are benefits to modern patients, they would have promoted health in antiquity, as well. These techniques are also important in changing patients’ attitudes towards their illness.¹⁷⁷ This attitude change is important for the healing process, particularly when facing a disease that is not able to be cured. In this way, patients can still achieve empowerment and positive emotions with which to heal. Empowerment is also important for the increasing shift towards self-care. Integrative Medicine focuses on increasing patient independence so that they can become partners in their health care rather than dependent on medical professionals.¹⁷⁸ This may have been the case at Asclepieia, in that suppliants sought out their care on their own accord, taking an active role in their care. The more active a role one takes in his healthcare, the better his health related outcomes, a likely result from seeking treatment at an Asclepieion.

¹⁷⁶ Gordon 2006:147.

¹⁷⁷ Gordon 2006:148.

¹⁷⁸ Gordon 2006:149.

In order for Mind-Body practices to be effective, three elements need to be present in the subject: motivation to achieve a therapeutic outcome, belief that improvement will occur, and expectation that improvement will occur with therapy.¹⁷⁹ These three elements would have been present within the individuals who sought cures at Asclepieia. Those who went to an Asclepieion did so out of a need to be cured, being bothered enough by some illness or ailment. Thus, they were motivated to the point of seeking help. In another way, seeking treatment at the Sanctuary of Asclepius reveals that the patient had a belief he could be healed by the god and the expectation that the god could, and would, do so. According to the one of the steles found at Epidaurus, the god even refused to treat non-believers:

δ' αὐτοῦ ἔθεν διακειμένου τὸν α[..... πολ]-
 λούς τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς ταῦτα φά[μεν? — — — — — — — — — —
 — ἀ]-
 φικνῶνται εἰς τὸ τέμενος ἐόντ.....
 τοιοῦτον ποιησοῖ, ἀλλ' ὑγιῆ ἀποπ[εμψοῖ. (IG, IV², 1, nos.121-
 122.XXXVII).

When he behaved in a cowardly way Asclepius said he would not heal those people who were too cowardly for that, but those who came to him into his Temple, full of hope that he would do no harm to such a man, but would send him away well.¹⁸⁰

It can be seen that it was not only beneficial, but necessary for a suppliant of Asclepius to believe that the god would heal him, and, therefore, be in a state of mind in which Mind-Body Medicine is most effective. Thus, being prepared with these three elements present in those who sought to be healed at Asclepieia, the suppliants of the god may have been healed through techniques similar to hypnosis and imagery.

¹⁷⁹ Gurgevich 2006:197.

¹⁸⁰ Translated by Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:237.

-Hypnosis

Hypnosis is one technique that is utilized in Mind-Body Medicine to bring about a physiologic response through changing a patient's mental status. Defined, hypnosis is "a system or collection of methods that allows us to enhance the communication and sharing of information between and within the Mind-Body."¹⁸¹ Hypnosis is used as a way to access the subconscious and use it to influence the body by choosing to which stimuli, external and internal, to give awareness. It is seen clinically as a state of the mind in which both conscious and unconscious processes are available at the same time.¹⁸² This is accomplished either through the self or with the help of others trained in hypnotic techniques. The goal of hypnosis is to create a trance, "a state of consciousness in which our focus of awareness allows us to become greatly absorbed in the experience and sensations of our ideas," much like a daydream.¹⁸³ Hypnosis can be used clinically to promote healing, to promote behavioral and lifestyle changes, and to reduce stress, all of which may contribute to alleviating the underlying causes of disease.¹⁸⁴ These same benefits may have been achieved at Asclepieia through the hypnosis-like ritual of incubation.

Hypnosis itself involves three key factors: absorption, dissociation, and suggestibility.

This is achieved in the following way:

Through an induction technique, the subject becomes fully absorbed in the matter at hand, resulting in dissociation from various distractions. This creates a heightened state of awareness that allows the subject to be more receptive to suggestions that can influence physical and behavioral change.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Gurgevich 2007:1011.

¹⁸² Gurgevich 2006:193.

¹⁸³ Gurgevich 2007:1011.

¹⁸⁴ Gurgevich 2006:196.

¹⁸⁵ Gurgevich 2007:1012.

By creating this heightened state of conscious awareness, patients are able to tell the body to relax and focus his attention on the purpose of the trance.¹⁸⁶ Having entered an Asclepieion and performed the initial rituals of cleansing and sacrifice, a suppliant may have been in such a heightened state of conscious awareness that she/he would be responsive to hypnosis.

Central to the healing process at Asclepieia was the ritual of incubation. The one seeking healing was made to sleep in an *abaton*, or open sleeping quarters, near the Temple of Asclepius where the god would visit him in his dreams and either cure him directly by touching him or tell him what the priest ought to do to heal them.¹⁸⁷ Aristophanes provides the best description of this ritual as it was in Athens in the early 4th century BC in his *Plutus*. What follows is the slave Carion's depiction of what occurs during the ritual surrounding Asclepius after Wealth bathes in the sea:

ἔπειτα πρὸς τὸ τέμενος ἤμεν τοῦ θεοῦ.
ἐπεὶ δὲ βωμῶ πόπανα καὶ προθύματα
καθωσιώθη πέλανος Ἡφαίστου φλογί,
κατεκλίναμεν τὸν Πλούτων, ὥσπερ εἰκὸς ἦν:
ἡμῶν δ' ἕκαστος στιβάδα παρεκαττύετο. (Aristoph. *Plut.* 659-663)...

...ὡς δὲ τοὺς λύχνους ἀποσβέσας
ἡμῖν παρήγγειλεν καθεύδειν τοῦ θεοῦ
ὁ πρόπολος, εἰπὼν, ἦν τις αἰσθηταὶ ψόφου
σιγᾶν, ἅπαντες κοσμίως κατεκείμεθα. (668-671)...

...ἐκεῖνος δ' ἐν κύκλῳ τὰ νοσήματα
σκοπῶν περιήει πάντα κοσμίως πάνυ.
ἔπειτα παῖς αὐτῶ λίθινον θυεῖδιον
παρέθηκε καὶ δοῖδουκα καὶ κιβώτιον. (708-711)...

...μετὰ τοῦτο τῶ Πλούτωνι παρεκαθέζετο,
καὶ πρῶτα μὲν δὴ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐφήψατο,

¹⁸⁶ Gurgevich 2007:1012. This is how a trance differs from meditation and relaxation techniques; meditation and relaxation techniques do not have a specific purpose the way that hypnosis holds a task in mind, such as symptom relief.

¹⁸⁷ Pedley 2005:99. Hartigan suggests that the ill also watched a performance at the theater which would have served as guided imagery to put them in a relaxed state of mind before the process of incubation. This is discussed in detail below.

ἔπειτα καθαρὸν ἡμιτύβιον λαβὼν
τὰ βλέφαρα περιέψησεν: ἡ Πανάκεια δὲ
κατεπέτασ' αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν φοινικίδι
καὶ πᾶν τὸ πρόσωπον: εἶθ' ὁ θεὸς ἐπόπτυσεν.
ἔξηξάτην οὖν δύο δράκοντ' ἐκ τοῦ νεῶ
ὑπερφυεῖς τὸ μέγεθος. (727-734)...

...τούτω δ' ὑπὸ τὴν φοινικίδ' ὑποδύνθ' ἠσυχῆ
τὰ βλέφαρα περιέλειχον, ὥς γ' ἔμοι δοκεῖ:
καὶ πρὶν σε κοτύλας ἐκπιεῖν οἴνου δέκα,
ὁ Πλοῦτος ὦ δέσποιν' ἀνειστήκει βλέπων: (735-738).

Then to the precincts of the God we went.
There on the alter honey-cakes and bakemeats
Were offered, food for the Hephaestian flame.
There laid we Wealth as custom bids; and we
Each for himself stitched up a pallet near (659-663)...

...Soon the Temple servitor
Put out the lights, and bade us fall asleep,
Nor stir, nor speak, whatever noise we heard.
So down we lay in orderly repose (668-671)...

...Whilst *he* [the god Asclepius] went round, with calm and quiet tread,
To every patient, scanning each disease.
Then by his side a servant placed a stone
Pestle and mortar; and a medicine chest (708-711)...

...Then, after this, he sat down by Wealth,
And first he felt the patient's head, and next
Taking a linen napkin, clean and white,
Wiped both his lips, and all around them, dry.
Then Panacea with a scarlet cloth
Covered his face and head; then the God clucked,
And out there issued from the holy shrine
Two great enormous serpents (727-734)...

...And underneath the scarlet cloth they crept
And licked his eyelids, as it seemed to me;
And, mistress dear, before you could have drunk
Of ten goblets, Wealth arose and saw.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ Translated by Rogers 1924:425-429.

Aristophanes illustrates the ritual of incubation as one in which the god appears in order to heal his suppliants directly while they sleep. In this case, Asclepios heals through the use of his serpents, one of his symbolic animals and with the aid of the goddess Panacea, one of his daughters. While it is unlikely that Aristophanes' audience believed that the healing in Asclepieia occurred in such a way as he presents (it is a comedy, after all), it is possible that those visiting the healing sanctuaries envisioned similar images in their dreams, seeing themselves in the place of *Plutus*.

For much of antiquity, including the Classical and Hellenistic Periods, dreams were commonly thought to show the future and ones in which the gods took part were seen as divine revelation.¹⁸⁹ For this reason, when a patient was to dream about Asclepios healing him, he took this as a sign that the god would indeed heal him, thus creating expectancy. While it has been suggested that Asclepios' suppliants were given some sort of mind-altering drug or potion that would promote sleep or dreams, there is no real evidence to support such a claim.¹⁹⁰ Once awake, the suppliant would recount the dream to a priest for interpretation; many of these dream cures were incorporated into the miracle inscriptions. An example of such a dream experienced by a suppliant is as follows:

Τίμω[ν λόγχοι τρω]-
θεῖς ὑπὸ τὸν ὀφθαλμόν· οὗτος ἐγκαθεύδ[ων ἐνύπνιον εἶδε· ἐδό]-
κει οἱ ὁ θεὸς ποίαν τρίψας ἐχεῖν εἰς τ[ὸν ὀφθαλμόν τι· καὶ ὑγι]-
ῆς ἐγένετο. (IG, IV², 1, nos.121-122.XL).

Timon...wounded by a spear under his eye. While sleeping in the Temple he saw a dream. It seemed to him that the god rubbed down an herb and poured it into his eye. And he became well.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Meier 1989:iii.

¹⁹⁰ Hart 2000:81.

¹⁹¹ Translated by Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:237.

As is explained in the inscription, the suppliant had a dream in which the god treated him with some sort of herbs. Thus, Timon became absorbed in the image of the god rubbing herbs on his eye, and in a sort of hypnosis, became dissociated with everything but the cure of his illness. In this way, Timon could have become open to the suggestion of rubbing herbs on his eyes as a possible cure. As Edelstein and Edelstein suggests, by dreaming that a god prescribed a possible cure, the suppliant was much more likely to follow through on a treatment than if a physician had suggested it.¹⁹²

In Aristophanes' *Plutus*, Carion describes how, while the suppliants were asleep, Asclepius came around and examined the disease of each person in his temple. Afterwards, the god mixed different remedies for each patient (Aristoph. *Plut.* 708-725).¹⁹³ It has been questioned how someone was able to dream of images of the god giving a specific cure during the ritual of incubation, as in the example above. Edelstein and Edelstein explain that since laypeople possessed some medical knowledge, they were able to dream of images of healing which were already familiar to them. When these images were combined with the expectancy of cure and the willingness to perform the actions that the god prescribed, healing was brought about through these dreams.¹⁹⁴

Aelius Aristides demonstrated that the expectancy and willingness of the mind was more important than the physical setting of the suppliant in his *Sacred Tales*. Aristides "received" some healing dreams from Asclepius outside of his sanctuaries and without performing the ritual of incubation.¹⁹⁵ Such an example of one of his dreams, which took place between October and

¹⁹² Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:163.

¹⁹³ In the comedy, Wealth is cured of his blindness when two snakes licked his eyelids. Animals were thought to have healing abilities, so it would not be uncommon for someone to dream about being healed in such a way.

¹⁹⁴ Edelstein and Edelstein 1998:170.

¹⁹⁵ Behr 1968:35. Aristides claimed to have visits from other gods and deceased persons, including Athena and Plato (*HL* 2.41-42; 4.57).

January 148 AD at the Temple of Asclepius at Pergamon, which did not have an *abaton* for suppliants to stay in, is as follows:

τοσαῦτα μὲν τὰ παρὰ τοῦ ἥτρου. ὁμοιον δὲ τῷ περὶ τὸ ἥτρον συνέβη καὶ τὸ τοῦ φύματος πολλοῖς ἔτεσι πρότερον. ὁ μὲν γὰρ θεὸς προὔλεγεν ἐκ πολλοῦ δεῖν ὕδερων φυλάττεσθαι, καὶ ἄλλα τε ἔδωκεν ἀλεξιφάρμακα καὶ ὑποδήματα Αἰγύπτια, οἷσπερ οἱ ἱερεῖς χρῆσθαι νομίζουσι. καὶ δὴ καὶ ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ τὸ ῥεῦμα ἀπάγειν κάτω. καὶ [p. 461] γίγνεται φῦμα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς σὺδεμιᾶς φανεραῖς τὸ μὲν πρῶτον οἶον ἂν τῷ καὶ ἄλλῳ γένοιτο, ἔπειτα προῆλθεν εἰς ὄγκον ἐξαίσιον, καὶ ὅ τε βουβῶν μεστός ἦν καὶ πάντα ἐξώδει, καὶ ὀδύνας παρηκολούθουν δειναὶ καὶ πυρετὸς ἔστιν ἄς ἡμέρας. ἐνταῦθα οἱ μὲν ἰατροὶ πάσας φωνὰς ἠφίεσαν, οἱ μὲν τέμνειν, οἱ δὲ ἐπικάειν φαρμάκοις, ἢ πάντως δεῖν ὑπόπυον γενόμενον διαφθαρήναι. ὁ δὲ θεὸς τὴν ἐναντίαν ἐτίθετο, ἀντέχειν καὶ τρέφειν τὸν ὄγκον: καὶ δηλαδὴ οὐχ αἴρεσις ἦν ἢ τῶν ἰατρῶν ἀκούειν, ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ. ὁ δὲ ὄγκος ἔτι ἐπὶ μᾶλλον ἤρετο καὶ ἦν ἀπορία πολλή. τῶν δὲ φίλων οἱ μὲν ἐθαύμαζον τὴν καρτερίαν, οἱ δὲ ἐνεκάλουν ὡς λίαν ἅπαντα ἐπὶ τοῖς ὀνειράσι ποιουμένων, τινὲς δὲ καὶ ὡς ἄτολμον ἐπιτιῶντο, ἐπειδὴ οὐ παρεῖχον τέμνειν οὐδ' αὖ φαρμάκων ἠνειχόμεν. ὁ δ' αὖ θεὸς διὰ τέλους ἀντεῖχε, κελεύων φέρειν τὸ παρὸν... τέλος δὲ ὁ σωτὴρ σημαίνει τῆς αὐτῆς νυκτὸς ταυτὸν ἐμοί τε καὶ τῷ τροφεῖ, περιῆν γὰρ δὴ τότε ὁ Ζώσιμος, ὥστε ἐγὼ μὲν ἔπεμπον ἐκείνῳ φράσεων ἃ εἰρηκῶς εἶη ὁ θεὸς, ὁ δ' ἀπήντα φράσεων αὐτός μοι ἃ ἀκηκόει τοῦ θεοῦ. ἦν δὲ τι φάρμακον οὗ τὰ μὲν καθ' ἕκαστα οὐ μέμνημαι, ἀλῶν δὲ ὅτι μετεῖχεν. ὡς δὲ ἐπεπάσαμεν, ἔρρει δὴ ταχὺ τοῦ ὄγκου τὸ πλεῖστον, καὶ ἅμα ἔω παρήσαν οἱ ἐπιτήδαιοι χαίροντες μετὰ ἀπιστίας. ἐντεῦθεν δὲ ἤδη τῶν μὲν ἐγκλημάτων ἐπαύσαντο ἰατροὶ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ὑπερφυῶς ἐφ' ἐκάστῳ τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν πρόνοιαν, καὶ ὡς ἕτερόν τι ἦν ἄρα μεῖζον, ὃ λάθρα ἰᾶτο (Aristides *HL* 1.61-63, 66-67).

And a tumor grew from no apparent cause, at first as it might be for anyone else, and next it increased to an extraordinary size, and my groin was distended, and everything was swollen and terrible pains ensued, and a fever for some days. At this point, the doctors cried out all sorts of things, some said surgery, some said cauterization by drug, or that an infection would arise and I must surely die. But the God [Asclepius] gave a contrary opinion and told me to endure and foster the growth. And clearly there was no choice between listening to the doctors or to the God. But the growth increased even more, and there was much dismay. Some of my friends marveled at my endurance, others criticized me because I acted too much on account of dreams, and some even blamed me for being cowardly, since I neither permitted surgery nor again suffered any cauterizing drugs. But the God held quite firm, and ordered me to bear up with the present circumstances... Finally the Savior indicated on the same night the same thing to me and my foster father—for Zosimus was then alive—so that I sent to him to tell him what the God had said, but he came to see me to tell me what he had heard from the God. There was a certain drug, whose particulars I do not remember, save that it contained salt. When we applied this, most of the growth quickly disappeared, and at dawn my friends were present, happy and incredulous. From here on, the

doctors stopped their criticisms, expressed extraordinary admiration for the providence of the God in each particular, and said that it was some other greater disease, which he secretly cured.¹⁹⁶

Aristides put so much faith in the god that he was unwilling to listen to the doctors as they attempted to treat him with the best practices available at that time. Nevertheless, Aristides and his foster father dreamed of the god prescribing a cure, which ultimately healed him. It seems that Aristides may have had a mentality which was more expectant of dreams from the gods, regardless of whether he had gone through the proper incubation ritual like at Epidauros, and, thus, was a good candidate for physical healing through mental means.

Many modern scholars have promoted the idea that healing occurred during the process of incubation as a kind of hypnosis.¹⁹⁷ The dream state in which the ill entered in the *abaton* allowed the patient to be open to suggestion and focus on the resolution of their illness.¹⁹⁸ In this way, through the relaxation and suggestion similar to hypnosis, the mind was able to affect change within the body to begin the healing process by accessing the unconscious through dreams. As it is known that the priests, particularly of the early Asclepieia, did not have any “medical” training, apart from at Kos, so the healing within the temple had to have occurred spontaneously, likely through the power of suggestion and expectancy.¹⁹⁹

It is possible that in the dream state of sleeping within the *abaton*, the ill believed and expected to be visited and healed by the god Asclepius. For this reason, the unconscious mind was able to be accessed in the same way as with modern hypnosis techniques in order to stimulate the healing process. It is a common misconception that the subject must be weak-minded or gullible in order to be hypnotized. For that reason, one might think that if hypnosis

¹⁹⁶ I am unable to obtain the Greek text at this time.

¹⁹⁷ Meier 1967:10; MacHovec 1975:216; Achte 1986:60.

¹⁹⁸ Achte 1986:60.

¹⁹⁹ Achte 1986:56. Priests were chosen from the community as they would have been for any other religious post.

were the mode of action for healing at Asclepieia, then the suppliants must have had to be simple and not as advanced as people of modern day. Research, however, has shown that some of the best subjects for hypnosis are those with “greater intellectual capacity, open-mindedness, and creativity.”²⁰⁰ Thus, if a hypnosis-like mechanism was a method through which healing took place in antiquity, those who sought this type of healing were actually quite advanced. Perhaps, then, it is possible to see the intelligence in utilizing such Mind-Body mechanisms for healing.

-Imagery

Imagery is another technique that utilizes the Mind-Body connection to promote healing or bring about a shift in consciousness.²⁰¹ Imagery is used as an “adjunctive” therapy, rather than alone, as it works with the patient’s mindset, reducing stress and stimulating the immune system. With its many potential benefits, it is easy to see why imagery is useful for sick patients and those attempting to improve their overall health alike. Rossman notes that it is so potentially useful because imagery is the “natural language of the unconscious and the human nervous system.”²⁰² It is for this reason, its universality, that ancient cultures utilized imagery for healing in the same way that is practiced today.²⁰³

The most common use of imagery is guided imagery, which is “a range of techniques from simple visualizations and direct imagery-based suggestion, through metaphor and storytelling.”²⁰⁴ One technique utilized by guided imagery is to have a patient visualize their disease within the body being treated by their immune system. For example, the visualization of treating warts within the body, particularly with children, has been shown by Gurgevich to be

²⁰⁰ Gurgevich 2007:1012.

²⁰¹ Gordon 2006:147.

²⁰² Rossman 2006:185.

²⁰³ Rossman 2006:186.

²⁰⁴ Rossman 2006:185.

effective in the resolution of warts within 2-3 imagery sessions.²⁰⁵ A suppliant imagining Asclepios using his medical knowledge to resolve his gout may be an ancient example of this. Images are thought to influence our attitudes and beliefs, thus creating a psychologic effect that acts upon the body through the Mind-Body connection.²⁰⁶ Images are thought to be particularly powerful stimuli for such a response because the body tends to respond to imagery as “to a genuine external experience.”²⁰⁷

Imagery was utilized in ancient Greece in order to elicit these same reactions through dramatic art. Every Asclepieion was relatively near a theater or odeon, with the most famous being the magnificent theater at Epidauros.²⁰⁸ It was postulated by Aristotle in the 4th century BC that theater, specifically tragedy, had a cathartic effect on the psyche of the audience (Aris. *Poet.*1449b27-28). This effect acts as a “cleansing” or “purifying” on the psyche to bring about psychological healing.²⁰⁹ The purpose of tragedy for Aristotle speaks to the salubrious nature of tragedy. He explains, ἔστιν οὖν τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἐκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας, δι’ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν (Aris. *Poet.*1449b21-28). “Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses a magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions.”²¹⁰ Thus, Aristotle was able to articulate the interpretation of the actions and emotions of the tragic characters as genuine experience for the audience, just as in imagery. For

²⁰⁵ Gurgevich 2007:1014-1015.

²⁰⁶ Rossman 2006:187.

²⁰⁷ Rossman 2006:187. The accessible example which Rossman gives for this is sexual fantasy and its “attendant physiologic responses.”

²⁰⁸ Kos had an odeon which was northeast of the Asclepieion.

²⁰⁹ Liddell and Scott:388. While Aristotle does not come outright and define this term, it is thought to be a psychological purging brought about by the tragic action of the play.

²¹⁰ Translated by Heath 1996:10.

this reason, it has been proposed that the theaters associated with Asclepieia served a similar purpose in the healing process.

The visual drama that could have possibly taken place at Asclepieia would have served to activate the healing response among patients through mechanisms of stress reduction similar to guided imagery. Karelisa Hartigan argues strongly that such plays would have taken place in antiquity, based largely on the archaeological evidence which revealed that Asclepieia were associated with theaters.²¹¹ Despite the fact that there is no strong evidence, such as surviving copies of plays, which indicate that these theaters were utilized in the daily healing rituals at the temples, drama may have provided another mechanism through which healing was achieved in antiquity. This is further supported by Hartigan's research on the effect of dramatic art on healing as part of the Arts-in Medicine program at Shands Hospital at the University of Florida. In this program, patients recount their disease course to actors, who act it out at their bedside immediately. Patients cite an increase in identity and reassurance which help in the resolution of disease.²¹²

Based on this modern evidence of better health-related outcomes through the use of drama, it can be argued that the theaters associated with Asclepieia may have provided similar relief. Hartigan postulates that plays that would have taken place at Asclepieia were not the same as those that would have been performed for a healthy audience, like during the festival of Dionysus.²¹³ This is because a weak and sickly population would not be able to handle the strong emotions that come with such tragic actions.²¹⁴ Instead, she asserts that this population would have watched dramas starring the god Asclepius healing before they were to begin the

²¹¹ Hartigan 2009:3.

²¹² Hartigan 2009:87.

²¹³ Although Hartigan would argue that the Theater of Dionysus may have served the sick on a more regular basis than the healthy population.

²¹⁴ Hartigan 2009:13.

process of incubation in order to prepare them mentally and emotionally to be visited by the god and healed themselves.

Hartigan explains that she envisions the process to be similar to the modern use of guided imagery in that the content of these plays would have been the god Asclepios healing someone, so that the audience could then envision themselves being healed by the god.²¹⁵ Thus, like in the case of guided imagery, the person watching the god heal could picture themselves in the place of the person being healed and activate his own innate healing response through the same mechanisms. Hartigan believes that this may be why, when they dreamed, they saw the god acting upon them, specifically.²¹⁶

It is assumed that the plays would occur daily, as Asclepieia operated every day. This is another difference between the performances that may have occurred at Asclepieia and those that took place annually at the Dionysia. However, due to a lack of evidence of such plays, what kind of content these performances would have had, if they were performed, is a mystery. If we are to assume that they were performed daily, it is possible that there were certain plays performed for people with different illnesses, such as a play performed specifically for those who sought to be cured of gout and a different play for those seeking to be cured of headaches.²¹⁷

The plays performed at Asclepieia were likely not nearly as long as the tetrad of tragedies which were performed at large festivals. This is because the population, again, was weak and sickly, so Hartigan asserts that the performances would have been short “mini-dramas,” rather than wear out the suppliants with long performances. Comedy would have also been an appropriate genre to be played upon at Asclepieia as it is well known that humor and laughter

²¹⁵ Hartigan 2009:15.

²¹⁶ Hartigan 2009:16.

²¹⁷ The god was known to heal many of blindness, so it is difficult to discern how this would have been facilitated by the use of imagery.

bring about positive healing effects. However, it is impossible to know if comedies, or tragedies for that matter, were actually performed. Regardless of what genre was performed, these plays, even short performances, would have provided patients with a “positive distraction” of entertainment that Ulrich explained could promote the healing response.²¹⁸ This is an alternative mechanism for this action besides the one by which guided imagery works. Regardless of mechanism, it is possible to see how the applications for imagery techniques could be elicited by the viewing of short plays by an ill person at an Asclepieia. These applications, like stress reduction and increased Mind-Body awareness, all are important to promote the body’s innate healing response. This is another similarity between Asclepieia and Integrative Medicine that seems to suggest that the ancients relied heavily on the Mind-Body connection in the healing response.

Asclepios, M.D.

The healing surrounding the Sanctuaries of Asclepios has been a topic of scholarship for many years due to its highly speculative nature. The great popularity of these temples requires modern scholars to assume that most patients, indeed, received some relief from the god, but the way in which this occurred is unknown due to a lack of evidence. It may be easy to assume that the healing which took place was not real, but merely stories which were used to promote the powers of the god Asclepios. As the healing at these sanctuaries was thought to occur by divine intervention by the ancients, it may easily be thought to be the result of a sense of spirituality or mysticism, rather than knowledge of the body. It may also be that the resolution of disease at the temples was the result of the natural course of the disease coming to an end which happened to correspond with going to an Asclepieion. Although it is a likely explanation for most acute ailments, it does not explain why most people who sought cures from Asclepios suffered from

²¹⁸ Ulrich 2000:53.

chronic diseases. Those with chronic diseases would not have been able to find relief due to natural disease course, but their disease must have been alleviated in other ways. Based on the evidence available, it is possible to explain possible mechanisms for healing at these temples, particularly in light of modern research on Integrative Medicine, thus shedding some light on why Asclepius was so popular.

Many patients, particularly those with chronic illnesses, turn towards Integrative Medicine after they are not relieved from their ailments by traditional Allopathic Medicine. Integrative Medicine seeks to close the gap between these Allopathic Medical practices and CAM practices in order to help a larger number of people. As this gap is closed and the medical legitimacy of many CAM therapies is brought under the same strict standards as those of Allopathic Medicine, they have received increased use in Western Medicine, further promoting their efficacy. For this reason, Integrative Medicine practices provide medically legitimate standards by which to measure the practices surrounding the god Asclepius.

Just as the ancient philosophers and physicians seemed to understand that there was a deep connection between the mind and body, Integrative Medical practices demonstrate the same conclusion. Integrative Medicine is now becoming an increasingly important part of mainstream medicine. This field has gained real legitimacy within medicine as more and more research supports the use of its practices in order to activate the relaxation response, and thus, the Mind-Body connection in the healing process. As the healing rituals surrounding the temples of Asclepius relied heavily on practices similar to those of modern Integrative Medicine, these rituals may have more medical legitimacy than previously thought. It seems then that the ancient healers understood the process of healing in a way that modern medicine turned away from in Descartes' time, but are now rediscovering.

Appendix: Asclepieia Site Plans

-Athens:

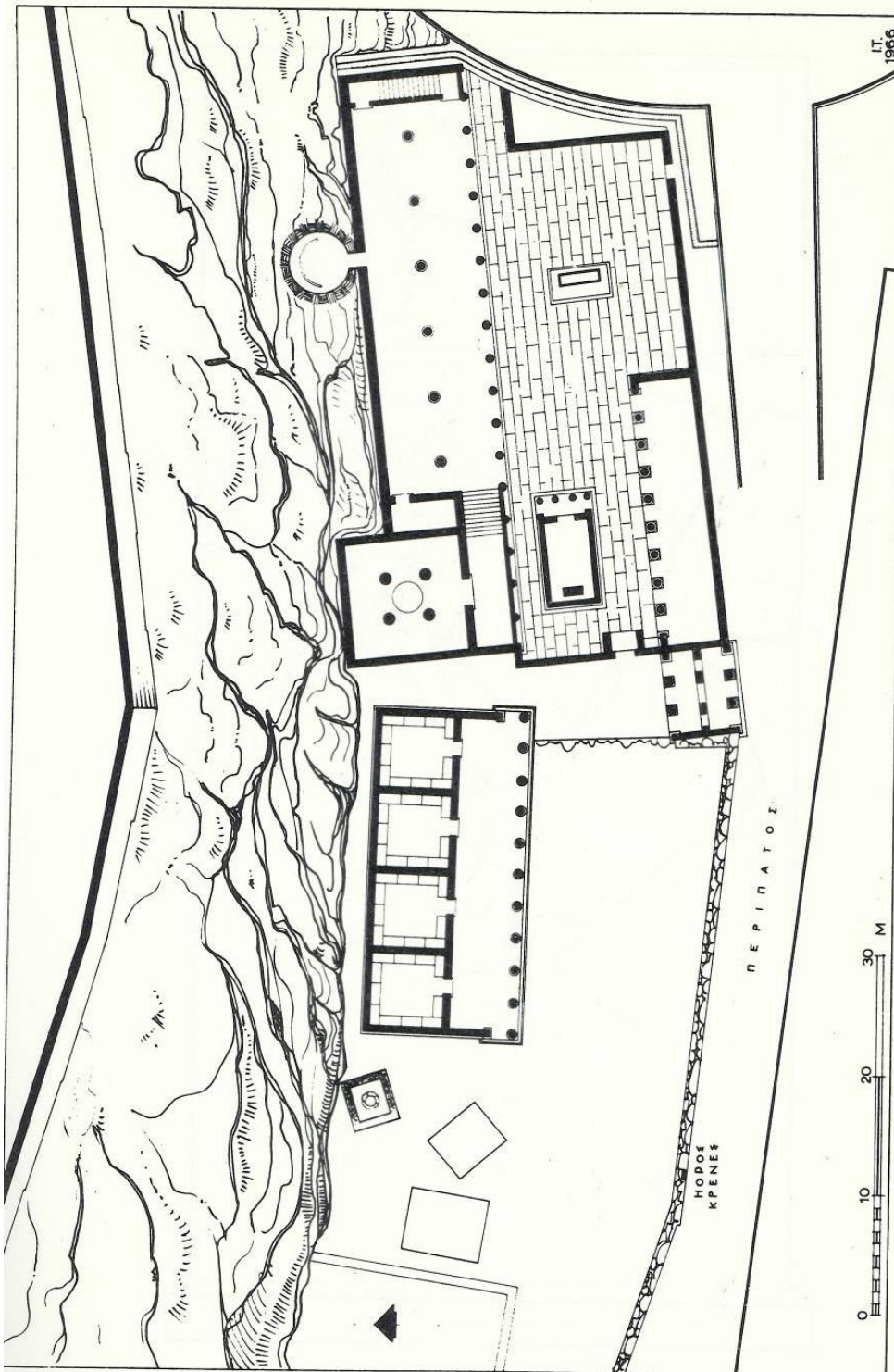
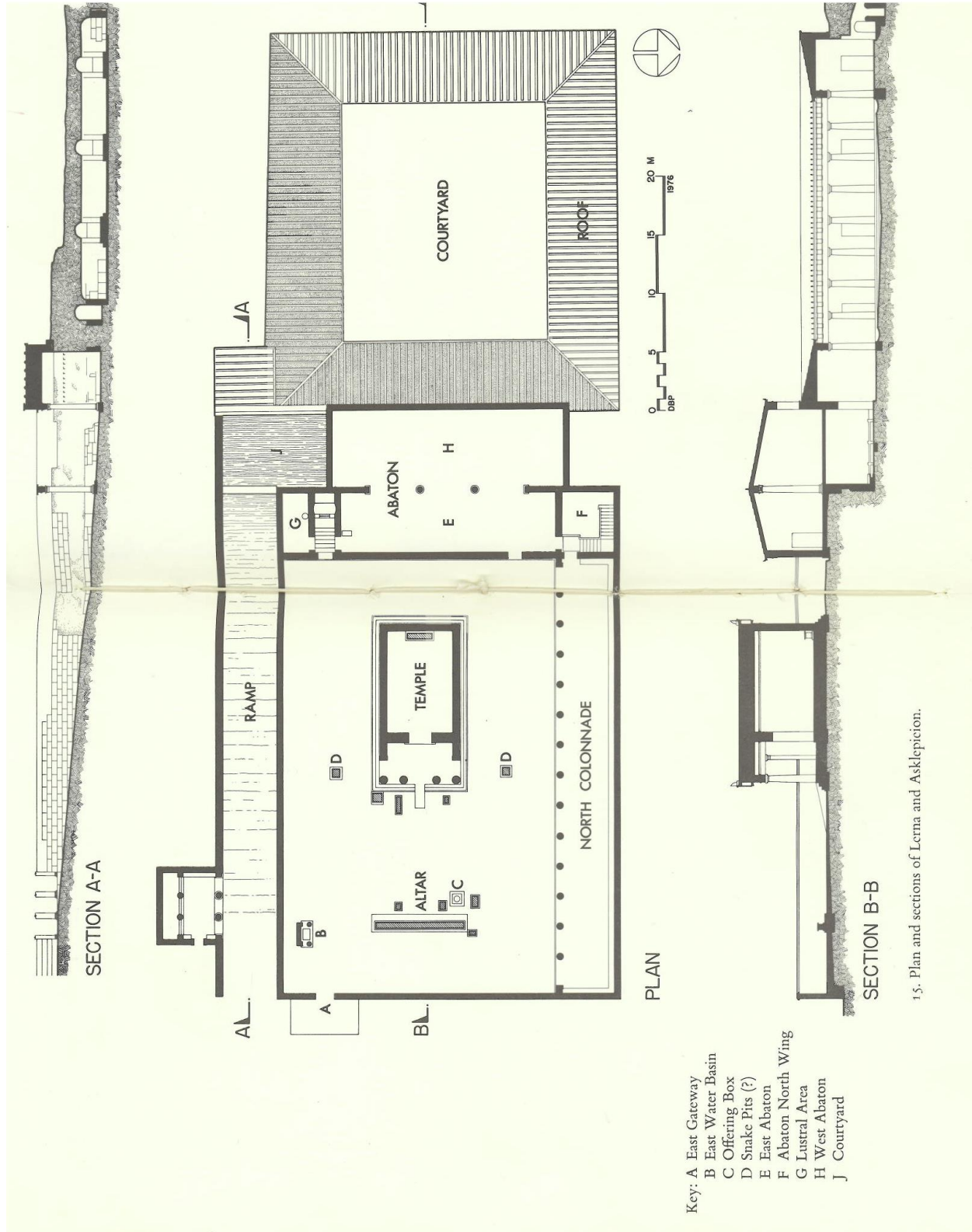
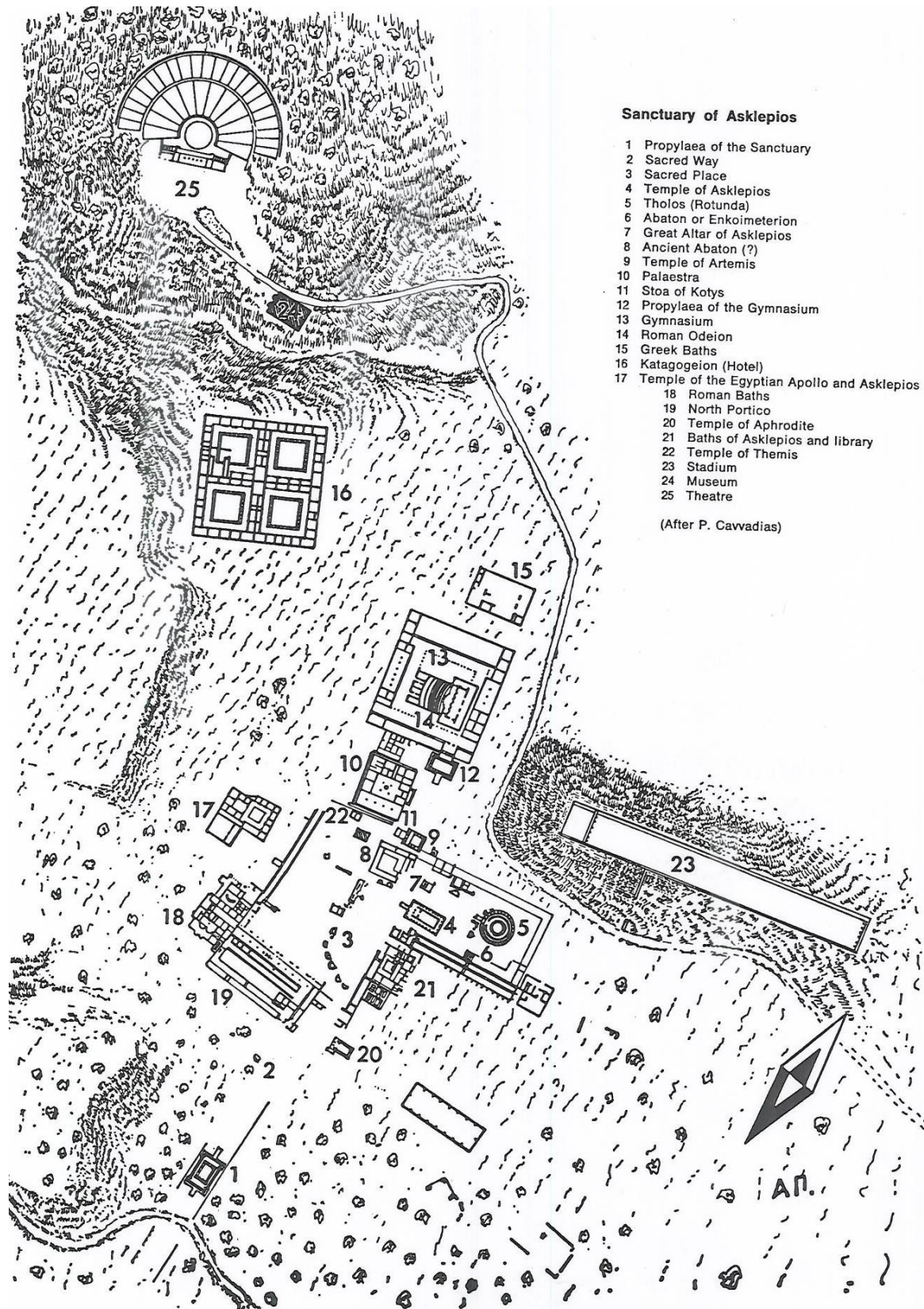


FIGURE 1: RESTORED PLAN OF THE ASKLEPIEION

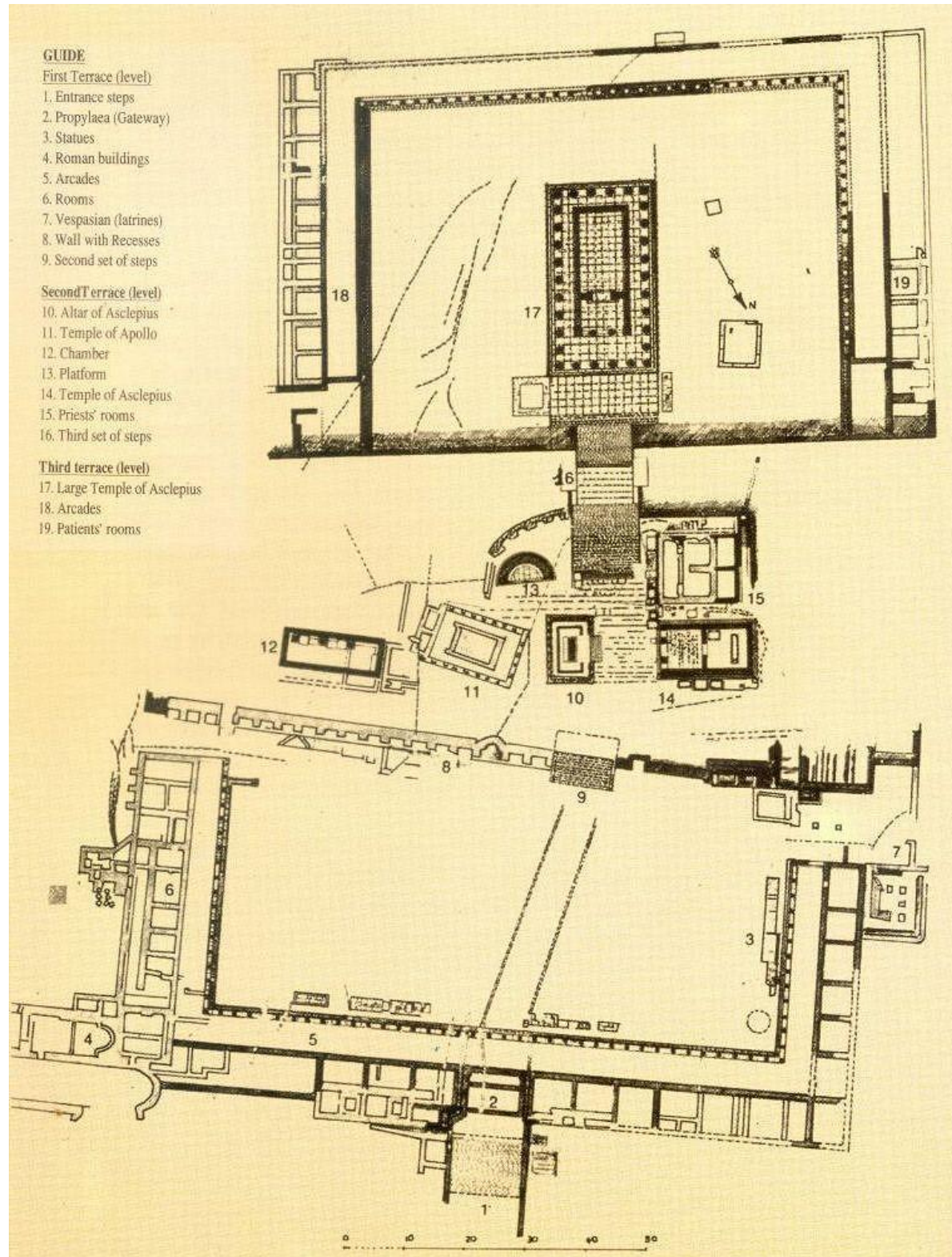
-Corinth:



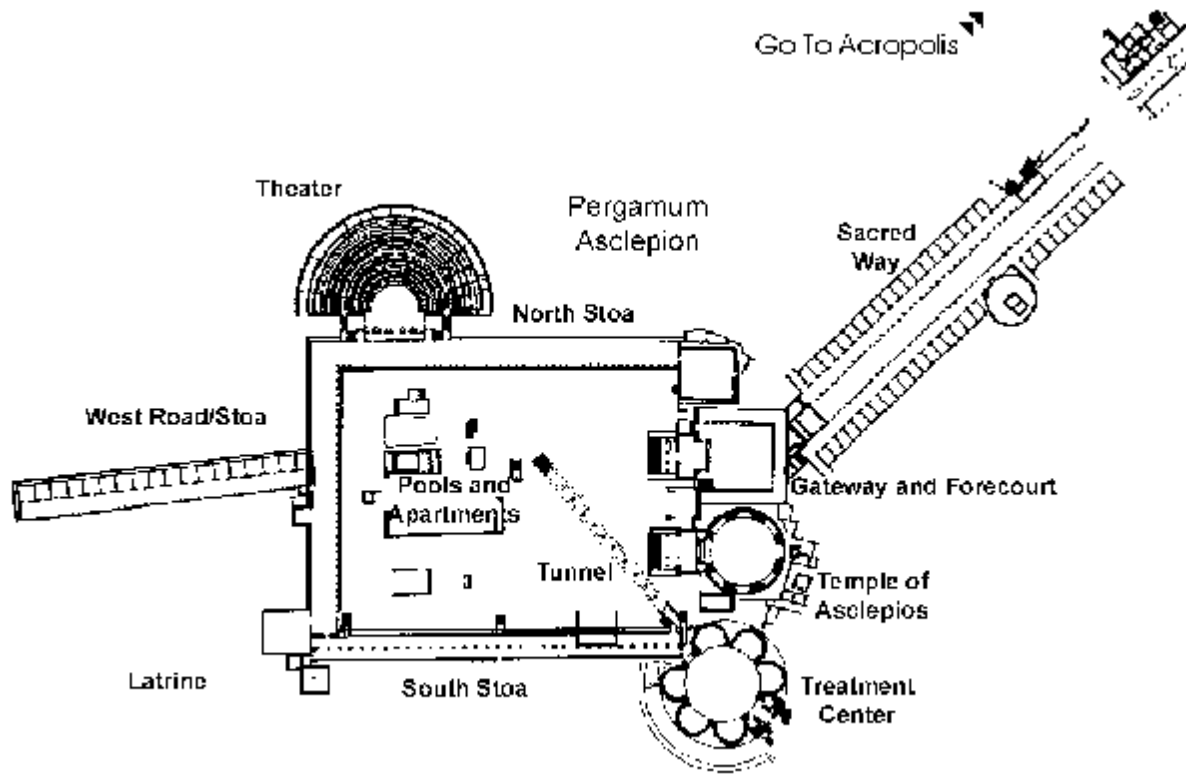
-Epidauros:



-Kos:



-Pergamon:



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