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Philosophy and Hippocratic Ethic in Ancient Greek Society: Evolution of Hospital - Sanctuaries

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Abstract

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The aim of this paper is to offer a new perspective of the Hippocratic thought and how it influenced the evolution of the medical art till now, highlighting the ethical aspects and hospital born from ancient temples and sanctuary. Ethics is defined as a set of values, principles, and rules that regulate human behavior and relate to how human actions can significantly affect not only their own lives but also the lives of others. The essence of a culture can be perceived by the philosophy and the means by which is placed against the illness and its treatment. In this sense, the medical anthropology of every age is an indicator of its culture and help us understand its basic dimensions such as life and death.

Introduction

Social rule systems and all the levels of human interaction are examined in order to be presented as a model for comparison between medical ethical constructions. So, the development of medical ethics was also through philosophical thought. This relationship between philosophy and medicine is very old and goes back to the ancient medical philosophers whose excellency according to the physician Galen depended on philosophy (*"the excellent physician must be a philosopher"*) [1], [2], [3].

Across the philosophical thought

Most of the work written for the medical ethics rules by ethics and especially bioethics experts refers to the Hippocratic "Oath" and some selected texts from the "Hippocratic corpus", a collection of a large amount of ancient Greek treatises regarding medical ethics and practice which is focused on the moral content. Thus the "Oath" testifies to the highest moral perception of the professional diligence of physicians and constitute a milestone in the ethics of the medical profession. This leads to the general conclusion that early Greek medical ethics began when Hippocrates or a group of physicians who shared his principles developed codes of professional conduct even if they

were not initially accepted by all. At that time the Greek point of view about health is a naturalistic relationship of thought. The healthy body depends on a balance between natural and society indicators elements [4], [5]. However, when an allusion is made to ancient medicine, we necessarily must take into account Hippocrates. Try to dismissed medicine from its previous supernatural and divine elements, biases and superstitions. Has been recognized not only as a pioneering physician, but first also as an outstanding philosopher. Hippocrates believe that medicine should be done wisely. He did not invent medicine but collected, filled and systematized all the knowledge that existed before him. Despite the deficient knowledge of anatomy Hippocrates, relying on the innate power of nature, which is present in human beings, laid the foundations for building its therapeutic methods. Thus, finalizing the value of medicine as science he established its entire structure. Health and diseases are the balance of the whole person (the holistic view) [6], [7], [8]. In the 6th century B.C., in the twelve colonies of Asia Minor (in the ancient region of Ionia of central coastal Anatolia in present-day Turkey), with the so-called pre-Socratic philosophers of Miletus, the transition of thought to scientific prose and the birth and development of the Greek philosophical miracle. Their contribution was influential not only in the way of the human reasoning but also in ancient medicine, whose doctrine has survived in our time as a branch of medical science based on observation and the therapy of the patient which was the ultimate goal. However, thanks to them for the first time the gradual release of medicine from its religious environment takes place. Before Socrates, it was the Pythagoreans who placed an emphasis on hygiene the well-known "Pythagorean way of living" and also the definition of health and illness. One of the most well-known representatives of the age of the Pythagoreans, who dealt with medicine, illness and healing, was Anaximander. The Pythagoreans alleged that the harmony of perfect equilibrium of the human body was the key element to its health. Health is a condition of unique balance of the four bodily fluids (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile), as well as Hippocrates described and supported.

Another crucial question was the relationship between medicine and health. Aristotle's position explains that it is not accidental but essential, and the purposes of the medicine and those who practice it is defined only from this relationship. Plato agrees with him that although those who practice medicine benefit from their art, such benefits are not essential to its purposes. Plato thinks that medicine does not benefit itself but seeks the appropriate treatment of the patient, a restriction that forbids the physician to make decisions for the advancement of medical science. Furthermore, Plato in the first book of his "Republic" (Πολιτεία), clarifies the medical reward. Tries to separate the purpose of the physician's practice for the benefit of the patient from his intention of earning

money, in fact Socrates does not say that the physician must be altruistic. On the other hand, the physician cannot look forward to his economic prosperity as an ultimate goal. In fact, he points out that each physician has two arts (τέχνες), that is medicine and earning his salary. What he underlines is that the real physician should not be ignorant of the fact that he is primarily physician and the relationship with a patient must be organized around the purpose of providing the best possible medical care to him [9], [10], [11], [12]. As we have already accented, ancient people in Greece, primarily perceived medicine as art that is closely related to the natural science and practical wisdom which is a medical concept that still seems to be valid also in our time. The term art is used very often, especially in Plato, however, the ancients separated art from other intellectual disciplines. Even when they perceive art in this more limited way, they always tend to include medicine among the arts, such as shoemaking, woodworking, agriculture, rhetoric and poetry, for the reason that medicine generates health. By creating health, medicine seems both, poetic and utilitarian art because physicians use a variety of tools and methods in order to achieve health for their society. Since medicine is the most important of the arts, those who are going to follow it are required to have many spiritual and moral qualifications if they wish to serve it properly.

As we said medicine is an art. This art consists in three parts. Indeed the "Hippocratic triangle" theory it clarifies that the disease, the diseased and the physician are those essentials parts. Thus, the physician needed to gain the patient's confidence so as the latter to reveal personal secrets about his health problems and physical imperfections. The establishment of a basic level of trust was necessary for the exercise of medicine as a feasible art. In pursuing health and balanced so that the person returns to his lifestyle, the physician inevitably deals with the human life in general and not only with the condition of the body [13], [14], [15].

Patients observation: body and soul

The promotion of health and the end of medical treatment, had to be combined with the promotion of the virtuous and prosperous life. What differentiated the Hippocratic physician from the previous healing sanctuary therapists was not mainly the change from "magic-religious" to "empirical-rational" therapeutic approach, but the focus on reading the signs of the patient's body. The Hippocratic physician, through a methodical observation process can't be reach a reasonable patient medical evaluation. The physician age and later, is evaluated by means of his abilities and purposes which determine the nature of his profession

while morality had a minor part [16], [17], [18]. Thus, the attitude of the Hippocratic physician towards the weak person, was the vigilance that required intensive care and the ability to read and interpret a long list of signs. Bodies were considered to be in constant flow or flow conditions, depending on climate, age, idiosyncrasy, diet and activity. Thus, Hippocratic physician had to weigh the evidence that certifies the patient's condition, some of which stem from the patient's observation and decide for the appropriate treatment. Therefore, the patient's personality and idiosyncrasy may also be involved in the evaluation and the moral orientation of the Hippocratic physician was gradually developing in relation to the patient and his family. Now human's health achieves the balance between soul and body which are the two elements of our nature that play an important role into all our actions and choices. The soul not change, but the body is different for all. The Hippocratic physician must avoid doing too little or too much, he has to aid these two elements of the human nature to preserve their balance. Plato in his "Phaedrus" recognized the importance of Hippocrates method: "*If Hippocrates the Asclepiad is to be trusted, one cannot know the nature of the body, either, except in that way*". He believed that through Hippocrates way of observation of the human body, the same method could be used for the soul. If the body was capable of warding off the disease, the physician had to recognize it, take time and not intervene. If the patient was in the need of help, the physician had to act directly so as to alter the course of the illness. In addition, the conclusion of Prognostic is elucidating regarding the physician's endeavor to make the right prophesy: "*You must take into account both the good signs and the bad that occur and from them make your predictions; for in this way you will prophesy aright...*" (LCL II, 33) [19], [20], [21]. Hippocratic thought was the first not to be dictated by any central authority and priesthood, something that did not happen in another culture like the Egyptians. Must be mentioned that the independence of medicine from magical-religious constitution did not mean complete liberation from certain ethical rules. Where human physician failed, Asclepius succeeded. We have had testimonies where the patients disappointed by the "human" physician they sought alternatives to the god. Regarding the diversity of others therapists that were accepted at the time of Hippocrates in antiquity, we must mention that there was a wide variety in terms of how they were identified by the society. Some assimilated with god others laid the medical practice under the auspices of the gods and some others, like therapists-craftsmen, had healing techniques they acquired after long-term training and practice [22], [23], [24].

Discussion

For the historical course, diseases were attributed to the angry gods whose power was shown to the human race through inexplicable forces called "*odious demons*" (Daimones). On the contrary medicine was associated with gods (especially Apollo and Asclepius) and heroes (such as Amphiaraus) who were identified with health. At sixth century B.C. begins the faith to the god Asclepius as a divinity that heals the human body. The Sanctuaries devoted to the divine healer, in the so-called Asklepieions (*Ἀσκληπιεῖα*), were frequented by people who wished to pray for well-being or sought cures for various diseases [25]. In the 5th century bC, Hippocratic medicine is built upon natural philosophy and make medicine a rational science and "*come to influence radical the way of healing in ancient world*". As we have mentioned the distinction between religion and Hippocratic medicine is due from the two important components of Greek society in that time: political and cultural evolution pluralism. In Asklepieions now the custom healing was to combine the art of medicine with the theurgical practice. Hippocratic holistic medicine approach to health was practiced in those sanctuaries and thus providing not only for physical and psychological care but also a social and spiritual aid. All these innovations comprised a radical re-orientation of health services. Among these, the most known were the Asclepieion of Kos, Pergamum and Epidaurus (was widely recognized as the greatest sanctuary). The Asklepieions were the first hospitals-sanctuaries and they had developed in famous healing centers visited by people from the wider contiguous areas. They were built near in a valley or on a hill (a location with the best climate condition and plentiful pure water) and they also had around theatres or / and other comforts [26], [27]. When the ill person coming to the Asklepieions received many instructions in order to relax and rest. Thus, they applied baths, massages and other body exercises for therapy included theatrical and others similar recreational activities. There was a sacred place, a long building who called "*kataklintryio*", for the presence of private rooms with bed. Patients may be participated in the sacrifice of animals and in mystic performances in honor of Asclepius and were finally relaxed and convinced that they will be certainly treated by the aid of Asclepius. In the middle of the whole infirmary there was a dome (*ábaton*), a special building, the main part of which was not free to everyone to visit, where the main medical treatment procedures were performed. In this place, the patient was kept under a condition of sleep or healing narcosis the so-called "incubation". Women were acting as vergers. While some priests therapist who had the art of divination looked at the flying of the birds and others examined the offal, now the Hippocratic physician, as we said, using the Hippocratic principles examined the human body by

carefully observing the fluids coming from the inside of the body (including urine or saliva) and by identifying their color, texture, smell he endeavored to determine the course of the disease and was expected to decide the therapeutic management process [28], [29], [30], Hippocratic medicine, as we mentioned, is the first who try to separate religion and healing. Despite this a patient who has been admitted, they had to make a religious offer like a replica of the afflicted part of body thus organ or limb. Inscriptions found in marble plaques describe the treatment of some diseases and the sum of money paid for each of them. Was being treated surgical diseases, diseases of integumentary attachments, chronic pathologies of the lung, gynaecological (parturient women were not accepted) and ophthalmic, but also neurological and psychological disorders. Must be reported that the craniotomy for decompression purposes as an innovation practice studied through the Hippocratic Asklepieions and at the Hippocratic corpus where we find many references about it [31], [32], [34],

Conclusions

The way how the Greek philosophy influenced the modern rational healing and ethics in medicine is undoubtful. Thanks to the Hippocrates' philosophy, medicine became a field of research for balance between health and disease by scientific orientation. He also examined the relationship between society and morality, patient and physician and created an innovative theory regarding medicine's practice through a new ethics vision for the benefit of health sciences. The modern practice of medicine in the new hospital-sanctuaries by the Hippocratic physicians appeared to be the major advanced institution of health (far away from the therapeutic religion) which influenced the way patients face it today. However, we must observe that Hippocratic medicine on the one hand has been based to a scientific thought with the aid of the philosophy but from the other hand supernatural forces could affect the healing process (for example through astrological observations who could change the evolution of the diseases) [35], Such principles were spreaded in all countries culturally conquered by Greek people, i.e. in the so called "*Magna Grecia*", southern Italy, where Alcmaeon built up the main medical school during the 6th century B.C. [36]. Despite the evolution of the humans through all these years from the ancient society in the time of Hippocrates until our modern society, this religious influence in medicine, that is the faith in a "god-saint", who might have a role in patient's salvation, is still present in our era.

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