

‘CONJURERS, PURIFIERS, VAGABONDS AND QUACKS’? THE CLINICAL ROLES OF THE FOLK AND HIPPOCRATIC HEALERS OF CLASSICAL GREECE ¹

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The Pluralistic Medical System

Hippocratic medicine is widely acknowledged as one of the most important and influential of the intellectual developments originating from classical period Greece, and with just cause. Yet Hippocratic *iatroi* were practising alongside a great variety of folk healers from purifiers to diviner-healers, some of whom they characterised as quacks.² This paper investigates the clinical roles these folk healers played in an attempt to challenge this depiction by their Hippocratic rivals.

For heuristic convenience, the multitude of folk practitioners can be subdivided on the basis of their principal methods of healing.³ There were folk healers who principally used *pharmaka* (*materia medica* such as herbs) to heal their patients, including the *rhizotomoi* (rootcutters) and *pharmakopolai* (drugsellers) as well as the *pharmakeis/pharmakides* (male and female witches). Other practitioners relied principally on the healing power of the hand, including the various purifiers (*kathartai*, *perikathartai*, *hagneutriai*, *hagnitai*, *hagnistai* and *phoibetria*) and the *maiai* (midwives) and other obstetric practitioners. The *goai* (sorcerers) focused on the healing word, primarily using oral and inscribed incantations. Finally the *manteis* and *iatromanteis* (diviners and diviner-healers) employed divination as their principal healing method. This taxonomy is not to suggest that the distinctions between the different healers were clear-cut. On the contrary, there was undoubtedly a great deal of overlap between the different groups of folk healers and also to some extent between the folk and Hippocratic sectors.⁴ Nevertheless, the categorisation provides a framework within which to investigate how the myriad of folk and Hippocratic healers contributed to the overall medical system, in which health care could be sought and provided, and in which health and illness were defined.⁵

With so many healers operating within the one medical system, how did an individual who fell sick determine which healer(s) he/she should visit or summon to the bedside? Anthropological studies of cultures with pluralistic medical systems indicate that the choice of healer is

1 μάγοι τε καὶ καθάρται καὶ ἀγύρται καὶ ἀλαζόνες Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 2. Translations are my own unless otherwise stated. I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers for many helpful suggestions.

2 I will use the Greek term *iatros* to refer to the Hippocratic healer throughout this paper in an attempt to avoid anachronistic connotations that invariably accompany English terms such as doctor or physician. *Iater* and *akester* are also occasionally used by the Greeks to refer to healers falling within the Hippocratic sector.

3 The following classification is my own variation of the 5 categories of Graeco-Roman traditional practitioners proposed by Gordon (1995), 363.

4 On the overlap of Hippocratic and folk healers, see, for example, Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.16.8, where Theophrastus notes that Alexias, the pupil of the *pharmakopoles* Thrasyas, is skilled in medicine generally.

5 On the competitive nature of the ancient medical marketplace, see Lloyd (1995), 25-40, and Lloyd (1992), 116f. Cf. Nutton (1995), 11f.

an extremely complex behaviour.⁶ Patients who decide to seek medical care may consult one practitioner, a number of different types of healers simultaneously, or a succession of practitioners. Some individuals habitually consult the same practitioner, practitioner-type, or group of practitioners each time they become ill, while others alter their health care seeking behaviour with each illness episode. One factor influencing the choice is the perceived differences in the type of services offered by various groups of practitioners. This paper contends that while folk and Hippocratic practitioners fulfilled the same general healing roles, there were important differences in the specific details of how these roles were performed.⁷ I will argue that the specific differences in the healers' clinical functions, including which aspects of the clinical roles were emphasised and which *nosoi* (maladies) were dealt with, played an important role in influencing which healer(s) an individual and his/her family might choose to consult when illness struck.

Folk medicine is a largely oral tradition and there are no extant sources written by the folk practitioners themselves from the classical period. As a consequence this paper relies on the references to these healers, which frequently appear as brief, incidental asides, in a wide variety of classical Greek literature, from drama through to philosophy, from forensic oratory to the Hippocratic texts. I am also making use of some material predating the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, including the Homeric poems, as evidence for earlier precedents. Each genre, indeed each text brings its own challenges of interpretation and must be read within context, most particularly the philosophical and Hippocratic texts, which are often hostile towards folk healers. In addition, because folk practices are strongly rooted in tradition and relatively static over time, I will also refer to some later texts, most significantly book 9 of Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants* and the Greek and Demotic magical papyri.⁸ Folk healers (particularly *rhi-zotomoi* and *pharmakopolai*) were an important source for Theophrastus' herbal and the papyri were written by magico-religious practitioners themselves, hence these texts provide a unique insight into the beliefs and clinical practices of folk healers.⁹ However, it must be noted that although the magical papyri contain many parallels with earlier Greek magico-religious literature, they originate from Graeco-Roman Egypt, and also contain Babylonian, Jewish and even Christian features.¹⁰ The use of such syncretic material to investigate Greek practices of the classical period is fraught with difficulty. Nevertheless, provided we employ only those segments of the papyri for which there are clear classical Greek attestations and interpret them in conjunction with this earlier Greek evidence, the papyri can provide invaluable supplementary detail with which to flesh out our knowledge of folk practice, including the various healing roles the practitioners performed.

The paper will consider each of the four major clinical healing roles or responses to illness that any healer, including the ancient Greek practitioner, may typically fulfil. First, healers

6 Staino (1981), 317-32; Kleinman (1980), 80-82 and 187-89; Feist and Brannon (1988), 80-85; Kelner and Wellman (1997), 203-12; Young and Garro (1982), 1453-65.

7 For the purposes of this paper, I am defining 'healing' as the practitioner's clinical response to illness or affliction within an individual who presents to him/her. This restricted definition is not to suggest that the term 'healing' has no wider meaning than what occurs between a healer and patient in a consultation, nor that healing in its broader sense is unimportant. The roles of *iatroi* and folk healers alike extend beyond their specific medical duties to broader social healing.

8 On the static nature of folk practices, see Faraone (1999), esp. 30-39.

9 On Theophrastus' sources see Scarborough (1978), 355-57.

10 On the essentially Egyptian nature of the papyri see Ritner (1995), 3333-79; Nock (1972), 176-94; Frankfurter (1998), 11-15. On exotic features see Brashear (1995), 3422-29. On the use of the papyri as a source for Greek folk magico-religious practice see Betz (1992), xlv.

may have a prophylactic role, acting to prevent illness and to maintain good health. Second, healers may be diagnosticians. They may give a label to the patient's symptoms, determine the underlying aetiology of the disease, or both. Third, healers may have a therapeutic role. This may involve curing the patient's disease, controlling the disease without curing it, or treating the symptoms alone. Finally, healers may have a prognostic function and predict the course of the illness, including the likelihood and extent of recovery. These four roles are not entirely distinct. For example, labelling the disease that is causing the patient's symptoms may itself lead to the patient feeling better for having identified their illness or for having taken some form of action. Similarly, the news that an illness is trivial rather than chronic or life threatening as the patient feared, can also lead to symptomatic improvement. Thus the diagnosis or prognosis of an illness can constitute an important part of the therapeutic process.¹¹ Nevertheless, different healers place different emphases on the various clinical roles. The spiritual healers of modern Mexico, for example, almost never provide their patients with a diagnosis.¹² Hippocratic *iatroi*, on the other hand, are well known for their focus on prognosis. The various Greek folk healers also emphasise different aspects of the healing roles.

Prevention

Although it is often overlooked, one of the primary concerns of medicine is the maintenance of good health by the prevention of disease. Today, vaccination programmes or no-smoking campaigns are considered less glamorous and receive less media attention than advances in transplant surgery or heroic cancer treatments, yet we still believe that 'prevention is better than cure'. This belief was perhaps even more strongly held in the ancient Greek world, where a healthy body was thought to reflect a healthy soul.¹³ Someone could only be *kalos kai agathos* if his (or possibly her) external appearance indicated a respectable moral character. So even Plato, notorious for turning popular ideas on their heads, debates whether it is the healthy body that produces a healthy soul or vice versa, but does not question the notion that the one reflects the other.¹⁴ This belief in the relationship between a healthy appearance and character was so deep that evident illness could even affect a man's ability to take part in the political life of the *polis*. Thus in the case *On the Refusal of a Pension*, Lysias' defendant laments that his crippled leg has prevented him from being eligible for selection as one of the city's archons.¹⁵ So prevention of illness, and especially disfiguring disease, was of the utmost significance and an integral aspect of Greek medicine.

The most important prophylactic weapon in the Hippocratic armoury was regimen. Diet, exercise, bathing, sleep patterns, the use of emetics and purges, and other aspects of lifestyle were all considered to be intimately related to health and disease. Regimen was certainly used as a therapeutic measure: no less than six Hippocratic treatises deal primarily with its use in treating illness.¹⁶ Yet regimen was even more frequently used preventively, as the means of

11 Csordas and Kleinman (1990), 12.

12 Finkler (1994), 178-97.

13 Sigerist (1961), 234f. and 290.

14 Pl. *Rep.* 403d.

15 Lys. 24.13.

16 *Regimen I, II, III, Regimen in Acute Disease, Affections, Ancient Medicine and Nature of Man* 17. *Regimen IV* contains advice concerning the appropriate regimen to follow as indicated by the types of

maintaining good health, the focus of yet another Hippocratic treatise, *Regimen in Health*. In fact, Plato argues that the prophylactic use of regimen is its only proper use, as its therapeutic applications are so time consuming, and only serve to delay the inevitable: death!¹⁷ So the use of regimen by *iatroi* had a significant role in the prevention of disease.

However regimen was not the sole preserve of the Hippocratic healers. Gymnastic trainers also made extensive use of regimen to maximize the health of their clients, so much so that the *iatros* and *gymnastikos* (gymnastic master) or *paidotribes* (physical trainer) are often treated as virtually synonymous by philosophical (non-medical) authors where preventative regimen is being discussed.¹⁸ But more significantly for this paper, regimen was also used by folk healers. In fact it seems probable that classical Hippocratic dietetic theory was derived from traditional folklore concerning food. The capacity to distinguish edible and poisonous substances, as well as the ability to recognise and utilise the physiological effects of foods, including medicinal effects, seems to be basic biological ability, which humans share not only with other mammals, but possibly even insects.¹⁹ In humans, knowledge of foodstuffs is not only a biological ability, but also a cultural practice.²⁰ Learned effects of foods, including their medicinal uses, are transmitted within the society. Societies from hunter-gatherer groups to post-industrial communities develop lists, which are frequently informal and oral, of foods and their physiological effects. The Greeks too must have had such traditional lists. Some of the earliest Greek literature, the Homeric poems, which are replete with depictions of eating and drinking, indicate that the Greeks had knowledge of the relationship between food and health.²¹ This is reflected in Odysseus' warning to Achilles that his soldiers' strength and courage in battle depend on their eating and drinking beforehand.²² Similarly, Achilles is portrayed as prone to rage because he was weaned on bile.²³ Hecamede uses a draught of wine sprinkled with goat's milk and white barley meal to revive the wounded Machaon.²⁴ So, although the poems do not contain food lists or descriptions of regimen, which would hardly be appropriate in epic, the Homeric poems do represent diet as a determinant of physical strength and character. An additional indication of traditional food lists is the presence of similar catalogues of foodstuffs in two Hippocratic texts, *Regimen* and *Affections*. Smith argues convincingly that the use of similar catalogues in these two texts, which have such differing aims and which use such markedly different methods to analyse the foods, suggests both authors were independently drawing from a long-standing, common-knowledge food list.²⁵

It is clear that by the classical period, if not earlier, folk healers were employing the physio-

dreams the patient is experiencing, while *Diseases of Women I, II and III* contain extensive prescriptions for regimen.

17 Pl. *Rep.* 406b-e.

18 For a representative example of texts where the two are treated synonymously see Arist. *Eth. Eud.* 1217b, 1220b, 1227b, Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1096a, 1112b, 1143b, Arist. *Metaph.* 1063b, Arist. *Pol.* 1268b, 1287b, Pl. *Amatores* 134e, Pl. *Cri.* 47b, Pl. *Rep.* 357c, 389c, Pl. *Symp.* 186e, Pl. *Grg.* 464a, 517d, Pl. *Prt.* 313d, Pl. *Plt.* 289a, 295c, Pl. *Phd.* 94d, Pl. *Alc. I* 131a. See Pl. *Grg.* 464b for Plato's explicit division of the care of the body into therapeutic (*iatrike*) and preventative (*gymnastike*) branches.

19 For a summary of studies of the consumption of plants with therapeutic, analgesic or chemoprophylactic effects by mammals see Janzen (1978), 73-84. For the Danaine butterfly's use of the cardiac glycosides ingested from milkweed to protect against predators, see Brower (1969), 22-29. For further anecdotal evidence and references see Johns (1990), 251-57.

20 See Johns (1990), 257-91 for further discussion.

21 For further discussion see Smith (1966), 547-56, esp. 552f.

22 Hom. *Il.* 19.154-71.

23 Hom. *Il.* 16.203. Cf. the murderous snake who has ingested *kaka pharmaka* at Il. 22.93f.

24 Hom. *Il.* 11.638-41.

25 See Smith (1980), 441-44.

logical effects of the foods on these sorts of lists to make similar dietary recommendations as *iatroi*. This is evident from *On the Sacred Disease*, in which the author lists the outlandish (in his opinion) methods of treatment that folk healers employ to treat epilepsy and related epileptiform disorders encompassed by the rubric ‘sacred disease’, including purifications, incantations, and various prohibitions such as forbidding the wearing of black or goatskin.²⁶ However, he tells us that these healers also employed regimen (in the form of prohibitions):

λουτρῶν τε ἀπέχεσθαι κελεύοντες καὶ ἐδεσμάτων πολλῶν καὶ ἀνεπιτηδείων ἀνθρώποισι νοσέουσιν ἐσθίειν· θαλασσίων μὲν τρίγλης, μελανούρου, κεστρέος, ἐγγέλυος (ο τοι γὰρ οἱ ἰχθυες εἰσὶν ἐπικηρότατοι), κρεῶν δὲ αἰγείου καὶ ἐλάφων καὶ χοιρίων καὶ κυνὸς (ταῦτα γὰρ κρεῶν ταρακτικώτατά ἐστι τῆς κοιλίης), ὀρνίθων δὲ ἀλεκτρυόνος καὶ τρυγόνος καὶ ὠτίδος, ἔτι δὲ ὅσα νομίζεται ἰσχυρότατα εἶναι, λαχάνων δὲ μίνθης, σκορόδου καὶ κρομύου (δριμύ γὰρ ἀσθενέοντι οὐδὲν συμφέρει).²⁷

This regimen is very similar to the sort of dietetic and bathing recommendations Hippocratic *iatroi* may have advised. In *Internal Affections*, for example, the author recommends those with diseases of the spleen abstain from grey mullet, eel, roasted meat, pork, silphium and vegetables prepared without vinegar, many of which appear on the folk healers’ list above.²⁸ The explanatory comments in parentheses appear to be the author’s rationalisations for the similarities, and are an indication that both groups of healers were using recommendations derived from common food lists. The author implies that quacks and charlatans may make the same dietary prescriptions as *iatroi*, but the regimen is successful because of *phusis*, entirely natural physiological reasons. Furthermore, the *iatros* can account for the success folk healers have with this treatment within his own theoretical framework. Thus the red meats prohibited by folk healers, for instance, are the ones that most interfere with digestion.²⁹ It is this, rather than any explanation the folk healers may advance, that explains why the recommendation is a useful one. It seems that Hippocratic *iatroi* have adapted the folk healers’ traditional regimen into their own theoretical paradigm, and the author of *On the Sacred Disease* is advertising this fact. Hanson has described a similar process whereby Hippocratic *iatroi* adapted traditional gynaecological recipes into their theory and practice.³⁰ Similarly, Smith has argued that the author of *Regimen* has added a theoretical superstructure to a long-standing a-theoretical food list.³¹ Traditional food lists could not have been entirely a-theoretical, since no catalogue can be compiled without some underlying basis on which to found decisions about the items to include or exclude, and how items should be grouped. Nevertheless, Smith’s evidence does suggest that the Hippocratics changed or adapted the existing theoretical basis for the food list. The superimposition of the Hippocratic theoretical framework onto

26 On the different diagnoses that could be labelled ‘sacred disease’ by doctors and others see Temkin (1971), 15-22.

27 ‘Ordering them to avoid baths and to avoid eating many foods that are unfit for sick men: from the oceans: red mullet, black-tail, hammer and the eel (for these fish are most dangerous); the meat of goats, deer, pigs and dogs (for these meats are most disturbing to the intestines); of poultry: the cock, pigeon and bustard, and all those believed to be very strong; of the vegetables: mint, leek and onion (for their pungency is not beneficial to the weak).’ (Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 1.)

28 Hp. *Int.* 30.

29 Cf. Hp. *Mul.* 218 where strong foods are recommended to men in order to promote conception.

30 Hanson (1991), 73-110; Hanson (1998), 71-94.

31 Smith (1980), 439-48.

the pre-existing traditional regimen is a parallel case. Nevertheless, as the very presence of advertisement in *On the Sacred Disease* indicates, it is clear that *iatroi* did not have a monopoly on advice concerning regimen. Patients could equally consult folk healers as *iatroi*, and very possibly received similar lifestyle recommendations. It is in this context then, that the author's pains to rationalise his rivals' use of regimen needs to be interpreted.

Yet disease prevention by regimen was difficult. Plato laments that excessive devotion to regimen is responsible for diverting people from their work, domestic responsibilities, and worst of all, in his eyes, from study.³² Exercise is equated with toil and pain: all are characterised as *ponoi* by the Greeks. *Regimen II* even contains advice on treating the fatigue pains caused by exercise.³³ In addition, as Craik points out, the emetics and purges that were part of regimen could not have been pleasant.³⁴ So it seems likely that many Greeks would have preferred a quick and easy method of prevention to following a complex regimen, just as many people today prefer to take vitamin and diet pills rather than follow dietary advice and exercise regularly. Folk healers were able to provide some quick preventative fixes.

Rhizotomoi and *pharmakopolai* in particular, could use their expertise with *pharmaka* in just such a quick-fix preventative role. The most spectacular and best-known example of their prophylactic use of *pharmaka* is their prevention of poisoning. *Rhizotomoi* and *pharmakopolai* could provide their clients with antidotes to poisons, and were also expert in the process of tachyphylaxis, the gradual administration of increasing doses of poison to produce immunity. There are several accounts of these healers engaging in poison-consuming competitions with each other and with lay people, in order to demonstrate their professional skill in just this arena.³⁵ Nor is it any coincidence that the best-known *rhizotomos* of antiquity, Krataeus, worked for Mithradates VI of Pontus, famous for having built up immunity to poisons from his youth.³⁶ Yet poison prevention was not the only prophylactic role these practitioners filled. They also prescribed *pharmaka* to prevent illnesses. For example *Asklepios*, a form of All-heal, was used to prevent chronic illnesses.³⁷ *Pharmaka* could also be used to prevent pest infestation.³⁸ Significantly, Theophrastus also tells us that herbal *pharmaka* were used as *alexipharmakoi* or amulets against disease. Thus wearing (*periapsetai*) the root of the polypody plant was said to prevent polyps.³⁹ Similarly, tripolion and squill could either be worn as personal amulets or placed near the threshold to protect the household.⁴⁰

Amulets and phylacteries were an important preventative measure, used to avert a variety of misfortunes in the ancient world.⁴¹ The debate regarding their use in medical authors is evidence that their use against disease was widespread, although only a few clearly recognisable material examples survive from the classical period.⁴² This apparent absence is due, at least in part, to the substances amulets were made from. Those manufactured from plant ma-

32 Pl. *Rep.* 407b.

33 Hp. *Vict.* 66.

34 Craik (1995), 344.

35 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.17.1-3.

36 Riddle (1985), 18; Wellmann (1958), 139-46.

37 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.11.2.

38 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.11.11.

39 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.13.6.

40 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.19.2 and 9.13.4 respectively.

41 Deubner (1910) and Kotansky (1991), 107-37, summarise amulet usage. Faraone (1992), 54-73, discusses the use of monumental apotropaic statues to protect whole cities from plague, which is beyond the scope of this study dealing with individual relationship with healers.

42 Lloyd (1979), 42, discusses the differing views of various medical authors concerning the therapeutic validity of amulets.

terials, as described by Theophrastus, animal products, wood, leather or other organic substances would have perished.⁴³ In addition, amulets made from precious metals may well have been melted down for re-use.⁴⁴ Furthermore, in the absence of an inscription, it is virtually impossible to distinguish objects worn as amulets from decorative jewellery or ordinary household objects. In the absence of many identifiable extant examples, it is difficult to ascertain whether the majority of amulets were supplied by professionals or made individually by lay people for their personal use. However there are some indications that professionals were involved in the supply of amulets. An amulet's effectiveness did not lie wholly in the object, but also in the incantation, purification or other ritual acts which accompanied its production and wearing.⁴⁵ Thus the process of producing an effective amulet was extremely complex, suggesting the involvement of professionals. *Katadesmoi* (binding tablets) may also provide indirect evidence that amulets were professionally manufactured. These objects differ from amulets in that they were designed to harm rather than protect, and that they were not worn, but placed in wells, rivers, graves or other locations.⁴⁶ However, the modes of action of the two groups of objects rely on the same basic principles.⁴⁷ In addition, Plato tells us that *katadesmoi* were made by the same wandering folk healers who claimed to be able to cure their patients with incantations and sacrifices.⁴⁸ As Gager points out, the well-written scripts of the 3rd century BCE *katadesmoi* excavated from the Athenian agora and those from Bath dating to the Roman period, indicate that professional scribes were involved.⁴⁹ These later Roman binding tablets and dolls also seem to have been mass-produced.⁵⁰ It is likely that many amulets were similarly mass-produced. Furthermore, Kotansky has shown that when amulets were used to treat (rather than prevent) existing disease, a specific medical diagnosis was required.⁵¹ This suggests that healers were involved in the supply of therapeutic amulets at the very least, and given the general opposition of *iatroi* to amulets, these healers were presumably the folk healers. So while it is certainly possible that some amulets were privately made, many were probably produced by professionals and supplied on the recommendation of folk healers.

Folk healers had one additional quick-fix weapon in their prophylactic armamentarium: prayer. As is well known, the Hippocratic corpus makes no appeals to supernatural deities or forces to explain the existence or aetiology of disease. The Hippocratics did not deny the existence of the gods. Indeed, the author of *On the Sacred Disease* claims that all nature is divine.⁵² Nevertheless, diseases are portrayed as subject to the same laws of cause and effect that govern all other physical processes.⁵³ In this sense the Hippocratic theories are rationalised, however patently absurd or fanciful the specific explanations may be. Interestingly, given this rationality, prayer was not confined to the folk sector, but was also employed by

43 There is literary evidence of these substances being used. See *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 37f. for the use of tortoise against bewitchment. See Anxilas fr. 18 for Ephesian *grammata* contained in a leather pouch.

44 For the use of a metal ring as an amulet, see Antiph. fr. 177 and Ar. *Plut.* 883f.

45 See Kotansky (1991), 108-10, on the combined use of incantations and amulets.

46 For an overview of their use in the ancient world see Gager (1992).

47 Gager (1992), 218-20.

48 Pl. *Rep.* 364b-c.

49 Gager (1992), 5 and 32 nn. 24 and 25.

50 See Faraone (1991), 4.

51 Kotansky (1991), 116f.

52 Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 1 and 2.

53 For further discussion of the author's conception of a naturalistic explanation, see Jouanna (1999), 182; Van der Eijk (1991), 168-76; Lloyd (1975), 1-16; Lloyd (1979), 15-27.

Hippocratic *iatroi*. The Hippocratic treatise *Regimen IV* complains of *manteis* φυλάσσεσθαι δὲ παραινέοντες μὴ τι κακὸν λάβη σῆο οὐ διδάσκουσιν ὧ χρηῖ φυλάξεσθαι, ἀλλὰ θεοῖσιν εὔξασθαι κελεύουσι.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the author does not dismiss prayer, but goes on to list the appropriate deities to pray to.⁵⁵ He does, however, take some pains to point out that, although prayers are useful in combination with other measures, prayers alone are of scant benefit.⁵⁶ Further preventative changes to regimen, including diet, exercise, sleep and bathing patterns, are also required, which only *iatroi*, not *manteis*, undertake. The inclusion of prayer in the Hippocratic corpus confirms that this was a mainstream method of prophylaxis, so common that even the Hippocratic author accepts it, although he does not pass up the opportunity to point out that his competitors' methods are inferior to his own.

So prevention of illness was an important aspect of the clinical function of Hippocratic and folk healers alike. Like *iatroi*, some folk healers seem to have employed regimen, but in addition, many also used *pharmaka*, amulets or prayer in a preventative role. Given that many of these prophylactic measures would have been much simpler and less objectionable to follow than complex dietary, exercise, bathing and purgative routines, it is easy to explain their apparent popularity.

Diagnosis

But when prevention fails and one falls ill, it is usual to seek out a healer for a diagnosis. Diagnosis encompasses two related but distinct aspects. The first facet of diagnosis is the determination that symptoms are due to disease, rather than some other misfortune. The second is the more specific determination of the nature of the illness. The first aspect of diagnosis, that the problem is a reflection of disease, is significant because in most societies the diagnosis of illness serves an important exculpatory function.⁵⁷ Those who are sick are not usually held responsible for their symptoms.⁵⁸ In fact, even in those cultures where disease is regarded as a divine punishment, including modern rural Greece, the sufferer may be considered guilty of a ritual infringement, but morally blameless for their illness.⁵⁹ This view also seems to have been current among lay people in classical Greece, perhaps unsurprisingly, given the capricious, petty and somewhat pedantic nature of the gods as they are portrayed in ancient Greek literary genres. In addition, the sick are often excused from their customary social roles as parents, spouses, employees and so on.⁶⁰ Instead they take on a new role, the sick role, with its own obligations and privileges.⁶¹ In many cases, self-diagnosis may be enough to take on this sick role, for example in the case of 'a 24 hour virus'. But in some situations, families, employers or other members of the community may demand a healer's diag-

54 Hp. *Insomn.* 87: 'They advise taking precautions against anything bad occurring, [but] they do not explain how to take precautions but recommend praying to the gods.'

55 Hp. *Insomn.* 89. See Jouanna (1999), 194, for further discussion of this recommendation.

56 Hp. *Insomn.* 87.

57 See Parsons (1951), 428-79.

58 Of course there are exceptions. Those with HIV/AIDS today, for example, are frequently blamed for having brought their illness upon themselves by following an immoral lifestyle.

59 Blum and Blum (1965), 125-27.

60 Although once again, sickness is not automatically exculpatory. See Freidson (1970), 224-43, for further discussion.

61 See Parsons (1951), 436-39, for the original formulation of this term. See Cockerham (1998), 146-63, for a summary of more recent scholarship.

nosis of illness to legitimate someone's assumption of the sick role. This was as true in Greece during the classical period, where medical certificates were unknown, as it is in the West today. So in Aristophanes' *Wasps*, when Philokleon does not join his friends at court, they ask whether he has sprained his ankle or has a tumour in his groin.⁶² This would excuse him from his duty (in their eyes) of sitting on the jury and convicting as many defendants as possible. Similarly, when Aeschines delayed joining the embassy to Macedonia, he made an affidavit to the *boule*, claiming the reason was his ill-health. Significantly in this instance, Aeschines produced an *iatros* as a witness to the fact he was ill.⁶³ It seems that folk healers could also validate the sick role. Thus, the nurse in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, when confronted with Phaedra's lethargic behaviour, determines that Phaedra must be ill, since her mistress's hands are clean of blood, and no enemy has cast a spell on her.⁶⁴ She gives her the following, oft-quoted advice:

κεῖ μὲν νοσεῖς τι τῶν ἀπορρήτων κακῶν,
 γυναῖκες αἶδε συγκαθιστάναι νόσον·
 εἰ δ' ἔκφορός σοι συμφορὰ πρὸς ἄρσενας,
 λέγ', ὡς ἰατροῖς πρᾶγμα μνηυθῆ τόδε.⁶⁵

It seems then that 'the women' may be just as qualified to legitimate and treat her illness as the *iatroi* are, depending on the sort of *nosos* she is suffering. In fact it is the female nurse who not only diagnoses that Phaedra is ill, but also, through her persistent questioning, establishes the nature of the disease: lovesickness.⁶⁶ She then takes it upon herself to treat her mistress with *philtrā thelktēria* (love charms) which require some of her beloved's hair or clothing, a folk rather than a Hippocratic remedy.⁶⁷ The nurse herself acts as a folk healer, albeit an ultimately unsuccessful one, in attempting to diagnose and treat a *nosos* that may not have been legitimated by Hippocratic *iatroi*.

An important difference between the healing role of folk healers and *iatroi* is that the folk healers often dealt with a greater array of conditions as *nosoi*. The term *nosos* has a wide range of meanings.⁶⁸ *Nosos* can refer to physical, psychological or emotional upset, as well as events or conditions that may cause or be associated with such distress. *Nosoi* include conditions we would recognise as biological disease, such as Philoctetes' suppurating ulcer, Alcestis' wasting or even Ajax' madness.⁶⁹ Equally, *nosoi* include some disturbances which modern Westerners might not view as disease, but were commonly regarded as such in the ancient Greek world.⁷⁰ Perhaps the best example is that of *eros*, particularly unrequited *eros*. Hence Euripides is not merely using a literary metaphor when he has Andromache and the chorus re-

62 Ar. *Wasps* 273-277.

63 The story is told from opposing viewpoints in Aesch. 2.94f. and Dem. 19.24.

64 Eur. *Hipp.* 315-18.

65 'And if you a sick with one of the unmentionable troubles, here are the women to treat the disease. But if the problem may be divulged to men, speak so that the matter may be revealed to the *iatroi*.' Eur. *Hipp.* 293-96.

66 Eur. *Hipp.* 267-350.

67 Eur. *Hipp.* 509-515.

68 LSJ (1968) includes among the definitions of *nosos* sickness, disease, plague, distress, anguish, bane, mischief, and diseases of the mind, especially those caused by madness, passion, or vice.

69 Soph. *Phil.* 7, 174, 259, 267, 281, 463, 521, 734, 764, 795, 1044, 1330, 1379, 1438, Eur. *Alc.* 203, 23, Soph. *Aj.* 59, 66, 186, 271, 274, 452.

70 On culture bound syndromes, see Hahn (1995), 40-56.

fer to sexual desire as a *nosos*.⁷¹ Emotional desire was clearly linked to physical ill health, particularly as both a cause and a result of fever.⁷² Like other febrile illnesses, *eros* could be treated. Literary *pharmakeis/ides* in particular are frequently depicted as ministering to those with unrequited desire. Thus Deianeira applies the ‘love potion’ (which turns out to be a terrible poison) given to her by the *pharmakeus* Nessos to rekindle Herakles’ passion.⁷³ Simaetha is similarly depicted concocting an erotic spell to bind her straying lover to her in Theocritus’ second *Idyll*, which is sometimes entitled *Pharmakeutria* (a later variant of the term *pharmakis*). Aristotle also remarks that *hippomanes* (a substance said to be found on a new-born foal’s forehead) is prized by *pharmakides*.⁷⁴ This is surely a reference to its use in love potions or spells, and thus evidence that it was not only fictional practitioners who were consulted for erotic magic.⁷⁵ Midwives, in their role as matchmakers, may also have contributed to the treatment of lovesickness.⁷⁶ It seems that *rhizotomoi* and *pharmakopolai* too could supply *pharmaka* to treat unrequited passion.⁷⁷ In addition, practitioners could provide a desirer with *katadesmoi* (binding tablets closely related to the binding doll Simaetha uses) to eliminate amatory rivals who may be preventing access to the affections of the beloved.⁷⁸ So unrequited love was treated by a wide variety of folk practitioners, the same practitioners who treated *nosoi* we more easily recognise as diseases today, and using the same methods they applied to cure those other *nosoi*. Nevertheless there is, to my knowledge, no reference to the treatment of unrequited love, or even any recognition that it may constitute a *nosos*, in the Hippocratic corpus.⁷⁹ There are, of course, implicit references to the dangers to the health of young women who develop sexual desire but are left unmarried.⁸⁰ However, there is no suggestion that passion for a particular person is a disease. Thus in this instance, folk healers seem to have diagnosed, legitimated and treated at least one condition unrecognised by *iatroi*.

The second aspect of diagnosis is the determination of the nature of the illness. Today this sort of diagnosis usually consists of a disease name or label. We are diagnosed with ‘pneumonia’ or ‘cancer’. However, in the ancient world, there was less emphasis on nosological labelling. In tragedy, for example, the unwell are usually suffering from an ill-defined *nosos*. Phaedra, Ajax and Heracles are three well-known protagonists of Greek tragedy whose symptoms are described in detail, but not given a name.⁸¹ Furthermore, there was no clear distinction made between disease as an ontological entity on the one hand, and symptoms and signs, the physical manifestations of disease, on the other.⁸² This is to a large degree a consequence of the fundamental theoretical basis for disease in the Hippocratic medical system. Disease, in essence, is viewed as a disturbance in the patient’s own physiology, whether that physiology

71 Eur. *Andr.* 220, 955.

72 LiDonnici (1998), esp. 69-88.

73 Soph. *Trach.* 1140.

74 Arist. *Hist. An.* 577a.

75 Watson (1993), 842-47.

76 Pl. *Tht.* 149d.

77 Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 9.9.3.

78 Faraone (1991), 13f.

79 I am excluding the *Vita Hippocratis Secundum Soranum*, the 2nd century CE or later biography of Hippocrates included in some manuscripts of the corpus from the 11th century CE onwards, which contains a fictional account of Hippocrates curing Perdiccas of lovesickness. For further discussion see Pinault (1992), 61-77.

80 Hp. *Virg.* is the prime example.

81 Eur. *Hipp.*, Eur. *HF*, Soph. *Aj.*

82 See Percy (1992), 595-616, esp. 595-97, and Clarke Kosak (2002) for further discussion. See King (1981), 107-18 for the disease/symptom distinction and summary of nominalist and realist positions on ontological status of disease.

is believed to be composed of humours or other properties such as hot and cold, wet and dry, or sweet and bitter.⁸³ Disease is not perceived as an invasion by a foreign object, such as a microbe, with its own external, independent existence. A potent indicator of the confusion between diseases and symptoms is the dispute between the Coan author of *Regimen in Acute Diseases* and the Cnidian author(s) of *Cnidian Opinions* regarding whether every subtly different symptom complex represented a unique illness, or whether similar symptom complexes were related and could be treated similarly.⁸⁴ This confusion further increased the difficulty of labelling diseases. This is not to suggest that there were no disease labels in Greek medicine. Of course Hippocratic *iatroi* and folk healers used labels based either on the affected body part, such as eye disease (ὄφθαλμία), the primary symptom, fever (πυρετός) for example, or the underlying cause, including the stone (λίθος) or, for folk healers, the sacred disease (ιερά νόσος).⁸⁵ However, Hippocratic diagnosis focused less on this nosological aspect, and placed more emphasis on the identification of the cause of the symptom complex.

A well known passage from *On the Sacred Disease*, illustrates that folk healers also made aetiological diagnoses:

κῆν μὲν γὰρ αἶγα μιμῶνται, κῆν βρύχωνται, κῆν τὰ δεξιὰ σπῶνται, μητέρα θεῶν φασὶν αἰτίην εἶναι. ἦν δὲ ὀξύτερον καὶ εὐτονώτερον φθέγγεται, ἵππων εἰκάζουσι, καὶ φασὶ Ποσειδῶνα αἴτιον εἶναι. ἦν δὲ καὶ τῆς κόπρου τι παρέη, ὃ πολλάκις γίνεται ὑπὸ τῆς νούσου βιαζομένοισιν, Ἐνοδίου πρόσκειται προσωνυμία· ἦν δὲ λεπτότερον καὶ πυκνότερον, οἶον ὄρνιθες, Ἀπόλλων νόμιος. ἦν δὲ ἄφρον ἐκ τοῦ στόματος ἀφή καὶ τοῖσι ποσὶ λακτίζη, Ἄρης τὴν αἰτίην ἔχει. ὀκόσα δὲ δείματα νυκτὸς παρίσταται καὶ φόβοι καὶ παράνοια καὶ ἀναπηδέσεις ἐκ τῆς κλίνης καὶ φόβητρα καὶ φεύξιος ἔχω, Ἐκάτης φασὶν εἶναι ἐπιβολὰς καὶ ἡρώων ἐφόδους.⁸⁶

The author is clearly mocking folk healers' differentiation of the varying types of the sacred disease. However, it is evident that the folk healers employed subtle and complex diagnostic categories, based on the presumed causes of each form of the disease. These various forms of the sacred disease are not given names, but nonetheless they are differentiated, and presumably are treated with distinct remedies, aimed at appeasing the particular aetiological deity.

The Hippocratic explanation of the sacred disease is also based on aetiology, but is in stark contrast to the folk healers' diagnoses. According to the author, the sacred disease occurs when the flow of phlegm from the brain is blocked, resulting in cold phlegm entering the usually warm blood vessels and flowing to the extremities.⁸⁷ The disease is always hereditary and

83 The different theories are debated at Hp. *Nat. Hom.* 2, 4, and *VM* 1.

84 Hp. *Acut.* 1-3, See Lonie (1978a), 42-75, and Lonie (1978b), 77-92, for further discussion of the artificial division into Coan and Cnidian schools.

85 For the Hippocratics, of course, the disease is referred to as the so-called sacred disease (ιερῆς νόσου καλεομένης) or epilepsy (ἐπίληπτος). See Maloney et al. (1986-1989) for a full list of diseases labelled by the ancient Greeks.

86 'If they mimic a goat, if they roar, if they convulse on the right, they say that the Mother of the Gods is responsible. If [the sufferer] cries sharply and loudly, they liken him to a horse and they say Poseidon is responsible. And if he is incontinent of some faeces, which often happens under the forces of the disease, they add the name Enodios. If it is rather thin and continuous, such as birds do, pastoral Apollo [is blamed]. If foam discharges from the mouth and he kicks with his feet, Ares is to blame. Whenever terrors come on at night and fears and paranoia and leaping from the bed and dread and running outside, they say that Hecate is assaulting and there are attacks of heroes.' Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 1.

87 Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 10.

those with a phlegmatic constitution are more liable to it than the naturally bilious.⁸⁸ The Hippocratics may also have recognised separate forms of the sacred disease, distinguishing childhood and adult onset epileptiform illness, although unlike the folk healers' subclasses, these categories are not related to aetiology and are much less complex.⁸⁹ The Hippocratic explanation of the aetiology of the sacred disease is clearly a naturalistic, physiological one. As we have already seen, the author insists that all diseases, including the sacred disease, have natural causes. This opposition between the rationalised aetiology of the Hippocratics and the irrational explanations of the folk healers has drawn much scholarly attention.⁹⁰ But what has been ignored is that the Hippocratic aetiology is also a mechanical one. It explains why the symptoms occur, and who are predisposed to the disease. But it does not explain why the symptoms occur when they do. Nor does it account for the fact that a particular phlegmatic person has fits when others do not. It cannot even explain why one person happens to be born with a phlegmatic disposition and another is bilious.

In contrast, the folk healers' aetiology emphasises the underlying meaning of the illness for the individual sufferer. A particular deity has targeted the patient and caused the fit. Perhaps the sufferer has recently committed a ritual offence against this deity. Perhaps he/she has been less diligent than was proper in the worship of this deity, or has shown favouritism to another deity. The folk explanations do not consider the physical processes by which the gods cause seizures. Rather the focus is on identifying the responsible deity.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the sufferer can understand why he/she in particular has been afflicted. The importance of the so-called 'why me, why now?' question is being increasingly recognised.⁹² Not surprisingly, medical anthropologists have shown that patients from a wide variety of cultures place great emphasis on this sort of individualistic aetiological explanation.⁹³ In addition, 'why me, why now?' explanations are usually fully compatible with mechanical explanations. Thus, a patient is able to believe both that he/she has been afflicted with the sacred disease by the gods as a punishment, and that the more immediate mechanical cause of their symptoms is a blockage in the flow of phlegm. It is plausible then that the sort of diagnoses offered by folk healers filled a specific need within the patient population in addition to the more general physiological diagnoses *iatroi* provided their patients with.

On the Sacred Disease also provides a valuable insight into the diagnostic methods that folk healers may have used. Historians of medicine have long admired the empirical diagnostic methods used by the *iatroi*.⁹⁴ *Iatroi* based their diagnoses on a careful history and a thorough examination of the patient and his/her urine and other excreta.⁹⁵ However, the passage from *On the Sacred Disease* quoted above indicates that folk healers also based their diagnoses directly on their patients' symptoms and signs.⁹⁶ These healers determine which deity is involved from the nature of the sounds made during a seizure, the side of the convulsions, the

88 Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 5.

89 Hp. *Aph.* 2.45, 5.7.

90 In addition to references above at n. 53, see also Longrigg (1993), esp. 26; Longrigg (1998), 18-30; Phillips (1973), 40f.

91 Cf. Ar. *Clouds*. 369-411 in which Strepsiades asks Socrates which deities cause various meteorological phenomena and Socrates gives entirely naturalistic answers focussed on the mechanical processes causing the phenomena.

92 Anderson (1999), 49.

93 Csordas and Kleinman (1990), 12.

94 Edelstein (1967a), 87-110; Phillips (1973), 62-67; Longrigg (1993), 99f.; Longrigg (1998), 39; Jouanna (1999), 291-303.

95 Hp. *Epid. IV* 3, *Off.* 1.

96 Hp. *Morb. Sacr.* 1.

nature of the bowel movements and so on. Hence they must either have directly observed their patients' seizures or elicited a detailed clinical history. The Hippocratic author of the treatise may be correct in implying that the conclusions the folk healers draw from their observations are literal and naïve, but nevertheless, the empirical clinical method was clearly not confined to *iatroi*. Similarly, according to the author of *Regimen IV*, diviners also attempt to interpret the physical symptoms revealed in dreams, a practice he believes should be left to *iatroi*.⁹⁷ Once again these practitioners clearly elicit their clients' dreams and base their diagnoses upon these signs.

Of course, some folk healers used very different methods of diagnosis. The inspired *manteis* did not use empirical methods.⁹⁸ They do not appear to have questioned or examined those who came to them for help, nor did they base their diagnoses on the observation of signs external to the sick person. Rather their diagnoses were divine inspirations. In fact this group of *manteis* were prophetic only when inspired, or possessed, by a deity.⁹⁹ At other times they had no divinatory ability. So in this sense it was not the *manteis* who made the diagnoses, but the gods themselves. Like the healers attacked in *On the Sacred Disease*, these diagnoses did not provide a physiological explanation of symptoms, but the underlying cause, for their clients' suffering. A divine agent is almost invariably implicated. For example, the oracle consulted by a Spartan family whose children were dying, the Aegidae, suggested the Furies of Oedipus and Laius were responsible and should be placated with a shrine.¹⁰⁰ It is possible that the *manteis* indicated that human agents were responsible for illness on occasion. Herodotus reports that it is in fact usual for Scythian diviners to claim that, whenever one of their kings becomes ill, it is due to one of his subjects swearing falsely at the hearth.¹⁰¹ There is, however, no extant example of Greek *manteis* acting similarly. Whether or not inspired *manteis* implicated human agents, there is no indication that their methods were based on observation or past experience.

So, Hippocratic healers were not alone in their employment of empirical methods to provide an understanding of the aetiology of an illness, rather than merely labelling the disease. Many folk healers used similar methods, although there were some exceptions, notably the inspirational *manteis*. However, there are important differences in their diagnostic role, in that they were able to diagnose a broader range of conditions as due to illness, and that their diagnoses were more likely to answer the 'why me, why now?' question.

Treatment

Yet, while prevention and diagnosis are important clinical functions, most patients present to a healer seeking treatment for their illness. Thus it should come as no surprise to discover that all the folk healers had a therapeutic role. *Rhizotomoi*, *pharmakopolai* and *phar-*

97 Hp. *Insomn.* 87.

98 See Flaceliere (1961), 4f., for the division of *manteis* into two groups: the readers of portents, who divined by the observation of signs, and the inspired *manteis*, who gave divinely inspired prophecy, exemplified by the oracles at Delphi and Dodona.

99 For example, see Pl. *Phdr.* 244a concerning the oracle at Dodona and the Sibyl, and Hdt. 8.134 concerning the oracle at the temple of Amphiaraus. For further discussion, see Parke (1967), 73, and Flaceliere (1961), 5.

100 Hdt. 4.149.

101 Hdt. 4.68.

makeis/ides did not merely supply the specific *pharmakon* a patient or other healer requested, they also provided active treatment, including recommending the appropriate *pharmaka*. For example, the Middle Comedian Alexis' *pharmakopoles* puns that he has been trying to treat Kallimedon's pupils for three days.¹⁰² Likewise, Demosthenes reports that Aristogeiton's brother, a *pharmakeus*, claims that he is able to cure epilepsy.¹⁰³ Purifiers are mocked in a number of sources for their attempts to use lustration techniques to cure illness.¹⁰⁴ Even the *manteis* were expected to advise on appropriate therapy, although in many cultures diviners confine themselves to diagnosis or prognosis and do not have a specific therapeutic role. Thus, Thucydides is disappointed that divination was no more successful at treating the plague in Athens than *iatroi* or supplications to the temples had been.¹⁰⁵ The *goai* too had a repertoire of amulets, spoken incantations and *pharmaka* to treat illness. Even the midwives and other obstetric practitioners not only assisted at normal deliveries, but also treated women with complicated deliveries and extreme labour pains.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the therapeutic role of folk healers, like *iatroi*, was extremely significant. The most obvious form of treatment, and the one most frequently sought by patients in all cultures, is the cure of the underlying disease. But treatment may also consist of the management of disease without its cure, perhaps by preventing the disease worsening or by decreasing the frequency of attacks in periodic illnesses. In addition, treatment may be directed at the elimination or control of symptoms, rather than the causative disease. These latter two forms of treatment are particularly appropriate in the case of chronic rather than acute disease. I will argue that while there is evidence to suggest that some folk remedies emphasised control of symptoms, *iatroi* focused their treatment efforts almost entirely on the cure of disease, a fact that is almost certainly related to the underdeveloped concept of chronic disease in early Hippocratic medicine.

The Hippocratic *alia aliis* approach to treatment is summed up by the author of *Breaths*: ἐνὶ δὲ συντόμῳ λόγῳ, τὰ ἐναντία τῶν ἐναντίων ἐστὶν ἰήματα.¹⁰⁷ The majority of Hippocratic remedies were aimed at curing the disease by eliminating or correcting the responsible aetiological factors. Surgery and cautery, for example, were directed at removing blockages, dislocations, fractures or other physical causes of disease. Other treatments generally involved the reversal of imbalance: purgatives, emetics, diuretics, regimen and bloodletting all functioned by restoring the humours to their correct balance. Similarly, folk healers generally aimed to cure disease, and the majority of their remedies were directed at the putative cause of illness. Many of the *pharmaka* used by *rhizotomoi* and *pharmakopolai*, for example, appear to be directed at correcting humoral imbalance, though whether they were thought to operate by the same *alia aliis* principle as the remedies of *iatroi*, or by the *similia similibus* principle more familiar in the remedies of the purifiers and *goai* is unclear. Thus according to Theophrastus, the germander fruit operates by purging bile, rupture wort promotes vomiting, hellebore is a diuretic, and a variety of roots cure by heating the body.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, *manteis*' treatment advice focused on placating the responsible deities. Hence the oracle advised the Aegidae, whose children were dying, to build a shrine to the Furies, and the *manteis*

102 Alexis Comicus 112.

103 Dem. 25.79 See also Hp. *Morb. Sacr.*, although *pharmakeis* are not explicitly named among the folk healers criticised for their treatment of the disease.

104 Hp. *Morb. Sacr.*, Diphilus fr. 126, Men. *Phasm.* 50-56.

105 Thuc. 2.47.4.

106 Pl. *Tht.* 149c-d.

107 'In short, opposites are remedies for opposites.' Hp. *Flat.* 1.

108 Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 9.9.4, 9.10.2, 9.10.3, 9.20.1

consulted by young girls suffering from madness advised them to dedicate clothing to Artemis.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the purifiers removed the pollution causing disease using lustration and related techniques. The use of dirt, blood, despised animals such as puppies, and other polluting substances in rituals to remove pollution illustrates that these treatments operated on the *similia similibus* principle.¹¹⁰ The majority of treatments offered by the *goai* and *pharmakeis/ides* also appear to have aimed to cure the illness. Some of these cures seem to be directed at the underlying cause. Examples include counter-charms and amulets that apparently operate by the *similia similibus* principle, such as amulets made of blood-red haematite for haemostasis. However, the mode of action in many of the treatments the *goai* and *pharmakeis/ides* used is difficult to ascertain. A typical example is the following treatment for discharge of the eyes found in the *Greek Magical Papyri*: πρὸς ῥεῦμα ὀφθαλμῶν ἐπίγραφε εἰς χάρτην καὶ περίαπτε· ρουραβισαρουρββαραισφρην.¹¹¹ The precise mechanism by which the amulet acted is unclear. It may or may not have been directed at removing the underlying cause of the illness. Nevertheless, this and similar treatments are generally aimed at curing the illness, rather than merely managing the symptoms.

In fact there is very little emphasis on the management, rather than cure, of illness in either Hippocratic or folk medicine. This is undoubtedly attributable to the concept of chronic disease in Graeco-Roman thought. The intermittent nature of some diseases, such as the sacred disease, was recognised. However, each recurrence of symptoms appears to have been viewed as a separate episode of illness, and patients were considered disease-free in between episodes. It is of note that the case studies in the Hippocratic *Epidemics* do not include any examples in which the disease remains unresolved. While the Hippocratics recognised that some diseases could take a year or more to climax, it was assumed that they would eventually come to a crisis, either killing the patient or being cured. The notion of a life-long disease, which a sufferer would die *with* rather than *from*, is rarely considered. Nor is the concept of asymptomatic disease clearly evident in Greek medical literature. I have already noted that the Hippocratic view of disease was functional rather than ontological, resulting in little differentiation of disease and its manifestations as physical symptoms and signs. In this context, where disease *is* a particular set of symptoms, the notion of asymptomatic disease is absurd. It is perhaps unsurprising then that there is little evidence that *iatroi* or folk practitioners attempted to control illnesses they were unable to cure.

Similarly, there is little evidence that Hippocratic *iatroi* directed any of their treatments at reducing or eliminating symptoms, rather than the underlying disease.¹¹² Once again, this is surely related to the fact that disease was rarely seen as a separate ontological entity from symptomatology. Hence, while the presence of pain is frequently documented throughout the case studies of the *Epidemics*, the use of analgesia is never mentioned. The opium poppy was known to the Greeks and Theophrastus correctly notes that the effective portion of the plant is the head.¹¹³ However, while he describes a number of applications, he nowhere mentions the poppy's use in pain relief.¹¹⁴ Likewise, the Hippocratic corpus contains a number of refer-

109 Hdt. 5.149, Hp. *Virg.* 1

110 See Parker (1983), 224-34, for a summary of purification techniques.

111 'For eye disease: write [the following] on papyrus and tie it on: "ROURABISAROURBBARIASPHREN?"' *PGM VII.197-8*.

112 The use of analgesia recommended in the gynaecological texts is an exception, and will be discussed below.

113 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.8.2.

114 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.11.4.

ences to the poppy, but as Prioreshi has shown, it is used significantly more often to treat non-painful conditions than those conditions where pain is a predominant symptom.¹¹⁵ The notion of palliating terminally ill patients is also largely absent from the Hippocratic corpus. *Iatroi* did not offer pain relief or other palliation for incurable patients, but refused to treat them.¹¹⁶ The only mention of euthanasia in the Hippocratic corpus of which I am aware is in the *Oath*, in which it is forbidden.¹¹⁷

However, some folk remedies do place a greater emphasis on the treatment of symptoms. It is possible then that suffering people who were unable to find symptomatic relief from *iatroi* would have consulted folk healers for additional or alternative remedies. This would apply especially to those people whom *iatroi* refused to treat, principally those whose disease they believed to have gained mastery over the patient's body. In fact Theophrastus documents a number of *pharmaka* used by *rhizotomoi* and *pharmakopolai* for the purposes of euthanasia, which may have been popular amongst some such patients.¹¹⁸ These healers also offered *pharmaka* to induce sleep, to improve mood and to decrease pain in childbirth.¹¹⁹ Sophocles' Philoctetes is also aware of a herb which can give him temporary symptomatic relief from the pain of his ulcer.¹²⁰ Likewise, a number of the spells recorded in the Greek and Demotic magical papyri are directed at the relief of pain, rather than the cure of illness *per se*. One example reads Κύριε Σαβαώθ, ἀπόστρεψον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ κόπον, νόσον τῆς κεφαλῆς, ἀξιῶ, μου ἄπαρον...¹²¹ Plato also tells us that midwives are able to decrease labour pains.¹²² Interestingly, the gynaecological texts of the Hippocratic corpus are an exception to the general rule that Hippocratic treatments do not aim for symptomatic relief. Many of the recipes contained in these texts are specifically designed to provide analgesia during childbirth. However, the gynaecological texts differ markedly from other Hippocratic texts. In particular, these texts, unlike other Hippocratic medical texts, contain long lists of pharmacological recipes. Moreover, there is little explicit theoretical basis for the organisation of these recipes.¹²³ In addition, the gynaecological recipes contain ingredients not found elsewhere in the Hippocratic pharmacopeia and which are more familiar in magico-religious recipes, including excrement and human milk. As a consequence, it has been proposed that much of the Hippocratic gynaecological pharmacopeia in fact had its origins in folk medicine.¹²⁴ This is not to suggest, as some scholars have, that the Hippocratics transcribed the recipes virtually unchanged and misunderstood from their original source.¹²⁵ Rather, as Hanson has demonstrated, there is considerable evidence that they recontextualised the recipes to be consistent

115 Prioreshi (1998), 325-31.

116 Hp. *de Arte* 3, Hp. *Prog.* 1.

117 Hp. *Jusj.* 1. This is not to suggest that all *iatroi* necessarily adhered to this prohibition. Nevertheless, there are no endorsements of euthanasia in the corpus. There is a vast body of literature concerning ancient views on euthanasia. See for example Carrick (1985), esp. 127-50 and 154-56; Edelstein (1943); Garland (1990), 284f.; Gourevitch (1969), 501-18; Amundsen (1996).

118 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.13.4, 9.16.8.

119 Theophr. *Hist. pl.* 9.11.5, 9.13.3, 9.19.1, 9.16.1 respectively.

120 Soph. *Phil.* 649f.

121 'Lord Sabaoth, take the throbbing pain from me, the headache, I pray, take from me...' *PGM XVI-IIa* 1-4 Cf. *PDM XIV*.1003-1014.

122 Pl. *Tht.* 149c-d.

123 The order of the prescriptions in the latter parts of the treatise is determined by the arrangement of clinical discussions in the opening sections of the work, not by any readily discernible underlying theory of disease or theory of pharmacological action.

124 Lloyd (1983), xi and 260; Hanson (1998), 71-94; Hanson (1991), 73-110; Dean-Jones (1994), 133. Cf. King (1995a), 206-08; King (1995b), pp. 137-39.

125 Rousselle (1980), 1089-1115; Riddle (1992), 81.

with their own theories of the female body, women's diseases and the proper social position of women.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, it is entirely plausible that the availability of analgesia from folk healers would have encouraged women in labour to seek their services in addition to or in favour of healers who did not provide pain relief. This preference may even have contributed to the adoption of analgesic gynaecological remedies by Hippocratic *iatroi*, as they attempted to establish themselves as appropriate healers for women in labour to consult and to draw patients away from their rivals.

Prognosis

Yet the need for treatment is not the only reason patients consult a healer. At times, people present not because their symptoms are painful or interfere with their function, but because they are concerned that their symptoms indicate a serious, even life-threatening, condition. Reassurance that the prognosis is good may be all the treatment the patient requires. In fact, reassurance in itself may alleviate the symptoms. Thus the final major clinical function performed by healers, prognosis, is of no little significance to patients. It has been well demonstrated that Hippocratic *iatroi* placed a great deal of emphasis on prognosis.¹²⁷ It was so important that much of what we might consider diagnosis, the divination of symptoms and signs suffered by the patient at the time of and prior to the consultation, was subsumed into the category of prognosis.¹²⁸ *Iatroi* gave showman-like public prognostications as a demonstration and advertisement of their medical skill. Quick-fire predictions of the nature and course of a patient's illness (past, present and future), based on distant and rapid observation rather than detailed history and examination, also gained the confidence of the patient and his/her family. In addition, Hippocratic *iatroi* used prognostication to identify and reject incurable patients, thus avoiding any blame for the continued ill health or death of the sufferer. The treatise *Prognostic* is devoted to this aspect of Hippocratic medicine, commencing with a justification for its importance.¹²⁹ Prognosis was an integral part of the practice of Hippocratic *iatroi*.

However, in general, the Greek folk healers do not appear to have placed the same emphasis on prognosis. It might be expected that *manteis* in particular would fulfil a very important prognostic role, using their divinatory skills to forecast the outcome of disease. In fact a number of scholars have commented on the apparent relationship between the prognoses of *iatroi* and divination.¹³⁰ Plato tells us that *manteis* prophesied whether or not someone would become ill.¹³¹ However, the inspirational *manteis* did not usually offer a prognosis to clients who were already ill. Most of the accounts of consultations with these practitioners reveal that they provided patients with a diagnosis of the cause of their affliction and/or a treatment recommendation, invariably the propitiation of a deity, rather than a prognosis. There is no indication that sufferers tended to ask oracular *manteis* for a prognosis and, in addition, it is likely that the practitioners themselves preferred to avoid predicting the future course of an illness.

126 Hanson (1998), pp. 71-94; Hanson (1991), 73-110.

127 Edelstein (1967b), 65-86; Jouanna (1999), 100-111.

128 Lloyd (1978), 16; Jouanna (1999), 100f.

129 Hp. *Prog.* 1

130 Jouanna (1999), 100-03; Demand (1994), 3; Horstmanshoff (1990), 179-82; Marchese (1985), 3; Edelstein (1967b), 81f.

131 Pl. *La.* 195e.

Aristotle explicitly comments that *manteis* find it easier to divine what is past than the future. He claims that even Epimenides the *mantis* *περὶ τῶν ἔσομένων οὐκ ἔμαντεύετο, ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν γεγονότων μὲν ἀδήλων δ'.*¹³² This would fit with a general preference for diagnosis rather than prognosis.

Similarly, it may seem logical to suppose that the *goai* may have used spells to obtain prognoses for their ill patients. There are certainly many examples of spells in the Greek and Demotic magical papyri both to divine the response to a specific question and to request a non-specific divine revelation.¹³³ One of these spells is a request for the revelation of the appropriate prescription and its method of use for the treatment of an unnamed illness.¹³⁴ However, despite the large number of spells for the treatment and the prevention of illness, the corpus of magical papyri does not contain a single specific request for knowledge about the course or outcome of a disease. Thus it seems *goai* were more likely to be consulted by patients for a cure rather than a prognosis.

However, the non-inspirational *manteis* do seem to have been more likely to provide their clients with a prognosis. The author of *Regimen IV*, for example, tells us that *manteis* used dream interpretation for prognosis as well as diagnosis. He explains that there are two types of dreams: divine dreams, which foretell the future, and what might be termed somatic dreams, which reflect the body's present state of health and signal excess, depletion, or change in the balance of the humours.¹³⁵ *Iatroi* are concerned only with the latter type of dream, but the *manteis* are consulted about both types.¹³⁶ The author claims that *manteis* can effectively interpret prophetic dreams, but have only variable success with somatic dreams. Thus it seems that, according to the rhetoric of the Hippocratic author, the prognoses of the *manteis* may have been more accurate than their diagnoses. The author also comments, as we saw above, that although *manteis* can provide a prognosis, they are powerless to recommend anything other than prayer to alter the course of the future. In this way he devalues the usefulness of the dream interpreters' prognoses. Given the competitive context of medical practice, this sort of polemic tends to suggest that prognosis was a relatively important aspect of the function dream interpreters were expected to fulfil. It seems probable then that other readers of portents, the *manteis* who divined by observing the entrails, flames, or the flight paths of birds, may also have been consulted about prognosis. Unfortunately, however, there are no extant accounts to confirm or refute this supposition.

Rhizotomoi and *pharmakopolai* may also have played a minor prognostic role by supplying *pharmaka* which were used to predict the outcome of illnesses. Theophrastus, describing the uses of white chameleon, adds *καὶ ἔαν βούληται τις ἀσθενοῦτος ἀνθρώπου διαπειρᾶσθαι εἰ βιώσιμος, λούειν κελεύουσι τρεῖς ἡμέρας, κἄν περιενέγκη βιώσιμος.*¹³⁷ It is not clear that the "they" who say these things are the *rhizotomoi* and *pharmakopolai* (although, as noted above, these practitioners were foremost among Theophrastus' informants). Nevertheless, the passage does indicate that the *pharmaka* these

132 '...was not in the habit of divining the future, but only past but obscure events.' Arist. *Rh.* 1418a.

133 For example, *PGM* II.1-64, III.165-86, 263-275, 282-409, 479-483, IV.1-25, 52-85, V. 370-446, VII.540-578, 664-685, 703-726, 795-845, 1009-1016, XLVI.1-4, LXI.1-30; *PDM* XII.21-49, XIV.93-114.

134 *PDM* XII.21-49.

135 Hp. *Insomn.* 87.

136 See Holowchak (2001), 382-99, for a discussion of the different approaches to dream interpretation taken by *iatroi* and *manteis*.

137 'And if someone wants to find out whether a sick man will live, they say to bathe him for three days [in it] and if he survives, he will live.' Theophr. *Hist. Pl.* 9.12.1.

healers sold could be employed for prognostic rather than therapeutic purposes. However, it is of note that this is the only prognostic test described in *History of Plants*, which counts against this being a particularly significant function of the *rhizotomoi* and *pharmakopolai*. Similarly, it is possible that the *pharmakeis/pharmakides* used *pharmaka* to provide their sick clients with prognoses. However, this is nowhere stated, and thus, if it was done, appears to have been a fairly insignificant aspect of their healing role.

Nevertheless, it is likely that folk healers consulted by women about pregnancy, including the *pharmakides*, *maiai* and other obstetric practitioners, used *pharmaka* and other means to prognosticate whether a woman would conceive in the future, and what the sex of an unborn baby would be. These sorts of prognoses were also made by *iatroi*, and the Hippocratic corpus contains a number of methods to determine both the possibility of pregnancy and the gender of the fetus.¹³⁸ Lloyd has commented upon the apparent ‘folk nature’ of these prognostic tests.¹³⁹ In particular, he notes their similarity to tests found in ancient Egyptian and Babylonian sources.¹⁴⁰ It is certainly possible that these tests, like other gynaecological recipes, could have been directly borrowed or adapted from longstanding folklore. Whatever their origin however, the widespread recording of the tests in the gynaecological treatises of the Hippocratic corpus, as well as their presence in neighbouring ancient cultures, suggests they were widely known. Thus healers who were consulted by pregnant women and those trying to fall pregnant no doubt used similar prognostic tests. In fact, the Demotic magical papyri contain one spell to determine whether a woman will conceive, which resembles some of the Hippocratic recipes: ‘The way to know it of a woman whether she will be pregnant: You should make the woman urinate on this plant above [the “Great-Nile” plant] again, at night. When morning comes, if you find the plant scorched, she will not conceive. If you find it green, she will conceive.’¹⁴¹ This suggests that even *goai* may have used such tests to prognosticate concerning pregnancy.

So while folk healers do seem to have provided their patients with prognoses in some instances, especially in obstetric cases, the prediction of the course and outcome of a disease was less emphasised by these healers than by *iatroi*. It seems that the divinatory skills of the inspired *manteis* and *goai* in particular were confined to divining diagnoses and appropriate treatments rather than prognoses.

Conclusion

So we have seen that the various groups of healers, whether they were Hippocratic or folk healers, placed different emphases on the four basic healing roles. In addition, they each fulfilled these roles in a unique manner. In deciding which of the bewildering array of healers to consult, a sick person would consider which healer(s) might provide him/her with the best solution to his/her current problems.¹⁴² Those who wished only to know whether or not their

138 For example, Hp. *Mul.* 216 notes ἤν αἱ θηλαὶ ἄνω ἔωσιν ἐστραμμέναι, ἄρσεν κύει· ἤν δὲ κάτω, θῆλυ (‘If her nipples are turned up, she will bear a male, if down a female’). Cf. Hp. *Mul.* 214-5, 219, Hp. *Nat. Mul.* 96, Hp. *Superf.* 25, Hp. *Aph.* 5.42.

139 Lloyd (1983), 65 and 82-84.

140 See Lloyd (1983), 65 n.21, for references.

141 *PDM* XIV.956-60, tr. Janet H. Johnson, in Betz (1992), 242.

142 Of course many other factors would influence this decision, including cost, availability, past experiences, gender, and so on.

symptoms were life threatening, for example, might prefer to seek the prognostic advice of the *iatroi*. Similarly a layman such as Thucydides, who ascribed to a rational explanatory model of disease and tended to dismiss supernatural explanations as superstitious mumbo-jumbo, might prefer to rely solely on the treatments of the Hippocratic *iatroi*.¹⁴³ Yet even a rationally inclined patient could resort to other practitioners if *iatroi* were unable to provide a cure. The orator Aeschines, for instance, reputedly turned to temple medicine after human doctors had failed to cure him for a year.¹⁴⁴ Those unable to gain symptomatic relief from the treatments *iatroi* offered, and those whom *iatroi* refused to treat on the basis of the terminal nature of their illness, would also be able to consult a variety of different folk healers.

But folk healers were by no means merely the last resort of the desperate, who were unable to get satisfaction from *iatroi*. Assuredly there were also people who preferred sacred explanations to rationalised ones, akin to the character mocked in Theophrastus' *Superstitious Man*. Other people may well have believed themselves, perhaps even wished themselves, to be suffering from a condition unlikely to be legitimated by *iatroi*, unrequited love for instance. Such a person would be more likely to approach a folk healer for diagnosis and treatment as a first port of call. This may explain why Aristophanes' Bdelykleon doesn't consult an *iatros*, but tries a succession of folk and religious treatments to cure his father of his addiction to sitting on the jury, a *nosos* the Hippocratics would be most unlikely to recognise.¹⁴⁵ Many may have preferred to try therapeutic options offered by folk healers such as amulets or prayer that were relatively simple, pain-free, and most probably equally efficacious before embarking on more onerous regimen or surgery.

No doubt in reality many people 'played it safe' and consulted a variety of healers simultaneously. The author of *Precepts* sternly warns that two *iatroi* who meet while being consulted by the one patient should not insult one another.¹⁴⁶ It was by no means out of the ordinary to consult several healers at one and the same time, and presumably some of these healers would be folk practitioners. It also seems that healers need not always act with the extreme degree of competitiveness at the bedside that is implied by the injunction of *Precepts*. The gynaecological texts refer to female 'assistants', possibly midwives, acting in concert with the attendant *iatros*.¹⁴⁷ Cooperation was also possible. After all, the naturalistic explanations of disease provided by *iatroi* and the theological aetiologies of some folk healers were not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they were complementary, with Hippocratic healers providing the 'how' and folk healers providing the 'why' for a sufferer. The abilities of the various healers to fulfil different aspects of their patients' wants and needs enabled folk and Hippocratic healers to thrive alongside each other in what was a highly competitive medical marketplace. Everybody, from the lowliest slave to a member of the social and intellectual elite, would fall prey at some time in his or her life to an illness, trivial or life-threatening, trifling or debilitating, comprehensible or mystifying. Emergent Hippocratic medicine was a complement and an alternative to more traditional folk healing, not a replacement. The folk healers were not merely the conjurers, purifiers, vagabonds and quacks the Hippocratics paint them, but a legitimate medical option. Each group of healers was able to fill a particular niche in the whole system of health care.

143 On the close relationship between Hippocratic and Thucydidean disease explanations, see Swain (1994), 303-27; Page (1953), 97-119; Parry (1969), 106-08; Longrigg (1980), 210-13.

144 *Palatine Anthology* 6.330.

145 Ar. *Wasps* 114-24.

146 Hp. *Precepts* 8.

147 Lloyd (1983), 70-72. Cf. King (1998), 165-68, who postulates these assistants may be relatives rather than trained healers.

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