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# Hippocratic Corpus work “Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”) Philanthropy and Utility in Medicine

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**Disclosure of Interest: Nothing to Disclose**



# Hippocratic Corpus work

**"Precepts"** ("Παραγγελίαι")

*Philanthropy and Utility in Medicine*



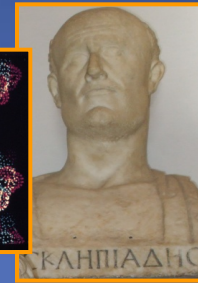
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# Hippocratic Corpus work "Precepts" ("Παραγγελῖαι")

## *Philanthropy and Utility in Medicine*

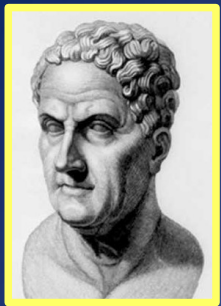


### Purpose:

- There were two different approaches in ancient Greek medicine originating from two different lines of philosophical thinking.
- One approach is more humanistic and more similar to modern evidence-based scientific medicine.

- **Galen: two sects in medicine and philosophy**
- **Kant: two lines of philosophy (intellectualism-empiricism)**
- **Hippocrates: humoral pathology – benevolent Nature – justice**
- **Asclepiades: molecular pathology–indifferent Nature – pleasure**
- **Precepts: philanthropy and utility based on pleasurable life**
- **Precepts - Modern Medicine: Common scientific & ethical basis**





**Galen of Pergamon** (Claudius Galenus, 129– c.200 AD) a famous physician employed by Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, author of “On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato”  
He wrote in his work that there are two sects in medicine:

■ **Hippocratic medicine – Pythagorean/Platonic philosophy**

Nature is benevolent/harmonic – continuous elements

■ **Methodic medicine – Atomic/Epicurean philosophy**

Nature is indifferent – atoms and void space

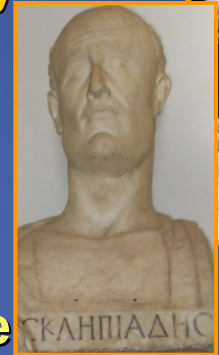
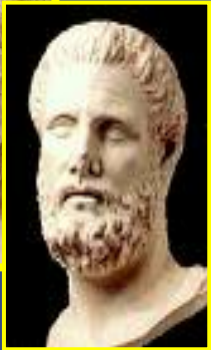
“On the Natural Faculties”

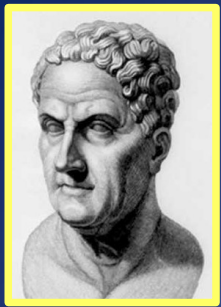
(Περὶ Φυσικῶν Δυνάμεων I 27-28)

“Speaking generally, there have arisen the

following two sects in medicine and philosophy among those who have made any definite pronouncement regarding Nature.

I speak, of course, of such of them as know what they are talking about, and who realize the logical sequence of their hypotheses, and stand by them; as for those who cannot understand even this, but who simply talk any nonsense that comes to their tongues, and who do not remain definitely attached either to one sect or the other- such people are not even worth mentioning...”





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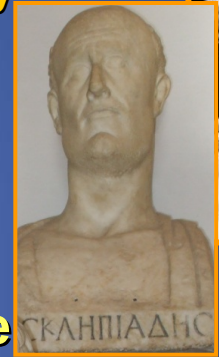
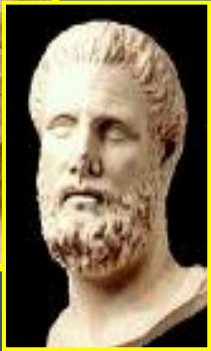
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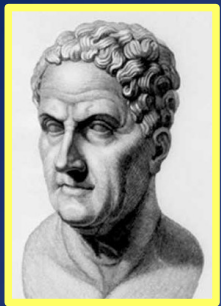
following two sects in medicine and philosophy among those who have made any definite pronouncement regarding Nature.

...What, then, are these sects, and what are the logical consequences of their hypotheses?

The **one class** supposes that all substance which is subject to genesis and destruction is at once continuous and susceptible of alteration.

The **other school** assumes substance to be unchangeable, unalterable, and subdivided into fine particles, which are separated from one another by empty spaces...”





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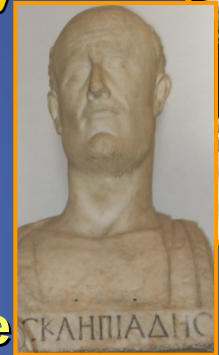
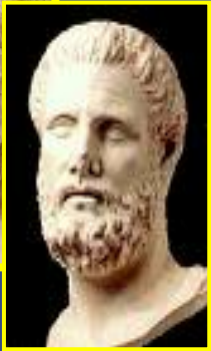
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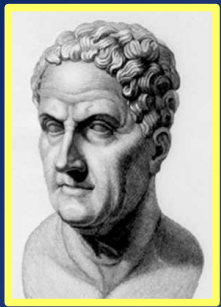
“Speaking generally, there have arisen the

following two sects in medicine and philosophy among those who have made any definite pronouncement regarding Nature.

...According to the **first-mentioned teaching**, Nature is not posterior to the corpuscles, but is a long way prior to them and older than they; and therefore in their view it is Nature which puts together the bodies both of plants and animals; and this she does by virtue of certain faculties which she possesses: on the one hand, attractive and on the other, expulsive. Further, Nature skilfully moulds everything during the stage of genesis and she also provides for the creatures after birth... **Hippocrates followed this approach...**”







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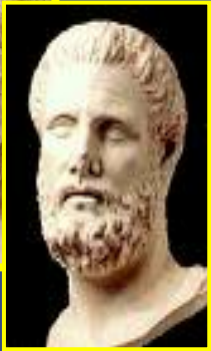
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“Speaking generally, there have arisen the

following two sects in medicine and philosophy among those who have made any definite pronouncement regarding Nature.

According to the **other school**, none of these things exist in the natures [of living things], nor is there in the soul any original innate idea, whether of agreement or difference, of separation or synthesis, of justice or injustice, of the beautiful or ugly; **all such things, they say, arise in us from sensation and through sensation**, and animals are steered by certain images and memories...This school also despises dreams, omens, symbols and the whole of astrology... and **such are the views of Asclepiades the physician...**”





Immanuel Kant in “Critique of the pure reason” (1781) discussed the two main philosophical lines, namely

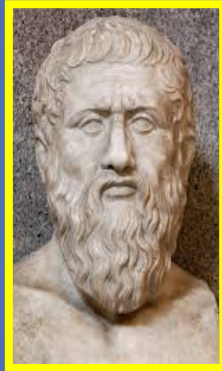
- **Intellectionalism** exemplified by **Plato, Descartes & Leibnitz**

- **Empiricism** exemplified by **Epicurus, Gassendi & Locke**.

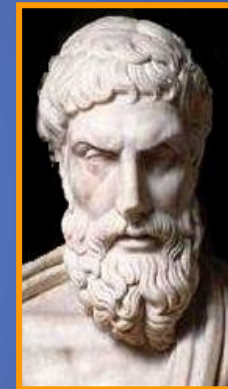
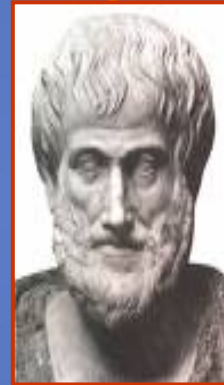
Their method of approaching the truth was different:

- **Platonic intellectionalism** used logic arguments (under the name “science”) which claimed to be involved with universal concepts,

- **Epicurean empiricism** used naturalism, namely empirical observation of nature.



**Intellectionalism**



**Empiricism**

This Kantian distinction of “science” versus naturalism may surprise a modern scientist.

It should be mentioned that Kant wrote his essays over two decades before **John Dalton measured the weight of “atoms”** of elements, like hydrogen, oxygen and carbon (1803) **proving that Epicurus' atomic physics was correct**. It is well known that since then, in the last two centuries **science has advanced through empirical and experimental observation of nature**.



# Hippocrates of Kos, the Father of Clinical Medicine, and Asclepiades of Bithynia, the Father of Molecular Medicine\*

CHRISTOS YAPIJAKIS<sup>1,2</sup>

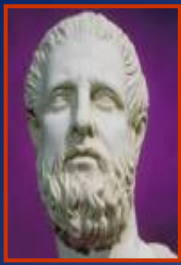
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**Hippocrates of Kos** (460-377 BC) is recognized as the father of clinical medicine, which was free from superstitious beliefs and based diagnostic hypotheses on clinical signs. The renown Greek physician was influenced by Pythagorean philosophy.

The **Hippocratic Corpus** is a collection of medical texts. Some were written by Hippocrates and his followers but some were obviously composed several centuries later, since they contain anachronistic philosophical views and language styles.

One such work, written in Greek but also containing latinisms, is '**Precepts**' (**Παραγγελῖαι**), a book devoted to medical ethics. This text clearly comprises many concepts introduced by **Asclepiades of Bithynia** (124-40 BC), a Greek physician influenced by Epicurean philosophy who was famous in Rome for his humane and naturalistic opinions

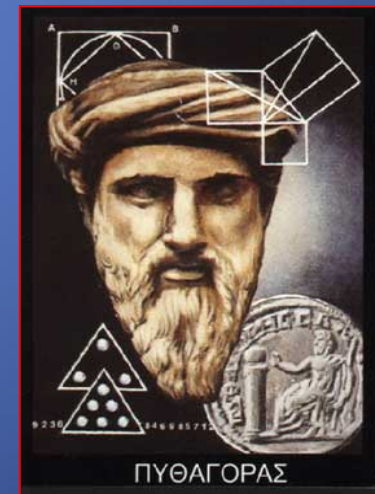
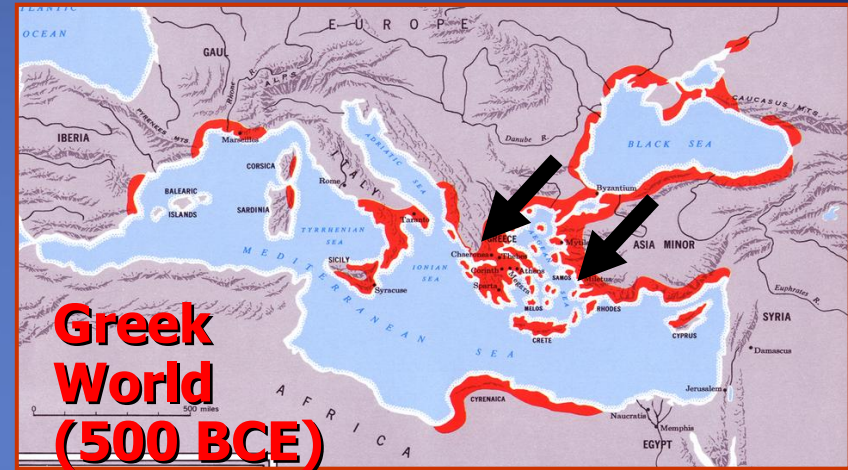


# HIPPOCRATES of Kos (460-377 BCE)

## *the Father of Clinical Medicine*



- Hippocrates based medicine on the notion that Nature was made of **4 elements (water, earth, wind, fire)** as the Pythagorean philosopher **Empedocles** first suggested.
- He believed that the body consisted of **4 fluids** or “**humors**” (black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood) and **4 elemental conditions** (cold, hot, dry and moist).
- He believed that the state of health exists when these **humors and qualities** are in **balance**.
- He believed in Benevolent Nature



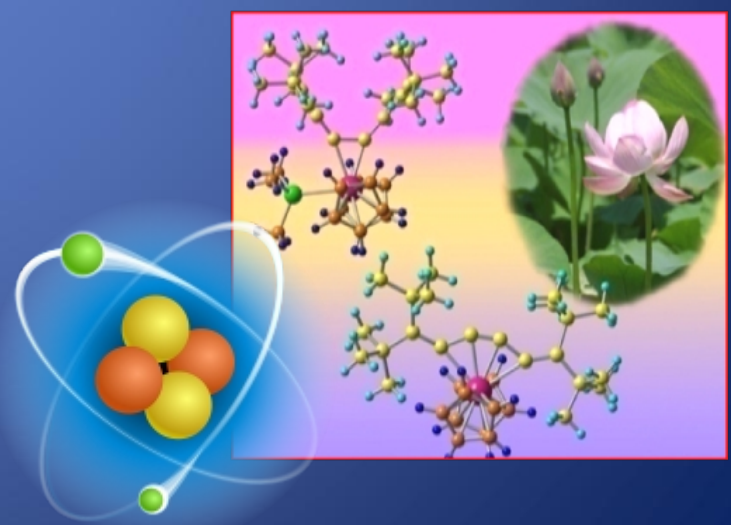
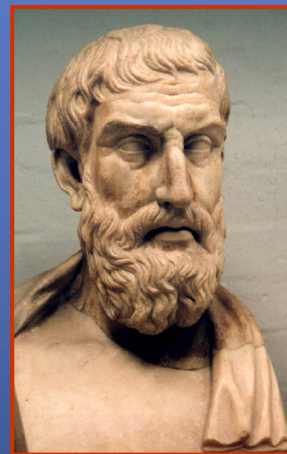
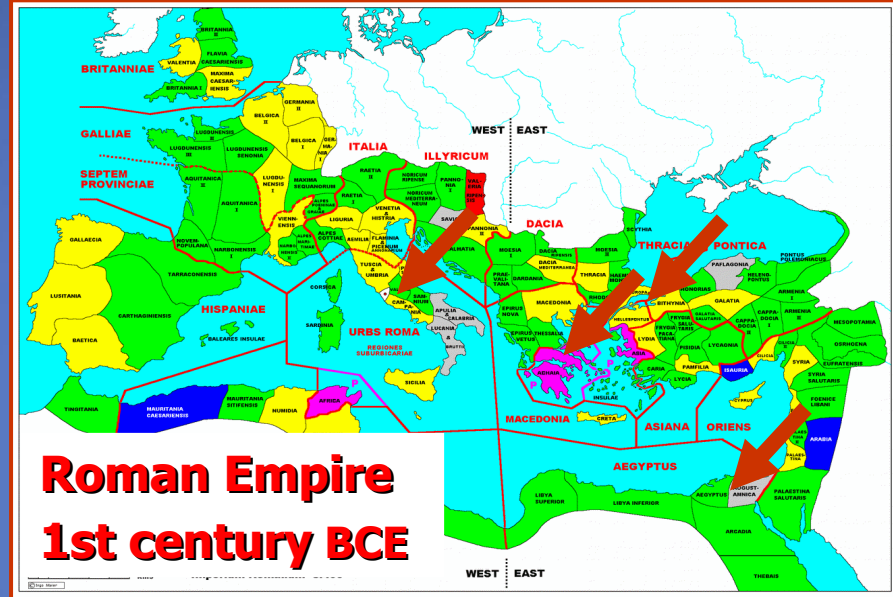


# ASCLEPIADES of Bithynia (124 - 40 BCE)

## *the Father of Molecular Medicine*



- Asclepiades was educated in **medicine** in Alexandria and in **philosophy** in Athens at the Epicurean School
- He was the first famous physician who established Hellenic Medicine in Rome
- **Molecular Medicine**, based on **atomic theory** and free of metaphysical ideas
- Against pain and anxiety
- He was the first who divided diseases into **acute** and **chronic** ones (Epicurus' pains)







# **“Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”)**

I. In time there is opportunity, and opportunity exists for a limited time. Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity. Knowing this, one must practice medicine not based primarily to possible theories but to experience combined with reason. Because reason is a composite memory of things apprehended with sense-perception. For the sense-perception, coming first in experience and conveying to the intellect the things subjected to it, is clearly imaged, and the intellect, receiving these things many times, noting the occasion, the time and the manner, stores them up in itself and remembers. Reasoning becomes allowable if it is based in an incident, and deduces its conclusions in accordance with phenomena. For if reasoning lays its foundation in obvious facts, it is found to exist in the domain of intellect, which itself receives from other sources each of its impressions. So we must conceive of our nature as being stirred and instructed under compulsion by the great variety of things. And the intellect taking over from nature the impressions, leads us afterwards into truth.



# "Precepts" ("Παραγγελίαι")

I. In time there is opportunity, and opportunity exists for a limited time. Healing is a matter of time, but it is sometimes also a matter of opportunity. Knowing this, one must practice medicine not based primarily on possible theories but on experience, as confirmed with reason. Because reason is a composite memory of things apprehended with sense-perception. For the sense-perception, coming first in experience and conveying to the intellect the things subjected to it, is clear in the intellect, receiving these things many times, noting the occasion, the time and the manner, stores them up in itself and remembers. Reasoning becomes allowable if it is based in an incident, and deduces its conclusions in accordance with phenomena. For if reasoning lays its foundation in obvious facts, it is founded on the use of intellect, which itself receives from other sources each of its impressions. So we must conceive of our nature as being stirred and instructed under compulsion by the great variety of things. And the intellect taking over from nature the impressions, leads us afterwards into truth.

**Chance - Indeterminism**

**Empiricism**

**Evidence-based**

**Medicine**

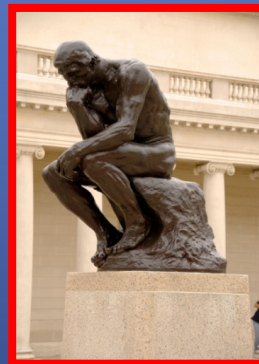


# **“Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”)**

I. But if [reasoning] begins, not from a clear sense impression, but from a possible creation of tale it often induces a sad and troublesome condition. All who so act are lost in a blind street. Now no harm would be done if bad physicians did not receive their payment. But their innocent patients suffer, because the violence of their disorder became worse with the addition of their physician's inexperience.

## **Therapies with no scientific basis may be Harmful**

**Dream therapy  
Astrology  
Magic remedies**



**Evil eye cure  
Homeopathy  
Bones of saints**





# **"Precepts" ("Παραγγελίαι")**

II. But conclusions which are merely verbal cannot bear fruit, only those conclusions do which are based on demonstrated fact. For affirmation and talk are deceptive and treacherous. Wherefore one must hold fast to facts in generalisations also and occupy oneself with facts persistently, if one is to acquire that ready and infallible habit which we call "the art of medicine." For so to do will be a very great utility upon patients and medical practitioners... One must pay attention to generalities in incidents, and be useful and calm rather than full of promises and of excuses that accompany ill-success.

## **Evidence-based Medicine**

Do not hesitate to inquire of laymen, if there seems likely to result in any improvement in treatment. For so I think the whole art has been set forth, by observing some part of the final end in each of many particulars, and then combining all into a single whole.

## **Good History Taking**



# "Precepts" ("Παραγγελίαι")

III. Early determination of the patient's treatment is useful, since only what is actually been administered will benefit. Emphatic assertion is useless.

## Actual therapy – Not empty words

IV. Should you begin by discussing fees, you will suggest to the patient either that you will go away and leave him if no agreement be reached, or that you will neglect him and not prescribe any immediate treatment. So **one must not be anxious about fixing a fee.** For I consider such a worry to be harmful to a troubled patient, particularly if the disease be acute. For the quickness of the disease, offering no opportunity for turning back, urges the good physician not to seek his profit but rather to lay hold on reputation. Therefore, **it is better to shame a patient you have saved than to extort money from those who are at death's door.**

**Utility is Good practice & reputation-Not money**



# “Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”)

V. Some patients ask for inappropriate and doubtful treatment, because of prejudice, deserving indeed to be disregarded, but not to be punished. Therefore, you must reasonably oppose them, as they are embarked upon a stormy sea of change.

## Consultation of patients - Philanthropy

VI. I urge you not to be too unkind, but to consider carefully your patient's wealth or means. Sometimes give your services for nothing, calling to mind a previous benefaction or your present reputation. And if there be an opportunity of serving one who is a foreigner in financial straits, give full assistance to all such. For **where there is love of man (philanthropy), there is also love of the art (medicine)**. For some patients, though conscious that their condition is perilous, recover their health simply through their contentment with the goodness of the physician. And it is good to superintend the sick to make them well, to care for the healthy to keep them well, due to goodwill.





# "Precepts" ("Παραγγελίαι")

VII. Now those **quacks** who are in deep ignorance of medicine, who may win reputation and fortune because of some good luck treating wealthy men, and if a relapse occurs they stand upon their **arrogance**, having neglected the irreproachable methods of the art, wherewith a good physician, a "brother of the art" as he is called, would be at his best. But he who accomplishes his cures easily without making a mistake would not go against any of these methods for the purpose of power; for he is not distrusted on the ground of wickedness. For **quacks do not attempt treatment when they see an alarming condition, and avoid calling in other physicians, because they wickedly hate help**. And the patients in their pain drift on a sea of twofold wretchedness for not having intrusted themselves to the end to the fuller treatment that is given by the art.

**Collaboration of Good Physicians**  
**Pretension & Arrogance of Quacks**



# "Precepts" ("Παραγγελίαι")

VIII. Physicians who meet in consultation must never quarrel or jeer at one another. For I will assert upon oath, a physician's reasoning should never be jealous of another. To be so will be a sign of weakness. Those who act thus lightly are rather those connected with the business of the market-place. Yet it is no mistaken idea to call in a consultant. For in all abundance there is lack (No matter how much help you have you can never have enough).

## **Collegiality – Decency – Science not fiction**

X. You must also avoid adopting luxurious headgear and elaborate perfume, in order to gain a patient. For excess of strangeness will win you ill-repute, but a little will be considered in good taste, just as pain in one part is a triviality, while in every part it is serious. Yet I do not forbid your pleasing appearance, for it is for a physician's protection.

XII. If for the sake of a crowded audience you do wish to hold a lecture, your ambition is not praiseworthy, and at least avoid all citations from the poets, for to quote them shows simple mindedness. For I abandon in medical practice an industry not pertinent to the art, and laboriously far-fetched, and which therefore has in itself alone an attractive grace. For you will achieve the empty toil of a drone and a drone's spoils.



# **“Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”)**

XIII. A condition too is desirable free from the late-learner's faults. For his state accomplishes nothing that is immediate, and its remembrance of what is not before the eyes is but tolerable.

So there arises a quarrelsome inefficiency, with headstrong outrage, that has no thought for what is seemly, while definitions, professions, oaths, great as far as the gods invoked are concerned, come from the physician in charge of the disease, bewildered laymen being lost in admiration of flowery language spoken in continuous reading and instruction, crowding together even before they are troubled by a disease.

Wherever I may be in charge of a case, with no confidence should I call in such men to help as consultants.

## **Pretentious Appeal to Divine Intervention**





# **“Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”)\***

XIV. When regimen has been restricted, you must not suppress for long a long-standing desire of the patient. **In a chronic disease indulgence too helps to set a man on his feet again,** if one pay the necessary attention to one who is immaturely blind. As great fear is to be guarded against, so is excessive joy.

Irregularity in a disease signifies that it will be a long one.

**A crisis is the riddance of a disease.**

**Loud talking is painful.**

**Overworking calls for gentle discouragement.**

**Pleasure=Absence of Pain and Anxiety**  
**Utility and Philanthropy**

\*Text (with some modifications) from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>  
Hippocrates Collected Works I. Hippocrates. W. H. S. Jones.

Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1868.



## Influenced by Epicurean philosophy, **Asclepiades of Bithynia** (124-40 BCE)

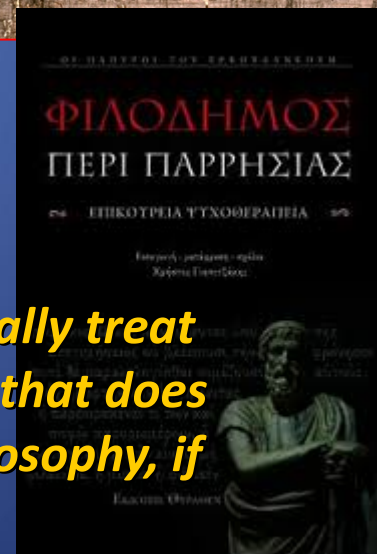
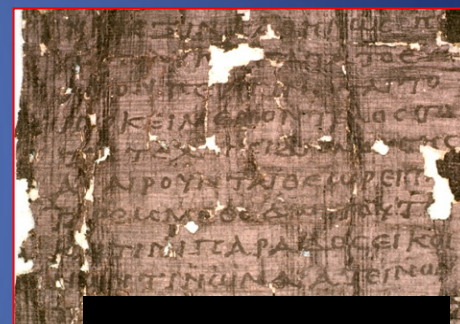
introduced **Humanistic values** in Medicine:

- He favored mild therapeutic methods and the **friendly** support of patients
- He was a pioneer in the **humane** treatment of patients with mental disorders



## **Philodemus of Gadara** (110-35 BCE)

- taught in Rome Epicurean philosophy as a therapy for the soul
- his book “on Frank Criticism” has >10 examples from medical art



***“Empty is the philosophical argument which does not therapeutically treat any human suffering. For just as there is no utility in a medical art that does not cast out the sickness of bodies, so too there is no utility in philosophy, if it does not throw out suffering from the soul.” (Epicurus)***



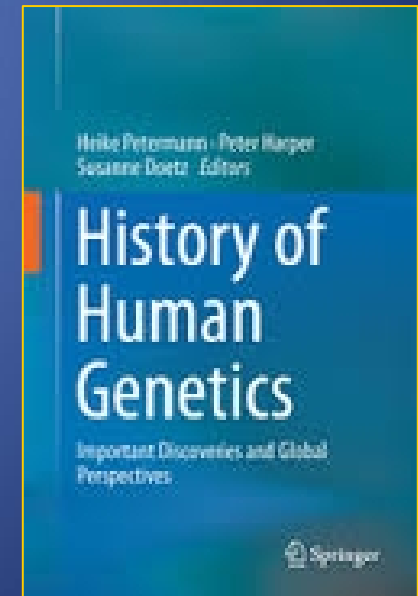
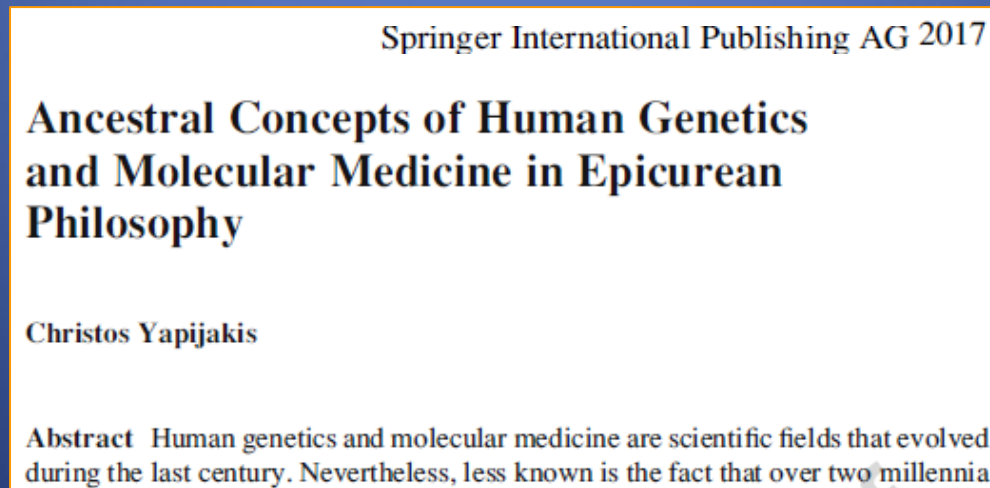


# “Precepts” (“Παραγγελίαι”)

## Conclusions

- There were two different approaches in ancient Greek medicine originating from two different lines of philosophical thinking.
- One approach was more metaphysical and was glorified in the Middle Ages
- One approach was more humanistic and more similar to modern evidence-based scientific medicine promoting

## Utility and Philanthropy







***Thank you  
for your attention!***



## ***Special Thanks for Discussions***

- As. Professor **Vangelis Protopapadakis**  
Bioethics & Applied Philosophy  
School of Philosophy, University of Athens
- As. Professor **Costas Voumvourakis**  
Neurology  
School of Medicine, University of Athens
- **“Garden of Athens”**  
Friends of Epicurean Philosophy

