

THE BEST DOCTOR IS ALSO A PHILOSOPHER

53 1. [K i] There is a malaise very frequently encountered in athletes: in spite of a desire to become Olympic champions, they take no regular exercise which might lead to the realization of that desire. A similar problem obtains in the case of doctors. Doctors will pay lip-service to Hippocrates, to be sure, and look up to him as to a man without peer; but when it comes to taking the necessary steps to reach the same rank themselves—well, they do quite the opposite.

Now, the opinion of Hippocrates was that astronomy (and therefore clearly the study which is prior to astronomy, too, that is, geometry) is of central relevance to the study of medicine; *these* people are not only personally ignorant of both
54 disciplines—they actually censure others who are not equally ignorant. Furthermore, Hippocrates set great store by accurate knowledge of the body, as the starting-point for the whole science of medicine; these doctors fail, in their studies, to learn any of the following matters: the substance, formation, construction, size, and relationship to its neighbours of each part of the body—and indeed its position too. Hippocrates also pointed out that an inability to distinguish diseases by species and genus* leads to the failure of the doctor in his therapeutic aims; his attempt was to encourage us to train ourselves in logical theory. But the present generation of doctors, so far from enjoying a training in logical theory, in fact blame those who do have this training for wasting their energies.

Again, Hippocrates says that one should employ great forethought in the construction of a 'prognosis' of the present, past, and future state of the patient; today's doctors are so perfectly studied in this branch of the art that if someone
55 predicts a haemorrhage or a sweat they denounce him as a magician or a speaker of riddles. Such fellows are hardly likely to tolerate one who is able to predict other matters beyond these; nor are they likely to base their instructions for diet* on

the expected peak of the disease—in spite of the fact that Hippocrates himself advocated such diets.

What remains, then, for them to admire in the man? Certainly not his skill in exposition. Such skill is, indeed, another of Hippocrates' qualities; but it is one so lacking in these authors that they may sometimes be observed making two mistakes in one word—something which is quite difficult even to imagine.

2. So I decided to try to find the reason why this universal admiration for the man is not backed up by a reading of his texts. (Or, if someone actually does read them, he does not understand them; or, if by great good fortune he does both, he baulks at actually studying the theoretical precepts seriously and turning them into his customary practice.) In my experience, other accomplishments follow if one is well endowed
56 with will and ability; if either of these is lacking, it is quite impossible for the goal to be achieved. We can readily observe athletes failing to reach their goals, either through the natural deficiencies of their bodies or through a neglect of exercise. But if someone has a physique that equips him for victory, and performs all the appropriate exercises, what can possibly prevent him from running off with a whole series of crowns? So, are today's doctors deficient on both counts? Do they lack both potential and sufficient eagerness in their preparation for the art? Or do they have one but lack the other?

That no one should be born with sufficient mental powers to learn an art which is so beneficial to mankind seems absurd, since the world is essentially the same as it was in previous times: the seasons have not changed order, nor has the sun's course altered, nor has any one of the stars—either a fixed star or a planet—admitted of change. It must be because of the bad
57 upbringing current in our times, and because of the higher value accorded to wealth as opposed to virtue, that we no longer get anyone of the quality of Pheidias among our sculptors, of Apelles* among painters, or of Hippocrates among our doctors. And yet the fact that we were born later than the ancients, and have inherited from them arts which they developed to such a high degree, should have been a considerable

advantage. It would be easy, for example, to learn thoroughly in a very few years what Hippocrates discovered over a very long period of time, and then to devote the rest of one's life to the discovery of what remains. But it is impossible for someone who puts wealth before virtue, and studies the art for the sake of personal gain rather than public benefit, to have the art itself as his goal. It is impossible to pursue financial gain at the same time as training oneself in so great an art; someone who is really enthusiastic about one of these aims will inevitably despise the other.

58 If there, then, any of our contemporaries of whom it may be said that his desire for financial gain is limited to what will provide for his simple bodily needs? Is there one with the ability not only to make a verbal formulation, but also to give an actual example of this: the limitation of wealth to Nature's requirements for the prevention of hunger, thirst, or cold?

3. If such a person exists, he will scorn Artaxerxes and Perdiccas.* He will wish never to come into the sight of the former; as for the latter, he will heal him of the disease he suffers, regarding him as a man in need of the Hippocratic art. He will not, however, spend all his time with Perdiccas, but will treat the poor people of Kranon and Thasos and the small towns. He will leave Polybus* and [Hippocrates'] other disciples to the citizens of Cos, and will himself travel through the whole of Greece. So as to test from his own experience what he has learnt from reading, he will at all costs have to make a personal inspection of different cities: those that lie in southerly or northerly areas, or in the land of the rising or of
59 the setting sun. He must visit cities that are located in valleys as well as those on heights, and cities that use water brought in from outside as well as those that use spring water or rainwater, or water from standing lakes or rivers. Nor should he neglect to consider whether they use excessively cold or hot waters, or waters of an 'alkaline', 'astringent', or other such quality. He should look at a city on the banks of a large river, one by stagnant water, one on a hill, one by the sea—and observe everything else about which Hippocrates taught.

If, then, this is the nature of one's character, one will,

necessarily, not only despise money, but also be extremely hard-working. And one cannot be hard-working if one is continually drinking or eating or indulging in sex: if, to put it briefly, one is a slave to genitals and belly. The true doctor will be found to be a friend of temperance and a companion of truth. Furthermore, he must study logical method to know how many diseases there are, by species and by genus, and how, in each case, one is to find out what kind of treatment is indicated. 60

The same method also provides the foundations for knowledge of the body's very nature, which is to be understood on three levels. First, the level of the primary elements, which are in a state of total mixture with each other; secondly, the level of the perceptible, which is also called the 'homogeneous'; thirdly, that which derives from the organic parts. The use and function for the animal of each of these is also a lesson of the logical method: they too should be learnt by a process of rigorous demonstration, not uncritically.

What grounds are then left for any doctor who wishes to be trained in the art in a way worthy of Hippocrates not to be a philosopher? He must be practised in logical theory in order to discover the nature of the body, the differences between diseases, and the indications as to treatment; he must despise money and cultivate temperance in order to stay the course. He must, therefore, know all the parts of philosophy: the logical, the physical, and the ethical.* In that case there will be no danger of his performing any evil action, since he practises temperance and despises money: all evil actions that men undertake are done either at the prompting of greed or under the spell of pleasure. And so he is bound to be in possession of the other virtues too, for they all go together.* It is impossible to gain one without acquiring all the others as an immediate consequence; they are connected as if by one string. 61

If, then, philosophy is necessary to doctors with regard both to preliminary learning and to subsequent training, clearly all true doctors must also be philosophers. That doctors need philosophy in order to employ their art in the right way seems to me to require no demonstration, when it has so frequently been observed that those who are interested in financial gain

are druggists, not doctors, and use the art for the opposite of its natural purpose.

4. I hope that no one is going to quibble over words, and come out with some nonsense just for the sake of arguing, for example that 'the doctor should of course be above monetary matters, and be a just man, but still not a philosopher'; or that 'he should know the nature of the body, the use of the parts, the differences between diseases and the indications as to treatment, but still not be practised in logical theory.' This would be to agree on the factual issue, but shamelessly concoct a disagreement on a purely semantic basis. We do not have time for this sort of thing. You would do better to return to common sense, and not quarrel with your fellow over mere sounds, like a jackdaw or raven—but interest yourself in the actual truth of the matter. You surely cannot claim that, though a weaver or shoemaker could never achieve competence without teaching and practice, people may suddenly appear with the quality of justice or temperance, with logical ability, or with a knowledge of the natural world without having had recourse to teachers, or without having imposed such a training on oneself. That would be a brazen claim. And the only other possible position would be that of a man making a verbal, not a factual, dispute.

63 We must, then, practise philosophy, if we are true followers of Hippocrates. And, if we practise philosophy, there is nothing to prevent us, not only from reaching a similar attainment, but even from becoming better than him. For it is open to us to learn everything which he gave us a good account of, and then to find out the rest for ourselves.

AN EXHORTATION TO STUDY THE ARTS*

1. [K i] It is not clear whether so-called 'dumb animals' are, in fact, entirely devoid of reason. Perhaps, though they are not endowed with that form of reason which achieves verbal expression, and which is known as 'external', they all none the less possess at least that form of reason within the soul which is called 'internal',* although some to a more advanced degree than others. The crucial difference between them and man, though, is seen in the great variety of arts which this latter animal performs, and from the fact that man alone has the capacity for knowledge: he can learn whichever art he wishes. All other animals, with a very few exceptions, are practically without the capacity for Art; and these few acquire it by nature rather than by choice.

But it is not just that man is practised in all *their* arts—mimicking the spider in weaving, moulding as does the bee, demonstrating considerable skill, too, in spite of being a land animal, in swimming. No: man also follows the divine arts. He emulates Asclepius in the art of medicine, Apollo in this same art and in all the others which that god possesses—archery, music, and prophecy—and each one of the Muses in her particular art. Man is not ignorant of geometry, nor of astronomy; moreover he examines (as Pindar* has it) 'the realm beneath the earth, the realm beyond the sky'. He has also by conscientious labour acquired that greatest of divine goods: philosophy. So, even if other animals perhaps have some share in reason, it is man alone among them who is called 'rational' *par excellence*.

2. Is it not vile, then, to neglect the one part of us which we share with the gods, while squandering our energies on some other matter; to disregard the acquisition of Art, and give ourselves over to Fortune? To put in graphic form how miserable a creature Fortune is, the ancients portrayed her, not just as a woman—as if this were not a sufficient sign of inanity—