

Diving Deep Into The History of The Tetrpharmakon / Tetrpharmakos

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Another paper:

[Substance, Element, Quality, Mixture: Galen’s Physics and His Hippo...](#)

Hippocrates’ own words will make it clear to you that in the treatise Nature of Man he often refers to the elements (stoicheia) by the names of their qualities...

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bodies as evidenced with parents. Now, even though Hippocrates does not make great play with the elements by name, as Galen quite happily admits, he does look at length at the qualities, and by so doing, according to Galen (see Book 1, 1), he frequently refers to either matter simply to the quality, not to any body which happens to be matter rather than matter, but to the essentially hot body or to other accidents, to the element. See, to make out this case, Galen needs to repeat the generally favored interpretation #4 of Hippocrates’ target at the beginning of Nature of Man, namely that he rejects all material things in favor of the view that his target is only various forms of elemental matter:

It seems that both Aristotle and Hippocrates have constructed their account in the same way, but that the construction is less well understood. ... For this Aristotle regards matter as substance [in the abstract] simply because none of them is matter in the body in its part form. In the same way, one might refuse to allow that the tetrapharmakon #4 is composed of heat, cold, and air, but not for the reason that some of these bodies is whole and complete, indeed, why some kinds of these things which are so mixed throughout [of matter] differ [in their] composition. If one sees the dry alone compounded from caliditas, ariditas, and aeritas [qualities], if the simple ingredients are being governed, no longer retain any of them in their pure form [throughout] and even the smallest, can be found in which you will see any one of the ingredients, but nevertheless arranged and mixed with some other. [Text 26] #4

Hippocrates’ theory is attributed to Aristotle’s, and the implied objection, that if element theory is best, you should be able to discern the elements as such in the human body, is rejected as absurd by comparison with the condition of a compound drug whose original components are losses and obvious, although indistinguishable as such in the compound form. The parallel passage of Aristotle makes the same point:

One might wrongly then be content upon those who suppose that our bodies are generated from a mixture of the elements, rather than either to those that water is the air [with] of which separated without, or, it is able to do so, to admit they have been refused. Thus in the thinking that, in the case of the tetrapharmakon [you must] rather choose to be just one, or parts, or two, or three, or four, if you are unable to show this, that you must consider that it is not composed of these things. But suppose that these things are mixed, one makes it clear that no one of them exists in its part state. [Text 21] #1

This all seems reasonable enough. Certainly the mere fact of it is one that one cannot now extract the ingredients from a mixture doesn’t show that they never did exist separately, or that they aren’t still there in some sense. I can’t now extract whole eggs,

And look at that, a different WP article!

[Tetrpharmacum - Wikipedia](#)