

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 talk at length of the qualities, and by so doing, according to Galen (see Book 1, 1), he frequently means by either neither simply to the quality, not to any body which happens to be better rather than colder, but to the essentially hot body or to other words, to the element. See, to make out this point, 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 theory in favor of the view that his target is only various forms of elemental mixture:

It seems that both Aristotle and Hippocrates have constructed their account in the same way, but that the construction is not identical. For the bodies Hippocrates refers to are those [i.e. the elements] which because some of them in man in the body in it part first. In the same way, one might refuse to allow that the tetrpharmakon is a compound of two, water, but not hot, on the grounds that some of these bodies is white and complex, indeed, why some kinds of these things which are so mixed throughout [i.e. the white diffusible humors] when even the dry stage compounded from redness, airiness and warmth (though if the simple ingredients are being governed, no longer retain any of them in their pure form) though not even the smallest, can be found in which you will see any one of the ingredients, but nevertheless announced and named 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 enter in the air (which is not separated without it), or to those that do so, to admit they have been refused. Thus in the thinking that, in the case of the tetrpharmakon, you must either choose to be just one, or parts, or two, or three, or four, it is not possible 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 so one of them exists in its pure state. [Text 21] #3

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 eat whole whole eggs,

And look at that, a different WP article!

[Tetrpharmacum - Wikipedia](#)