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*The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body  
in Ancient Greece* by Brooke Holmes

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This is a humanist's book and readers of *Aestimatio* will want to know up front that the original claims are less about the scientific knowledge or reasoning of classical Greece than about the role of medical discourse in the development of mainstream Athenian classical thought, literature, and philosophy, as it has more traditionally been defined. Since most scholarship on the rich and well preserved Hippocratic corpus is all too isolated, and since ambitious syntheses of Greek intellectual history like those of Bruno Snell (in the mid-20th century) and G. E. R. Lloyd (early 1960s to present) can always be supplemented, not least by integration of the prolific research in ancient medicine from the last 30 years, Holmes provides a timely new avenue for putting ancient medicine centrally on the map of classical Greek thought.

Rosalind Thomas' *Herodotus in Context* [2000] can be compared; and Holmes exceeds Thomas in range and ambition by virtue of her forays into core ideas of tragedy and philosophy, where she establishes the influence of medicine, not for the first time, but as a turning point in a new master-narrative and in a setting accessible to a broad audience. Perhaps inevitably, given the range of the book and its proposal of a continuously developing story from Homer to Plato, Holmes' explanations can fall short of Thomas' precedent in precision and rigor. Yet these explanations are interesting and they intersect with modern issues that both are and ought to be philosophical in so far as we can accept Holmes' quest to historicize and so destabilize the conception of a passive, automatic human body continuous with inert matter (and so with robots and other artificial life forms), such as might be assumed in some modern schools.

Specialists in ancient medicine should be glad to have such an articulate and intelligent advocate trying not only to bridge the gaps among subfields of Hellenic studies but making connections to Foucault and the ‘mind-body problem’ that we have inherited (as the story goes) from Plato and Descartes. Holmes’ main goal, if it can be put so bluntly, is to pin the very origin (which is sort of a proto-origin in so far as it needed the later development by Plato among others) of the mind-body problem on the Hippocratic corpus.

Holmes keeps her main argument before the reader’s mind in clear fashion.<sup>1</sup> She argues that ‘the body’ inherited by the Western Tradition (which is, overall, Plato’s ‘body’ («σῶμα»), as we see it especially in the *Phaedo*, *Alcibiades I* and, more theoretically, in the core arguments of the *Sophist* and *Timaeus*) has a history that can be usefully traced, presumably in order to show that it is contingent on certain interlocutors rather than self-evident and universally true. The Greek term «σῶμα» is part of the argument: overall, Holmes thinks (against the complications brought up by Snell in *The Discovery of the Mind* [1953]), there is a simple, continuous trajectory from Homer to Plato whereby what was originally a term for organic bodies becomes a term for inert body, that is, matter. At the same time, Holmes hangs with one or two fingers onto Snell’s implication that Homer’s use of the word «σῶμα» only for corpses shows that there always was something dead and disparate about it. Her explanation for the semantic shift of «σῶμα» in the mid-fifth century BC, which she discerns from Melissus fr. 30B9 [Diels and Kranz 1952] in conjunction with a passage in the Hippocratic *On Regimen*, appeals to issues Plato cared much about, form and stability. Like Snell’s own argument, hers seems to have a Platonic teleology. But the big picture does not depend essentially on the argument about Melissus. We have always known that Plato differs from Homer in ranking soul over body, and Holmes’ case for a particular path through the intervening time and culture, whereby the Hippocratics become one key precipitating background for Plato, is convincing overall. (She encourages us to forget about the Pythagoreans, the more traditional answer: but it is likely that Plato’s thought is a focus for many traditions.)

<sup>1</sup> See esp. pp. 2, 15, 22, 85–87, 189–191, 193–195, 225–227, 237–39, 273–274, 275–276.

Publishing a major book like this one within five years of the Ph.D. is a stellar achievement. Holmes (Ph.D. Princeton University, 2005) has read broadly in many languages on topics in Greek literature, Greek philosophy, modern art, and modern theory; and she has studied a wide array of Greek texts from Homer to Plato *via* the Presocratics and Hippocratics with a particularly keen eye for Euripides (evident already in an article of 2008 in *Classical Antiquity*). Her single most important interlocutor may be Foucault, although *The Use of Pleasure* [1985] and *The Care of the Self* [1986] do not dominate the book: indeed, the aim is to fill in more completely the story of origins that Foucault elides [5, 20n64, 177n119, 189–90]. From and through this previous scholarship and critical inquiry, Holmes tracks a course of her own, articulated nicely both in chronological terms and on the level of her prose. This is, to repeat, an achievement matched by few. That said, the reviewer's task is to evaluate the book, not the author. In Holmes' own words [87n9], in reference to Aristotle's history of his predecessors, one might expect, and even prefer, a 'healthy distrust' to any such master-narrative proposed as the account of the past. The following comments highlight Holmes' major claims and submit them to (some) critical examination. Since the book is so comprehensive, other readers may prefer to select other points for close criticism.

The book can be summarized under the three-part structure that Holmes gives [37–40]. First [ch. 1], Homeric poetry shows us how Greeks understood the boundaries of the ethical human self and the non-human 'other' before the emergence of naturalist thinking (Holmes renounces 'science' in its full sense) in the sixth and fifth centuries and of 'new medicine' in the late fifth and early fourth centuries. The human being was something complex, not just a soul and not just a body, but a being comprised of various working parts that could generally be seen and sensed. Surprising (and unseen) disruptions in the regular function of the human being, that is, both magical and uncaused events, were interpreted as divine actions; and the gods, who were intentional like humans, constituted the main field of 'the other' that interrupted the phenomenology of human life and so also constituted the main limit on human responsibility.

Second [ch. 2–4], the first Greek natural philosophers struck out in a new direction by conceiving of an extra-human world, or cosmos, as (quasi-)systematic, operating mostly by internal laws that allowed no

choices or decisions and, hence, no ethical value. When ‘new medicine’ emerged, the Greek doctors, as well as some of the philosophers, used the naturalists’ terms to explain the human being and so developed a kind of systematic explanation of the human being based on the more or less automatic interactions of internal, non-ethical stuffs such as humors and their quasi-chemical qualities or powers. The medical texts generally omit the ethical person, treating him or her as the object of the doctor’s technical care. But because the nature under discussion in these technical treatises is the nature of the human being, we can trace out the authors’ recognition (which is sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit) of the ethical person. This ethical person shows up mostly as one who is supposed to cooperate with the physician by taking care of him- or herself. This internal caregiver, who seeks what is objectively best against what might be subjectively pleasant, is the prototype for the new subject position, or the new ‘ethical substance’ (a quotation of Foucault), of the newly abstracted, non-embedded Greek ethics.

Third [ch. 5–6], the consequences of the new turns in medicine specifically are evident in philosophers and at least one tragedian, Euripides, of the late fifth and early fourth centuries. Philosophical ethics emerges as care of the self, where the self to be governed is equated or aligned with the body; and the ethical agent of care is equated with a thinking and planning capacity, whether the ‘mind’ or the ‘soul’ or ‘deliberation’ or another intellectual organ or faculty. The newly theorized body is both the ‘foil’ for the newly theorized psychological self, defining what it is not, and an analogy for the psychological self, offering a model for the hidden interior. The real person is thereby reduced to the soul, which is not a body but has (or plausibly could not have) a body. (This way of putting things can be contrasted with its converse, that the person is primarily a body, which has, or plausibly could not have, a soul.) This soul has both unity and anatomy like that of the body, by analogy. It can acquire disease and it can grow or nurture a disease automatically, so to speak, in its own internal cavity, whose workings are unseen but can be diagnosed and explained and either can be (in the most optimistic passages of the philosophers) or cannot be (in tragedy) treated and cured.

Close analysis should pay particular attention to the Hippocratic texts that Holmes calls into play. But first Homer. Holmes’ picture

of the Homeric background, in its focus on wounded and dying soldiers, might paint around and over certain matters that could be seen differently; but no one will dispute that abstract and technical accounts of the human, whether body or soul, are not found in Homer. Whether there is body-soul dualism in Homer (the answer depends on what ‘dualism’ exactly requires, whether different ‘material’, which is false and impossible for Homer, or just spatial separability and independent persistence of two components), this is relevant only at death and it has no role in the structure of the living human and no place in the ethics of living.<sup>2</sup>

The reader is sometimes uncertain, given the ethical evolution that she posits in the full run of the book, how Holmes places Homer’s characters in the history of ethical subjects. Many readers have found the *Iliad* to be far more realistic and humanist, and far less interested in necessary (rather than rhetorically useful) divine causation or even a divine ‘other’ than it looks under Holmes’ reading.<sup>3</sup> If there are not fully mature ethical subjects in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, it is hard to say what is missing. Government of the self is not abstracted in Homer as it is by Plato; but both Plato [*Rep.* 441b] and modern scholars have shown—as Holmes acknowledges in passing [60–61, 69–72]—how Homeric characters experience dilemmas and how they overcome parts of themselves, the fearful or emotional parts, through the operation of other parts of themselves, the parts that look for the best or the most advantageous outcome.<sup>4</sup> Holmes never claims really that ethics is missing from Homer (and she is very careful to keep Homeric characters’ belief in their gods plausible). Rather, her clearest claim is that in the wake of the Hippocratics we get ‘a new kind of “ethical substance”’ [189, quoting Foucault 1985, 26–27]. But a main arch of her story [e.g., 226] is the claim that the ‘daemonic other’, against which the human ethical self is to be defined and judged after the Hippocratics have made their mark, is the body; whereas in Homer

<sup>2</sup> One might note that death is a major motivation for the body-soul dualism in most human cultures and so could be important to Plato, too, in and after the *Phaedo*, despite Holmes’ efforts to sideline Greek eschatological traditions [30–31; 195n9 is a more positive footnote].

<sup>3</sup> Griffin [1977] showed that Homer, by contrast with other residues from the epic cycle, is generally not super-natural.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Williams 1993 and Gill 1996, both of which Holmes uses at multiple points.

it had been the gods, who are somehow not fully to be distinguished from the person or not rigorously definable themselves: hence, ethics is not defined. This seems to diminish Homer. Perhaps one could get Holmes and Foucault both to agree that the new kind of ethical substance which we find in the philosophers might restrict the range of ethics even as it deepens the concepts by focusing so obsessively on control of the subject's own appetites. Of course, this change, for the better or for the worse, is handed down through Aristotle's practical syllogisms and Thomas Aquinas to mainstream European culture of the high Middle Ages and becomes a core (or the core) of ethics for several centuries of the pre-Cartesian, pre-Kantian, pre-Nietzschian, pre-Freudian, pre-Foucauldian background.

Let us turn to Holmes' history of automatic systems and inert body [ch. 2–4]. Surveying Anaximenes, Xenophanes, and Heraclitus, and including fifth-century receptions in Aristophanes, Euripides, and Plato of their ideas about cosmology, Holmes shows that by the late fifth century the 'laws of nature' can be considered to have 'a measure of autonomy' [98]. No one will dispute this. Meanwhile, thinkers such as Alcmaeon, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Democritus describe humans in physicalists' terms and address interactions and reciprocity between humans and non-human nature, including their birth, death, and sensation [99–101]. No one will dispute this either. Holmes' own claim is about just how the Greek word «σῶμα», which in or before Plato's works (esp. *Sophist* and *Timaeus*) is to become the earliest Greek word for inert matter, makes that semantic shift from organic body to inert matter.

The key idea, according to Holmes, is that the σῶμα is 'the site' of the physical reciprocity between organic bodies and inert cosmic matter [101] as organic bodies come to be and pass away: the fact that organic bodies have interchange with stuff outside themselves motivates the use of the term «σῶμα» for both.<sup>5</sup> The outcome of the semantic shift of «σῶμα» to 'inert matter' is apparent in a citation of Diogenes of Apollonia by Simplicius [Diels and Kranz 1952 fr. 64B7] and in several *testimonia* on Gorgias as well as directly in his *Encomium of Helen* [§8], evidence which probably pre-dates Plato.

<sup>5</sup> This is the process that Aristotle explores in *De gen. et cor.* and it is implied in passages of Plato from as early as the *Symposium*, but evidence in the Presocratics is lacking.

But the key figure for Holmes is Melissus (*flor. ca* 440 BC), who is attested using the term «σῶμα» in [Diels and Kranz 1952](#), fr. 30B9. Given Melissus' presence in the opening of the Hippocratic *On the Nature of Man* as well as his own discussion of pain as a phenomenon to be denied to what-is [fr. 30B7], his bridging function is highly plausible. Older scholarship has already proposed that this fragment of Melissus is intermediate in the intellectual discovery (or invention, as one prefers) of non-material being.<sup>6</sup> Holmes finds insufficient Sedley's more recent view<sup>7</sup> that Melissus denies σῶμα to what-is because he is denying its anthropomorphism (and so the term is neither a novel metaphor nor a dead metaphor, but still stands on the earlier side of the semantic shift) and she proposes more: that key to Melissus' usage is an unrecognized component in the original, Homeric meaning of «σῶμα», the sense of corruptibility and change over time [104]. This meaning is supported from a sentence from *On Regimen* 1.28, which Holmes dates to 'ca 400 BC' (40 years after Melissus is said to have flourished), and has obvious connections to Plato's view of aesthetic objects.

Maybe this solution is not impossible but it seems almost like a rabbit pulled out of the hat. In particular, the Homeric background that Holmes claims [104] seems wrong. Although Holmes lays the groundwork earlier in explicating Homeric «σῶμα» as 'flesh' and 'the point where form is yielding to formlessness' [34], this interpretation (which gains support from J.-P. Vernant [1991, as well as from Renchan's paraphrase 'bulk' [1979, 278]) misses what seems to me a crucial difference between «σῶμα» used as a so-called count noun, one that implies individuation and readily becomes plural, and «σῶμα» used as a mass noun, one that, like 'flesh' or 'blood' or 'bronze', usually remains singular because it names unformed stuff.<sup>8</sup>

Up to Melissus, «σῶμα» is a count noun and a group of dead organic bodies are σώματα, not σῶμα. It is unclear whether Melissus in fr. B9 uses σώματα as a count noun or a mass noun (Holmes negotiates this ambiguity by placing an article in parentheses); but,

<sup>6</sup> See [Renchan 1980](#), 117 with references.

<sup>7</sup> [Sedley 1999](#), reported and endorsed in [Palmer 2003](#), 4.

<sup>8</sup> At the same time, the Pluralists could naturally speak of their stuff as plural σώματα that are not to be counted, as one can also speak of 'bones' and 'sinews' as organic matter.

since Simplicius uses no article in citing Melissus, one might want to presume the mass-noun sense. Or, if it is a count-noun applied (or, more correctly, denied) to the unique being the cosmos (or the singular what-is), the choice might vanish and this usage might help to bridge the semantic gap. In *On Regimen* 1.28, by contrast, we have the older use by this criterion, a count-noun used for an individual human body, whereas ‘the soul’ in this passage seems to be used as a mass-noun since it is the same for all ensouled beings. (It might be argued that ‘the body’ in its first occurrence is parallel, even as the point is that each being has a different body; but this is ambiguous in the same way it is for Melissus). Further, corruptibility has no resonance in Simplicius’ context or in the (very inert) pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *On Gorgias, Melissus, and Xenophanes*, where the relation between  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  and the Eleatic what-is is also featured. One can say that the question deserves more investigation and that any use of « $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ » or « $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha\tau\alpha$ » in the mass-noun sense in the Hippocratic corpus would be relevant.

Meanwhile, the contrast between the varying bodies and the identical soul (of male and female, in this case) in *On Regimen* 1.28 is very interesting in relationship to Plato’s ontology; but it is an unsolved problem exactly when most texts in the Hippocratic corpus were written and how much they were influenced by Plato himself. (I am on Holmes’ side, generally in favor of the Hippocratics’ independence of Plato.) More likely, both could have been responding to the same debates between Monists and Pluralists. When it comes to more subtle points of reasoning, rather than vocabulary in itself, a direction of influence from late fifth-century natural philosophy into medical physiology seems more plausible, in general, than the reverse direction that Holmes is proposing. We can agree to a special relationship between Melissus and medicine (shared by other philosophers such as Alcmeon, Empedocles, and Democritus), and possibly to Melissus’ special role in the changing meaning of « $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$ »; and this may be all Holmes needs since Melissus wrote text now lost where a clear link might have been found. In short, we see the interaction between natural philosophers and doctors in a more robust way than we otherwise might and we recognize how closely the organic body

and cosmic nature (or what-is) were being compared and influenced each other's conceptualization.<sup>9</sup>

Holmes stops short of making organic bodies entirely inert or automatic, for there remains space in which the expert doctor will intervene (as she shows in detail in ch. 3). But she suggests that philosophical and medical theory comes close enough to doing this that the ethical subject is virtually omitted from the theory of the human. This is the 'invention' of the body or  $\sigma\omega\mu\alpha$  that she has promised [16–21, 28] to map out.

Holmes sets herself up to announce the rebirth of the ethical subject in her fourth chapter; and her most original contribution to the study of ancient medicine lies here, in combing out the ethical subject that must be implied (as she sometimes seems to assume, although she also demonstrates why and how) amid the objectified, systematic, but non-transparent body in which he or she now resides.<sup>10</sup> Her readings of *On Ancient Medicine* and *On Regimen*, as well as of other texts, show that medical care is a reciprocal practice between doctor and patient in which the patient must communicate with the doctor about his or her 'biofeedback' [166] and must cooperate in making advantageous choices about what to eat and drink, when and how much to wrestle or sleep, and so on. Key to her point is that the right answers of medical technique, whether this is in the domain of doctor or patient, are, despite the 'biofeedback' term, non-transparent to the body as a whole, which therefore needs something else, the external doctor or the internal ethical subject, to direct it. The ideal ethical subject is subject of the symptom in a secondary sense, not by feeling it but by deliberate and educated response to knowledge of its causes; alternatively, the patient who fails to follow correct technique *versus* the symptom or is passive to it becomes 'a

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<sup>9</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd is responsible for most of the modern work in this area but he never fully accounts for Melissus' intersections with medicine: his most extended treatment of Melissus is in [Lloyd 1979](#). Patricia Curd's subsequent work on the Eleatics laid the groundwork for distinguishing Melissus from Parmenides [see [Curd 1993](#) and [1998](#)].

<sup>10</sup> One must remember, of course, that there were other ethical subjects alive in Athenian culture, such as in Sophocles' tragedies if not in the still beloved Homer, and that the ethical subject of Hippocratic care need not have displaced them all, although maybe it did eventually.

symptom himself' [176, elucidating the book's ambiguous title; also 189, 217].

But sometimes Holmes may be imputing too much non-transparency and passive mechanism to this body (or thinking ahead too fast to Plato and Aristotle). The issue comes to the fore several times in chapters 3–5. To take one example [167–169], in *On Ancient Medicine* §9 the writer appeals to αἴσθησις τοῦ σώματος (perception of the body) as the ultimate criterion for determining correct treatment. There has been scholarly debate over whether the genitive 'of the body' is subjective or objective, that is, whether the body perceives (e.g., its own warmth or cold, or pleasure or pain) or whether someone, such as the doctor, perceives the body by poking it or looking at it, for example. Schiefsky (most recently) has argued on the basis of parallels in other Hippocratic texts that the body does perceive changes as subject and he understands that there is a transparency implied from 'the body' to the person who reports 'bodily' sensations to the physician [2005, 188–189]. Holmes, too, concludes that the genitive is subjective; but because the body is incomprehensible without the expertise of the doctor (as she argues from *On the Nature of a Human Being* §2), someone must then interpret the body anyway and both the physician and the patient are in equal position to 'gather somatic data' and 'make inferences'. Since *On Ancient Medicine* seeks to defend medicine as an expert's field, however, not to make it a self-help field or 'democratic' (which is more the interest of *On Regimen*), Holmes concludes that the physician 'has the advantage' in interpreting the body's data; and so, although the genitive is subjective, we compound the diagnosis process from αἴσθησις to αἴσθησις plus judgment and get two subjects, thereby ending up with the same meaning we would have if we had read the genitive objectively. One cannot help suspecting that Holmes is presupposing the compound nature of judgment in, e.g., Plato's *Theaet.* 163b–c.

In chapter 5 [196–197], we do look into a text, *On Diseases* 4.39, where Holmes finds a 'rare counterexample' in which the body's needs are 'seamlessly and uncannily transformed' into the person's desires; and then we consider some 'probably...playful' similarities [201–202] in Plato's *Gorgias* and *Phaedo* (as they may well be, but especially if certain rivals thought they were serious). My own suspicion is that this is closer to normal than Holmes is allowing. Apart from this inclination to overlook transparent bodily 'perception', Holmes succeeds in making her overall point, which fills out and advances

the insights of Foucault in *The Use of Pleasure* [1985, 99–116]. I will be among the first to agree that bodily ‘perception’ is several steps removed from ethical subjectivity or responsibility and that the questions merit further treatment at least in the Hippocratic corpus. Holmes maps out interesting territory for future work.

In her fifth chapter, where she turns to philosophical ethics, Holmes takes one last look at the medical corpus (*On the Use of Liquids* §2) to argue that the medical corpus itself has an inchoate notion of ethical error arising from conflict between the person’s desire and what is in fact good for the body, that is, ‘how desire—and especially desire for pleasure—comes to be articulated as an ethical problem’ [200]. She may want to set out a precedent or parallel for Plato’s conflict among parts within the soul by pointing to a Hippocratic writer’s conflict among parts within the body, and to show that the Hippocratic ‘person’ is identified with a privileged one among these parts just as in Plato’s *Republic* the ‘person’ becomes essentially the reasoning part of his soul. She also wants to ask, in consideration of a position like the Socratic denial of ἀκρασία, how the person ever comes to commit ethical error. She explains as follows:

The author of the treatise *On the Use of Liquids* makes just this assumption—namely, that because we are estranged from the cavity and its needs, other motivating forces, more intimately felt, surge up in the conscious field. The author has been observing that different parts of the *soma* take pleasure in (ἡδόμεαι) or are vexed by (ἀγανακτέω, ἄχθομαι) heat and cold. He then turns to note that, although the cavity grows irritated when it is overpowered by cold, the person, being ‘very far from feeling it’ (πλείστον ἀπέχει τοῦ παθεῖν), sometimes develops a desire for [*scil.* to drink] something cold. Given that this desire is most proximate, it is only to be expected that the person takes pleasure in his cold drink, oblivious, at least initially, to any distress caused to the cavity. From one perspective, the (initially unfelt) conflict between the needs of the cavity and the needs of the person is just one possible example of conflict within the physical body’s composite nature. At the same time, this conflict is singular, in so far as one ‘body part,’ that is, ‘the person,’ has the power to seek its pleasure at a significant cost to the

pleasure of the other parts and, indeed, to the health of the whole. [200]

*Liq.* 2 is a difficult text, as one sees when one tracks it down.<sup>11</sup> Without going into full detail, it seems worth pointing out that ‘the person’ whom Holmes sees here and who is split off from experiencing his body is not in the Greek but is supplied as the subject of a third-person clause in the translations of Joly and Potter to make sense of the text. Littré, following the articulation of the Greek, understands the subject of «πλεῖστον ἀπέχει τοῦ παθεῖν» (‘being very far from feeling’) as ‘the breast region and the cavity’ itself. It seems to me also more natural to understand that the cavity is subject of the whole run of the sentence, the part that is both fatally conquered by the cold (drink) because it is least accustomed to cold (since it is located closest to the body core and so naturally warmest and most able to flourish in warmth) and at the same time farthest from experiencing the pathology of the cold because it most lacks the cold (and has ignorance of, but also desire for, what it lacks) and so takes pleasure in receiving the cold drink. In the same way, just earlier in the text, wounded lesions, which seem to know better what is good for them, take pleasure in warmth and, as Holmes reports, many body parts throughout the text have taken pleasure in the warm or the cold. The cavity has a special built-in liability, not because it is farthest from ‘the person’ who fails to experience his body but because, unlike superficial body parts like the skin, being deep inside, it does not have tolerance for variation, yet it does have a fatal desire for what it lacks. The medical writer might need to explain to the ethicist how it is that the cavity’s pleasure in something new drives the person’s mouth to imbibe a cold drink, but this writer does not even recognize a problem.

Philosophical ethics, Holmes goes on to argue in chapter 5, arise exactly on the precedent of, and sometimes in competition against, the medical ethics of regimen that she has traced out. In addition to Plato, to whom we return below, Holmes considers Democritus and Gorgias as ethicists who take on medical models. Basically, her goal seems to be to document an ethics that recognizes drug-like causal forces in the psychological realm and offers (or, in Gorgias’ case, teases about offering) an expertise precisely in this situation

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<sup>11</sup> Joly 1972, 166.15–167.5 = Littré 1927, 124.1–17.

without dismissing the body or resorting to dualism. As she tells us [214–215, 222–225], the precise way for attaining ethical freedom is not documented for these thinkers but we can reconstruct it. (Or for Gorgias, maybe ethics is all negative, a matter of resistance and rejection.) Just as Gorgias calls *λόγος* a drug for the soul [*Encom.* §14], so Democritus holds that ‘thoughts can act, as it were, as drugs against potentially damaging desires’ [223].

For Democritus, two special points seem worth querying before we accept either a connection to the Hippocratics or a non-dualist ethics. First, he does speak explicitly of the soul cloaked by a body [Diels and Kranz 1952, fr. 68B187] in a manner not unlike Pindar’s fragment 131b, where Orphism has been suspected, or the dualist *Phaedo* of Plato. Moreover, his term for the body (here as in several other fragments) is ‘tent’ («σκῆνος»), not «σῶμα». If the soul-body analysis of the person in the late fifth century is the effect of the Hippocratic doctors’ theorization and objectification of the σῶμα, why do we consistently find this odd term in Democritus? It suggests at least independence from the Hippocratics, to leave aside the question of dualism. Democritus did write texts whose titles are medical but was he in another tradition? Or did he explicitly reject the Hippocratics?

Second, the ethical therapy that Holmes reconstructs for Democritus is a top-down therapy from the psychological level to the physical, a rebalancing of the soul’s atoms,<sup>12</sup> and not *vice versa*. It is not even the case that the psychological causation in the subject is steered by an external teacher since Democritus (in the preserved fragments) is offering self-help. If the psychological person is controlling the physical person—which admittedly could be a reversal of the more common relationship that Democritus seeks to correct—how is this different from the soul’s government of the body recommended by Plato? Holmes might not claim that it is (she aligns Plato with these others [226]). But either the whole question of mind-body dualism vanishes as a significant feature of ethical theory, thus undermining the promises of the book, or the ‘mind-body problem’ turns into the full range of positions that are not rigorously determinist in the bottom-up direction, physics to psychology.

<sup>12</sup> Note «μεταρροσμός» in fr. 68B33 and the uncompounded verb in 68B197 with Vlastos’ interpretation [1945–1946].

When it comes to the influence of the medical writers' account of the person on Plato's ethical theory, Holmes is all too brief,<sup>13</sup> understandably enough, considering the pervasive and differential presence of the health metaphor, complexity of the soul, and soul-body dualism in the Platonic corpus as well as the considerable scholarship on Plato's moral psychology published in recent decades. Let us distinguish a few questions that one might ask.

First, one could hope to explain the very basis of the polarized ethical choice between the good and the pleasurable in Socraticism up to *Philebus*, and why some Platonic texts, such as the *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*, appear to imply a 'basically bipartite' soul [201]. Holmes is at her best here, not so much on the anatomy of the bipartition (which is not clearly made by Plato), but on the oddly polarized conflict between the advantageous and the pleasant and why the one is a value for the soul and the other for the body. Although Holmes does not fully exploit the centrality in the Hippocratic corpus of the vocabulary of the 'beneficial' (τὸ σὺμφερον or the verb συμφέρειν) versus the 'harmful' (τὸ βλαβερόν, βλάβη, or the verb βλάπτειν), and the 'pleasant' (τὸ ἡδύ and so on) versus the 'painful' (τὸ λυπηρόν and so on)—she brings it up briefly on page 199—this seems highly relevant to the centrality of the same kinds of terms in the ethics of Plato's dialogues, especially in the *Republic*, along with Socrates' insistence that there is a fully objective basis to this vocabulary.<sup>14</sup>

Socrates' conviction that there is an objective science of virtue is very well supported by the Hippocratics' conviction that there is an objective science of medicine.<sup>15</sup> This is no new insight—Socrates says as much at, e.g., *Rep.* 353b–d and there have been previous studies of the medical craft in Plato—but Holmes presses and develops the point in ways that make it more serious ethically: within the *Republic*, the health analogy is presented as a second-best explanation for the

<sup>13</sup> There are scattered references in ch. 4 and six pages in ch. 5: 201, 206–211. She promises more in a separate study [Holmes 2010].

<sup>14</sup> This is by distinction with, e.g., Thucydides' Melian dialogue, where 'advantage' is counter to justice and the conflict is between parties to the situation rather than between values or forces within one person's consciousness.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, we come up again against the possibility that a text such as *On Ancient Medicine* is post-Platonic and one hopes this question can be settled decisively.

objective nature of justice in case we do not buy the longer proof in the city-soul analogy and the dependence on the Form of the Good. Holmes defers various questions (for lack of evidence) that could shore up the connection more tightly, such as how physical diseases are like foul desires and to what degree the origin and development of each is parallel [e.g., 193, 196]; but it does seem that Plato sees a ‘daemonic’ inner system of the soul at work in texts such as the *Gorgias* and *Republic*.<sup>16</sup> The corrupt soul of the tyrant and its development along with the arguably self-directing and autonomous evolution of deviant constitutions in *Rep.* 8–9 might depend more closely on the medical corpus than we immediately see.

Second, one could hope to explain the more famous, and more detailed, tripartite soul of the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, often recognized behind Freud’s theory of the soul, where the notion of an unseen inner anatomy seems most vivid. Holmes does not touch this point, leaving mention of the tripartite soul to footnote 31 on page 202. Socrates’ argument for the tripartite soul at *Rep.* 435b–441e, meanwhile, does use terms and vocabulary that one can connect to the medical corpus, although geometry is also evoked at 436d–e.

Third, one could hope to explain the extreme mind-body dualism of the *Phaedo*, where Plato’s Socrates argues that the soul is a divine, eternal substance as opposed to the body in which it is temporarily entombed. This seems continuous with the semantic shift of «σῶμα» to inert matter seen in the *Sophist* and *Timaeus*, and may be the beginning of the ‘Western Tradition’ that Holmes is interrogating. But the dualism of the *Phaedo* is not addressed rigorously, although Holmes cites it as an outstanding example [e.g., 202n31]; and the dualism of the *Timaeus* provides the springboard for the conclusion [275] but is left hanging as a most extreme example of Plato’s dualism. The story about how this notion gets shaped across the Platonic literary corpus was never really begun, let alone finished. But this is sooner a research agenda than a book topic. Holmes’ book urges us to keep the Hippocratics on the agenda.

Holmes saves her final substantial chapter for Euripides’ reflection of the medical writers’ theory of the body. Although this is

<sup>16</sup> Since Holmes explains in her final chapter that the tragedians too derive this kind of thinking from the doctors, one might ask how we can decide whether Plato was influenced more by the tragedians or by the doctors directly.

disconnected from the philosophical and scientific history in that a tragedian may be more interested in complicating ‘the answer’ to ethical problems than in solving them, it answers the book’s beginning in Homer and adds to Holmes’ endeavor to restore the female subject omitted by Foucault [evoked, e.g., 20n64].<sup>17</sup>

Holmes offers sequential readings of the *Troades*, *The Madness of Heracles*, *Orestes*, and *Hippolytus* that show how consistently Euripides imagines madness and erotic affliction on the model of medical diseases. The differences between men’s and women’s diseases are not examined systematically but ‘female nature’ appears, as in the Hippocratic corpus, ‘as a model for the daemonism that is buried in human nature’ [262]. The ‘magico-religious paradigm’ of explanation for symptoms is not replaced by medicine, however, as it generally is in the naturalizing philosophical traditions; rather, Euripides explicitly overlaps natural explanation with religious explanation, rival accounts of the same problem. This is the best way to understand Euripides’ theological outlook, Holmes proposes, as well as to map out compelling readings of his drama. Holmes is interested sooner in how medical discourse helps Euripides to articulate complex truths about the human condition and to write plays that have tension than in how tragedy itself is like medicine (as some of the Stoics thought, following a tradition that might be continuous from Hesiod) or how even tragedy, what we might consider the most ‘artistic’ and least technical of Athenian discourse, documents the importance of medicine in all registers of Athenian literature. For this broader treatment we have, most recently, Jennifer Kosak’s book [2004] on Hippocratic thinking in Euripides.

Holmes succeeds on many levels. There remain all kinds of questions to be asked about the relationships between Plato’s thinking and the Hippocratics’, which Galen was not all wrong to align so easily. Whether or not we assume interdependence, the Hippocratics should be recognized better for their participation in the otherwise lost world of later ‘Pre-Socratic’ philosophy. Entities, powers, and causes permeate both the Hippocratics and Plato, sometimes in different idioms, sometimes in the same. New commentaries on Hippocratic

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<sup>17</sup> She addresses the female body at pages 185–188 and briefly elsewhere.

texts, such as those by Jouanna, Craik, and Schiefsky<sup>18</sup> have made new syntheses such as this book by Holmes possible; and one hopes that there is more to come.

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<sup>18</sup> Jacques Jouanna has published seven volumes in the Budé series (covering texts too numerous to list) from 1983 to the present. Elizabeth Craik has published *Places in Man* [1998] and *On Glands* [2009]. See also Schiefsky 2005. Paul Demont, Philip van der Eijk, Heinrich von Staden, and others have been advancing our research on the connections between older Greek medicine and philosophy beyond the fundamental work of G. E. R. Lloyd. Philosophical work on Galen may be in fuller force, as witnessed by R. J. Hankinson's *Cambridge Companion to Galen* [2008] and his other work.

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