

Chapter 01

Care for Patients with Mental Illness in Ancient Greece

Kourkouta Lambrini^{1*}, Karametsou Panagiota², Papathanassiou V Ioanna³, Koukourikos Konstantinos⁴, Iliadis Christos⁵, Plati Panagiota⁶, Vakalopoulou Betty⁷ and Tsaloglidou Areti⁸

¹Professor, Nursing Department, Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

²Graduate, Nursing Department, Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

³Assistant Professor, Nursing Department, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece

⁴Clinical Professor, Nursing Department, Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

⁵RN, Private Diagnostic Health Center of Thessaloniki, Greece

⁶Graduate, Department of History and Archeology, University of Ioannina, Greece

⁷Philologist, 70 High School of Athens, Greece

⁸Assistant Professor, Nursing Department, Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece

***Corresponding Author:** Kourkouta Lambrini, Nursing Department, Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki, Greece, Email: laku1964@yahoo.gr

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Introduction

Since mythological times, people accepted several causal factors for the genesis of psychopathy. Initially, the perception of the “demonic” nature of mental illness was dominated. Psychopathy was interpreted as the possession of man by demons or bad deities [1]. The psychopath was not considered ill but guilty. This fact explains why the treatment was the job of priests, who were using mainly magic methods to remove evil spirits [2]. Patients were being sentenced to death in the fire, tortured, chained, lashed, and their head dipped in water [2].

“Trepanning” during Neolithic period (4,000 or 5,000 years BC) is the earliest indication of knowledge for the surgical treatment of mental illness. Its purpose was to clear evil spirits and thus liberate the patient from them. According to the primitive perception, evil spirits were considered responsible for psychiatric disorders. Drilling skulls, moreover, were found in archaeological excavations in various parts of the world [3].

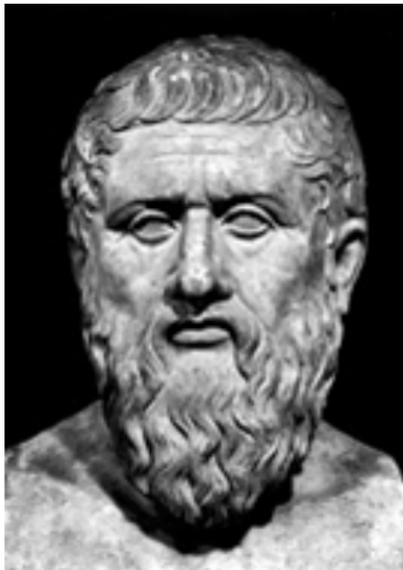
The belief on psychopathological spirits in the form of demons, which is still present today, has prevailed as the beginnings of modern times in Europe and in many other parts of the world leading to tragic consequences for countless psychiatric patients [4].

Psychiatric disorders are also reported in the writings of all ancient societies such as Indian, Egyptian, Jewish and especially the

Greek one. They are also reported in Homer, and in Attic tragedies. Characteristic examples of these are Aianta's manic-depressive crisis, the similar disorder of Hercules, the schizophrenic crisis of the matricide Orestes and the psychogenic impotence of Iphiklos. All of them have as a common sign the origins from the evil spirits, that in ancient Greek mythology are represented by the goddesses Lyssa and Mania [5].

Between 1200 BC and 500AD, the development of therapeutic art to medicine in Greece is mainly due to the development of philosophy. Medicine had to be based on the logic and accuracy of its observations, properties that can be developed by philosophy and education [6].

This study identifies the mental illness and describes the treatment of mentally ill in Ancient Greece.



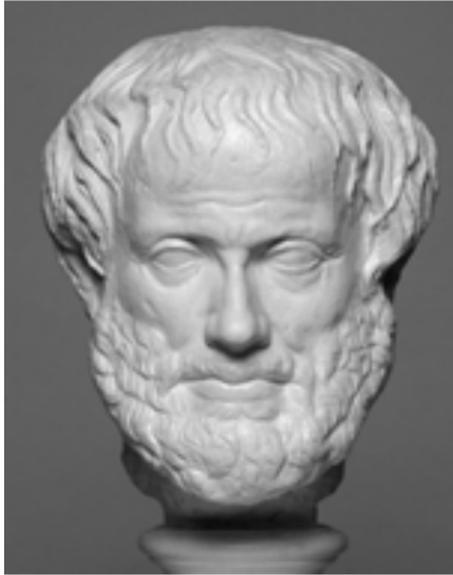
Picture 1: Plato.

Mental Illness According to the Ancient Greek Philosophers

According to Plato (427 BC - 347 BC) - an ancient Greek philosopher from Athens - the most well-known student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle - psychiatric disorders are special, but inevitable expressions of human soul, and their existence doesn't require external causes or effects. Thus, the objectivity of the physical world and the functionality of the human body do not prevail, but its theological teleology and the moral criteria do [7].

For Plato, every state of delirium and mania is of divine origin, and as a proof it carries the etymology of the word "mantiki", which means divination (I am maniac, mania). It accepts the divine intervention not only in the manifestation of the disease, but also in its treatment [3,8]. In "Timaeus" project, he states: "We will now see how the state of the body can cause diseases in the soul" [9]. We have to agree that dementia is a disease of the soul and that there are two kinds of dementia, mania and ignorance. The intensity of pain and pleasure make man most of his life crazy (obsession), and his soul, due to the action of the body, loses its health and logic ... But no one is bad. A person is bad from a defect in his body and from an inappropriate upbringing ... These harmful substances of the body are directed to three pillars of the soul and, depending on the area they infect, bring every kind of stiffness, dysthymia and cowardice, forgetfulness and laxness ... " [10,11].

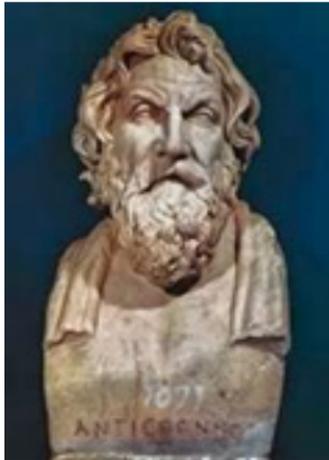
Plato believed in the existence of three spirits or souls in man: the nutritional, based on liver, the vital, based on heart and the logic based on brain. The imprisonment of the mentally ill for the first time is introduced by the laws of Plato. A mentally ill person could be sentenced by the judge to five years' imprisonment with an explicit ban of contact with members of the community [6,12].



Picture 2: Aristotle.

Aristotle, (384 BC - 322 BC) - an ancient Greek philosopher from Stagira of Chalkidiki and Plato's student - systematized human psychology by creating an academic tradition that has been kept alive until today. He is the first to describe the mental functions in a detailed manner, as: thought, affect, and will [13]. In his treatise "On the Soul" he stresses: "... And it seems that, in most cases, the soul without the body neither suffers nor causes any passion. It doesn't get angry, for example, neither gives courage nor wishes and generally does not feel. The intellectual ability, however, seems to belong to the soul. But although intellect is some kind of imagination, or at least it does not exist without the imagination, it could not even exist without the body. Therefore, the soul is the hypostasis in the form of a physical body that has the potential of life [14]. This hypostasis is entelechy (term of Aristotle indicating the transition of matter from the potential situation into reality.) The soul is, therefore, the entelechy of such

a body. Entelechy has two meanings: it is like knowledge and sometimes as the practice of knowledge. It is obvious, then, that the soul is entelechy, as the knowledge, because “as long as there is soul, there is sleep and alertness,” and alertness is proportional to the practice of knowledge, while sleep by holding it without exercise ... » [11].



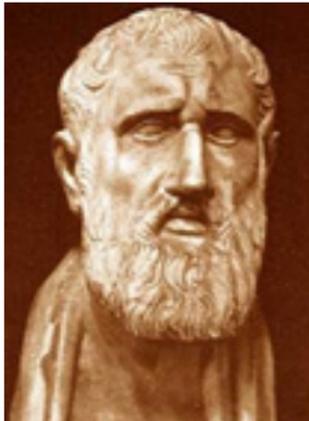
Picture 3: Antiphon.

The contribution of Sophist Antiphon, who lived at the same time as Socrates and Plato, was also remarkable, particularly in Support Psychotherapy, which relieves the patient from discomfort by acting as “verbal analgesic” [15]. The therapist is the listener who cares about the patient and gives him the power to discuss his emotional problems and to be relieved of guilt, anxiety or shame. It is of particular value when an acute anxiety disorder tortures the patient. None of Antiphon’s projects is saved altogether, only quotes from other writers. At least two of them are about psychotherapy [16].

a) Philostratus (160/170 - 244/249 AD) in his project “Lives of the Sophists” states that: “Antiphon ... announced courses to overcome sorrow claiming that ... could ... something ... sad ... to ... take it out of the mind. “

b) Plutarch (45 AD - 120 AD) in his project “Life of the Ten rhetoricians” states that “Antiphon ... devised a technique to avoid sorrows.” After preparing a space in Corinth, near the market, he announced that he “has the power to heal those who suffer from depression using the words as a means” [17].

The word “alypia” means without distress and to achieve it, one must avoid fears, passions and emotional bonds. Antiphon knew that the roots of the somatic and physic pain should be sought in thought, and that illness could sometimes be explained as an escape from the energetic life [18].



Picture 4: Zenon.

Zenon (490 BC - 425 BC) and Epicurus (341 BC -270 BC) were succeeded. Plato and Aristotle. They simply founded philosophical schools and stressed the importance of experience and interpersonal relationships for the development of the mental world. On the verge of our time, the British empiricists believed that this is born as unwritten, colorless and shapeless mass [19].

Mental Illnesses According to the Ancient Greek Doctors

Among mythological doctors, the most important was Melambous (1400 BC), king of Pylos, holy sorcerer and priest. He was the first who treated mental illnesses, like [5,20]:

the treatment of Proitides and other Argian women who suffered from mass insanity,

the treatment of Ifiklos, king of the Thessalian city of Filakis, who suffered from psychological incompetence, and

the treatment of Alcathaus- king of Megara, who suffered from melancholy.



Picture 5: Amphiaraus.

A great physician (doctor) was also Amphiaraos, grandson of Melambos. Amphiaraos cured patients during their sleep, using music as a means of psychotherapy, creating musical groups [21,22].

In the Old Testament, it is reported that when Saul, the first king of Israel, fell into deep melancholy, David was entertaining him with his guitar. Since 7 ° BC Hesiod spoke about the power of the Epic to

comfort and bring oblivion to pain. Plato also in “Politia”(state) highlights the emotional importance of music [5,9].



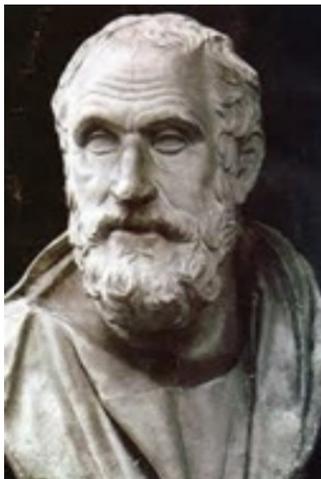
Picture 6: Asclepius.

Asklepius, son of Apollo and of the mortal Koronis, was initially a chthonic hero, but he became a normal god from the 5th century BC, and as deity of healing, he was particularly beloved by the faithful. The origin of Asclepius is located in Thessaly and the most ancient place of worship was probably Tricky (today Trikala). Asklepius was taught him everything he knew about medicine [23].



Picture 7: Asclepeion Kos.

For the worship of Asclepius, the therapist God, many temples were originally established as places of worship that over time became sanatoriums, known as “Asclepieia” [21].



Picture 8: Hippocrates.

The most illustrious and leading physician of antiquity was the Greek Hippocrates, who laid the scientific foundations of medicine. Hippocrates was born on the island of Kos, which was famous for its “Medical School”. From the side of his mother, he was the 20th grandson of Hercules and from the side of his father was the 18th grandson of Asclepius. He belonged thus to the priestly - medical genus of Asclepiades.

He was the first to systematically classified medicine and attempted a methodical treatment of the diseases [13].

The name of Hippocrates has been closely associated to the beginnings of clinical observation and holistic approach of the human body and its diseases. Medicine in general and psychiatry in particular have made with Hippocrates a real qualitative progress, as they passed for the first time at the stage of scientific thinking, including its characteristics: observation, experiment, determinism, objectivity and prognosis [14].

He rejected the perceptions prevailed until then, regarding the cause of the disease and treatment. At the beginning, he argued that the disease is due to a disturbance of the natural laws rather than the intervention of evil spirits. He stressed the need for clinical monitoring and study of the patient. He was observing the patient, patiently for hours and he was studying and recording his symptoms and reactions, as well as the effects of the applied therapies (successes and failures) [5].

The written project of Hippocrates is large, but it hasn't been all saved. His writings cover the whole spectrum of medicine, and until today they are considered classical. These are the following: Predictions, Aphorisms and the Oath. The *Aphorisms* contain 420 clinical observations and the *Predictions* contain 47 chapters, referring to patients' diet, acute diseases, head injuries, bone and joint injuries, ulcers and infectious diseases (Hippocratic facial), all based on the patient's clinical study. Hippocrates, finally, in his *Oath* formulated

the moral and ethical aspects of the physician's behavior, giving mankind the basis of Ethics and Semiology. The "*Hippocratic Collection*" shows that the physician had to treat the patient as a psychosomatic entity and support him mentally [24].

Hippocrates' therapies were based on the empirical observation, holistic view of the causes and restoration of balance, as regards to the pathogenetic hypotheses of ancient medicine, especially the "theory of the four juices" (blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and nigra bile) and their balance [10].

In his project "On the Sacred Disease" (epilepsy), Hippocrates after considering the effects of external environment on the human body and the way it reacts to the external stimuli (temperature, winds, fear, etc.), proceeds to the investigation of the causes of permanent or temporary mental and spiritual disorders. In both cases, the cause is the disturbances in the balance of the four juices under the influence of external stimuli. He points out that the cause of epilepsy, like all mental disorders, is found in the brain. He writes: "Regarding the illness (epilepsy), which is called "sacred "... I hardly believe that this disease is more divine or more sacred from all others. I think that there is also a natural cause for it, but the people, either ignorantly or for the reason that they are impressed by the strange character of this disease, as it doesn't look like other disorders - they considered it as an illness sent by god ... " [21,25].

Hippocrates from the middle of the 5th century BC studied not only the aetiology of psychopathies, but also their clinical picture. He knew the frenzy (which was probably tantamount to acute feverish delirium), mania, melancholy (characterized by fear and depression), hysteria and epilepsy (so-called sacred disease) and he also refused their divine origin. He was even aware of the pregnancy psychosis and alcoholic psychosis. Moreover, he recommended treatment with bleeding, bath and not bonding with chains [12].

Furthermore, notable are also the original perceptions of Hippocrates for the favorable effect of fever (sleep therapy) and sleep

(hypnotherapy) on neuropsychiatric illnesses. He did not also fail to mention the psychotherapeutic and psychiatric examination. This is shown in his book “On Juice” (E 488-9) where Hippocrates tries to collect information about his patient’s personality (possible abuses, sleep, physical and mental fatigue, etc.)

Hippocrates healed the king of Macedonia, Perdika II, as he diagnosed that “the passion is of the soul” and allowed him to marry Phila, a concubine of his deceased father. Perdika II had a strong erotic passion with her, but unconsciously Phila represented his mother. It should be noted that no other physician found the cause of his disease [12].

The first classification of mental illness was made by Hippocrates, who used the following psychiatric terms. These are also used until today [8,14]:

- Mania (meaning manic psychomotor agitation and psychosis in general)
- Melancholy (meaning the pathological manifestations resulting from nigra bile, melancholy, being fear and dysthymia for a long time)
- Phrenitis (meaning acute feverish pathological conditions associated with psychopathological manifestations)
- Insanity (meaning psychopathological manifestations associated with mental mainly disorders)
 - Discontinuity (disturbing the mind)
 - Paranoia (meaning psychosis in general)
 - Delusions (meaning insanity)
 - Hysteria, and
 - Epilepsy



Picture 9: Asclepiades.

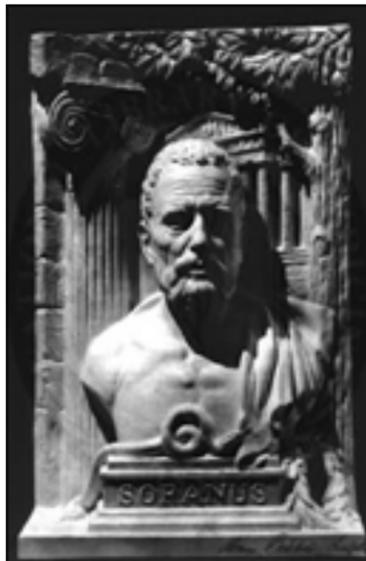
Progress in the treatment of mental patients was continued by Greek doctors and after the Romans took over ancient Greece. In the middle of the 1st century BC very important factor is the contribution by the Greek physician Asklepiades (120 BC - 40 BC), who was head of the Methodic or Logical School of Medicine while philosophically belonged to Epicurean school. Starting from the atomic philosophy, he considered that the body consists of “anormous volumes” and “dilutions”. He began as rheto and finally became physician and more specifically psychiatrist [26]. Asklepiades argued that mental illnesses result from emotional conflicts and gave special attention to the treatment of mental ill, trying to calm them by the means of special devices, various kinds of baths and soft music [8,10]. He also recommended rest, warm baths, music, and pleasant company, for the restoration of spiritual peace. Asklepiades rejected the imprisonment of the psychopaths in prison cells and the use of whips for their treatment”.

He was the first who referred to acute and chronic conditions, distinguishing the functional psychoses from organic disorders due

to fever. Asklepiades attributed illnesses to obstruction of the body molecules and hence his treatment was not based on many drugs, but on the proper diet and on the change of climate conditions. The soul, according to Asklepiades, existed in the motion of psychic individuals [2].

He was a great observer of mental illness and the first who divided the psychopathies into acute with fever and chronic without fever or Mania and Melancholy. He also studied the disorders of perception by distinguishing them clearly in hallucinations and delusions [15].

He noticed the transition from mania to melancholy, and vice versa. Starting from this observation, he recommended the use of inebriety as a general treatment for mental illness. He did not believe in the usefulness of bleeds and he also found unacceptable the use of dark prison cells to deal with the mental ill [21].



Picture 10: Soranus.

Student of Asklepiades was also the Greek physician Soranus (2nd century AD). He belonged to the Methodical School, and he was the most remarkable representative of the Methodic School, so that Kailio Avriiliano called him “Methodius Princeps”(Lord of methodic) [8]. He has written numerous medical and other writings, fragments of which have been survived until today. These texts deal with gynecological diseases, medical issues of reproduction, chronic diseases, hygiene and surgery issues. It is obvious that Soranus “dealt in a scientific way with gynecology” and as such was justly labeled as “the greatest gynecologist of antiquity”. At the same time, Soranus was one of the first to study the pre- morbid personality of psychiatric patients and he is particularly well-known for his true humanitarian principles in the treatment and hospitalization of psychopaths [12].

He fought the methods of punishment and coercion and supported psychotherapeutic treatment. He also opposed to the isolation of the patient in dark places. He wanted their rooms to be in a quiet place and their relatives’ visits limited. He insisted that the nursing staff had to be well trained to deal with the patients in a nice and affectionate way. He refused to use amulets and despised the use of exorcisms. During their light breaks, hospitalized psychopaths were encouraged to read and then discuss what they read [2,15].

They were encouraged to participate in dramatic theatrical performances (tragedy used as retaliation in mania and comedy as retaliation in melancholy). Saranus also encouraged them to discuss in group meetings (Mora) [8].

In the writings of Soranus, instructions for prohibiting the chains use among psychiatric patients and the prohibition of imprisonment are found. According to Saranus, patients should stay in rooms with moderate lighting and temperature, as well as complete safety. Relatives’ visits should be avoided in order not to upset them [26].



Picture 11: Ciceron.

Soranus continued Askliade's project and refers to the treatment of psychopaths, as it was before him, and he mentions: "They put all the patients in the dark. They compare them with wild beasts and made them suffer from food and water deprivation. They tied them with chains, forgetting that their limbs could break or be hurt. According to him, "it is better to limit them by using the hands of people, rather than the burden of harmful irons, physical violence and the use of whips. All these dye the body with blood, an embarrassing issue for the patient" [27, 28].

Pupil of Askliades was also the famous Roman orator and Stoic philosopher Cicero who gave a detailed description of the emotions or passions. He distinguished sexual desire called "libido" as the most powerful of them, and he was the first he dealt with the term with its psychological meaning [11]. The most important projects of Asklepiades are: "On Pulses," "Breathing," "On Soul," "On Periodic Fever," "On Heart Disease" [10].



Picture 12: Aretaeus.

Aretaeus the Cappadocian (1st century AD) was also one of the most famous Greek physicians of antiquity. He became famous with his wonderful, accurate and true descriptions of the various forms of psychopathy, especially of mania and melancholy, and he was the first to observe that there were two phases of the same disease.

Melancholy was considered by Aretaeus as the sorrow of the soul by concentration of thought on an obsessive no- five idea [22]. It's a psychopathy with limited and circumscribed delirium, fact that separates it from mania, which was considered as a general and continuous afebrile delirium and as a general disturbance of intelligence. Mania was also separated from the toxic deliriums caused by wine, mandrake and hyoscyamine, because these start and end abruptly, whereas mania is stable and lasting [21]. It also noted that mental exaltation in mania strengthens, in some patients, the functions of memory and imagination to such an extent that patients are pushed to talk about astronomy, philosophy, etc. and to pursue poetry without having learned it [11].

Aretaeus also describes in a perfect way the physical symptoms accompanying melancholy, such as constipation, oliguria, belching,

odor of breath, small pulse, etc. In many parts of his project he states that melancholy is a beginning or a kind of mismanias, and that when it tends to disappear, it alternates sometimes with mania more due to the progress rather than due to the intensity of evil. He has also noticed that even manic exacerbations can be followed by a period of melancholy [10].

As far as treatment is concerned, we can assume (Regis) that Aretaeus has reacted to Celsius' perceptions, since he nowhere speaks of bindings and straps even for the ferocious mentally ill [22].



Picture 13: Galen.

Aretaeus in his project “On the causes and signs of chronic diseases” speaks about melancholy: “It is, with the first impression, a bad mood, without being accompanied of fever. I think melancholy is the beginning and a part of mania, since to those who are mad the emotion ends up in anger and sometimes in joy, while in the melancholic only in sorrow and depression. Those who suffer from melancholy are not all characterized by the same form ... If the cause lies in the area of the subchondria, it concentrates around the diaphragm and the bile

passes down or up in the cases of melancholy. If the disease is moved to the head and the irrational state of anger turns into laughter and joy in many life events, these people are getting mad, by the aggravation of the disease rather than the pain of the disease. In both cases the cause is the quality of dryness. Therefore, older men are more prone to madness and melancholy than the younger ones ... “[11].

Claudius Galenus (130 AD-210AD) was the second most accomplished Greek physician of antiquity after Hippocrates and the last of all the major physicians of the Greco-Roman world [12].

Galen's ideas maintained strong for 1400 years until the Renaissance. In the 500 books he wrote, he seems to have very little dealt with psychopathy. What prevails in his writings about this issue is the division between idiopathic psychopathy and sympathetic or patronized psychopathy, as well as the significance given to the latter [31]. However, he clearly distinguished delirium of acute brain diseases and frenzy from chronic psychopathy. He also distinguished symptomatic psychosis from internal organ disorders [22]. An interesting project is the one that is dealing with “patho-imitating”, which means those who imitate the disease where, among other things, it refers to mental phenomena.

Castiglioni writes: “Some pretend to be delirious or insane, or even trying to make others appear insane. Now, even the ignorant is aware that the physician should discover such evasions and separate them from the true points “[32].

Galen, in “On Causes and Symptoms”, stresses: “Like apoplexy, epilepsy is caused by a concentration of mucus juice in the brain's ventricles. And that's why they appear and disappear so suddenly, since this could not only happen due to body's dyscrasia. Moderate brain damage only causes logic and memory dysfunction due to a lower cooling of the brain ... “[8,31].

Hospitalization of Patients with Mental Illness in Antiquity

In ancient Athens, the mentally ill, in fact, remained at home under the supervision of their relatives, who were being punished if they neglected or abandoned them [2].



Picture 14: Asclepeion Pergamos.

At the same time they could be hospitalized in treatment centers, the most important of which were the “Asclepieia”, in which the ritual of the psychiatrist was practiced by the priests of the god Asklepius. There were a total of 320 Asclepieia throughout Greece, the most important of which were that of Thessalian Trikka (now Trikala), the birthplace of Asclepius, Epidaurus, Kos and Pergamon [21]. The “Asclepieia” were sacred places of worship of the hero, holy doctor and healer god Asklepius. They were, in reality, the first hospitals or rather complexes of health buildings not only of the Greek area but also of all the Western civilization. They offered their services in the Greek

wider region for many centuries, from the period of the Trojan War to the 6th century AD, the era of the full prevalence of Christianity [33].



Picture 15: Asclepeion Epidaurus.

The entire treatment process applicable to Asclepieia was led by Archpriest or Great Priest. He was assisted, in turn, by “Pyrophori”, who performed the duties of deacon debts and of assistants in medical jobs, and by “Ieromnimones” and nurses called “Asclepiades”. Among them, there were women who belonged to the class of Nakoron or Zakoron [2,9].

Medical care was secret and hereditary, and Lucian reports that participants in the healing process were taking an “oath of silence” that they would not reveal their medical or other secrets [10]. Only the elders were being initiated in secrets, the younger ones did not even have the right to ask. Furthermore, only senior in the hierarchy practiced medicine, all the others were limited to religious therapies, which were closely related to the Eleusinian mysteries. The initiates had communication, correspondence and cooperation among themselves, and sometimes priests from one Asclepieion were going to another to deal with specific difficult therapies [33].

The reputation of each Asclepieion depended on the priests who were in it. Other priests were specialists in surgery, others in psychiatric illnesses or others in aphrodisiac illnesses. The Asklipseion, therefore, were like today's specialized hospitals. The priests believed that man needed to seek the help of nature about hygiene issues and technical therapy [21].



Picture 16: Asclepeion Messini.

Asklepius had transferred to them the medical treatment by the use of various medicines and surgical instruments that were remained secrets. Hippocrates drew many practical lessons of science from sources hidden in Asclepieia and the study of tables and slabs there [5].

The medical interventions performed in Asclepeion are classified as general, preparatory and special.

General

The choice of Asclepion's location was of great importance. Each Asclepion was built on a natural beauty and high energy load, usually near natural waters, sea or springs, and away from residential areas. The site selection criteria were about the same as the selection of sites for the installation of modern sanatoriums. The entrance to the animals was forbidden for hygienic purposes. The dying patients and pregnant women, were being moved to avoid any contamination [33,34].

Preparatory

The patient was entering Asklepieion area through a main gate (propylaea) which usually had an inscription reminding him that the incoming had to be "pure" both externally and internally, ie physically pure, but also mentally and spiritually [13].

So, by entering, they had to be bathed, first in cold water, either in the sea or in the springs, and then in hot baths. Then the chief priest, who was welcoming them, was asking them questions that helped him make an initial diagnosis and suggested the preparatory treatment, "the putative" [22].

For a few days to weeks, the patient was following a special diet or was undergoing fasting therapy according to his state of health. At the same time, fumigations were applied to him with antiseptic herbs for his decontamination and he was following a systematic gymnastics (there was a stage in the Asklepiean places), massage and daily walks in the surrounding forests, which were decorated with statues, because beauty and harmony act therapeutically [33].

During their stay, they were spending much of their time with the priest who took over them and who on a daily basis did their psychotherapy. He was trying to raise their morale and strengthen their belief that they would certainly be cured, by preparing them for the cure from God [9]. The empowerment of the patient's faith was also being made with the many sacrifices on the altars of the sanctuary. Medications were also being administered mysteriously. At the same

time, mental and spiritual empowerment was being through theater – that’s why there were theater facilities - and many hours spent by the healer to the library, an integral part of each Asclepeion [21].

This preparatory stage lasted from a few days to several weeks depending on the disease to be treated. Meanwhile, the patient was already starting to feel better due to the activation of the inner therapist. The whole process was known as “putative” [33].

Special Treatments

Among them, there were various surgeries and local bleeds, and some of the Asclepieia had developed a special way of treatment, such as Amphiaraus, specializing in dream therapy. In Kos, there was a marble plaque on the doorway with the famous recipe against animals and in Ephesus they used a miraculous collyrium for ophthalmological incidents [10].

In the Asclepeion of Epidaurus, the final treatment was given by Asklepius with the “slumbers” in Abato. On the crucial day, a sacrifice was taking place again. The patient, after eating from the sacrificed animal and drinking a lot of drink and nectar, accompanied by music from Asklepius’ lumen, was being led to a state of ecstasy – a changed state of consciousness - through many corridors in the labyrinthial construction of Tholos.



Picture 17: Encoimesis.

There, he was sleeping on the hot skin of the sacrificed animal - probably to benefit from the energy of the sanctified animal. The patient was also being asked to remain silent and not to mention whatever he was hearing or seeing during the sacrifice. [9,21] During his sleep the High Priest was coming from the Crypt. Until then, he was appearing as if he was Asclepius himself, followed by his great snakes or dragons - at that time there were dragons in Greece -, the daughters of Panacea and Health and the children holding lamps [22].

Although the High Priest had not seen the patient until then, he was aware of the symptoms, the treatment, and the course of the patient. With a strong hissing voice, he was whispering to patient's ear what he had to do by himself, in order to be healed [33].

All the patients were visiting these centers, but especially the people suffered from diseases that could not be cured by the means available to ordinary doctors. These disorders are often psychiatric or general disorders in which the psychological factor plays an important role. A classic example of this is hysteria, a mental disorder, which is difficult to be distinguished from diseases due to organic causes [2].

One of the most effective methods of treating psychiatric disorders in Asclepieion was the "dream interpretation" of both the patient and the hierophant who took care of his treatment. Dreams were means of communicating with a deity, who was associated with the disease, or reflecting the psychological state of the patient, indicating at the same time its secret aetiology [15].

Treatment was free, but patients used to provide offerings, or excerpts of gold or silver, representing their cured member. This habit continues until today with the so-called "offerings" left by the believers in "miraculous" pictures [1].

Conclusions

Ancient physicians and philosophers have been deeply concerned with psychiatric illnesses, and, according to their knowledge and their perceptions about life and man, tried to deal with mental ill.

In Greek antiquity, medical science and, at the same time, psychiatric care, filled with mythical and magic elements, changed with the contribution of ancient philosophers, such as Hippocrates and Aristotle. They put them on scientific bases, rejecting every element of superstition from their theories.

Thus, in Greek classical antiquity, the medical concept of “body disease” begins to be established as well as the concept of mental illness, which will take a clearer formulation in the Hellenistic period, and it will be completed by the 5th century. The contribution of other peoples of antiquity in the treatment of mental illness is also unquestionable.

It could therefore be concluded that ancient doctors and philosophers, through their knowledge about life, health and disease, manage to cope with mental illnesses and lay the foundations for their care and treatment for the future generations.

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