

## Experiencing a disease and a treatment process in Greek non-medical sources in the Classical period and Roman times

‘As to diseases, make a habit of two things – to help, or at least to do no harm. The art has three factors, the disease, the patient, the physician. The physician is the servant of the art. The patient must cooperate with the physician in combating the disease.’ (Hp. *Epid.* 1.2.11, trans. W.H.S. Jones) – this sentence by Hippocrates of Kos is the quintessence of the ancient understanding of the art of medicine. From the writings of Hippocrates and other ancient physicians, one can learn a lot not only about the theory of medicine, but also about the daily practice of doctors.

Therefore, one of the three elements of medical art mentioned by Hippocrates, i.e. the patient, is missing from the complete picture of ancient medical art. Ancient medical treatises do not describe how patients experienced diseases, what a disease was for them, how they treated doctors and their recommendations, whether they trusted them, and how they endured the often strenuous and painful therapies. This information must be looked for in other types of testimony, i.e. one that shows the disease and the treatment process from the point of view of the patient or their immediate environment. There is a scarcity of such sources, and they are scattered and of various nature. This project aims to analyse these testimonies, define the terms the ancients used to describe diseases and treatment, as well as develop a research theory to answer the question of how the ancients experienced disease and healing.

The research will focus on sources from the classical period (5th-4th centuries BC) and Roman times (1st-2nd century AD). The Classical period was the time when scientific medicine began to develop, strongly marked by the activities of Hippocrates. The functioning of the humoral theory and the rational perception of the disease, at least among the elites, became widespread. Simultaneously, it was the time of the development of sanctuaries of Asclepius, where healing rituals were performed and sacrifices were made in order to seek help from the god. In the Roman times, both epigraphic and literary sources concerning diseases and treatment changed their character, as they became more detailed, contained more information about specific ailments, the treatment process, and contacts with a doctor. On the other hand, asclepieions became spa centres, where the patient underwent treatment procedures carried out by medics. Patients also spent a lot of time doing intellectual activities, bathing and exercising there.

The research aims to capture the change in the approach to diseases and treatment over several centuries and to answer the question of how much the perception of medicine and religion that is related to it, as well as the way of describing health issues, changed. I will try to answer the following research questions: were the healing rituals of key importance to the Greeks, or was contact with a doctor equally, or maybe more important for them? Did the ancients regard disease as a normal part of life, or was it a serious disturbance to their daily existence?

Literary sources, including excerpts from the works of Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, as well as Thucydides and Plato, will be taken into account. One of the most important sources will also be *The Sacred Tales* by Aelius Aristides, a famous orator living in the 2nd century CE, which is the only ancient testimony that so extensively describes the experience of the disease and the healing process. Epigraphic sources, i.e. inscriptions of healings from asclepieions in Epidaurus and Pergamon, both from the classical period and from Roman times, will be important. The archaeological remains, i.e. asclepieions and related artefacts, will also be analysed.

The innovativeness of the project will be expressed not only in the selection of such diverse sources, but also in the methods used. In addition to traditional methods for historical research, I intend to apply the grounded theory methodology that is used in social sciences and has never before been applied in the study of ancient sources. It will allow for an in-depth analysis of the research material and the creation of a theory concerning the analysed problems.

The results of the project will contribute to deepening the understanding of how the ancients experienced diseases and the course of the healing process. They will also contribute to research on the history of medicine from the point of view of the sick. The results of my research can inspire doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists and sociologists to do research in the experience of disease and treatment in current patients, and help them understand certain processes that are happening here and now, and are rooted in ancient Greece.