

Asclepiads amounted to little or nothing in a scientific sense is the treatise which Hippocrates himself wrote on the early medical art, *περὶ ἀρχαίης ἰητρικῆς*, from which we must infer that he inherited nothing that could be called even the rudiments of medical science. In that treatise, which perhaps was written as a kind of manifesto about the beginning of his career, we find Hippocrates trying to define the proper field of medical study, to give it a systematic and scientific direction on the one hand, and on the other to free it from the metaphysical speculation with which he says all previous writers, who appear to have been properly speaking philosophers rather than physicians, had mistakenly encumbered it. "All those who have written on medicine," he begins by saying, "have postulated some theory about heat and cold, moisture and dryness, or some other thing of the sort to which they trace the cause of diseases." And in the twentieth section of the same treatise he exposes the error of those "physicians and sophists" who assert that to know the medical art it is necessary to know "what man is and how he came to be and was originally compounded," *ὥς οὐκ εἴη δυνατόν ἰητρικὴν εἰδέναι ὅστις μὴ οἶδεν, ὃ τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος καὶ ὅπως ἐγένετο πρῶτον καὶ ὁπόθεν συνεπάγη ἐξ ἀρχῆς*). This line of inquiry, Hippocrates remarks, belongs rather to philosophy. In contrast to such philosophical flights of speculation Hippocrates defines with characteristic realism and plainness the science of the physician as the study of "what man is as concerns his eating and drinking and other habits, and how he is affected by each. Nor is it sufficient (Hippocrates continues) to say, for example, that cheese is a bad food because it causes trouble to him who has eaten his fill of it; but we must ask what kind of trouble, and how it arises, and to what part of the body it is hurtful, for there are many foods and drinks bad which affect different men in different ways." The advance which Hippocrates made in this treatise seems to have been to define more clearly and emphasize the function of the medical art in the regulation of diet in cases of disease as distinguished from the use of food by those in health. By putting medical art on this plain and simple footing, he at once rids it of the purely empirical prescriptions and the superstitions and magical