CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE THEORY OF SENSATION, THOUGHT AND
THE SOUL IN THE HIPPOCRATIC TREATISE REGIMEN:
ITS CONNECTIONS WITH EMPEDOCLES AND PLATO’S TIMAEUS

Among the sixty or so medical treatises preserved under the name of Hippocrates, the treatise Regimen, despite its title, is not entirely dedicated to what ancient doctors meant by regimen. Whilst in book 2 (chs. 37–66) we find the most developed and systematic catalogue in the Hippocratic Corpus on the natural and artificial properties of the various ingredients of regimen (which, according to the ancients, comprised not only food and drink, but also exercise), the work’s content is much richer and more diverse. The author of Regimen dedicates his entire first book (chs. 1–36) to a discussion of anthropology, because he is convinced that it is not possible to study regimen correctly without prior, and profound knowledge of the nature of man in his environment. Thus, the treatise belongs to a group of ‘philosophical’ Hippocratic works, i.e. treatises that establish a connection between the nature of man and the nature of the universe, between anthropology and cosmology. We find in Regimen, as Robert Joly, its most recent editor and commentator highlighted, the “clearest and most accurate formula articulating the doctrine of macrocosmos-microcosmos”:\(^1\) man was made ‘in imitation of the whole’ (ch. 10 ἀποτίμησιν τοῦ ἄλου).

It is essentially for this cosmological anthropology and for its connections with pre-Socratic philosophy that the treatise has attracted scholarly attention from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. Rather than giving a detailed account of the history of scholarship on this work, I would like to highlight the more important stages of this interpretative history and to situate the present study in this history because, to an extent, it was part of it. The first important monograph on Regimen was published in 1899 by C. Fredrich in his Hippokratische Untersuchungen;\(^2\) the second was by a

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Belgian philosopher, Robert Joly, who published, more than half a century later in 1960, his *Recherches sur le traité pseudo-hippocratique Du Régime.* Between these two dates, Hippocratic studies made great progress, above all in Germany (with the works of Ilberg, Wellmann, Diels, Pohlenz, Deichgräber, Edelstein and Diller), in Britain (with Jones’ Loeb edition), but also in France, notably under the impetus of philosophers who, in the first half of the century, were ahead of the philologists. Since I have the honour of speaking in front of an audience of philosophers, I will briefly recount their role in the development of Hippocratic studies by recalling the principal names. Monseigneur Diès, at the start of the century, highlighted in his studies in the *Revue critique d’Histoire de la Philosophie antique*, collected together in 1926 under the title *Autour de Platon. Essai de critique et d’histoire*, not only the scientific interest of the Hippocratic Corpus, but also its importance for the history of Greek philosophy: “all, or nearly all, of the questions it asks are echoed in the history of Greek philosophy, and particularly in that of the great Socratic schools”—I hope that my paper will be a fitting illustration of this attractive proposition. At the time of intense academic study of the history of ancient medicine, particularly thanks to German and English scholarship, Diès hoped that French scholarship would reclaim the very important place that it had held in the nineteenth century with Littré, Daremberg and Pétrequin. This renaissance came from the Ancient Philosophy Department of the Sorbonne, under the direction of Léon Robin, and then Emile Bréhier. Pierre-Maxime Schuhl, a student of Léon Robin, wrote a chapter on ancient and modern medicine in his doctoral thesis entitled *La formation de la pensée grecque*, published in 1934. Another member of this research group, Paul Kucharski, also took an interest in the Hippocratic Corpus, in particular because of the famous passage of Plato’s *Phaedrus* on the Hippocratic method, in an article that appeared in the *Revue des Études grecques* in 1939. A new sign of the renaissance of Hippocratic studies amongst specialists in ancient philosophy was the

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