CHAPTER 5

Creating Problemata with the Hippocratic Corpus

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This chapter discusses how the Aristotelian Problemata engage with the Hippocratic corpus. The existence of such engagement was the subject of a fundamental study by Poschenrieder (1887, 38–66); more recently Bertier (1989), Jouanna (1996), and Ulacco (2011, 67–77) have discussed particular examples; Flashar’s commentary (1975, esp. 338–40) and the notes to the editions of Louis and Mayhew contain numerous references.¹ My aim is not primarily to revisit arguments about whether a particular parallel implies source-use, nor to uncover new parallels. Instead I shall focus on what the parallels tell us about how the Hippocratic corpus was read and used by Aristotle and his followers. This provides evidence of both the early reception of the Hippocratic corpus, and the role of medical authority among Peripatetics. One productive approach (touched on for example by Jouanna and Ulacco) is to situate the Problemata’s explanations, where their content contrasts with Hippocratic ones, in the context of Peripatetic physiology. But here I shall focus, more basically, on the range of forms of engagement, from the straightforward conversion of proposition-plus-explanation into a problema, through cases of supplying, altering and combining explanations, more or less complex processes of extracting a proposition, and instances of reapplying some Hippocratic data to a different problem. My contention is that by delineating these various processes, and by contrasting them where possible with Galen’s commentaries on the same Hippocratic passages, we can better understand the enduring pedagogical value of problemata as a format for study.

* My thanks to the audience in Oxford who gave very helpful comments on an early version of some of the material presented here. All translations are my own.

¹ Where I cite Flashar (1975), Louis (1991–1994), and Mayhew (2011) by name alone, understand “ad loc.”
Hippocrates is not cited by name in the *Problemata*, unlike various natural philosophers.² (The nearest one gets is a reference at 30.1.953a16 to ‘sacred disease’ being the terminology of οἱ ἄρχαῖοι for epilepsy, as in the Hippocratic *Morb.Sacr.*)³ However, Theophrastus is nowhere cited by name either, despite the fact that the *Problemata* (particularly in books 2, 5, 12–13, 20, 23–26, and 30.1) convert extensive passages of claim-plus-explanation from his works into the problema-format.⁴

No problema in the extant collection paraphrases Hippocratic material quite like this.⁵ However, if we look to the earlier edition of “Aristotle’s *Problemata*” read by Aulus Gellius, we do find an example.⁶ Gellius (19.5) cites the question in Greek, then gives the explanation in Latin with a Greek précis. Both parts are remarkably similar to *Airs Waters Places* 8, as the comparison in Table 1 shows.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gellius (Latin)</th>
<th>Gellius (Greek paraphrase)</th>
<th><em>Airs Waters Places</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Question given only in Greek.]</td>
<td>(1) διὰ τί τά ἀπὸ χιόνος καί κρυστάλλων</td>
<td>(1) Τά θέ ἀπὸ χιόνος καί κρυστάλλων</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) quoniam cum aqua frigore aeri</td>
<td>κρυστάλλων ὕδατα φαυλά ἔστιν; (2) δἰ παντὸς ὕδατος πηγγυμένον (3) τὸ λεπτότατον</td>
<td>[sc. ὕδατα] πονηρὰ πάντα; (2) ὁκόταν γὰρ ἀπαξ παγη; (3) οὐκ ἕτε ἐς τὴν ἀρχαίην φύσιν καθίσταται, ἀλλὰ τὸ σημεῖον δέ, ὅτι ἐλαττὸν γίνεται ἢ πρότερον, ὅταν τακῆι ἀπεληλυθότος</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) necessum est fieri euaporationem et quandam quasi auram tenuissimam exprimi ex ea et emanare.</td>
<td>καὶ κουφότατον ἐξατμίζει. (6) σημείον δέ, δὶ ἐλαττὸν γίνεται ἢ πρότερον, ὅταν τακῆι παγέν. (4) ἀπεληλυθότος</td>
<td>μὲν αὐτέου λαμπρὸν καὶ κοῦφον καὶ γλυκὺ ἐξατμίζεται καὶ ἀφανίζεται, τὸ δὲ θολωδέστατον καὶ σταθμωδέστατον</td>
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Table 1: *Comparison of Gell. 19.5 and Aër. 8.8–10. Numbers in brackets refer to key ideas*

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² See Mayhew’s index (2011, 2: 433–34) s.v. Alcmaeon, Anaxagoras, Empedocles (see also Arist. fr. 718 Gigon), Heracliteans, Plato, Pythagoreans; also the mathematician Archytas.
³ Cf. the claim of οἱ ἄρχαῖοι πάντες cited at 2.21.868a33, that sweating-treatments should be applied in summer rather than winter. I am not aware of this being Hippocratic. ἄρχαῖοι cosmologists are cited at 25.21.939b34.
⁴ See e.g. Flashar (1975, 335–38), Richter (1885, 5–30).
⁵ We will return below (n. 37) to 2.35, which appears to rewrite a passage of observation and explanation from *De morbis* in more Aristotelian terms.
⁶ Gell. 19.5 = Arist. fr. 760 (fr. 71–69 give the testimonia to ancient collections of Aristotelian *Problemata*). Gellius mentions (19.6) that he read the *Problemata* with L. Calvenus Taurus, his teacher in Athens in c.146 (see Holford-Strevens 2003, 90–97).