

THE COSMOLOGICAL DOCTORS OF CLASSICAL GREECE

Why did some doctors in Classical Greece feel compelled to study the universe as a whole? How could cosmological principles be employed in clinical practice? This book explores the works of the cosmological doctors, such as *On Breaths*, *On Flesh*, and *On Regimen*, and argues that they form part of a much broader reorganization of medical knowledge in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. These healers used cosmological principles as a supplement to, rather than a replacement of, more traditional approaches to health and disease, creating theories about the cosmos whose obscurities can best be understood as the products of medical thinking. Through fresh readings of many ancient sources, the book revises customary views of the intersections between medicine and cosmology in Classical Greece and advances our understanding of one of the most remarkable periods in the history of ancient thought.

DAVID H. CAMDEN holds the Alexander Smith Cochran Chair in Greek Language and Literature at St. Paul's School in Concord, NH. He obtained his doctorate in Classical Philology at Harvard University.

THE COSMOLOGICAL DOCTORS OF CLASSICAL GREECE

First Principles in Early Greek Medicine

DAVID H. CAMDEN

St Paul's School



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-009-20300-5 — The Cosmological Doctors of Classical Greece
 David H. Camden
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009203005

DOI: 10.1017/9781009203012

© David H. Camden 2023

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2023

First paperback edition 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data

NAMES: Camden, David H., 1982– author.

TITLE: The cosmological doctors of classical Greece : first principles in early Greek
 medicine / David H. Camden.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2023. |
 Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2022058753 | ISBN 9781009202992 (hardback) |

ISBN 9781009203005 (paperback) | ISBN 9781009203012 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Medicine, Greek and Roman. | Cosmology, Ancient.

CLASSIFICATION: LCCR138 .C36 2023 | DDC 610.938–dc23/eng/20230302

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022058753>

ISBN 978-1-009-20299-2 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-20300-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-20300-5 — The Cosmological Doctors of Classical Greece
David H. Camden
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For Liz

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Citations and Abbreviations</i>	x
Introduction	I
I.1 The “Cosmological Doctors”	1
I.2 Medicine and Philosophy?	4
I.3 The Scope of This Study	10
1 Three Secondhand Reports	18
1.1 <i>Anonymus Londiniensis</i>	18
1.2 Plato’s <i>Symposium</i>	37
1.3 <i>On Ancient Medicine</i>	49
2 <i>On the Nature of the Human Being</i>	67
2.1 The Hot, the Cold, the Wet, and the Dry	67
2.2 Remote and Proximate Causes	74
2.3 Commonality and Difference	79
3 <i>On Breaths</i>	83
3.1 A Rhetorical Game?	83
3.2 The Work of Hippocrates?	92
3.3 The Common Cause of All Diseases	104
3.4 Accessory and Contributing Causes	116
3.5 A Single Class for All Diseases	119
4 The Cosmological Impulse	123
4.1 The Problem of Individual Variation	123
4.2 The Shortcomings of Diagnostic Handbooks	129
4.3 A Search for Commonality	137
4.4 The Stability of Causal Explanations	145
4.5 From the Common to the Particular	151
4.6 The Cosmological Turn	160
4.7 The Limits of Medical Thinking	168

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
5	<i>On Flesh</i>	176
5.1	The Hot, the Cold, and the Wet (but Not the Dry)	176
5.2	The Body and the Cosmos	184
5.3	The Fatty and the Glutinous	189
5.4	Anthropogony As a Guide to Treatment	197
6	<i>On Regimen</i>	206
6.1	The Self-Sufficiency of Fire and Water	206
6.2	The Cyclical Universe	217
6.3	Mapping the Cosmos	222
6.4	A Resemblance of the Whole	230
6.5	Treating and Preventing Disease	235
6.6	The Quest for Precision	240
6.7	The Nature of Intelligence	244
6.8	The Mind of Gods	249
	Conclusion	262
	<i>References</i>	265
	<i>Index of Passages Discussed</i>	282
	<i>General Index</i>	292

Acknowledgments

I owe a great deal of thanks to many people, without whose support I would never have completed this project. Special thanks are due to Frances Fisher, who first introduced me to the study of the ancient world, and who is the indisputable *arche* for my interest in antiquity; my dissertation adviser and long-time mentor, Mark Schiefsky, to whom I owe much of my thinking about what early Greek medicine is all about; countless friends and teachers from Harvard, Emory, and St. Paul's School, too many to name here; my parents, Betty and Rodney Camden, and my brother, James; my sons, Benjamin and Henry Camden, whose energy, joy, and curiosity make me strive every day to do better; and most importantly, my best friend and wife, Elizabeth Engelhardt. This book is dedicated to her.

Citations and Abbreviations

With the exception of Galen, abbreviations of Greek authors and their works are taken from Liddell, Scott, and Jones, hereafter LSJ. Abbreviations for Latin authors are taken from Lewis and Short. Titles of Galen's works are abbreviated in accordance with the appendix to Nutton (2020). Works in the Hippocratic Corpus are first cited by their paragraph and section number, then by their volume and page number in Littré, hereafter L. The paragraph and section numbers are taken from the most recent editions, with preference given to the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum*, Budé, and Loeb editions, in that order. All Greek texts are based on these same editions, although I have occasionally found it preferable to adopt my own readings, the most significant of which are explained in the footnotes. Where applicable, the works of Galen are cited according to their volume and page number in Kühn, hereafter K. The following abbreviations have also been used:

<i>AbhMainz</i>	<i>Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz</i>
<i>AMT</i>	Thompson, R. C. 1923. <i>Assyrian Medical Texts from the Originals in the British Museum</i> . Oxford University Press
<i>BAM</i>	Köcher, F. 1963–2007. <i>Babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen</i> . De Gruyter
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Brill's New Jacoby</i>
<i>BNP</i>	<i>Brill's New Pauly</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>The Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>DK</i>	Diels, H., and Kranz, W. 1952. <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i> . Sixth edition. Weidmann
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>

Citations and Abbreviations

xi

<i>IStrat.</i>	Sahin, M. C. (ed.). 1981–90. <i>Die Inschriften von Stratonikeia</i> . Habelt
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
K–A	Kassel, R., and Austin, C. 1983–2001. <i>Poetae comici Graeci</i> . De Gruyter
<i>OF</i>	Bernabé, A. 2004–5. <i>Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta</i> , vols. 1–2. Saur
<i>RE</i>	<i>Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des Études Grecques</i>
<i>SpTU</i>	<i>Spätbabylonische Texte aus Uruk</i>
<i>STT</i>	Gurney, O., and Finkelstein, J. J. (eds.). 1957–64. <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> . British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara

Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.