HEAT, PNEUMA, AND SOUL IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

The conceptualization of the vital force of living beings as a kind of breath and heat is at least as old as Homer. The assumptions that life and living things were somehow causally related to “heat” and “breath” (pneuma) would go on to inform much of ancient medicine and philosophy. This is the first volume to consider the relationship of the notions of heat, breath (pneuma), and soul in ancient Greek philosophy and science from the Presocratics to Aristotle. Bringing together specialists on early Greek philosophy and on Aristotle, it applies an approach drawn from the history of science to the study of both fields. The chapters give fresh and detailed interpretations of the theory of soul in Heraclitus, Empedocles, Parmenides, Diogenes of Apollonia, and Democritus, as well as in the Hippocratic Corpus, Plato’s Timaeus, and various works of Aristotle.

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HEAT, PNEUMA, AND SOUL IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

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Preface

The following volume is the product of many productive conversations among scholars of ancient philosophy and medicine, which began at a conference, “Aristotle and his predecessors on heat, pneuma and soul,” held on June 12–14, 2014 at Charles University in Prague, sponsored by the Czech Science Foundation (project no. 13-00800S) and the August Boeckh Centre for Ancient Studies of the Humboldt University of Berlin. As organizers of that conference, we took it upon ourselves afterward to unite some contributions from it, together with further solicited papers, in a volume which would bring together studies of the ancient Greek material on heat, pneuma, and soul in ancient philosophy, medicine, and science of the Classical Era, as few existing publications have. We were encouraged in this by our four special guests, who facilitated an extraordinarily productive conversation among the participants while commenting on their papers: Geoffrey Lloyd, István Bodnár, Philip van der Eijk, and Anna Marmodoro. Though none of them authored contributions to this volume, their critique and encouragement of the work which led to it was in many ways seminal and put the project as a whole on a good path. We are very grateful to them, and also to our authors for their forbearance in the long gestation of this publication, as well as to two anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press, who made valuable and specific recommendations for the improvement of the volume. Miguel Regalado assisted in compiling the final bibliography; our thanks also to him. Finally, and not least, we should also like to thank Michael Sharp for his diligent and patient encouragement of this volume in stages both hot and cold.

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