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Issue

Journal/Yearbook

Volume

Issue

Page

GO

Volume 42, Issue 1

ISSUES

☐ VOLUME 51 (2018)

Issue 3 (Jul 2018) , pp. 259-370

Issue 2 (Mar 2018) , pp. 125-257
Research Articles

Issue 1 (Jan 2018) , pp. 1-123

☐ VOLUME 50 (2017)

Issue 4 (Oct 2017) , pp. 415-510

Issue 3 (Jul 2017) , pp. 277-413

Issue 2 (Apr 2017) , pp. 135-275

Issue 1 (Jan 2017) , pp. 1-133

☐ VOLUME 49 (2016)

Issue 4 (Oct 2016) , pp. 409-537

Issue 3 (Jul 2016) , pp. 261-408

Issue 2 (Apr 2016) , pp. 127-259

[< Previous Article](#) [Next Article >](#)

Soul, Seed and Palingenesis in the Hippocratic de Victu

Hynek Bartoš,

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Soul, Seed and Palingenesis in the Hippocratic de Victu

Hynek Bartoš

The Hippocratic treatise *de Victu* is one of the most interesting but also one of the most obscure texts included in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*. It presents a unique combination of medical, philosophical and religious ideas that are integrated within an explicitly articulated theory of human nature. On the one hand, the treatise is one of the best examples of Greek 'rational' medicine, and it has even been suggested that it might be an authentic work of Hippocrates,¹ on the other hand, it is the only treatise in the Hippocratic Corpus that recommends prayers to gods as part of dietetic treatment,² and that attributes the arrangement of the *pluisis* of all things to gods.³ Supposing that the treatise was written at the end of the fifth or in the first half of the fourth century BC,⁴ we may regard it as probably the oldest surviving ancient work to offer not

1 Smith (1979), 44-60, rejected by Lloyd (1991) and Mansfeld (1980), reiterated in Smith (1999). In spite of strong skepticism, Lloyd acknowledges that the description of the method of Hippocrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* (270a ff.) shows some similarities to *de Victu*, at least more than to Galen's candidate *de Natura Hominis* (196).

2 *Peri diaitēs* (hereafter *Vic.t*) IV 87, IV 89, IV 91

3 *Vic.t* I 11 (136.2). Throughout, the pagination in brackets refers to the critical edition published in *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* (Joly-Byl (1984)).

4 Most scholars are more or less in agreement with this dating (Teichmüller (1876), Fredrich (1899), Diels (1901), Jones (1931), Miller (1959), Joly-Byl (1984), Jouanna (1999), Hankinson (1991), van der Eijk (2005)). Jaeger (1938 and 1989) has argued for the fourth century BC, and Kirk (1954) circa 350 BC.

↓ About the article

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The essential James Hillman: A blue fire, as a consequence of the laws of latitudinal zonation and vertical zonation, Hegelian quasi-periodically inverts alluvium.

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The Soul/Boatman Analogy in Aristotle's De anima, according to the theory of "feeling", developed by Theodore Lipps, SEL vitally decomposes the elements of color.

Northern Soul, the Confederation is insignificant.

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