

The Genius of Polytheistic Hippocratic Physicians

This lecture discusses the amazing features of medicine from over 2500 years ago under a few headings:

1. Why did they involve their gods?
It's all about rational trust.
2. They understood that, at its heart, medicine should be fundamentally a moral transaction.
3. Killing and Trust are understood to be mutually incompatible.
4. Guarding one's life in purity is light years ahead of modern bioethics.
5. What should we do?
For example, do we need a parallel system of Hippocratic medical care?

Ethics: Why has medicine improved its outcomes in measurable categories since the 1860s?

1. From Hippocrates to 1860s going to the doctor increased your probability of dying – so why go?
2. Galen ran away from the Plague and was amazed that Christians didn't.
Read Manzoni, *The Betrothed*.
3. Character replaced by 'professionalism'.
Read David Wootton, *Bad Medicine: Doctors doing Harm since Hippocrates*
4. The change in medical etiologies in the last 70 years.
5. Effective contraception – the sociological disaster.
Read www.firstthings.com/article/2010/05/bitter-pill
6. Reductionism – “*humans lost piecemeal to the animals*”.
Read Thomas Sowell, *Intellectuals and Society* (revised edition) or listen to him on Uncommon Knowledge,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyufeHJlodE>

From Robert Frost's poem, The White-tailed Hornet

“Won't this whole instinct matter bear revision?
Won't almost any theory bear revision?
To err is human, not to, animal.
Or so we pay the compliment to instinct,
Only too liberal of our compliment
That really takes away instead of gives.
Our worship, humor, conscientiousness
Went long since to the dogs under the table.
And served us right for having instituted
Downward comparisons. As long on earth
As our comparisons were stoutly upward
With gods and angels, we were men at least,
But little lower than the gods and angels.
But once comparisons were yielded downward,
Once we began to see our images
Reflected in the mud and even dust,
'Twas disillusion upon disillusion.
We were *lost piecemeal to the animals*,
Like people thrown out to delay the wolves.
Nothing but fallibility was left us,
And this day's work made even that seem doubtful.”