

which is then projected onto the outer situation.⁸⁵ In terms of Asklepiian healing this refers to the constellation of the wounded healer archetype. It tells us that the god of healing is eternally present, watching, waiting and ready to respond to the silent cry of the one who suffers.

85. Jane Hollister Wheelwright (1981) *op. cit.*, p. 280.

The rite of Asklepiian healing

For the body's sickness skilful art can cure, but the soul's sickness only the physician death can cure.

Phalaris, *Epistulae*, 1.¹

As a chthonic god, Asklepios may well be the 'physician death' Phalaris is referring to here. The first principle of Asklepiian healing is that the way through the 'soul sickness' that is suffering is found within the depths of the person who suffers. This involves a metaphorical dying as the patient enters the underworld of dream. The Asklepiian rite was designed, therefore, in such a way as to encourage this inner process:

The patient himself was offered an opportunity to bring about a cure whose elements he bore within himself. To this end an environment was created, which, as in modern spas and health resorts, was as far as possible removed from the disturbing and unhealthful elements of the outside world. The religious atmosphere also helped man's innermost depths to accomplish their curative potentialities.²

The second principle of Asklepiian healing is that it is dependent on an encounter with 'the divine'. The healing of suffering comes through an encounter with some autonomous element within the depths of that person, which can neither be prescribed by another nor willed by the person him- or herself. There is the journey inwards and then there is the waiting:

[C]lassical man saw sickness as the effect of a divine action, which could be cured only by a god or another divine action. . . . Thus a clear form of homeopathy, the divine sickness being cast out by the divine remedy (*similia similibus curantur*), was practised in the clinics of antiquity. When sickness is vested with such dignity, it has the inestimable advantage that it can be vested with a healing power. The *divina afflictio* then contains its own diagnosis, therapy, and prognosis, provided of course that the right attitude is adopted. This right attitude was made possible by the cult, which simply consisted in leaving the entire art of healing to the divine physician. *He* was the sickness *and* the remedy. These two conceptions were identical. Because he was the sickness, he himself was afflicted . . . and because he was the patient he also knew the way to healing.³

The purpose of a visit to the sanctuary of Epidauros was to meet this divine power halfway. This was no visit to a doctor who simply administers medicine; it was an encounter

1. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 271.

2. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, p. 50.

3. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

with the naked and immediate event of healing itself, experienced sometimes in sublime and sometimes in more realistic visions.⁴

To help us take a more detailed look at the ancient rite of Asklepiian healing, we shall consider how it may actually have been for a pilgrim-patient to consult the god of healing in ancient Greece. We shall then reflect on these experiences through the eyes of both ancient and contemporary commentators.

Being called

Leto was fifty years old. She lived in a small village in southern Crete some ten miles from the coast. About a year previously her left breast had become hard and painful. She talked to her friends and tried what they advised but to no avail. Since it had become worse she visited a local healer. He gave her an ointment to apply but again it made no difference. By now the skin on the breast had puckered and she had lumps at the side of her neck and under her arm. From time to time a sharp pain darted down her left arm in a way that reminded her of the flickering of a snake's tongue.

One day Leto heard that one of the sons of the Asklepiads was in that area and that he would be visiting a nearby town. Her hopes rose and she went to see him. He took time to listen to her and examined her wound carefully. He gave her some herbal remedies for the pain, advised her on how to dress the wound, and suggested a regime of diet and exercise but added, to her great disappointment, that he could not cure her.

That night Leto had a dream. In the dream she was walking in an arid desert of rocks and heat. A sudden movement caught her eye and as she turned she saw a snake's tail disappearing under a big, flat stone. She hunched down on her knees and peered under the rock. There she found a pool of clear water. When she awoke the next day she knew what she must do. She baked some honey cakes, packed these with some food and water and set out for the coastal town of Lissos where there was a temple of Asklepios.

Another wealthy man, this one not a native but from the interior of Thrace, came, because a dream had driven him, to Pergamum. Galen, *Subfiguratio Empiric*.⁵

4. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, pp. 34-5.

5. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 250.

The man Euphronius, a wretched creature . . . , being grievously afflicted with a disease (the sons of the Asklepiads call it pneumonia), he first besought the healing aid of mortals and clung to them. The illness was stronger than the knowledge of the physicians. When he was already tottering close to the brink of death, his friends brought him to the temple of Asklepios. Aelianus, *Fragmenta*, 89.⁶

Arrival at the Asklepiian

All day Leto travelled. The way to the coast was mountainous and she had to rest frequently. Late that evening she arrived at a coastal village close to Lissos. She stayed that night with some relations and rested with them throughout the following day. Early the next morning she set out taking a path that led into a ravine. She was glad of the shade. Around midday the path turned up the hillside to the left. It was a steep and difficult climb that eventually brought her onto a plateau, which was dry and dusty. The sun beat down on her. She walked on and soon came to the cliff's edge. Looking over, she saw a green valley curving down to a sickle-shaped beach. On the far hillside she could see the outlines of stone houses.

As Leto made her way carefully down the winding path, she noticed that the valley floor was a patchwork of small fields bordered by bushes and trees. A strange, sweet sound rose to greet her; at first she did not know what it was but then realized it was the noise of bells, lots of bells, ringing. As she stepped off the path and onto the valley floor a sheep stepped out from a blooming oleander bush, a bell hanging from its neck. It stood and looked at her. She had arrived.

The site of these temples was chosen with a great deal of care and forethought in a healthy district well supplied with fresh water.⁷

[T]he Greeks, according to the ancient writers, selected healthful sites, rich in springs, for their temples of Asklepios. The proximity of other gods and cults had something to do with the choice, but undoubtedly climatic conditions were also taken into consideration. The sanctuaries of both Athens and Epidauros are blessed with good clean air and both are sheltered from the wind. The same was to be expected at Kos, an ancient centre of medical science, and it was no surprise when the foundations of the great Asklepieion were discovered a few miles inland from the city of Kos, on a gentle, healthful rise of ground not far from a mineral spring.⁸

6. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *Ibid.*, p. 201.

7. J. Schouten (1967) *op. cit.*, p. 50.

8. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, p. 47.

The Asklepiian

Some other travellers told Leto that the temple was further down the valley. As she came to a group of houses, she was greeted by a woman called Cleo; she told Leto that she was a priestess of the temple and that she would be her guide and attendant. She brought Leto to the house where she would be staying and left her there to have some food and rest.

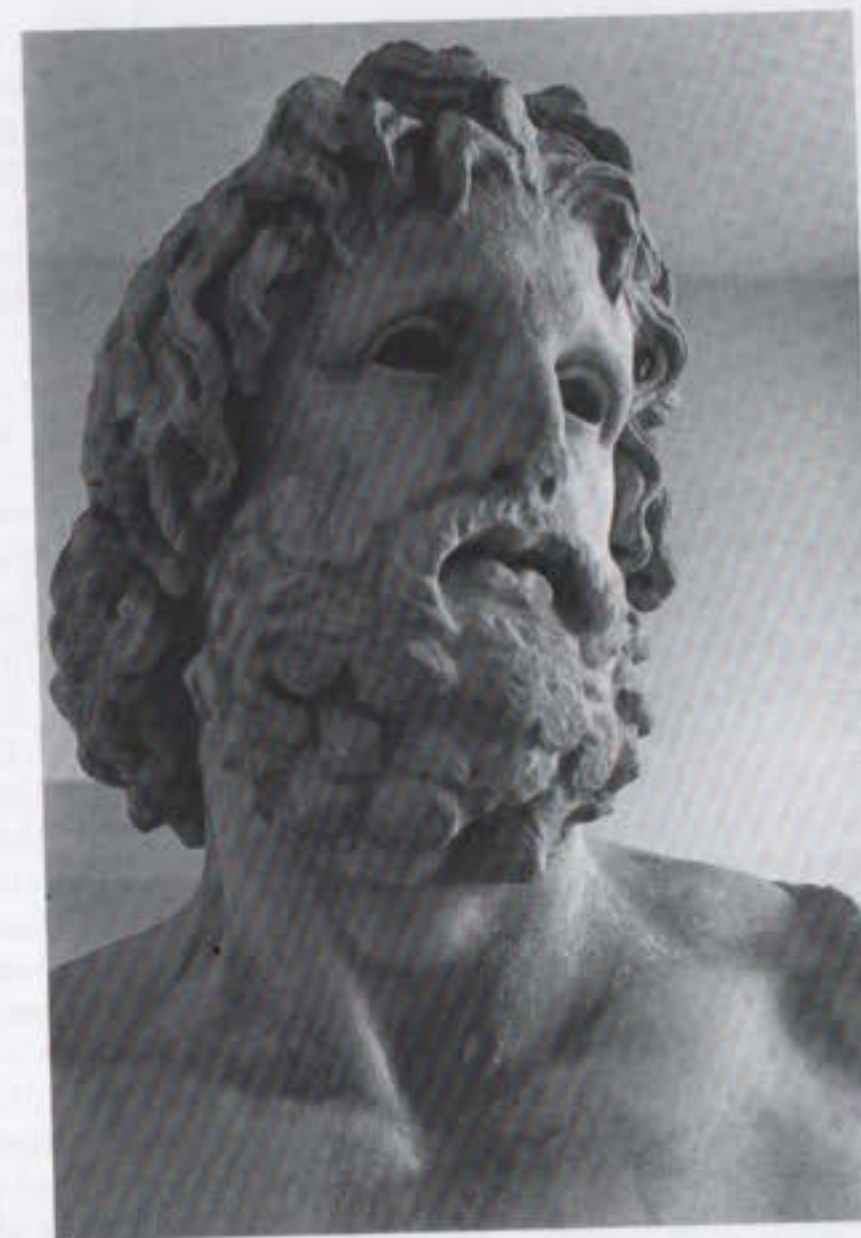
Later, Cleo returned and offered to show Leto around. As they walked through the narrow streets that led to the temple, Leto was struck by the many sick and disabled she encountered. Some, obviously blind, were being led by others. Some were lame. Others were being carried on stretchers. There were men, women, and children and it was evident that, although some were wealthy, many, like her, were poor.

Soon they came to the temple. It was made from rust and ochre-coloured stone and was tucked in under the cliff face among some old, gnarled olive trees. It was not as big a building as Leto had expected. Around its outer walls were slabs of inscribed rock. Cleo explained that these stelae were the testimonies of people who had been healed by the god. Leto walked forward to look more closely. On one she read:

A man came as a suppliant to the god. He was so blind that of one of his eyes he had only the eyelids left—within them was nothing, but they were entirely empty. Some of those in the temple laughed at his silliness to think that he could recover his sight when one of his eyes had not even a trace of the ball, but only the socket. As he slept, a vision appeared to him. It seemed to him that the god had prepared some drug, then, opening his eyelids, poured it into them. When day came he departed, with the sight of both eyes restored.

Close to the temple there was a great stone. Cleo explained that this was a 'navel-stone', like the one at Delphi, and that it was so called because it marked a site of interconnection between the two worlds of the human and the divine. Cleo then left Leto, saying she would call to see her the following morning.

By the temple door was a statue of Asklepios. For some time Leto stood in the shade of the olive trees looking at the statue. There was something about this image of the god that touched her deeply. She had never before seen such an expression in the face of a god.



The eyes seem to look upwards and into the distance without definite aim. This, combined with the vivid movement, gives us the impression of a great inner emotion, one might almost say of suffering. This god does not stand before us in Olympian calm: he is assailed as it were by the sufferings of men, which it is his vocation to assuage.⁹

Tablets [stelae or stone slabs] stood within the enclosure [of the Temple at Epidauros]. Of old, there were more of them: in my time six were left. On these tablets are engraved the names of men and women who were healed by Asklepios, together with the disease from which each suffered, and how he was cured. The inscriptions are in the Doric dialect. Pausanias, *Descriptio Graeciae*, II, 27,3.¹⁰

The omphalos [navel] stone is another attribute of Asklepios. The omphalos, the navel of the world, is often depicted at the feet of the god of healing. It is a sacred stone indicating . . . where the first piece of earth emerged from the primeval ocean; hence the 'navel

9. Carl Kerényi (1959) *Ibid.*, pp. 22–3.

10. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 195.

of the earth'. It also represents the place where life rises from the dead and is therefore eminently applicable to Asklepios because, by his very nature, he calls forth life from death. There is another aspect whereby the omphalos is associated with the Greek god of healing, and that is divination; for Apollo, the divine father of Asklepios, was believed to sit on the sacred navel-stone at Delphi when pronouncing his oracles. Accordingly, in the case of Asklepios, the omphalos bears direct reference to his mantic gift, which is mainly manifested during incubation in his temples and draws its strength from the never-ceasing life of the earth.¹¹

Preparation

In the days that followed, Cleo met Leto each day. Cleo listened to Leto's story and told her how the god of healing, born in distant Thessaly, had arrived at this site by boat in the form of a snake. She told her many other stories about the god and about the rituals of healing. Each day Cleo instructed Leto in a special regime of purification and preparation. This involved periods of fasting and frequent bathing in the waters of the sacred spring. Indeed, Leto spent much of her day by the spring as the waters that welled up from the earth were clear and refreshing. It also allowed her to meet and talk with others who, like her, had come to the shrine in search of healing. She heard many stories of suffering and healing. Just as the waters cleansed her body, these stories bathed her soul.

By now Leto was feeling more at home. She found it difficult to understand how a place like this could have such an atmosphere of peace, hope, and even humour. Nor could she understand a new and unfamiliar feeling of inner quietness. She noticed that she was beginning to look at her own body with less repulsion and more tenderness and she was aware that she had become closer and more attentive to nature and its rhythms than she had ever been. Cleo had told her that this period of waiting and preparation would last until Leto, perhaps through a dream or a sign, or some inner sense, knew that the time was right.

One day, Leto rose early and went to wash in the sacred spring. The sun had not yet entered this part of the valley and all was quiet and shaded and cool. As she stooped at the side of the pool she felt she was not alone. She turned. Nearby a snake lay motionless, looking up at her. Perhaps it had been drinking from the spring. After a moment and with the flicker of a green tail, the serpent disappeared into a crevice between the rocks. Leto pondered on this encounter as she began her bathing. She knew that the time had come.

11. J. Schouten (1967) *op. cit.*, p. 46.

The priest [or priestess] was regarded as a servant of the god, and the temple was not a hospital but a shrine, so that the priest did not figure openly as a doctor.¹²

To judge from the Epidaurian inscriptions and from Aristophanes, the medical art was not practised at the temple. The god wrought miracles of healing, and the temple had need only of priests and servants for the accompanying rites. Of these priests we find mention in many of the inscriptions. There was the chief priest, and a second one, called the Fire-bearer, of almost equal rank, and the third was a temple-servant, the Zakoros or Makoros.¹³

In contrast to the priests in the service of other gods, those serving Asklepios did not exact much from applicants wishing to be placed in contact with the deity. When the patients had reported to the priests, they first took a bath of purification and then brought an offering in token of respect for the god. . . . Everywhere in antiquity, ritual cleansing with water was considered to be highly important. Bathing was a religious magical act, in which the cleanser—the holy water—had, among other things, the power to transmit its apotropaic energy. That the prescribed baths were associated more with inner than with outer purity may perhaps also be inferred from an inscription in the temple of Epidauros, according to Porphyrius, which ran as follows: 'He who enters this sweet-smelling temple shall be clean: not cleanliness is but the nurturing of pure thoughts.'¹⁴

The important part played by water in the Asclepieia has yet another aspect. Large quantities of water were needed to keep the pools filled. The baths, which were prescribed for incubants had . . . the significance of lustrations, through which the soul was freed from contamination by the body. This enabled the incubant to have dream experiences without restriction. In this sense the bath was *oneiraiteton* ('dream-producing'), an expression frequently used in the magical papyri. . . . In addition, the bath has the meaning of a *voluntaria mors*, a voluntary death, and of a rebirth. In other words, it had a baptismal aspect.¹⁵

Of the great miracle-worker who does everything for the salvation of men this [sc., well] is the discovery and possession: it works with him in all matters and for many it comes to take the place of a drug. For when bathed with it many recovered their eyesight, while many were cured of ailments of the chest and regained their necessary breath by drinking it. In some cases it cured the feet, in others something else. One man upon drinking from it straightaway recovered his voice after having been a mute, just as those who drink sacred waters become prophetic. For some the drawing of the water itself took the place of every other remedy. Furthermore, not only is it remedial and beneficial to the sick but even for those who enjoy health it makes use of any other water improper. Aristides, *Oratio*, XXXIX, 14-15.¹⁶

Fasting is the ceremony of most frequent occurrence in connection with oracles. It produced a certain state of mind, which was believed to be conducive to dreams. . . . Wine was forbidden . . . because of its disturbing influence on the senses. Another probable restriction was laid on beans. . . . The explanation given . . . is that beans were believed to act in a special way on the mind, so that dreams were checked.¹⁷

12. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, p. 76. 13. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
 14. Schouten (1967) *op. cit.*, p. 51 and fn. 10.
 15. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 69.
 16. Jones and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 207.
 17. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, p. 85.

Abaton or *adyton* means 'place not to be entered unbidden'. Here we must . . . assume that those permitted to sleep in the temple were those bidden or called to do so. For sick persons healed on Tiber Island, the invariable formula used was *echrématisen ho theos* ('the god made it be known by means of an oracle that he would appear') . . . Probably being bidden by the god was the original significance of incubation.¹⁸

It is possible, however, that auguries and auspices were taken at the preliminary sacrifices and that the sick person did not sleep in the *abaton* unless these were favourable. This was certainly the case at a later date, since there is evidence that sick persons sometimes stayed for a considerable time at the Asklepion. In such cases preliminary sacrifices were continued until a favourable constellation occurred, a *numen* of the deity, which showed that the *kairos oxys* (the 'decisive moment') had arrived.¹⁹

When he (the voiceless boy) had performed the preliminary sacrifices and fulfilled the usual rites, thereupon . . . *Inscriptiones Graecae*, IV, 1, no. 121, 5.²⁰

Incubation

All through that day Leto felt at times anxious, fearful, and excited. Cleo stayed with her, explaining in detail each step of the coming evening's ritual. She called back for Leto just after the sun had left the valley and they went together to the sacred spring. This time Cleo helped Leto with her bathing and then helped her to dress in a clean white gown and gave her special slippers to wear.

By now it was dark and others were making their way up the road to the temple. Cleo walked beside Leto. Soon they came to an opening among the olive trees, not far from the temple, where they joined with other incubants and the priests and priestesses in a circle around a blazing fire. Together they all joined in an invocation to the god:

*Awake, Paieon Asklepios, commander of peoples,
Gentle-minded offspring of Apollo and noble [K]oronis,
Wipe the sleep from thine eyes and hear the prayer
Of thy worshippers, who often and never in vain
Try to incline thy power favourably, first through Hygieia.
O gentle-minded Asklepios
Awake and hear thy hymn; greetings, thou bringer of weal!*

With this the high priest turned and led the way along the path towards the temple. Torches burned on either side of the temple door. At the threshold Leto paused for a moment, took a deep breath and, stepping out of her slippers, went inside.

At first it seemed dark but as Leto's eyes adjusted to the dim light from the oil lamps, she could see the other incubants around her. The

mosaic floor felt cold underfoot. By now the high priest had approached the altar. He then turned and silently beckoned the incubants to approach the altar one by one. Leto, remembering Cleo's instructions, took the honey cake from her pocket. As she approached the altar, the high priest looked in her eyes, put his hands on her shoulders and said her name. He then indicated the rectangular stone basin to his right. This she knew was where the temple snakes were kept. She fed them her honey cake and returned to the corner of the temple where she would sleep.

Soon the candles were quenched and all was quiet. For what seemed like hours, Leto lay on her side on her thin mattress. She was uncomfortable and aware of the noises of others around her and thought she would never sleep. Suddenly, she froze. Someone had put their hand on her left arm. She opened her eyes to see a young boy crouched beside her. He put a finger to his lips and beckoned her to follow him. He led the way through the sleeping bodies. Outside the light of a full moon bathed the valley. All was silent. Taking Leto's hand, the boy led the way along a path she had never been on before. After walking for some time they came to a meadow, at the centre of which was the black silhouette of a mighty tree. As they came closer, Leto could see that the tree was badly damaged. Perhaps lightning or some awful storm had wrenched the huge branch from its side that now lay nearby. The boy approached the branch and climbed up on it. Leto followed but with some difficulty. She then lay down on the branch and rested her cheek on its mossy bark, which was soft, like an animal's skin, with a deeper firmness. She felt a wave of grief ascending like a spring and tears began to flow. For what seemed like ages she wept. A sound caught her attention. She looked up. Was it the wind? Just then a great raft of birds floated over the top branches of the tree. Leto knew that she was both alone and not alone. She sensed that her grieving linked her to the depths of the earth. Someone put a hand on her arm. She turned. It was Cleo. Dawn had arrived and it was time to leave the temple.

Before the actual rite of incubation took place, certain rites of purification and ablutions had to be performed. . . . An initial cleansing bath seems to have been one of the necessary preliminaries for incubation. . . . The *mystai* [initiates in the Mysteries at Eleusis] were also required to bathe.²¹

In most places where incubation was practised, the incubants were strictly enjoined to wear white linen bands and white garments. There is no doubt that this garb also represents 'putting on the new man'. It is the outward and visible sign of transfiguration, and thus also the garment of god, the indication of the appearance of God.²²

18. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 52. 19. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
20. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 290.

21. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 50. 22. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Great care was observed in the matter of footwear, for shoes came in contact with the holy place and could not be used in ordinary life. Hence, . . . in many popular shrines a stock of old clothes and shoes are kept for the convenience of the worshipper, who returns them when the devotions are over.²³

I thought that I stood within the entrance of the temple and that many others had assembled, just as when a purification takes place, and that they were clad in white and otherwise too in suitable fashion. Aristides, *Oratio*, XLVIII, 31.²⁴

For it was now the time to light the sacred candles and the sacristan was bringing up the keys [for] the temple happened to be closed at the time. Aristides, *Oratio* XLVII, 11.²⁵

We know that tame snakes were kept in Asklepieia, and there seems no doubt that these were tree snakes. This does not conflict with the chthonic significance of the serpents of Asklepios; most of the trees in the hieron were Oriental planes, and it is said of these in ancient texts that the sacred springs flowed out from among their roots; thus here, too, the close connection between trees, snakes and water is preserved.²⁶

The main offering to Asklepios, as performed in early centuries, [was] . . . honey cakes, cheese-cakes, baked meats, and figs [which] were laid upon the holy table of the god. . . . There is no indication that the initial offerings required much expense. This fact is well in accord with Asklepios's general attitude toward gifts. He was not one of the gods who enjoyed luxury.²⁷

The sacred serpents in the Asklepieia were also fed with these [honey cakes], a fact which shows they represented chthonic aspects of Asklepios. . . . Honey cakes were offerings made to the chthonii; the chthonii were prophetic; therefore, there is a link between honey and prophecy.²⁸

In the *Aeneid* (ii. 42) Aeneas throws them [honey cakes] to Cerberus, to allow him to get past [as he entered the underworld]. . . .²⁹

The patient, after the preliminaries were ended, betook himself to the sleeping-hall, and there was passive in the hands of the god, who appeared in person and wrought the healing.³⁰

The god of sleep, Hypnos Epidotes (the generous) and the god of dreams, Oneiros, had statues in the Asklepieium at Sicyon, and an Attic inscription with names Asklepios, Hygieia and Hypnos together. At Epidaurus, too, there are many dedicatory inscriptions to Hypnos.³¹

That the incubants were required to stretch themselves out on the ground—i.e., the earth—before a cult image or altar to consult the dream oracle is consistent with the essence of the Ancients' conception of healing, namely that it was the earth itself which, through the intermediary of the rod, serpent and gods of healing, brought relief and deliverance.³²

23. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, p. 91.

24. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 278. 25. *Ibid.*

26. Carl Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 67.

27. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 186-7.

28. Carl A. Meier (1989), *op. cit.*, pp. 91-2. 29. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, p. 92.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3. 31. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, pp. 50-1.

32. I. Schouten (1967) *op. cit.*, p. 55.

After entering the temple, the portico, or the adytum [the room specially built for the incubation], the patients lay down on mattresses on the floor. . . . The temple was plunged into darkness before the expected appearance of the divine physician to the dreamers. 'The priest soon extinguished the lights and bade us address ourselves to sleep', (Aristophanes, *Plutos*, 663). In their dream . . . they saw Asklepios as they knew him by his holy images: a dignified, friendly, calm man holding a rough staff, or a handsome youth with delicate features.³³

[I]t is important to make clear that the decisive event took place at night. The cure occurred in the abaton during the night, whether the patient actually slept or stayed awake from excitement. In the latter case it was effected not by a dream but a vision. This is further proof that the miraculous Asclepian healing was regarded as a mystery; for all the mysteries were celebrated at night.³⁴

The wisdom of the ancient physicians and of those who conceived the temples ascribed the mysterious process of healing rather to the night and sleep than to the day and waking.³⁵

Characteristically, this cure is sought in sleep and dreams. In sleep the patient withdraws from his fellow men and even his physician, and surrenders to a process at work within him. . . . The abaton, 'the innermost chamber' of the sanctuary to which the patient withdrew for the temple sleep, the *incubatio*. . . . The priests were certainly not without medical training or ability. But their role, apart from deciding whom to admit, seems to have been largely passive.³⁶

The general attitude of mind towards dreams prevalent in the ancient world requires some explanation. Incubation's effectiveness is very closely bound up with the importance accorded to dreams. Only when dreams are very highly valued can they exert great influence. . . . The Greeks, especially in the early period, regarded the dream as something that really happened; for them it was not, as it was in later time and to 'modern man' in particular, an imaginary experience. The natural consequence of this attitude was that people felt it necessary to create the conditions that caused dreams to happen. Incubation rites induced a *manitiké atechnos* (prophecy without system), an artificial *mania*, in which the soul spoke directly, or, in Latin, *divinat*.³⁷

Equally positive was the judgement of the ancients concerning the reality of dreams, which were supposed to give men a share in divine wisdom. Nobility and plebes, town-folk and farmers believed in such revelations. Philosophers and scientists admitted that dreams were sent by the gods. . . . Asklepios, then, as a giver of dream oracles only made use of that means by which God and men were supposed to communicate. In dreams the soul came into contact with those divine powers surrounding men and the world, which it could not apprehend when it was awake.³⁸

Then a mysterious and incorporeal atmosphere surrounds them as they lie, such as does not touch their eyesight, but affects their other senses and sensibilities, murmuring in the entrance and penetrating everywhere without touching anything, working wonderful works to rid them of suffering of soul and body. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* (iii. 2).³⁹

33. I. Schouten (1967) *Ibid.*, p. 52. 34. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 75.

35. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, p. 56. 36. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

37. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, pp. iii-iv.

38. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 157.

39. Cited by Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6.

It [sc., the remedy] was revealed in the clearest way possible, just as countless other things also made the presence of the god manifest. For I seemed almost to touch him and to perceive that he himself was coming, and to be halfway between sleep and waking and to want to get to the power of vision and to be anxious lest he depart beforehand, and to have turned my ears to listen, sometimes as in a dream, sometimes as in a waking vision, and my hair was standing on end and tears of joy (came forth), and the weight of knowledge was no burden—what man could set forth these things in words? But if he is one of the initiates, then he knows and understands. Aristides, *Oratio*, XLVIII, 31–35.⁴⁰

Deubner, in his treatise *De Incubatione*, shows the existence of a certain similarity of characteristics in dreams, which have come during incubation, as recorded in the ancient writers. . . . The hearing of a voice was a common sensation. In the second *Sacred Oration* he says of Asklepios: 'A voice came to me by night, saying,' and 'A voice came in a dream.' . . . A mystical light is often recorded as appearing to the sleepers. In Aristides' *Orations* many instances occur. . . . He sees the throne of Asklepios blazing with fire. . . . The god who appears to the dreamer, does so in an abrupt manner. . . . The disposition of the god is felt to be kind and conciliatory. . . . The god is said to be of handsome and imposing appearance, and to be youthful. . . . Sweet odours emanate from the deities. . . . The gods disappeared suddenly. . . .⁴¹

Scarcely had they fallen silent when the golden god, disguised as a serpent, with crest raised erect, sent forth a hissing sound to announce his coming and, by his arrival, shook statue and altars, doors and marble threshold, and the golden gables. He halted in the midst of the temple, rearing his breast up from the ground, and his eyes, flashing fire, travelled round the assembled company. The terror-stricken crowd was filled with panic but the priest, his holy locks bound with a white fillet, recognized the divine presence. 'It is the god, behold the god! Let all who are present keep silence, and cleanse their minds of unclean thoughts. And you, O god most beautiful, let this appearance be to our advantage, and bless those who worship at your shrine!' Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XV, 650–687.⁴²

Here we have an extremely un-Greek epiphany of an otherwise beautiful Greek god! But for this very reason it offers a unique opportunity to note the characteristic feature of the religion of Asklepios that distinguishes it from the Olympian world of Homeric gods. 'Chthonic' would have been the ancient word for it, while today, speaking from a different standpoint, one might say 'numinous'. These two terms cover different aspects of the same phenomenon, but it is in any case the same phenomenon. D. H. Lawrence suggests the essential point when he says that the symbol of the snake goes so deep that a 'rustle in the grass can startle the toughest "modern" to depths he has no control over'.⁴³

Thus in the Asklepieion illnesses are healed by divine dreams. Through the ordinances of visions that occur at night the medical art was composed from divinely inspired dreams. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 3, 3.⁴⁴

40. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, pp. 210–11.
 41. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, pp. 4–6.
 42. Ovid (1955) *op. cit.*, p. 352.
 43. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, pp. 12–14.
 44. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 209.

Afterwards

Cleo walked Leto back to the house where she was staying and said she would call back to see her later that morning. When she did, they went together to a spot down by the beach where they had often gone during the time of preparation. Cleo listened carefully as Leto described what had happened and made a written record of the details of the dream.

'It wasn't really like a dream,' Leto said, 'it seems like it really happened. It's strange . . . I'm the same "me" as yesterday and yet . . . something is different. When I was washing this morning and I looked at my diseased breast, it didn't repulse me like it usually does. I wasn't so frightened. I feel sad and happy at the same time . . . I can't explain it.'

'You have had your dream,' Cleo replied, 'the god of healing has come to you. What this will mean in your life is yet unclear. You must now make your offering to the god and return to your life.'

That afternoon Leto made a small clay model of her left breast. She brought this to the temple and laid it at the foot of the statue of Asklepios. It was quiet and there was no one else around. As she stood up she looked at face of the god and bowed her head. Then she walked slowly around the temple and read the inscriptions on the stone stelae that were laid against the wall. She had read these before but now the stories they told meant something else for her. She turned to leave wondering how her own story would now unfold.

Dream interpreters did not practise in the sanctuaries. As we have seen, they were not necessary. Therefore it is also unlikely that the priests interpreted dreams. . . . Everyone cured was obliged to record his dream or to have it recorded. . . . The incubants were often given this command in the dream itself (*kat' onar*), and the inscribed records on the votive tablets were called *charistéria* ('thank offerings').⁴⁵

It was decisive that the sick should have the *right dream* while sleeping in the abaton. This was the essential point for the rite of incubation. The right dream brought an immediate cure. The two famous physicians Galen and Rufus attest to this fact unreservedly. Apparently the incubant was always cured if Asklepios appeared in the dream. The god might appear *onar*, 'in a dream', as the technical term was, or, alternatively *hypar*, 'in the waking state', or, as we should say, in a vision. He appeared in a form resembling his statue, that is, as a bearded man or a boy, or quite often in one of his theriomorphic forms, as a serpent or a dog. Generally he was accompanied by his female companions and sons. He himself, or, even more often, his serpent or dog, *touched* the affected part of the incubant's body and then vanished.⁴⁶

45. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, pp. 55–6. 46. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

The incubants were *prisoners of the god*. . . . In the worship of Asklepios . . . patients sometimes had to wait until they had the right dream. . . . This means that the sick in search of healing . . . had to remain in the sacred precinct as prisoners of the god for perhaps a considerable time. . . . The rhetorician Aelius Aristides (Aristides of Smyrna) tells us that the *enkatochoi* ('the imprisoned' or 'detained ones') made a careful record of their dreams until a *symptōma*, that is, a coincidence with the dream of the priest, occurred.⁴⁷

The suppliant was not always successful. It might be that no visitation came to him, the dream might be unintelligible, or he might fail to interpret it correctly.⁴⁸

Asklepios healed without asking anything in return. He did not even demand that the person who asked for his help should believe in him, but only that he should be a decent man. He was free from resentment or revengefulness, and his miracles occurred in and through the closest personal contact between him and the invalid. . . . Julianus, speaking of the philanthropic spirit of the god, says, 'For Asklepios does not heal in the expectation of reward, but manifests everywhere the benevolent disposition, which is characteristic of him.' In this respect Asklepios is a successor to Hermes, who was once called the god most friendly to men.⁴⁹

After the [incubation] it was customary to offer up a model of the healed part of the body. . . . It is probable that this custom . . . arose from a more ancient one, by which, before the healing, an image of the member to be healed was hung up in the neighbourhood of the god's statue, as a sort of guide for the deity. In the inscription of the temple regulations we are told that certain fees had to be paid, and Pausanias mentions the further duty of throwing coins into the sacred well, after cure. This last rite has been widely practised in a thanksgiving for restored health, both in ancient and modern times.⁵⁰

Apparently the patient had no further obligation after recording the dream, apart from certain thank offerings and the payment of the fee. People gave what they could, in proportion to their wealth. But the thank offering which Asklepios preferred was a cock.⁵¹

That the cock was an animal sacrificed to Asklepios is known chiefly through the words of the dying Socrates: 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asklepios. Do not fail to make the sacrifice.'⁵²

The symbolic value [of the rooster] is expressed in relation to the sunrise. . . . Scholars were long puzzled as to the meaning of Socrates's last words Today we know what he meant. He might just as well have said: 'The sun is rising, the light is coming, let us give thanks.'⁵³

They [the stelae] originally stood in the neighbourhood of the abaton, and they . . . give no less than seventy case histories. . . . They are nearly all rigidly drawn up in accordance with the following pattern: so-and-so came with such and such an illness, slept in the abaton, had the following dream, and, after making a thank offering, went away cured. The inscriptions belong to the second half of the fourth century BC, but some go back to the fifth century. . . . According to legend, Hippocrates copied them down and learned his art from them. . . . It is important to note that the men who drew up the inscriptions on the stelae took great care that the reader should not mistake the records of dreams for real events, for they invariably began them with the phrase *edokei*—'it seemed', or 'it appeared'.⁵⁴

A man had his toe healed by a serpent. He, suffering dreadfully from a malignant sore in his toe, during the daytime was taken outside by the servants of the Temple and set upon a seat. When sleep came upon him, then a snake issued from the Abaton and healed the toe with its tongue, and thereafter went back again to the Abaton. When the patient woke up and was healed he said that he had seen a vision: it seemed to him that a youth with a beautiful appearance had put a drug upon his toe. *Stele 1, 17*.⁵⁵

The sacred animals symbolise life at the threshold of death, a hidden force, dark and cold, but at the same time warm and radiant, that stirs beneath the surface of the waking world and accomplishes the miracle of cure. The vision of the beautiful young healer appearing while the patient's toe is being cured by the snake is a kind of dream within a dream, an amplification reaching out for a still deeper meaning—the immediate experience of the divine in the natural miracle of healing.⁵⁶

A dog cured a boy from Aegina. He had a growth on the neck. When he had come to the god, one of the sacred dogs healed him—while he was awake—with its tongue and made him well. *Stele 2, 26*.⁵⁷

There is a striking equivalence of dog and snake in the Greek mythology of the underworld; their forms merge and their meanings as well. 'Dogs', says an ancient exegete, 'are also snakes.' The equation can only be taken to mean that both animals may express the same psychic content. . . . Dog and snake, these symbols offered by nature itself, express the same situation, the turn for the better at the brink of the underworld, and in the Epidaurian records they appear in the same function.⁵⁸

Dogs are regarded as guides into the other world. . . . Obviously their ability to follow a trail and their intuitive nature make them especially suitable for this role. These are also qualities which characterize the good doctor.⁵⁹

Arata, a woman of Lacedaemon, dropsical. For her, while she remained in Lacedaemon, her mother slept in the temple and saw the dream. It seemed to her that the god cut off her daughter's head and hung up her body in such a way that her throat was turned downwards. Out of it came a huge quantity of fluid matter. Then he took down the body and fitted the head back on the neck. After she had seen this dream she went back to Lacedaemon, where she found her daughter in good health; she had seen the same dream. *Stele 2, 21*.⁶⁰

Another person could sleep in the sanctuary as proxy for a sick person who could not be moved.⁶¹

Studying the sources, we see at once that incubation is for the cure of bodily illnesses alone. You might then ask what it has to do with psychotherapy. In the first place, the sources constantly emphasize that Asklepios cares for *sōma kai psyché*, both body and mind—'body and soul' is the corresponding Christian term: and second, bodily sickness and psychic effect were for the ancient world an inseparable unity. The saying *mens sana in corpore sano*, which is often misunderstood today, is a later formulation of this idea.

Thus in antiquity the 'symptom' is an expression of the *sympatheia*, the *consensus*, the *cognatio* or *coniunctio naturae*, the point of correspondence between the outer and the inner.⁶²

55. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein, (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 233.

56. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, p. 34.

57. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 234.

58. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, p. 32.

59. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 20.

60. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 233.

61. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 51.

62. *Ibid.*, p. iv.

47. Carl A. Meier (1989) *Ibid.*, pp. 92–3.

49. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, p. 104.

51. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, pp. 55–6.

53. Carl Kerényi (1959) *op. cit.*, p. 58.

48. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, p. 3.

50. Mary Hamilton (1906) *op. cit.*, pp. 85–6.

52. J. Schouten (1967) *op. cit.*, p. 42.

54. Carl A. Meier (1989) *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60.

The incubant was reborn, healed, after a visit to the underworld. . . . Moreover, when the postulant emerged from the mysteries, he was himself a *religiosus*, a *cultor deae*: this corresponds to the Greek term *therapeutés*. . . . Mysteries presuppose *epopteia* (spectators), who see the *drómenon* (action). In the case of incubation, the incubant would have been the *epoptés*, and the *drómenon* which he had witnessed would have been the dream; while the healing itself would have been the mystery.⁶³

I myself am one of those who have lived not twice but many and varied lives through the power of the god, and consequently one of those who think that sickness for this reason is advantageous and who moreover have acquired precious gems in return for which I would not accept all that which is considered happiness among men. Aristides, *Oratio*, XXIII, 15–18.⁶⁴

63. Carl A. Meier (1989) *Ibid.*, p. 107.

64. Emma and Ludwig Edelstein (1945) *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 203.

SECTION 3

Theory