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Holmes' work on the emergence of the concept of the physical body in ancient Greece reworks the body versus soul debate from another perspective, taking into account the medical texts. Holmes' main objective is to draw attention to the shift away from seeing the influence of the gods as the cause and the expression of activities within the body, namely symptoms. With this distinction created from an analysis of the medical texts, Holmes aims to revisit other literary genres to explore the use of the concept of the body in ethical and medical literature and the use of symptoms as indicators of Greek world views. As Holmes shows, a wide range of literary texts benefit from a re-analysis using the ancient Greek concept of the body, as this new perspective allows the tracing of a shift in attitude towards the body which affected Greek thinking to a considerable degree. The focus of the book is, however, solely literary, and as such ignores the material evidence, making it less convincing as a reflection of a Greek world view in its entirety. A discussion of the continuing changes in the depiction of anatomy in sculpture and vase-painting, for instance, and how these might be a reflection of the shifting views of the body, would have broadened the scope of this work.

The book is divided into six chapters which cover by turns epic, medical texts, philosophy and tragedy. The first chapter, 'Before the Physical Body', focuses on the Homeric concept of the body, which has been largely considered primitive. Holmes notes that while the Greeks did blame external sources, particularly the gods, for human symptoms and decisions, it does not follow that Homer had no concept of the body. Holmes concludes that Homer was in fact more aware of the self as a concept than is usually credited since, if the gods affect the bodies of the heroes (as is the case with Patroklos), the idea of something other than the body is already
well established, hence the concept of the body is also formed, even if only to a limited extent.

Chapter Two, 'The Inquiry into Nature and the Physical Imagination,' discusses the philosophy behind perception and thought to highlight the beginnings of what and how a body was imagined in relation to the world at large. Holmes tracks the change in the origins of disease from 'personal agents to impersonal causes' (85-6) expressed in the philosophical and medical treatises produced in the archaic and classical periods. In this chapter Holmes introduces the idea of a 'cavity', the space inside the body that is concealed and frequently below sensation, which she argues is vital to the concept of the physical body as containing a secret, uncontrollable aspect.

It is in Chapter Three ('Incorporating the Daemonic') that Holmes really delves into the medical texts and discusses the symptom and the body as portrayed by the medical writers. The biggest problem the physicians faced was the opaqueness of the body and its multitude of hidden parts which therefore screened the disease; the only way to diagnose was to use the symptom. What is most obvious from Holmes' discussions of the medical texts is the recognition on the part of the writers of the body's strangeness and untrustworthiness in its ability to cause the disease and to turn on the patient.

Chapter Four continues the focus on medical writing, particularly On Ancient Medicine. It explores how the physicians saw their knowledge and its connection with the body and the symptoms, and more particularly how they used their skill to exert control over the physical body. This control over the physical body is given back to the patient by the doctor teaching the patient to care for his body, and is reflected in the texts that provide instructions on this subject. On page 175 Holmes explains in detail the way in which the concept of the body has influenced the ideas of responsibility for the physical body, fatalism, and the unconscious part of a human, since people's level of care for their physical body shows their level
of responsibility, but the disease still works from within the body and exaggerates what is already there that can lead to illness.

In the final two chapters, Holmes discusses the way the concept of the body has influenced other genres in ancient Greece, and from these the world views of the Greeks. In Chapter Five ('Beyond the Σῶμα: Therapies of the Ψυχή') Holmes seeks to answer the question of what motivates people to act as they do. The rationale behind excessive behaviour, for instance, is scrutinised from a medical point of view, although, as Holmes points out on page 193, there is not much on this subject in the medical texts. Holmes then moves to philosophical texts, working to prove that the philosophers took on board the emerging concept of the physical body and treated the soul in the same way, describing the pursuit of pleasure as a disease of the ψυχή.

Chapter Six is the most accessible through its use of three of Euripides' tragedies to show the way symptoms are used to explore moral and ethical issues on the tragic stage: Herakles, Orestes, and Hippolytus. Holmes focuses on Euripides, who seems to have drawn the closest connection between medicine and tragedy: both discovering and conceptualising the battle within the body. The first part of this chapter explains the function of the symptom within tragedy as a communication of the suffering of the character, the externalisation of inner struggles, whether at the hand of a god or not. Holmes argues that Euripides, in his tragedies, encouraged opaqueness about whether the god or the characters themselves were responsible for their suffering.

Within each of these six chapters, the information is further segmented enabling the argument, which at times is heavily conceptual and theoretical, to be advanced in more manageable sections. Holmes also provides useful summaries within the chapters for current and previous chapters, which create a chance to pull back from the very dense and detailed writing and recap the main points that have been painstakingly proved with reference.
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to many primary and secondary texts. Equally useful is the clear summary of each of the chapters in the introduction (37-40).

Holmes has written a wide-ranging and thorough book on the emergence of the concept of the body as a physical object in Ancient Greece. The primary and secondary sources consulted are extensive (particularly the information in the footnotes), making this work most useful for a scholar already knowledgeable in the body soul argument. The language used and the concepts raised make for intense reading at times, but this book provides a systematic analysis of the concept of the body, a frequently ignored part of a significant Greek belief: the body-soul dichotomy.

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