
Soul, Seed and Palingenesis in the Hippocratic de Victu

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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 *phusis* 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

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2 *Peri diaitēs* (hereafter *Vict*) IV 87, IV 89, IV 91

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only a detailed account of regimen⁵ and zoological taxonomy,⁶ but also a profoundly elaborated account of the body-soul relationship.⁷

In this study I will challenge two earlier, and radically opposite suppositions concerning the notion of soul in this treatise that are decisive for a general reading of the text as a whole. Some modern scholars have interpreted the treatise as advocating a kind of dualism,⁸ in particular between body and soul.⁹ This interpretation was based largely on one passage in Chapter 86 at the beginning of Book IV, which was considered to be influenced by 'Orphic' or 'Pythagorean' ideas¹⁰ and believed to express a hostile relationship between body and soul.¹¹ Other interpreters have tried to show that the relation of body and soul within the whole treatise is explicitly non-dualistic,¹² that body and soul cannot be separated from each other,¹³ that there is a continuum between the psychological and the physical¹⁴ and that the Orphic hypothesis is improbable.¹⁵

Two difficulties have obfuscated recent discussions of the topic and need to be considered in advance. First, the term 'dualism' has been taken in very different ways both by its asserters and its critics; second, the 'Orphic-Pythagorean' account of soul was often identified with the body-soul dualism presented in Plato's 'middle' dialogues, mainly in the *Phaedo*.¹⁶ In this paper I will argue mostly on behalf of the second line of interpreters and try to show the limits of the alleged 'dualism' in

5 Smith (1992), 263

6 *Vict* II 46-9. Cf. Heidel (1914), 156.

7 Cf. Hankinson (1991), 205-6. Out of nearly one hundred occurrences of the expression *psuchē* in the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, two thirds are attested in *de Victu*. See also Gundert (2000), 15n9.

8 Jones (1931), xlii n3

9 Gallop (1996), 13n25

10 Palm (1933), 62-9; Joly (1960), 168; Joly (1967), 97n1; Pigeaud (1980), 429

11 Dodds (1951), 119

12 Hankinson (1991), 200-6, Gundert (2000), 22-5

13 Peck (1928), 82

14 Singer (1992), 141

15 Joly (1960), 75, Cambiano (1980), 90-3

16 Cf. Singer (1992), 133.

de Victu. I will start by analyzing the theory of fire and water underlying the author's theory of dietetics first; in the second and third sections, I will proceed to his discussion of soul and body. In my view, the author of *de Victu* presents body and soul as two distinct but not separable entities which are treated as a psycho-somatic unity and reduced (for the purposes of dietetics) to a single mixture of fire and water.

In spite of my skepticism about the dualistic reading, I will suggest in the final section that there are in this treatise some essential traces of thoughts traditionally connected with the so called Orphics or Pythagoreans as well, including a specific notion of an immortal soul which can be reborn.¹⁷ I will introduce a version of *palingenesis* which diverges from Plato's theory of reincarnation in three crucial respects. First, *de Victu*'s version of transmigration presupposes some sort of immortality of certain ensouled human 'parts', but their nature — in contrast to the Platonic account — is physical and corporeal in the same way as any other parts of body. Accordingly, what is described in *de Victu* is not an unembodied soul entering its new body, but a seed as a soul-body unity entering all animal bodies, which can under specific conditions become suitable providers of nutrition for the further development of the seed and thus become biological parents of a new individual. Secondly, as distinct from the Platonic focus on death, departure of the soul from the body and its existence after life, *de Victu* is particularly concerned with life and health and therefore speaks rather about the process of generation, growth and preservation of a healthy life within the limits of natural conditions moderated by dietetic treatment. Thirdly, the moral and theological aspects of Plato's doctrine stay absolutely outside the dietetic scope of this Hippocratic treatise — indeed they do not apply there at all because of the rather problematic notion of the soul's individuality, as I will discuss in the final section.

I Fire and water

There are two reasons for beginning our discussion with an analysis of concepts of fire and water introduced in the first chapters of Book I of *de Victu*. First, both body and soul, as we will see, are reduced to a kind of fire-water mixture, and therefore it seems necessary to analyze

17 In this respect I will slightly divert from my own views as published previously (Bartoš (2006), 68-71).

these two elemental principles and their relationship before proceeding to the discussion of soul and body. Second, W. H. S. Jones wrote in the introduction to his Loeb edition of the treatise that ‘chapter VIII, and perhaps other places also, show strong Pythagorean influence’, and in the footnote he laconically adds: ‘E.g. the dualism of fire — water’.¹⁸ As far as I know, this is one of the oldest suggestions of a dualistic reading of the text, but unlike its later proponents, Jones does not speak directly about body-soul dualism. Therefore, in this section we will focus on *de Victu*’s account of fire and water with special regard to the question raised by the Jones’ note, namely in what sense it is possible to speak about a dualism of fire and water.¹⁹

At the outset of the second chapter of Book I, where the author introduces his general methodology, he declares that ‘he who aspires to treat correctly of human regimen must first acquire knowledge and discernment of the nature of man in general.’²⁰ He presents this general understanding of human nature as (1) ‘a knowledge of man’s primary constituents’ and (2) ‘discernment of the components by which it is controlled.’²¹ Concerning the dietetic aims of the treatise, the author presupposes that anyone who wants to write about regimen must know the ‘powers’ (*dunameis*) of all foods and drinks as well as of the exercises, because ‘food and exercise, while possessing opposite qualities (*dunameis*), work together to produce health.’²²

18 Jones (1931), xliii n3

19 It is worth noting that in the lines preceding Jones’ laconic suggestion of a fire-water ‘dualism’ he mentions the doctoral thesis of A. L. Peck, which he at another place praises as a ‘masterly discussion of the whole of the first book’ superseding all previous interpretative attempts (Jones (1931), xlii n1; xlvii-xlviii). In his dissertation Peck writes: ‘There is in them [i.e., in the soul and body], as in the world at large, a duality, which may be presented as a duality of Fire and Water, each of which reaches in turn its appointed maximum (ch. 5).’ (Peck (1931), 87.) Peck sees a close parallel between the fire-water and soul-body oppositions, but he is strongly arguing against any kind of dualism in terms of separability and independency of soul from body (82-4).

20 *Vict* I 2 (122.22-3). Throughout, I draw (with some necessary minor modifications) on the English translation by W. H. S. Jones (Jones (1931)).

21 *Vict* I 2 (122.24). To justify the second requirement, he further claims that a physician would not be capable of administering to a patient a suitable treatment, if he was ignorant ‘of the controlling in the body’ (*to epikrateon en tōi sōmati*) *Vict* I 2 (122.26).

22 *Vict* I 2 (124.6-7). This methodological demand is fulfilled in the account of vari-

In response to the first requirement of the suggested methodology, at the beginning of Chapter 3 man's primary constituents are defined as fire and water: 'All animals, including humans, are composed of two [things], different in power but working together in their use, namely, fire and water'. Fire and water, he says, are 'different in power', which he further specifies by postulating a polarity of two closely interrelated activities, nourishing and moving ('fire can (*dunatai*) move all things always, while water can (*dunatai*) nourish all things always').²³ The difference between the two elements is further expressed in Chapter 4 by assigning to each of them two opposite qualities: 'Fire has the hot and the dry, water the cold and the moist.'²⁴ So the differences between the two elements are formulated in pairs of opposites: activity-nourishment, hot-cold and dry-moist. But we also read about their common aim ('working together in their use'). The author goes on to specify that both fire and water together are 'sufficient for one another and for everything else, but each by itself suffices neither for itself nor for anything else'.²⁵ He implies that it is impossible for the two elements to be separated, because they would not be 'sufficient' not only for 'anything else', i.e., for all the living things they compose, but also for each of them 'itself'. The distinction between the two elements according to the pairs of qualities hot-cold and dry-moist in Chapter 4 is followed by a further specification, i.e., that 'mutually too fire has the moist from water, for in fire there is moisture, and water has the dry from fire, for there is dryness in water also.'²⁶

Thus the first requirement of the suggested methodology is fulfilled by defining man's primary constituents as fire and water. The second methodological requirement, i.e., the discernment of the components by which human nature is controlled, is completed by implementing the reciprocity of activity and nourishment in human regimen into the

ous kinds of man's nutrition and their qualities discussed in the second book of the treatise, and of various activities (physical exercises, daily activities, etc.) discussed mainly in the third book. The equilibrium of these two aspects is supposed to be the healthy state (*Vict* III 67 (194.2-4)) while the overpowering of one over the other causes diseases (*Vict* III 67 (194.10-14)).

23 *Vict* I 3 (126.9-10)

24 *Vict* I 4 (126.20-1)

25 *Vict* I 3 (126.6-8)

26 *Vict* I 4 (126.21-2)

essential features of the primary constituents of human nature. The *dunamis* of fire is the capacity of movement (*kinēsis*), that of water the nourishment (*trophē*), and their dynamic equilibrium is expressed in terms of mastering: 'each masters or is mastered to the greatest maximum and the least minimum possible.'²⁷ These determining limits are taken as a sufficient guarantee that 'neither of them can gain complete mastery'.²⁸

The most important details about the activities of fire are introduced in the embryological account in Chapters 9 and 10, where we read that 'all things were arranged in the body by fire',²⁹ that fire keeps the embryo 'in movement',³⁰ 'draws to itself its nourishment from the food and breath that enter the woman',³¹ it consumes, dries and solidifies the moisture it is mixed with, develops the essential bodily structures and arranges the body 'according to nature'.³² Fire's capacity of movement is always conditioned by the nutritive power of water, and therefore the mutual cooperation of fire and water in all living individuals and their parts (i.e., animals including humans, their parts, plants and seeds)³³ can be described from two fundamentally different but closely inter-related perspectives — activity and nourishment.

Let us now return to our initial question: in what sense can we call the author's view on the relationship between fire and water dualistic? The two elements are defined in such a way that they can never be fully separated one from the other. Even though we might theoretically imagine some kind of totally passive water existing without fire (which would evidently have to stay outside the realm of animal life), the existence of fire always presupposes some water to be nourished from, and we can find no exception from this rule anywhere in the treatise. The inseparability of the two elements is further supported by the argument that neither of the two can completely master over the other: 'If ever either were to be mastered first, none of the things that are now

27 *Vic* I 3 (126.10-11)

28 *Vic* I 3 (126.11; 126.15)

29 *Vic* I 10 (134.5-6)

30 *Vic* I 9 (132.12-14)

31 *Vic* I 9 (132.14-16)

32 *Vic* I 9 (132.18-23)

33 *Vic* I 3 (126.5); I 6 (128.25-130.1); II 56 (178.16-18)

would be as it is now. But things being as they are, the same things will always exist, and neither singly nor all together will the elements fail. So fire and water, as I have said, suffice for all things throughout the universe unto their maximum and the minimum alike.³⁴ No matter how loose this final argument of Chapter 3 might appear to us, there is no doubt that its aim is to assure the reader that human nature must be understood as being in the tension of two opposites, united in an indestructible mixture of fire and water, or more precisely as an everlasting interaction between movement and nutrition. It is therefore possible, though not necessary, to call the account of fire and water in *de Victu* 'dualistic' in the sense that the elementary principles are two in number and that they are not reducible to one single principle.³⁵ On the other hand, this type of dualism leaves no room for the two principles ever to cease to co-operate or even be separated from each other or exist independently.

II Soul and body (*de Victu* I-III)

While the author of *de Victu* defines the elements of fire and water as two distinct but closely connected and inseparable entities, he treats fire as an element operating *in the body*, and at the end of Chapter 10 a specific kind of fire is closely related with soul: 'The hottest and strongest fire, which controls all things, ordering all things according to nature, imperceptible to sight or touch, wherein (*en toutōi*) are soul (*psuchē*), mind (*noūs*), thought (*phronēsis*), growth, motion, decrease, mutation, sleep, waking. This governs all things always, both here and there, and is never at rest.'³⁶ Even though the ambiguous expression *en toutōi*

34 *Vict* I 3 (126.16-19)

35 G. E. R. Lloyd also calls the account of fire and water in the treatise as 'dualist element theory', but he does so in order to differentiate it from 'monistic', 'four-element' or 'four-humor' doctrines, without any implication for a separability of fire from water or even soul from body (Lloyd (1979), 149).

36 *Vict* I 10 (134.17-20). It is worth noting that the only other occurrence of the expression *noūs* is in Chapter 11 (134.22-4), where the author speaks of a 'mind of gods' (*theōn noūs*). In Chapter 35 (150.29) thought is ascribed to soul (*fronēsis psuchēs*). All other expressions on the list seem to express various life activities (*auxēsis*, *meiōsis*, *kinēsis*, *diallaxis*, *egēsis*, *hupnos*). Surprisingly, the expression *gnōmē*, which is repeatedly ascribed to man (I 1 (122.5), I 12 (136.10), I 24 (142.4)) but not to trees

does not exactly mean identification of ‘the hottest and strongest’ fire with soul, it is the only passage in the whole treatise implying a sort of definition.³⁷ As we will see presently, fire and soul are treated in *de Victu* in very close analogy. Similarly to fire in Chapters 9 and 10, soul also moves within the body, it is wandering about its parts and moving within certain passages,³⁸ suggesting that soul is something distinct from body and thus seemingly supporting a dualistic reading of Chapter 86 in Book IV. I will return to this further down; in this section I will focus on the analogies between soul and fire on the one hand, and water and body on the other, as they are presented in Books I-III.

In accordance with the notion of fire and water just discussed, we may expect that as fire always needs some water for its nourishment, the same should apply for the soul as well. Indeed, two passages say explicitly that soul *has* a mixture of fire and water.³⁹ In other words, soul (analogous to fire) is always mixed with some water, and therefore the author can speak of a soul *having* a mixture of fire and water. This becomes most evident in Chapter 35, where the author discusses the ‘intelligence of soul’. He recognizes seven types of soul depending upon seven types of fire-water mixture.⁴⁰ The ‘most intelligent’ soul with ‘the best memory’ is dedicated to a mixture of ‘the moistest fire and the dri-

(III 68 (198.12-14)), and which is also connected to *psuchē* (I 21 (140.5-6)), is missing from the list in Chapter 10.

37 Nor is it very clear what the qualification of fire as ‘the hottest and strongest’ (*thermotaton kai ischurotaton*) in this passage means. The quality of ‘hot’ is the intrinsic feature of fire, but nowhere else in the treatise is the superlative *thermotaton* connected with fire. Without any direct reference to fire, males are considered to be ‘warmer and drier’ (*thermotera kai xērotera*) than females in Chapter 34 (150.23), and in the discussion of various ages in Chapter 33 we read that ‘the moistest and warmest’ (*hugrotata kai thermotata*) are those nearest to birth’ (150.12-14). In the typology of human physiques in respect of their health in Chapter 32 the ‘strongest’ fire is mentioned in two types of fire-water mixtures, but none of them is considered very firm in health (148.14-20, 148.34-150.4). I am inclined to understand the qualification ‘the hottest and strongest’ as an emphasis of the very nature of fire, which is the capacity to move and ‘activate’.

38 *Vict* I 36 (156.24-5)

39 *Vict* I 7 (130.18-19); I 25 (142.6-7)

40 Following Hankinson ((1991), 203n24) in the form of his typological scheme, I will abbreviate ‘water’ and ‘fire’ by their initial letters and indicate the domination by ‘<’ or ‘>’ and equality by ‘=’. The seven types of fire-water mixture in Chapter 35 are as follows: (1) F=W (150.20-152.8); (2) F<W (152.8-28); (3) F<<W (152.28-154.7);

est water'. In this mixture both fire and water are 'most self-sufficing' by virtue of their mutual balance. Whenever this balance is not achieved, the author distinguishes three types of soul in which fire overpowers water, and three for water overpowering fire. The fire-water mixture responsible for human intelligence is located *in the body*,⁴¹ and the suggested therapy of the inferior soul mixtures consists in simple dietetic prescriptions (including running, walking, vomiting, baths, sexual intercourse, etc.) affecting the body and the fire-water mixture *in it*.⁴²

We find a similar classification concerning the human 'condition' (*hexis*) or 'nature' (*phusis*) in Chapter 32, where the author distinguishes six types of fire-water mixture according to their dispositions for health and diseases.⁴³ Although the qualities of fire and water discussed in both chapters may seem to coincide (e.g., in both chapters the author speaks about 'the moistest fire' and 'the driest water'), they are never mentioned in the same combination and therefore it is not necessary to suppose that the author is thinking of two separate kinds of mixture but only one which has different consequences for intelligence and different for health. In Chapter 32 the whole typology is based on a

(4) F<<<W (154.7-13); (5) F>W (154.13-21); (6) F>>W (154.21-156.3); (7) F>>>W (156.3-18).

41 *Vict* I 35 (150.29-30)

42 Similarly, if any pathology or inconvenience 'of soul' is diagnosed in Book IV, the therapeutic recommendation is to treat 'body' (*Vict* IV 88 (220.9-10); IV 93 (228.26-230.3)). The only example of psychotherapy, i.e., explicit advice to treat *psuchē*, is attested in Chapter 89 (*Vict* IV 89 (222.28-31)), about the case of a patient dreaming about heavenly bodies wandering about, 'some in one way and others in another', which, according to the author, indicates 'a disturbance of the soul arising from anxiety (*merimnēs*)'. The suggested therapy is following: 'Rest is beneficial in such a case. The soul should be turned to the contemplation of comic things, if possible, if not, to such other things as will bring most pleasure when looked at, for two or three days, and recovery will take place.' Even though the physiological aspect of such a therapy is not clarified in the passage, it has to be presupposed in virtue of the general nature of sense reception and thinking mentioned elsewhere (*Vict* II 61 (184.8-14)). The uniqueness of this passage in the whole Hippocratic corpus is claimed by Entralgo (1970), 341-2, and Gundert (2000), 25n69.

43 Four qualities of fire (i.e., *araiotaton* (thereafter abbreviated 'Ar'), *ischurotaton* ('Is'), *leiptotaton* ('Le'), and *hugrotaton* ('Hu')) are combined in Chapter 32 with four qualities of water (i.e., *leiptotaton* ('Le'), *puknotaton* ('Pu'), *pachutaton* ('Pa') and *xērotaton* ('Xe')) in the following way: (1) ArF-LeW (148.3-14); (2) IsF-PuW (148.14-20); (3) LeF-PaW (148.20-7); (4) HuF-PuW (148.27-34); (5) IsF-LeW (148.34-150.4); (6) ArF-XēW (150.4-9).

combination of different qualities of fire and water, in Chapter 35 only 'the most intelligent', i.e., most perfectly balanced mixture is defined by a combination of specific qualities ('the moistest fire and the driest water'), while the other six types of fire-water mixture are specified merely by the relationship of fire and water in terms of the supremacy of the one over the other and the extent of this supremacy (see note 41). In other words, there is no duplication of exactly the same fire-water mixture appropriated separately for the human 'nature' and for human intelligence.

So far, we have discussed Chapters 32 and 35 where the author speaks about different types of fire-water mixture as they manifest themselves in man's physical constitutions in respect to health and in certain soul's features, from childhood to old age. But we should also notice that elsewhere (Chapters 6-10 and 25-31) the author often uses the expression *psuchē* where we expect him to speak about seed or sperm (which has lead some interpreters to suppose that the Hippocratic author uses expressions *psuchē* and *sperma* as synonyms).⁴⁴ Indeed, the expression *psuchē* is sometimes used instead of *sperma* in the meaning of seed or some aspect of a seed, but never vice versa, the expression *sperma* never describes anything other than a seed, as for instance the features discussed in Chapter 35 (e.g., intelligence, memory, brightness in sensation, etc.). Furthermore, seed can be denoted not only as *sperma*,⁴⁵ to *apokrithen*⁴⁶ or *psuchē*,⁴⁷ but also as *sōma*.⁴⁸ But it does not mean that all the expressions are synonyms, as I will try to demonstrate.⁴⁹

While in Chapter 27, where the author begins to discuss all possible combinations of male and female parental seeds, he explained that there is a kind of seed in woman as well as man and why male seed (*apokrithen*) has to conjoin with female seed, which he expresses

44 Heidel (1914), 157; Joly (1960), 30; Joly (1967), 9n1; Joly-Byl (1984), 238; Gundert (2000), 18n28, 32. Cf. Aristotle who ascribes a kind of identification of soul with sperm to Hippon (Aristotle, *de Anima*, 405b5).

45 *Vict* I 4 (126.24), I 30 (146.21), I 31 (146.30-31), II 45 (168.2), IV 90 (226.10), IV 92 (228.14)

46 *Vict* I 27 (144.5); Cf. I 28 (144.20) and I 28 (144.30)

47 *Vict* I 6 (130.8 and 15), I 7 (130.19), I 26 (142.6), I 29 (146.11 f.)

48 *Vict* I 28 (144.20)

49 Cf. Singer (1992), 143n46.

as joining of fire with fire and water with water,⁵⁰ in Chapter 29 he explains how can a soul (*psuchē*) combine with another soul by an illustration:

If anyone doubts that soul combines with soul, let him consider coals. Let him place lighted coals on lighted coals, strong on weak, giving them nourishment. They will all present a like body, and one will not be distinguished from another, but the whole will be like the body in which they are kindled. And when they have consumed the available nourishment, they dissolve into invisibility. So too it is with the soul of a human.⁵¹

This passage evidently speaks about a fusion of two parental seeds, with the two heaps of burning coal obviously representing two seeds consisting of fire and water. The coal united into one whole is called *sōma*, and the heat of the coal represents a soul of seed which unites with the heat (i.e., soul) of the other heap of coal (i.e., seed). Thus in the illustration of the fusion of two parental seeds, both the soul and the body are mentioned. While in this passage the author, in order to describe *psuchē*, discusses *sōma* as well, in the preceding passage we find a reverse order: 'If the bodies (*sōmata*) secreted from both [parents] happen to be male, they grow up to the limit of the available matter, and the babies become men brilliant in soul (*psuchē*) and strong in body (*sōma*).'⁵² I suppose that a seed is denoted in this account as a *psuchē* or as a *sōma* according to what aspect of the seed's nature the author wants to stress. Regarding the activity and the potency of further development of the seed, he mostly prefers to speak about *psuchē*, while in relation to nutrition, physical power or gender difference, he prefers expressions *sōma*, *to apokrithen* or *sperma*.

The last passage to be discussed in this section is the only one that explicitly explains the difference between the soul and the body. In Chapter 28, where the discussion about the determinants of the fetus gender begins, we read:

50 *Vict* I 27 (144.8-9)

51 *Vict* I 29 (146.11-16)

52 *Vict* I 28 (144.20-2)

Male and female [seeds] have the power to fuse into one solid, both because both are nourished in both and also because soul is the same [thing] in all living creatures, although the body of each is different. Now soul is always alike, in larger creature as in smaller, for it changes neither through nature nor through force. But the body of no creature is ever the same, either by nature or by force, for it both dissolves into all things and also combines with all things.⁵³

According to this passage only bodies differ one from the other with respect to their zoological species, gender and other differences, but soul is somehow universal and therefore distinguishable from any other soul only by the features of its body. This general statement implies two points that are important for our later discussion:

(1) Whenever the author speaks about any specific soul (e.g., 'the soul of a human' or even individual soul), he always means soul together with body.

(2) Whenever the author speaks about any possibility to influence (as a rule by regimen) some 'psychological' features of man (intelligence, memory, sense perception, etc.), again, it has to be a soul *together with* or *in* some body.

In all passages discussed so far we have seen that soul is treated as if it corresponds to fire⁵⁴ and that fire is always accompanied by some water. But does it mean that body should simply correspond to water or nourishment? The analogy of body and water is most evident in the early stages of the development of embryo from a seed in Chapter 9, where the process is described as gradual drying and solidification of the original fluid substance. Some parts are totally consumed by fire, others are only dried and formed into required shapes (bones, sinews, flesh), where the moisture 'was most abundant', fire creates belly, etc. Concerning the relationship in adulthood and in fully developed individuals, several passages suggest that soul receives its moisture from the body. Analogous to fire, which 'has the moist from water', *psuchē* also has some moisture⁵⁵ which is said to be supplied by the body,⁵⁶ or

53 *Vict* I 28 (144.15-20)

54 Cf. Peck (1928), 83.

55 *Vict* II 60 (184.2)

56 *Vict* II 56 (180.11-14); Cf. Hippocratic *Epidemiae*, VI 5.2 (ed. Littré).

consumed from the body,⁵⁷ the belly and the flesh.⁵⁸ Any activity (such as seeing, hearing or thinking) causes the soul to be moved, warmed and dried.⁵⁹ And conversely, when the soul is at rest, inaction moistens and weakens the body, 'for the soul, being at rest, does not consume the moisture of the body'.⁶⁰

With respect to the previous considerations, we may conclude that body is treated in *de Victu* not only (1) as a source of nourishment (i.e., water), but also (2) as something specific to each biological species and individual gender, which is gradually arranged by fire (i.e., soul) from a seed into a fully developed individual. As we will see, the difference between the meanings (1) and (2) will be important for our interpretation of the presumably dualistic passage in Chapter 86.

III Sleeping body and dreaming soul (*de Victu* IV)

Let us now proceed to the famous passage in Chapter 86, to which most of the asserters of dualistic reading refer. This introductory chapter to Book IV discusses 'signs that come in sleep' and their function in a dietetic diagnosis. The passage reads as follows:

For when the body is awake the soul is its servant (*tōi sōmati hupēreteousa*), and is never her own mistress (*autē heōutēs*), but divides her attention among many things, assigning a part of it to each faculty of the body — to hearing, to sight, to touch, to walking, and to acts of the whole body; but the mind never enjoys independence (*autē de heōutēs hē dianoia ou gignetai*). But when the body is at rest, the soul, being set in motion and awake, administers her own household (*ton heōutēs oikon*), and of herself performs all the acts of the body. For the body when asleep has no perception; but the soul when awake has cognition of all things — sees what is visible, hears what is audible, walks,

57 *Vict* II 62 (184.27-186.2)

58 *Vict* II 60 (182.28-30)

59 *Vict* II 61 (184.7-16)

60 *Vict* II 60 (182.27-8)

touches, feels pain, ponders. In a word, all the functions of body and of soul are performed by the soul during sleep.⁶¹

Modern scholars often refer to the striking similarity of this passage with the famous fragment 131 of Pindar,⁶² generally regarded as 'Orphic' or 'Pythagorean', and with certain passages in Plato's *Phaedo*.⁶³ E. R. Dodds has developed this idea in his famous book *The Greeks and the Irrational*, where the statement in *de Victu* that a dreaming soul 'becomes its own mistress' leads him to conclude that 'here the influence of the Orphic view is evident'.⁶⁴ By 'Orphic' he means the inclination of religious minds 'to see in the significant dream evidence of the innate powers of the soul itself, which it could exercise when liberated by sleep from the gross importunities of the body'.⁶⁵ He interprets the meaning of the passage in *de Victu* as a kind of liberation of soul out of its bodily 'prisonhouse' during sleep, which corresponds to 'Puritan psychology' (as Dodds calls the hardcore of the Orphic and Pythagorean beliefs about the soul).⁶⁶ A much more cautious interpretation is presented by P. van der Eijk, who on the one hand recognizes the 'material' nature of soul, on the other hand argues that in sleep soul can 'function independently',⁶⁷ and that the author in Chapter 86 'appeals to a rather dualistic conception of the relation between soul and body',⁶⁸ and 'presents soul and body as two separate entities which co-operate in the waking state but whose co-operation ends in sleep'.⁶⁹

61 *Vict* IV 86 (218.4-12)

62 'Each man's body follows the call of overpowering death; yet still there is left alive an image of life (*aiōnos eidōlon*), for this alone is from the gods. It sleeps while the limbs are active; but while the man sleeps it often shows in dreams a decision of joy or adversity to come.' Pindar, fr. 131 (Snell), translated by E.R. Dodds.

63 Palm (1933), 62-9

64 Dodds (1951), 119

65 Dodds (1951), 118

66 Dodds (1951), 149. D. Gallop takes over Dodds' view and simply claims that 'dualism is clearly formulated in the Hippocratic *On Regimen* (IV.86)' without any further argumentation (Gallop (1996), 13n25).

67 Van der Eijk (2005), 125

68 Van der Eijk (2005), 198

69 Van der Eijk (2005), 199

In this section I will not only argue against the identification of the Hippocratic passage with the dualistic accounts of Plato and Pindar, but I will also suggest that even though soul and body are treated as two separate entities and their co-operation ends in terms of their common activities when body sleeps and soul dreams, they do not cease to co-operate in terms of nutrition, and therefore the 'independence' of a dreaming soul on body is limited in this sense.

Since there has been some scholarly controversy concerning the unity of the whole treatise, I shall first propose some arguments that are independent of the account of soul and body in Books I-III of *de Victu*. Despite the evident similarities between the Hippocratic passage and the parallel passages in Pindar and Plato, there are also some important conceptual differences that preclude the identification of the position of the author of *de Victu* with the dualistic ideas presented by the other two authors. Let me begin with the rendering of the expression *oikos* in the *de Victu* passage as a 'prisonhouse' suggested by Dodds, which is evidently a misleading prejudice based on Plato's accounts⁷⁰ and finds no support in the text.⁷¹ The dreaming soul in the *de Victu* passage performs all the common functions of body and soul, which does not suggest any antagonistic relation between the two, but rather cooperation and reciprocal dependence. This is clear from the interpretation of dreams, which follows the introductory passage: 'Such dreams as repeat in the night a man's actions or thoughts in the day-time, representing them as occurring naturally, just as they were done or planned during the day in a normal act — these are good for man. They signify health, because the soul abides by the purposes of the day, and is overpowered neither by surfeit nor by depletion nor by any attack from without.'⁷² If the aim of the soul during sleep were to free itself from the prison of the body similar to the soul's departure after death,⁷³ it would probably act and think differently from the thoughts and activities of

70 Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 67d; 82e f.; *Phaedrus*, 250c4-6.

71 This was already convincingly demonstrated by G. Cambiano (Cambiano (1980), 90-3). In my opinion, a much closer analogy for the intended meaning of the term *oikos* in the Hippocratic passage may be found in the fragments of Democritus, where the body is called *skēnos* of *psuchē* (Democritus, DK 68 B 223.), and the soul itself is referred to as a dwelling of *daimōn* (DK 68 B 171).

72 *Vict* IV 88 (220.1-5). Cf. also *Vict* III 71.

73 Cf. Xenophon, *Cyro* 8.7.21; Aristotle, fr. 10 (Sextus Empiricus, *Adver Phys* I 20-1).

the day-time's prison. But in the *Phaedo*, for instance, the coexistence of a soul within a body is understood as a kind of disease,⁷⁴ and elsewhere the liberating of the soul from its body resembles healing and purification;⁷⁵ by contrast, the author of *de Victu* interprets cases in which the soul during its dream-activities departs from its waking experience in the body, as pathological and calling for a therapy.

Comparing the Hippocratic passage with the Pindar's fragment, it is not easy to overlook the fact that Pindar does not speak about *psuchē* but about *eidōlon*, an expression obviously evoking Homer's concept of eschatological *psuchē*, a shadow of man forever stored away in the underworld realm of Hades. Furthermore, unlike Pindar's *aīōnos eidōlon*, which is sleeping 'while the limbs are active', the Hippocratic soul is explicitly said to be awake together with body in waking, and it is only 'the status of her activity' which changes in dreaming.⁷⁶

It is time now to focus on the question of the relation of Book IV to the rest of *de Victu*. In some manuscripts and printed editions Book IV is titled 'On Dreams', which might impeach the unity of the treatise, even though Book IV was not separated in antiquity as in modern times.⁷⁷ At first sight the text itself might seem like a separate discussion 'at very best loosely connected with the preceding sections', as van der Eijk puts it, but as was repeatedly argued by modern scholars, 'on closer inspection it fits in neatly in the author's overall concept'.⁷⁸ Following the same view I will suggest an additional argument in favor of the unity of the whole treatise and consequently discuss the passage in Chapter 86 in the light of the general principles introduced in Book I.

Presupposing the unity of the whole treatise the same principles as in Books I-III should be in operation in Book IV as well. This can be demonstrated for example from the passage in Chapter 93, where we read: 'Whenever in his sleep a man thinks he is eating or drinking his usual food and drink, it indicates a want of nourishment and a desire

74 Plato, *Phaedo*, 95d1-2; 105c2-4

75 Plato, *Respublica*, 571d6-2b1. The absence of the notion of *katharsis* as the 'highest goal' of soul (Plato, *Phaedo*, 67c) in the Hippocratic passage was already demonstrated by A. Palm (Palm (1933), 68).

76 Cambiano (1980), 91

77 Smith (1992), 263n3

78 Van der Eijk (2004), 193. Cf. Diller (1959); Miller (1959); Smith (1992).

of soul (*psuchēs epithumiē*).⁷⁹ It is clear from the following prescriptions that the shortage of nutrition was meant literally (not as any special soul nutrition) and that the soul was affected by it in sleep. Also the analysis of dreams ‘contrary to the acts of the day’ in Chapter 88 suggests a very close connection of soul and body in dreams. The author advises ‘treatment of body’, which is explained in the following way: ‘For a disturbance of the soul has been caused by a secretion (*apokrisis*) arising from some surfeit (*plēsmonē*) that has occurred.’⁸⁰ Even though it is not specified in this passage where the secretion disturbing soul comes from, it is explicitly ascribed to the body in Book III (Chapter 71), where the nature of sleep is described within a discussion about symptoms of men overpowered by food. Since this is probably the only passage in the whole treatise explaining the nature of sleep, we should quote it in full length:

At the beginning of the surfeit they have fall upon them long and pleasant sleeps, and they slumber for a part of the day. The sleep is the result of the flesh becoming moist; the blood dissolves, and the breath, diffusing itself, is calm. But when the body can no longer contain the surfeit, it now gives out a secretion inwards through the force of circulation, which, being opposed to the nourishment from food, disturbs the soul. So as this period the sleeps are no longer pleasant, but the patient perforce is disturbed and thinks that he is struggling. For as the experiences of the body are, so are the visions of the soul when sight is cut off. Accordingly, when a man has reached this condition he is now near to an illness. What illness will come is not yet known, as it depends upon the nature of the secretion and the part that it overpowers. The wise man, however, should not let things drift, but as soon as he recognizes the first signs, he should carry out a cure by the same remedies as in the first case, although more time is required and strict abstinence from food.⁸¹

79 *Vict* IV 93 (228.26-7). Here I adopt the correction of Emerins (followed by Littré, Joly and others) and read *epithumiē* instead of manuscript *athumiē*. A similar idea describing *psuchēs epithumiē* is repeated a few lines later (230.1-2).

80 *Vict* IV 88 (220.9-10)

81 *Vict* II 71 (202.34-204.10)

The connection of the 'visions of soul' with the disturbances by the secretions of body originating from the surfeit of food fits together with the passage in Chapter 88. The whole of Book IV is devoted to the interpretation of these visions in order to prevent the advent of approaching diseases. In the first sentence of Chapter 86 we read that 'he who has learnt aright about the signs that come in sleep will find that they have an important influence upon all things'.⁸² And the last sentence of the same chapter concludes: 'Whoever, therefore, knows how to interpret these acts aright knows a great part of wisdom'.⁸³

Let us now return to the passage about the 'independence' of the dreaming soul in sleep in Chapter 86. So far I have tried to show that even in sleeping the dreaming soul depends on the nutrition delivered by body, which influences the content of dreams. So the remaining question to be answered is: In what sense shall we understand soul's 'independence' from body in dreams? The activities performed during the waking state by soul together with body are specified as seeing, hearing, touching and walking. The same activities are said to be performed solely by the soul in dreams, which was already mentioned for seeing in Chapter 71 discussed above, where dreams were presented as 'visions of the soul when sight is cut off'. Similarly in Chapter 86, dreaming is conditioned by the fact that 'the body when asleep has no perception'. The activities of seeing, hearing, touching and walking are normally connected with certain sense organs or limbs, which are the components of human body. Since these organs are not active in sleep, soul becomes *autē heōutēs* in these activities, it is independent of sense organs and the inactive limbs, i.e., from the body in the second meaning. But concerning the first meaning, i.e., the body as a source of nourishment of soul, nothing in the passage suggests that the nutritive bond between soul and body is broken during sleep. The nutritive dependence of soul on body has to be presupposed in this passage as anywhere else,⁸⁴ since the principles of activity and nutrition were defined in Chapters 3 and 4 as the essential and inseparable features of all fire-water mixtures, and soul 'has a mixture of fire and water'. So what restricts the soul's independence in dreaming, where it is relatively self-

82 *Vict* IV 86 (218.3-4)

83 *Vict* IV 86 (218.12-13)

84 It was suggested already by Palm (1933), 66n112.

sustained in its 'activities', is the fact that it still relies on the 'nourishment' received from body.⁸⁵

Let me summarize the main features differentiating the account of soul and body in *de Victu* from the Platonic body-soul dualism. In Plato's *Phaedo* (and occasionally in other 'middle' dialogues) (a) soul and body belong to different orders of reality or different ontological 'worlds' (b) soul is separable from body and capable of an independent existence; (c) the relationship of soul and body is rather hostile and their junction pathological. The earthly connection of the two is understood as a kind of disease which is cured only by release of soul out of body at the moment of death. Contrary to this, in *de Victu* (a) both body and soul are mutually interdependent in the same way as fire and water;⁸⁶ (b) under specific conditions (e.g., in dreaming) soul is separable from body in its activity, but it can never be separated from the nutrition supplied by body, which means it can never leave its body; and (c) the relationship between soul and body is based on co-operation and mutual interdependence. Any disorder between the two is rendered as pathological, and the aim of any therapeutic intervention is to restore their co-operation.

IV Into a human there enters a soul

We have already seen that the author of *de Victu* often uses the expression *psuchē* to denote certain animating and organizing aspect of a seed or embryo. We have also mentioned his analogy of the two heaps of coal mingling together as an illustration for combining two parental seeds in the process of impregnation. In this section we shall focus on the process of generation in closer detail in order to reveal certain features that bring the theory of *de Victu* very close to the hardcore of the so-called Orphic-Pythagorean notion of soul, i.e., the idea of the pre-existence of

85 A sleeping body is not deprived of its soul, it is just that their relationship is operating in a different modus. The only example of a body existing without a soul is found in Chapter 21 (*Vict I* 21 (140.5-6)) in the description of a sculpture: 'Statue-makers copy the body without the soul, as they do not make intelligent things (*gnōmēn de echonta*), using water and earth, drying the moist and moistening the dry.'

86 The only kind of 'duality' lies in the differentiation between fire and water on the theoretical level of explanation, or activity and nourishment on the dietetic level.

human soul which transmigrates across individual lives, though it is also fundamentally different from that in ways I shall indicate.

In Chapter 4 immediately after introducing the elements of fire and water and their basic characteristics, the author adds that 'of all things nothing perishes, and nothing comes into being that did not exist before', and that 'things change merely by mingling and being separated'.⁸⁷ There is no place for a fresh beginning in existence in the Hippocratic theory and therefore even a 'new life' of any individual must be interpreted in terms of mingling of previously existing parts.⁸⁸ In order to learn more about the history of these pre-existent parts we have to turn to the passages in Chapters 6, 7 and 25 claiming that human souls, the germs of new organisms, enter living individuals from outside. To exclude the possibility that these passages describe the biological process of impregnation of woman by man's sperm, I will first quote the beginning of Chapter 25:

The soul of a human, as I have already said, which possesses a blend of fire and water, and the parts of a human, enter into (*eserpei*) every animal that breathes, and in particular into every human, whether young or old. But it does not grow equally in all; but in young bodies, as the revolution is fast and the body growing, it catches fire, becomes thin and is consumed for the growth of the body; whereas in older bodies, the motion being slow and the body cold, it is consumed for the lessening of the human. Such bodies as are in their prime and at the procreative age can nourish it and make it grow. Just as a potentate (*dunastēs anthrōpos*) is strong who can nourish very many people, but

87 *Vict* I 4 (126.26-8)

88 According to the account of fire and water in Chapters 3-5, the suggestion made by J. Jouanna (Jouanna (1999), 408) that 'birth is only a reuniting of elements and death a separation of these elements' is rather misleading. B. Gundert in her attempt to reconstruct the whole process of generation supposed that 'according to *Regimen*, life begins when secretions from the two parents, each consisting of a mixture of fire and water, unite in the uterus' (Gundert (2000), 17). Although some passages in Chapters 26-9 might suit this interpretation, many others condemn it as unsatisfactory, oversimplified or even misleading, as I will argue in the next paragraphs. To reveal the most serious objection, we shall ask: What kind of life according to Gundert begins? Although in our modern view new life begins in the moment of the unification of sperm and ovum ('parental seeds' in the Hippocratic vocabulary), after a closer inspection of the first chapters of Book I it turns out not to be the Hippocratic story.

is weaker when they desert him, even so those bodies are severally strongest that they can nourish very many souls, but are weaker when the souls have departed.⁸⁹

Let us begin with the last sentence, which confused W. Jones and compelled him to ask in his note: 'To what does it refer? And how can a body nourish many souls?'⁹⁰ R. Joly answers him that here the *psuchai* correspond to 'sperm emissions',⁹¹ which I believe is correct in this sentence. But in the preceding text we also have to consider that human sperm develops only in the body of an adult and fertile male (and similar process has to be presupposed in a female body as well), which reveals very clearly the difference between the underdeveloped seed called 'human soul' entering all animals, and the fully developed sperm maturing only in the right place at the right time.⁹²

In my reading, our passage describes an early stage of development of seed preceding the conjunction of parental seeds and subsequent

89 *Vict* I 25 (142.6-17)

90 Jones (1931), 263n2

91 Joly (1960), 77; Joly (1967), 20n2

92 R. Joly seems to realize the possible resemblances of the idea of the author of *de Victu* with Orphic accounts and considering the idea that the soul of a human enters into every animal he declares that we are 'far away from *metensōmatōsis*' (Joly (1960), 75). He explains the fact that *psuchē* can enter all animals by pointing to the passage in Chapter 28, which we have already discussed, where it is declared that 'soul is the same (*tōuto*) in all ensouled beings' (*Vict* I 28 (144.16)). This neither ensures us being far away from *metensōmatōsis*, nor explains why it is explicitly human soul (*psuchē tou anthrōpou*) which enters all animals. Joly seems to think that the whole of Chapter 25 (as well as Chapters 6 and 7) speaks about biological insemination and embryological development. If we concede that the author speaks about *psuchē* as *sperma* at the beginning of our passage in the same meaning as at the end of it and in the subsequent chapters, where it means evidently man's sperm, we are faced with very bizarre consequences. First, we should concede that according to the author man's sperm enters not only women of all ages, but also all men. Regarding the frequent homosexual encounters in Greco-Roman antiquity, we should not exclude this possibility, but there is no satisfactory explanation for the fact that man's sperm further develops in the mature and fertile bodies of these male recipients. And second, even more bizarre consequence rests in the claim that the sperm should enter all animals. A zoophilia is quite rare and definitely not generally an accepted part of Greek daily life, and it seems to be hardly imaginable that zoophilia should be practiced with 'all animals'. This is definitely not the right way to go in our interpretation.

embryological development, which implies two different stages in the development of seed.⁹³ Since nothing completely new can come into existence, there are many different kinds of seed of plants and animals already pre-existing in our surroundings. The idea that these seeds enter a human from outside was already (Chapter 25: ‘as I have already said’) discussed in Chapter 6, where we read:

All other things are set in due order, both human soul and likewise human body. Into a human enter (*eserpei*) parts of parts and wholes of wholes,⁹⁴ containing a mixture of fire and water.⁹⁵

Here the connection between what enters a human from outside (‘parts of parts and wholes of wholes’) and ‘the soul of a human’ is very loose, but it becomes much clearer later in the text. So far it seems that whatever enters a human can be described as ‘parts’ organized in relative ‘wholes’, no matter whether we speak about human seed, other seeds or any parts of our nutrition. The emphasis here is on the fact that all these parts *have* a mixture of fire and water. Soul has to have its own parts as well, as we read later in Chapter 6, where it says that ‘each individual soul, having greater and smaller parts’ needs some suitable space to grow and some suitable parts to join with. And this is supposed to be the reason why human soul cannot grow in other animals, as we read in the following explanation: ‘For the suitable joins the suitable, while the unsuitable wars and fights and separates itself. For this reason the soul of a human grows in a human, and in no other [animal].’

93 As far as I know, the separation of these two stages of seed’s growth has been overlooked by most commentators, with the exception of the excellent and still undervalued dissertation of A. L. Peck. Peck speaks about three stages of the seed development: (1) the growth from a seed up to a matured sperm which moves its position; (2) under certain conditions two parental seeds commingle into an embryo which grows in woman up to the moment of birth; and (3) the development of the organism after birth (c.f. Peck (1928), 90).

94 The general (but nowhere in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* repeated) figure ‘parts of parts and wholes of wholes’ opens a possibility of two expository perspectives: (1) either we can see and describe anything from the bottom up, from parts towards the unity they compose and higher unity of that unity, or (2) we can begin with any natural whole and discuss its parts and parts of its parts.

95 *Vict* I 6 (128.24-130.1)

It is the same with the other large animals.⁹⁶ Although it is not exactly clear what the author has in mind when restricting his account only to 'large' animals, the explanation concerning the necessary conditions for further development are obvious: the soul of a human (i.e., soul having certain parts of human body) can grow only in humans and not in any other animals because her parts need appropriate conditions for further development specific for humans, and the same should hold for the seeds of other ('large') animals.

Accordingly, it is understandable why in the next chapter the author begins with a restriction: 'I shall say nothing about the other animals, confining my attention to humans'.⁹⁷ In the following sentence we find exactly the same idea as at the beginning of Chapter 25 in slightly different wording:

Into a human there enters (*eserpei*) a soul, having a blend of fire and water, and the parts⁹⁸ of a human body. These, both female and male, many and of many kinds, are nourished and increased by human diet. Now the things that enter must contain all the parts.⁹⁹

The condition that any specification of soul ('human soul', 'female' or 'male' in our case) always rests in some body is satisfied here by the presence of 'the parts of a human body' ('parts of a human' in Chapter 25) entering humans together with the soul. The fact that there are many human souls of both genders entering into our bodies together with the supposition that they 'have' a mixture of fire and water provide the possibility to control (at least in terms of probability) the gender of our offspring by regulating our regimen. This topic is discussed in Chapter 27, where on assumption that females incline to water and males to fire the following regimen is suggested: 'So if a man wants to beget a girl, he must use regimen inclining to water, if he wants a boy, he must live according to a regimen inclining to fire. And not only the man must do this, but also the woman. For growth belongs not only to the man's

96 *Vict* I 6 (130.13-16)

97 *Vict* I 7 (130.18)

98 Here I adopt Fredrich's emendation *merea de* supported by the Latin translation in manuscript P: *membra*.

99 *Vict* I 7 (130.18-21)

secretion, but also to that of the woman.¹⁰⁰ As far as I understand it, the suggested regimen may support the growth of the female seeds at the expense of the male seeds (or *vice versa*) in the bodies of both parents, but they obviously cannot change the gender of any single seed, because it is predestined already before entering human body.

We may now reconstruct the two stages of the growth of human seeds (or souls) as follows: The first stage begins with the entering of the human seeds (soul together with the 'parts of a human body') into all animals including humans from outside,¹⁰¹ probably in the same way as nutrition and air come in.¹⁰² They don't grow in any other animals than humans because they cannot find a suitable environment for the growth of their parts there, nor do they grow in human bodies being too young or too old, but only men or women in their prime can nourish them properly.¹⁰³ They grow and develop in the bodies of fertile men and women until they fulfill their 'allotted portion'.¹⁰⁴ At this moment, 'driven along [...] by force and necessity',¹⁰⁵ an ejaculation in men or an analogous process in women — as I tend to render it — transport the seeds 'into larger room'¹⁰⁶ and the first stage of development is finished. If it happens that both the parental seeds (also called souls, parts or 'secreted bodies' (*sōmata apokrithenta*)) are emitted together to 'one place' and 'on one day in each month' (i.e., into a womb of a potential mother in her fertile period),¹⁰⁷ they commingle together into one fire-water mixture and 'achieve a correct attunement',¹⁰⁸ the second developmen-

100 *Vict* I 27 (144.2-5)

101 *Vict* I 7 (130.18-19), I 25 (142.6-8)

102 Cf. *Vict* I 6. A connection of breath and seed is attested in Chapter 25, where it is said, that 'The soul of man ... and the parts of man enter into every animal that breathes' (*Vict* I 25 (142.7)).

103 *Vict* I 25 (142.8-17)

104 *Vict* I 8 (132.4)

105 *Vict* I 8 (132.3)

106 *Vict* I 8 (132.2-3). This presupposes that the female seed develops in some other place than the womb. Cf. Hippocratic *De semine*, 4.3, 5.1-4 (Littré).

107 *Vict* I 27 (144.7-14)

108 *Vict* I 8 (132.7-8)

tal stage described in Chapters 9, 10 and 26 can begin and continue for the next seven to nine months before the fetus can be born.¹⁰⁹

V What is there Orphic or Pythagorean?

So far we have deduced that, according to the author of *de Victu*, human souls (i.e., ensouled seeds, or souls together with some bodies which make them to be 'human') pre-exist in our environment. There is no explicit specification in the treatise where these 'human souls' come from. Nevertheless, there are some hints allowing us to move the speculation even closer to a theory of transmigration. When we ask for the origin of the everlasting seeds of human beings, the only possible answer we can find in *de Victu* is that they come from 'the dead'. In Chapter 92 of Book 4 the author interprets dreams in which dead people occur. Receiving something clean (*katharon*) from them indicates both 'health of the body and the healthiness of the things that enter it'.¹¹⁰ The explanatory basis for this interpretation is striking: 'For from the dead (*apo tōn apothanontōn*) come nourishment, growth and seeds'.¹¹¹

Supposing that (1) 'growth' as well as *psuchē* were closely connected with 'the hottest and strongest fire' in Chapter 10, and 'nourishment' is in the elemental theory represented by water; that (2) all seeds 'have a mixture of fire and water'; and (3) that the potency of growth and further development of human seeds is commonly indicated as *psuchē* in the treatise, we can conclude that the seeds (*spermata*) in this passage are in principle the same as the seeds (i.e., souls with 'parts of body') entering a human from outside together with nutrition.¹¹² Contrary to R. Joly, I believe that the presented Hippocratic theory of soul is in a way that I shall specify very similar to the principles of *metensōmatōsis* or *metempsuchōsis*.¹¹³ But since these expressions were often employed

109 *Vict* I 26 (142.24-6)

110 *Vict* IV 92 (228.12-14)

111 *Vict* IV 92.4-6 (228.14)

112 It seems significant that the unusual verb *eserpein* used in Chapters 7 and 25 in connection with *psuchē* is repeated in the following sentence in connection with *spermata* (*tauta de kathara eserpein es to sōma hugieiēn sēmainei* (228.15)).

113 According to Olympiodorus (*In Plat Phaed com* 9.6.5-6 (ed. Westerink)), both terms are synonymous.

in late antiquity to label a specifically Platonic version of reincarnation, I would rather prefer to use another name for the Hippocratic version of this idea. A convenient candidate is the expression *palingenesis*,¹¹⁴ which is derived from Plato's description of an 'ancient doctrine', according to which the living are born again from the dead (*palin gignesthai ek tōn apothanontōn tous zōntas*).¹¹⁵ If my reconstruction of the Hippocratic account is right, the seeds originate from the dead (*apo tōn apothanontōn*), enter living animal bodies and under certain conditions revive (literarily *zōpureontai*)¹¹⁶ into new individuals, which seems to be very similar concept to the 'ancient doctrine' mentioned in Plato's *Phaedo*.

These speculations seem to lead us very far away from the physiological account of human nature introduced in the first chapters in Book I. But if we focus again on Chapter 4 and also on the subsequent Chapter 5, which we have so far omitted in our survey, we can find certain theoretical considerations concerning the nature of life and death that are perfectly consistent with the concept of *palingenesis* as we have revealed it in our analysis. The idea, introduced in Chapter 4, that the common belief of men in 'perishing' and 'coming into existence' is wrong and that in reality things merely change by mingling and being separated, is further developed in Chapter 5 into universal and amazingly general consequences, which are important for our discussion in two respects. First, the traditional eschatological realm of death associated with Hades is understood in *de Victu* as an invisible complement of 'this world', the realm of visible phenomena ('Light of Zeus').¹¹⁷ Drawing on the conventional ideas, the distinction between being and not-being is transformed into the contrast of visibility and

114 The expression *palingenesis* was also occasionally used to denote Plato's doctrine. On the other hand, some scholars (Cumont (1923), 182; Stettner (1934), 3-4) have already suggested a terminological difference between Plato's *metempsychōsis* and the *palingenesis* associated with Pythagoras. For my purposes, I am going to use the same terminology in order to distinguish Plato's and the Hippocratic theories (without necessarily identification of the Hippocratic and Pythagorean versions of *palingenesis*).

115 Plato, *Phaedo*, 70c. Cf. also Plato's *Meno* (81a-b): 'They [i.e., certain priests and priestesses ... and Pindar also and many other poets] say that the soul of man is immortal, and at one time comes to an end, which is called dying, and at another is born again (*palin gignesthai*), but never perishes.'

116 *Vict* I 29 (146.14); see also I 9 (132.14).

117 *Vict* I 5 (128.15)

invisibility of certain everlasting entities. It is supposed to be only a wrong belief among men who 'trust their eyes rather than their mind' that things originate and perish, but in reality things come to light from Hades (i.e., invisibility) and disappear from the light to Hades.¹¹⁸ Second, the repeated statement that 'the things of the other world [i.e., Hades] come to this, and those of this world go to that' is exactly the essence of the 'ancient doctrine' described in Plato's *Phaedo*, which seems to legitimize our speculation about the Hippocratic version of *palingenesis* in *de Victu*.

We have already defined the difference between the Platonic version of body-soul dualism and the theory of *de Victu*. According to the suggested theory of transmigration, the main divergence between the two concepts resides in the fact that the transmigrating soul is for Plato the bearer of man's identity and that each reincarnation is a consequence of one's previous merits or wrongdoings. This moral background is completely absent from the Hippocratic account of the cosmic cycle of life and nutrition and the identity of transmigrating seeds is very problematic.¹¹⁹ First, the identity cannot depend on the soul, which is 'the same' in all animals, but rather on the 'human parts'.¹²⁰ Therefore we must consider the composite of soul and parts of human body (in other words — specific mixture of fire and water). But even if we do this, the features of man's character discussed in Chapter 36 do not depend on this mixture, but rather on the 'passages' of soul in the fully developed body,¹²¹ which implies that without one's specific bodily structure there is no place for one's personal identity. And second, whatever else might survive in the transmigrating fire-water mixture (i.e., soul within some 'parts of human body'), its identity is impeached by the fact that 'soul

118 *Vict* I 4 (126.28-128.2)

119 The absence of moral and theological aspects in the oldest versions of the idea of transmigration seems to be attested in Herodotus (II 123) as well as in Aristotle's fragments of the 'Orphic' and 'Pythagorean' accounts on soul discussed below (*de Anima*, 404a16-20; 407b20-6; 410b27-11a1). According to W. Stettner, the version of the theory of transmigration that was free from morality (ascribed to old Pythagoreans) was of an earlier date (Stettner (1934), 7-19 and 29-31; cf. Burkert (1962), 111n87).

120 A. Peck supposes 'parts' to be the 'element of stability' opposed to the constant flux of the body as a whole (Peck (1928), 87).

121 *Vict* I 36 (156.23-5)

combines with another soul', and that soul can also be divided as we read in Chapter 16.

Seeing that Plato's version of transmigration and that of the author of *de Victu* are different in many respects, it seems that our question concerning the possible 'Orphic-Pythagorean' influence on this Hippocratic treatise is insoluble unless we define what we suppose to be the original Orphic or Pythagorean ideas on soul. If we exclude the testimonies of Plato and his followers, which are very specific and evidently preoccupied with Plato's own ideas and inventions,¹²² probably the oldest authentic evidence which explicitly says something positive about Orphic and Pythagorean notions of soul is to be found in the first book of Aristotle's *de Anima*. In contrast to Plato's eschatological myths in *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, *Republic* and *Timaeus*, where the fate of soul between two incarnations is discussed in amazing detail but where we find no specification of how the immortal soul enters her new body, it is the only aspect of the theory of reincarnation that Aristotle discusses in the criticism of his predecessors. Criticizing those 'who describe the soul as composed of the elements' Aristotle claims that 'the theory in the so-called poems of Orpheus [...] alleged that the soul, borne by the winds, enters from the universe into animals when they breathe.'¹²³ This account suits *de Victu* very well not only because the Hippocratic author describes soul as an elemental composite, but also because he supposes that 'the soul of a human [...] and the parts of a human, enter into every animal that breathes, and in particular into every human, whether young or old.'¹²⁴ Aristotle attributes a similar idea to the Pythagorean stories, which 'try to explain what the nature of the soul is' and suggest that it is possible 'for any soul to find its way into any body'.¹²⁵ Again, this Pythagorean idea closely resembles the account of the author of *de Victu* where he explains the nature of soul and says that human seed (i.e., soul plus parts of human body) enters into every breathing animal.¹²⁶

122 Both Burkert (1962) and Huffman (1993) have already persuasively showed the difference between our oldest testimonies of Orphic and Pythagorean doctrines of soul and that of Plato, whose influence is also apparent in many later doxographers.

123 Aristotle, *de Anima*, 410b27-30. Translated by W. S. Hett.

124 *Vict* I 25 (142.6-8)

125 Aristotle, *de Anima*, 407b20-4. Translated by W. S. Hett.

126 *Vict* I 6 (130.15)

Considering that our pre-Platonic evidence about the idea of a trans-migrating soul is very poor, fragmentary and often very unspecific, we may conclude that *de Victu* is besides Plato our oldest evidence — preserved in an authentic and non-fragmentary form — of a philosophical reflection on certain ancient ideas concerning the fate of soul as life-principle in the everlasting cosmic cycle of life. Differences in topic and emphasis, different therapeutic suggestions and different goals in Plato and in the Hippocratic author may offer us a more plastic view on the early history of the philosophical reflections on the eschatological thoughts traditionally connected with the 'Orphics' or 'Pythagoreans', as well as on the very vague frontiers between religion, philosophy and medicine in the Classical Era of ancient Greek history.¹²⁷

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