



## Hippocrates (Medicine and Culture)

*Jacques Jouanna*

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Hippocrates, considered for more than two thousand years the father of medicine, came over time to be credited with a life of mythic proportions and an enormous body of work. Hippocrates' pronouncements on health, disease, and prognosis went unchallenged in the Western world until scientific advances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries made many of his ideas obsolete. And yet medical students in the United States and Europe still recite the Hippocratic oath upon completion of their studies. In view of Hippocrates' exceptional importance in the history of medicine, it may seem surprising that our knowledge of this fifth century b.c. Greek physician should be so incomplete.

Nonetheless, Jacques Jouanna contends that a great deal can be concluded about the life and works of Hippocrates. Published to both critical and popular acclaim in France, *Hippocrates* reveals a man who was not only the greatest of the ancient physicians but also a philosopher of unrecognized ability and consequence who influenced both Plato and Aristotle; a historian who was the equal of Herodotus and Thucydides as a writer and superior to them in his powers of observation and analysis; and a master of tragical narrative who bears comparison with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Now that Hippocrates has at last emerged from the hagiographic mists of Byzantium and medieval Europe, the justice of his reputation as one of the greatest figures of antiquity can be more fully appreciated.

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