

Antiquity Matters!
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Abstract: Prediction in medicine and meteorology.

In the fifth and fourth centuries BC, the art of prediction played an important part in a physician's skill-set or *techne*. Physicians aligned themselves with seers who could predict the course of diseases through using their extensive knowledge base and skill to read signs on the body and make a prognosis. However, the art of prediction was not just centred around the human body, it also extended to the natural environment as, to some extent, disease was thought to be caused by the change in the natural environment.

This paper aims to examine the ways in which physicians tried to predict both the course that diseases might run and what particular diseases might attack a certain place at a certain time of year through predicting the weather for the year. In both the prediction of disease and in the prediction of meteorological events, extensive observation was carried out to build up a picture of how the natural environment changed over the year and how the body reacted to such changes.

Though this type of observation of the climate already had a long established history among ancient astronomers, physicians went a step further in attempting to predict "abnormal" years, which could produce different diseases to those in a normal year. If a physician could predict the weather, he could predict the different diseases that might occur as a result of the changes in environment. He could then prepare himself and his patients for the coming seasons and the diseases they produced.