

# Medicinal Uses of Wine

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# World's Oldest Medicine?

- Sumer, 5500-4000 BC
- Egypt, 3100-350 BC
- Homeric Greece, 800 BC  
(Pramneian Wine mixed grated goat's cheese, and barley meal is given to wounded soldiers Machaon and Eurypylos)



# Certainly the most common medicine in “Western Civilization”

- Used until the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century
- Question: Why did wine stop being seen as a medicine?



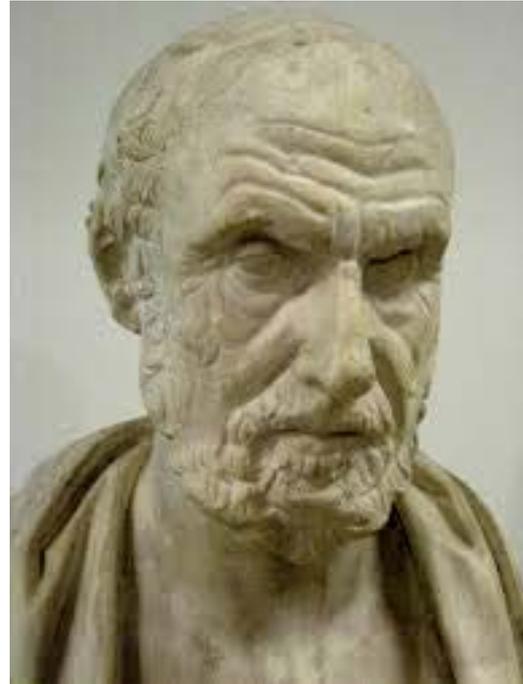
## Hippocrates, c. 460-370 BC

Wine should be used both externally and internally:

“Surface lesions should generally not be moistened except with wine.”

-On regimen

Internal use, drinking wine, was based upon humoral theory.



# Humoral Theory

1. Blood: hot and moist
2. Yellow Bile: hot and dry
3. Black Bile: cold and dry
4. Phlegm: cold and moist

All people had a primary humor. The role of food and medicine was to create balance between all four.

1. Sanguinary
2. Choleric
3. Melancholy
4. Phlegmatic

Humors were unstable, as they varied according to individuals, regions, gender, age, and seasons.

# Wine in Humoral Medicine

- Because wines were already thought of as medicine, they were incorporated into humoral practice
- Water was cooling and moist; most wine was *hot and dry*
- The more alcoholic the wine, the “hotter” it was
- The sweeter the wine, the more it moved in the direction of “moist”
- Wines were thought especially effective as *laxatives and diuretics*

# Hippocrates on Wines

“Dark and harsh wines are more dry, and pass well neither by stool, urine, or spittle. They dry by reason of their heat, consuming the moisture of the body. Soft, dark wines are moister and weaker; they cause flatulence because they produce moisture. Harsh white wines heat without drying, and pass better by urine than by stool. New wines pass by stool better than other wines because they are nearer the must [crushed grapes], and more nourishing. Of wines the same age, those without bouquet pass better by stool than those without...thin wines pass better by urine. White wines and sweet wines pass better by urine than by stool; they cool, attenuate, and moisten the body, but make the blood weak, increasing in the body what is opposed to the blood.”

Thus, Hippocrates prescribed different wines for different illnesses, including consumption, fevers, fistulas, jaundice, and uterine pain.

Foods important too, but nothing used as much as wine.

## **Galen, c. 130-201 AD**

### **Popularized Greek Theory**

Born in Pergamon, Asia Minor.

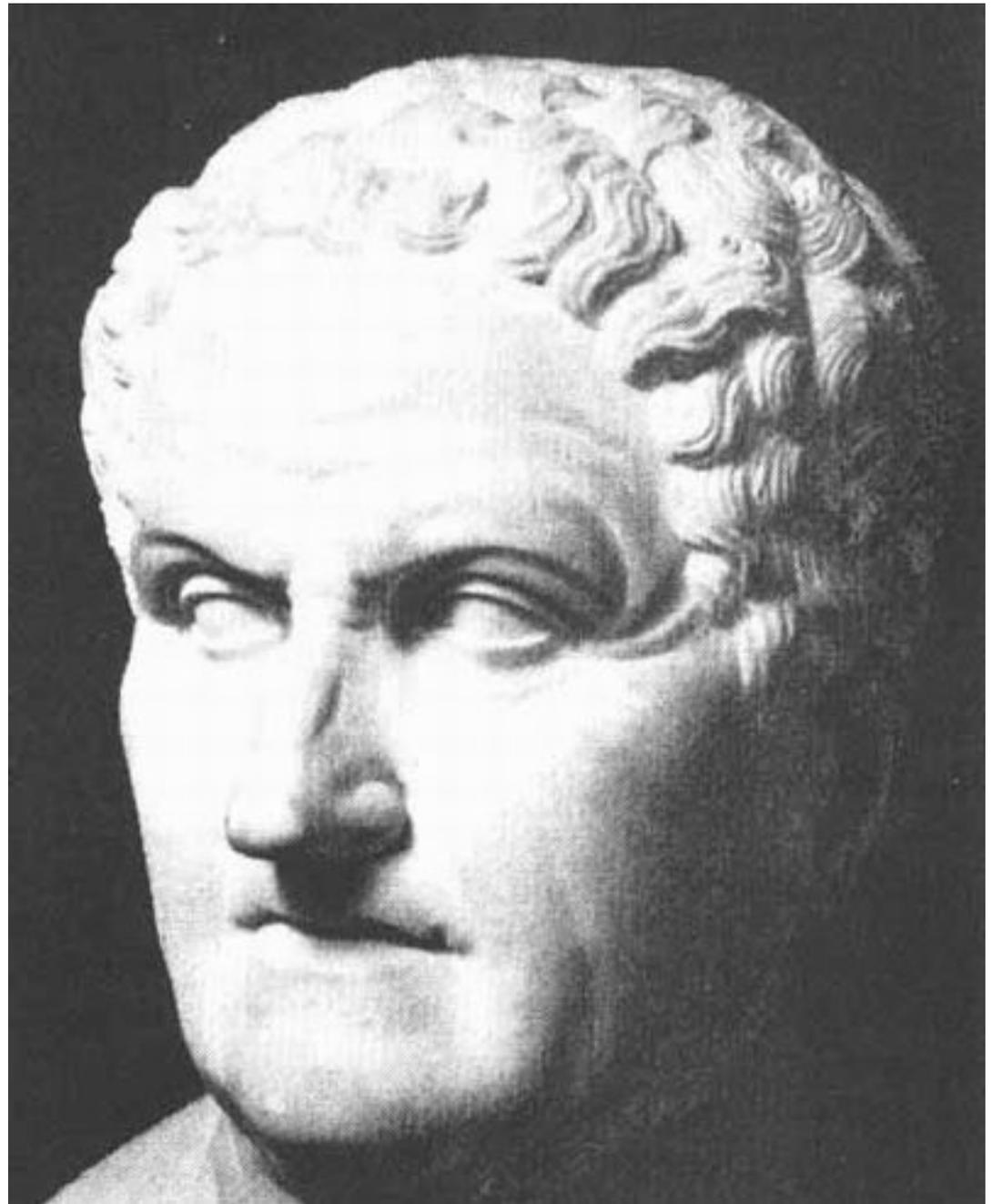
Began career treating wounded gladiators.

Moved to Rome where he worked for a succession of emperors.

Favored wine as an antiseptic:

“I cured the most seriously injured by covering the wounds with a cloth soaked in astringent wine kept moist day and night by a super-imposed sponge.”

Believed wine should be given internally to “ the choleric, the sad, or the dreamer, but not to the irascible until after his passion has subsided.”



## Medieval Medicine

Essentially Galenic Medicine

*Regimen Sanitatis Salernitanum*  
(11<sup>th</sup> C)

The best wine engenders the best humors

If wine is dark, it renders your body indolent;

Wine should be clear, aged, subtle, ripe,

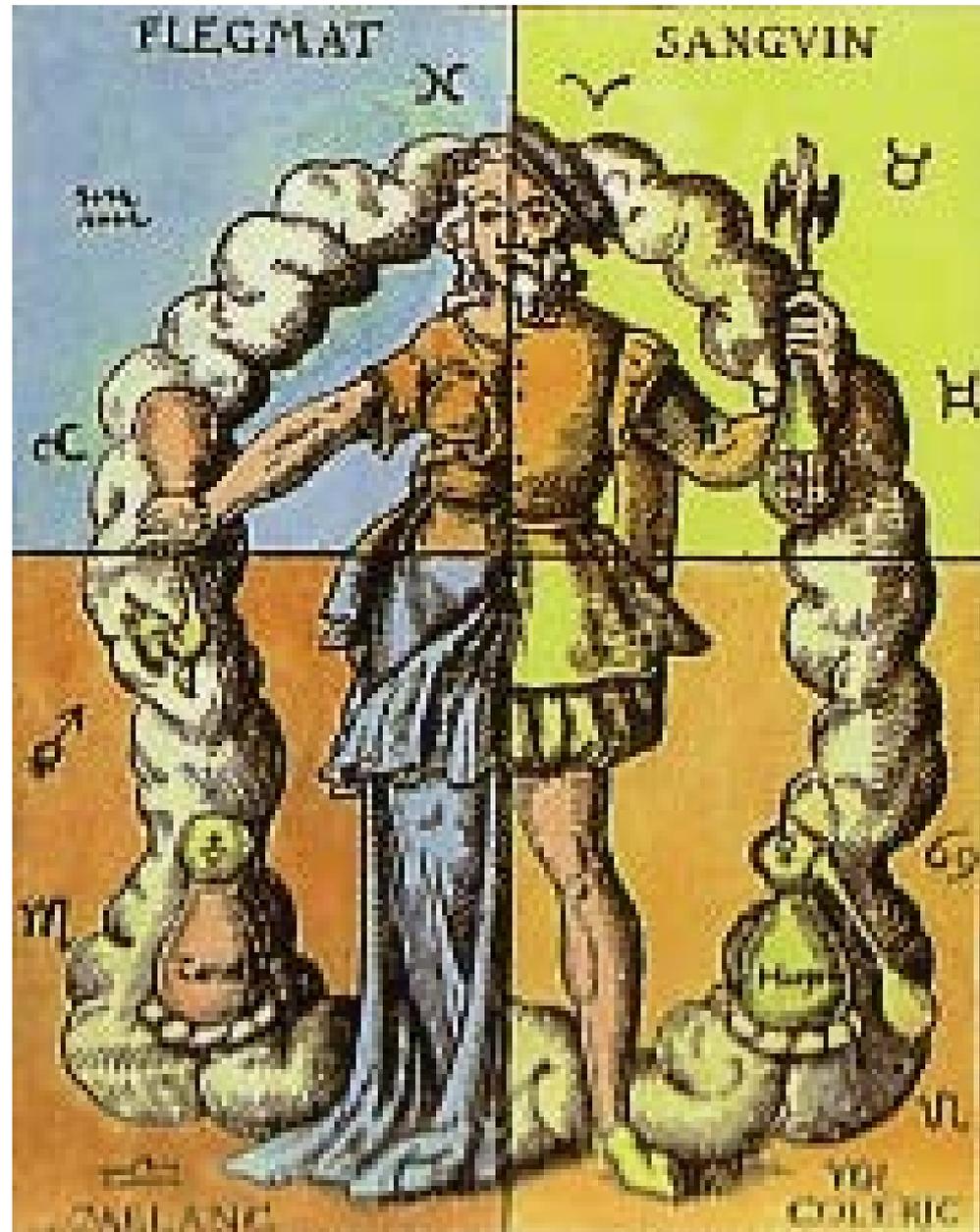
Well diluted, zesty, and taken in moderation.

However:

If you develop a hangover from drinking at night,

Drink again in the morning;

It will be your best medicine.



## Hildegard von Bingen, 1098-1179

*Physica, or Book of Simple Medicine*

Catalogued 230 medicinal plants, almost all of which needed to be soaked in wine before being consumed.

Likewise, Valerius Cordus, *Pharmacorum* (1564), recommended wine based medicines that included ashes of centipedes and scorpions, dog excrement, and wolf's liver.

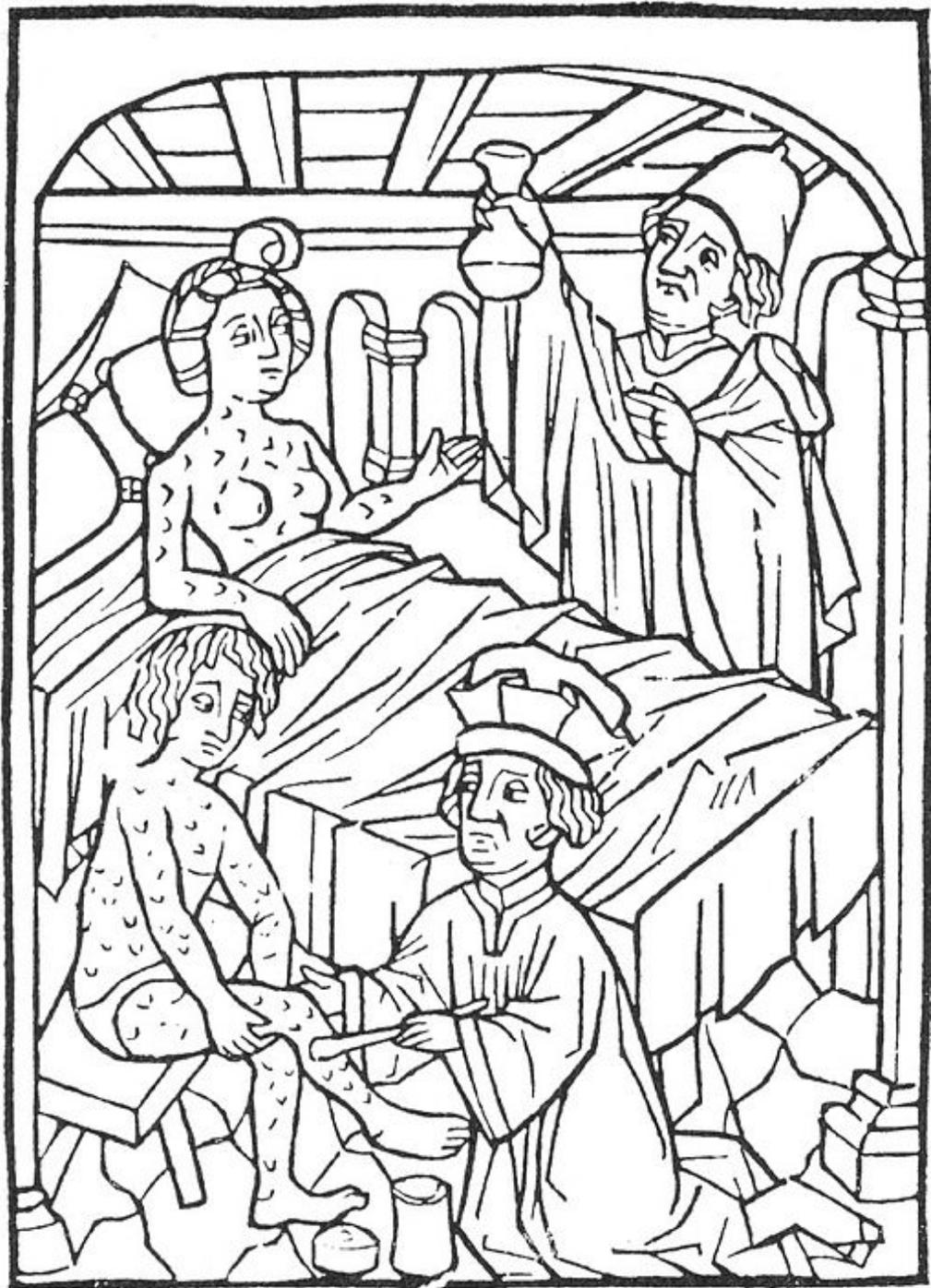


## Syphillis

Arrives in Europe in 1594

Wash penis or vagina with white wine

Take bath in solution of wine and herbs.



## Early Modern Era

Humoral (Galenic) and Analogic medicine remain dominant

Louis XIV (1643-1715) was given wine for all his illnesses: gout, fevers, fistular tumors.

His first doctor, Antoine d'Aquin, recommended drinking champagne with every meal.

His second doctor, Guy Fagon, recommended burgundy.

Led to long-standing dispute between the two regions



# The English Speaking World

- William Smith, *A Sure Guide in Sickness and Health* (1776): “If the stomach be weak and cold, the constitution languid, weak, cold, and relaxed, and the blood poor and watery, then a glass or two of wine will be of service.”
- William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine* (1769): The effects of wine are to raise the pulse, promote perspiration, warm the habit, and exhilarate the spirits.”

## The Nineteenth Century

Alexander Henderson, 1780-1863,  
*The History of Ancient and Modern Wines* (1824)

“In general, then we may conclude that the good effects of wine, as an article of diet, are referable to its stimulating operation of the nervous and muscular coats of the stomach, by which means that organ is incited to greater action, and the flow of gastric juices is promoted

- Champagne: hypochondria
- Burgundy: where heat is required
- Bordeaux: the safest for daily use
- Port: where gentle tonics are required
- Madeira: invalids

# What happened?

- Germ theory emerges
- Louis Pasteur, 1822-95, and host of others
- Humoral Medicine and Analogic Medicine dies a slow death
- Wine falls victim to nutritional science
- Wine becomes a recreational “drug”, albeit a legal one