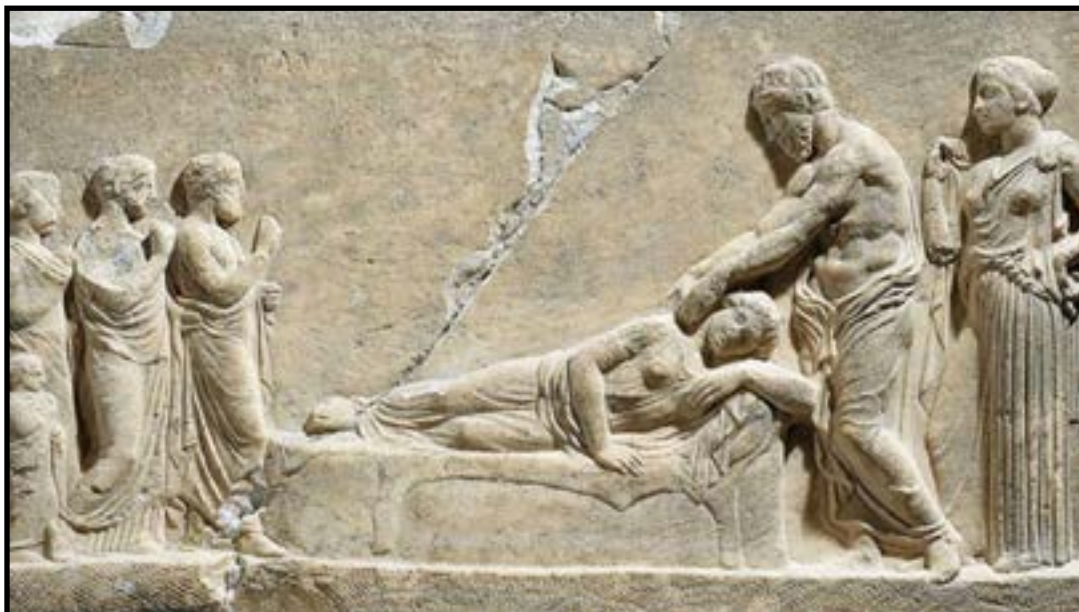


# ASCLEPIEIA - ANCIENT CENTERS FOR RADIANT HEALTH

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*Asclepius treating a woman lying on a couch. Behind him is his daughter, Hygieia, goddess of health and hygiene. From the Asclepieion in Piraeus, Greece.*

The golden rule in matters of health is to harmoniously combine the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical conditions necessary for one's general well-being.

**Sixth Temple Degree, Monograph 25**

For more than 800 years the ancient Greeks, and later the Romans, established healing centers called *Asclepieia* (named after the Greek god of medicine and healing, Asclepius) that created conditions conducive to holistic healing and radiant health. Their focus was on diet, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle, with an emphasis on harmony of the whole self, including the spiritual self.

The Greeks inherited much of their wisdom about holistic healing from

the ancient Egyptians, who also shared their techniques with the Essenes and Therapeutae.

The Rosicrucian lessons that we study today help us to set similar conditions for our radiant health. From the earliest Rosicrucian monographs, we are encouraged to eat healthy food, drink sufficient amounts of pure water, and to exercise, and lessons throughout the teachings address our mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

The ancient Asclepieia included many features one might expect to find in a healing center, such as a spa and gymnasium, however they also included facilities to address the patients' emotional, psychological, and especially spiritual needs. They understood the importance of harmony on all levels of the patients' beings in the healing process and in the activation of their inner healing mechanisms, leading to recovery and good health, as the Rosicrucian lessons teach.

The Asclepieion buildings used for healing were called temples. The patients' experiences and interactions were highly ritualized. Asclepius was the son of Apollo, god of the sun and light, music and poetry, healing, prophecy, knowledge, order, and beauty. His mother was a mortal princess. Apollo took Asclepius at birth and apprenticed him to the wise centaur Chiron, who taught him the healing arts in order to reduce the suffering of mortals. Asclepius's children included Panacea (goddess of universal remedies), Hygieia (goddess of good health, cleanliness, and hygiene), Iaso (goddess of recuperation), and Aceso (goddess of the healing process), along with others. Hippocrates, Apollonius of Tyana, and Galen were all healers in ancient Asclepieia.

There were several steps to the healing process in an Asclepieion. First, there was purification, including therapeutic baths and a clean diet. Then the patient was encouraged to go deeply within himself or herself.

More than 300 ancient Asclepieia have been located. The most well-known today are in Epidaurus (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Pergamon, and on the island of Kos. Most were in secluded natural settings with inspiring views, next to a spring, with fresh breezes, in

the middle of a sacred grove, etc. Like the Rosicrucians, the ancient Greeks recognized the therapeutic value of the natural environment.

There was time for rest and relaxation. The Asclepieia typically included a theater for musical and theatrical performances, and a large library. The Rosicrucian teachings encourage us to explore art, science, and mysticism and to get enough rest and relaxation for radiant health and personal growth.

After initial practical treatments, such as natural remedies and even simple surgery sometimes, the patient entered a state of deep sleep and dreaming in an incubation chamber called an abaton. Sometimes the patient was healed during the dream experience. It was believed that they were visited by Asclepius or one of his daughters in their dream and were healed by them. In other cases, the dream guided the next phase of the patient's treatment, including a preview of the progress of the health challenge and what could be done about it. Many Rosicrucian lessons explore more than intellectual ways of knowing, such as understanding our dreams, seeing beyond the usual limits of time and space, and especially attuning with the Master Within.

The ancient Asclepieia promoted a sense of peace, mental well-being, and optimism for the patients which the ancient Greeks, like Rosicrucians, knew were essential for the patients' rapid and thorough recovery and ongoing radiant health. The Rosicrucian teachings perpetuate many ancient holistic healing practices.

