

Einladung zum öffentlichen Abendvortrag
im Rahmen des 5. Jahrestreffens der
„Marburger Gespräche zur Alten Heilkunde“

International working group
„Marburger Gespräche zur Alten Heilkunde“



Talking about the body: Health and disease in sympotic conversations in ancient Greece and Rome

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Ancient historians have devoted a great deal of work to studying the drinking and dinner parties known as symposia, using many types of historical evidence: epigraphical, archaeological, and literary. In the 1980s, Oswyn Murray, inspired by contemporary anthropology, described the symposion as a select all-male group bound by mutual obligation and shared activity. One of the most important — indeed, characteristic — activities of the symposium was conversation. Some conversations were witty and entertaining, others were serious and even philosophical. I am intrigued by the setting of the symposium as a site of knowledge production, reception, and negotiation.

The human body, health, and disease were topics of discussion. Was medical knowledge being pursued or developed at symposia? The setting of the symposium was by its very nature a very social one; the pursuit of knowledge there was not a lone activity, but one that was mediated and shared.

How important is this particular social setting for understanding ancient discussions of the body, health, and disease? For my talk, my chief informant is Plutarch, who in the *Table-Talk (Quaestiones convivales)* describes in detail a number of conversations on a broad range of topics, including some which might be classified as medical and/or scientific. I will review some of the subjects discussed relating to health and disease, asking what is accomplished by choosing the discursive and dialogic setting.

Datum und Uhrzeit: **Freitag, 19.06.2026, 18:30-20:00**
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