

L' HUMANITAS DI SORANO DI EFESO

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Abstract – This essay focuses on the revolutionary humanitarian *facies* which proves Soranos of Ephesus, in the second book of his treatise entitled Περὶ γυναικείων παθῶν.

The first part of the work briefly retraces the historical and literary context of the first two centuries of the Common Era, in which there was a special focus on topics such as breastfeeding and child rearing, the behavior of the bride and of the pregnant woman, as well as to a particular speculation on the professional roles of the midwife and the nanny, key figures in the child's life. Furthermore, reference is made to economic and welfare measures enacted, during the First and Second century A.D., by the emperors for the benefit of needy children.

The second part of the contribution, keeping in mind the delineated *milieu*, analyzes the most meaningful places of the second book of Sorano's work – not without some references to the first book – in which it is possible to gather the anthropocentrism of the Greek physician, his sensitivity and his balance towards the woman – in such a sensitive and risky moment as giving birth – and towards the newborn infant.

In this sense, Soranos of Ephesus traces some theoretical coordinates and practices which recognize an importance and scientific autonomy to the woman and the newborn infant which had been almost unknown until that moment.

Keywords: Soranos; diseases; pregnant woman; newborn child; Greek-Roman world.

1. Introduzione

Innocenzo Mazzini, nella sua presentazione dell'opera ginecologica e del profilo autoriale di Sorano di Efeso, ne mette in luce a buon diritto l'«attenzione alla salute psichica e morale sia della partoriente, sia della nutrice», nonché il rilievo dato alle «condizioni socio-sanitarie della donna del II s. d.C. [...], l'importanza degli aspetti psicologici nel parto, nella concezione, nella figura della nutrice»; non esita, dunque, a definirlo «una figura complessa... di medico e umanista».¹ Definizione quest'ultima che non è legata soltanto al costante interesse che Sorano manifesta, nel corso della sua opera, per le etimologie dei varî termini medici esaminati,² al fine di

¹ Mazzini 1997, vol. 1, pp. 58-60.

² Cfr. *e.g.* I 17.