

Galen: *On Avoiding Distress* and *On My Own Opinions*. Critical Edition by Ioannis Polemis and Sophia Xenophontos. English Translation by Sophia Xenophontos. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2023 (Trends in Classics. Supplementary Volumes 151). XIV, 168 p. € 89.95/£ 82.00/\$ 98.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-132041-0.

Retrieving material that has long been considered lost is undoubtedly a lucky moment in the field of philological studies, for it breaks fresh ground for original research. This was the case with the (re)discovery by Antoine Pietrobelli of the codex *Thessalonicensis Vlatadon 14*, a fifteenth-century manuscript that preserves a collection of the works of Galen, the medical practitioner and philosopher *par excellence* of the ancient world. Pietrobelli's discovery, which dates back to 2005, has given a new impetus to Galenic scholarship in the last two decades, with the main interest focusing on two of the author's writings, the essays *On Avoiding Distress* (*De indolentia*) and *On My Own Opinions* (*De propriis placitis*), which were not mentioned in the catalogue of Eustratiades and for which the Vlatadon manuscript forms the *codex unicus* and the only manuscript transmitting the entire Greek text of the treatise respectively. After many successive attempts to critically edit and emend the two texts in the past years, the recent publication of Ioannis Polemis and Sophia Xenophontos, with which the present review is concerned, aims at providing both specialists and the broader audience with an improved version of Galen's treatises, utilizing in a very constructive way the results of previous research and suggesting points for further problematization as well.

The introductory part of the book that precedes the critical edition of the treatises is divided into three main chapters. The first one ("Brief Introduction to Galen and the Two Works", pp. 1–25), written by Xenophontos, is mainly addressed to "the unacquainted reader" (as the author clearly states at start, p. 1) and touches briefly – yet comprehensively – upon the basic issues relating to Galen and his two works under consideration. After a short sketch of Galen's life and career (pp. 1–2), there follow two separate sections dedicated to *On Avoiding Distress* (pp. 3–13) and *On My Own Opinions* (pp. 13–25) respectively. The two sections have a similar structure and deal in smaller subsections with subjects such as the date of composition of the treatises, their generic identity, their content and structure, the main points of interest arising from each one of them, the translations of the texts in modern languages, as well as their treatment in contemporary scholarship. The presenta-

tion summarizes for its most part the results of previous research. Nevertheless, in the case of *On My Own Opinions* Xenophontos also raises new points for discussion – especially with regard to the affiliation of the treatise with the doxographical genre and its place in the relevant tradition – and proposes desiderata for future work on the text.

The second part of the introduction (“Introduction to the Critical Edition”, pp. 26–46), signed by both Polemis and Xenophontos, deals with issues pertaining to the critical edition of the treatises. For each one of the texts the relevant section opens with a short presentation of its manuscript tradition and previous editions. As regards *On Avoiding Distress*, the authors reject Pietrobelli’s identification of the text’s copyist with Andreiomenos, a medical author and scribe of the fifteenth century, while they also suggest a later date for the Vlatadon manuscript, which should rather be placed in the second half of the fifteenth century and thus, be disconnected from the circle of John Argyropoulos. The main focus of this chapter lies on the discussion of selected problematic passages from the two treatises. The editors propose new solutions for the restoration of the passages,¹ following in almost all cases the chief editorial principle that one should keep as close as possible to the transmitted text and avoid making invasive interventions. This approach seems rather conservative, yet it is the one that has prevailed in modern textual scholarship and results usually in the constitution of less problematic and more reliable texts. The chapter ends with a detailed presentation of the (more) ‘technical’ principles of the edition, concerning primarily the construction of the *apparatus criticus*. A corresponding final chapter covering the principles of the English translation that accompanies the edition of the treatises (“This Translation”, p. 47) rounds off the opening part of the book.

The two treatises are subsequently edited in their chronological order (which happens to coincide with the order in which they appear in the Vlatadon manuscript); thus, *On Avoiding Distress* is placed first (pp. 51–93), followed by *On My Own Opinions* (pp. 94–143). The edited text is supplied in both cases with a rich critical apparatus, principally positive. Except for the peculiarities of the manuscript tradition and the emendations of the (current and previous) editors, in the critical apparatus are systematically recorded all

1 In the case of *On Avoiding Distress*, they mostly repeat previous proposals made by Polemis, some of them in a revised version.

critical amendments proposed by scholars who have dealt with textual issues of the treatises; in this way, the (professional) reader can have at the same time a comprehensive overview of both the textual history and the scholarly debate on problematic passages of the two Galenic works.

Overall, the texts are restored in their most reliable version, which makes them more readable and comprehensible even for the less acquainted reader (with the help of the parallel English translation). There are only a few points which could be further emended and will be discussed below:

On Avoiding Distress 1.2–7

Παρὼν μὲν αὐτὸς ἔφησ ἔωρακέναι κατὰ τινα τοῦ πολυχρονίου λοιμοῦ μεγάλην εἰσβολὴν ἀπολέσαντά με τοσοῦτους οἰκέτας, ὅσους σχεδὸν εἶχον ἐν τῇ Ῥωμαίων πόλει, ἀκηκοέναι δὲ καὶ πρόσθεν ἤδη μοι γεγονέναι τι τοιοῦτον, εἰς χρήματά τε τρίς που καὶ τετράκις ἀδραῖς ζημίαις περιπεσόντα, ἔφησ αὐτὸς ἔωρακέναι με μὴδὲ ἐπὶ βραχὺ κινήθέντα [...]

It is not clear whether the phrase εἰς χρήματά τε [...] περιπεσόντα refers to what comes before or after it. According to the English translation, the specific phrase is explicative to the preceding καὶ πρόσθεν ἤδη μοι γεγονέναι τι τοιοῦτον, while the phrase ἔφησ αὐτὸς that follows introduces a new sentence (p. 55: “something similar had happened to me already before then, when I fell into severe financial losses three or possibly four times. You said that you personally [...]”). If we accept this syntactic analysis, then we should rather replace the comma after περιπεσόντα with a semicolon (= ἄνω τελεία).² Nevertheless, it would be equally (or rather more) correct to link the phrase εἰς χρήματά τε [...] περιπεσόντα with what comes next and put a semicolon after τοιοῦτον; this solution, adopted in the edition of Paraskevi Kotzia/Panagiotis Sotiroudis as well,³ fits better with the syntactic function of τε (χρήματά τε), which connects conjunctively the two finite clauses controlled by the verbs ἔφησ (1.3) and ἔφησ (1.6) respectively.

2 A semicolon (= ἄνω τελεία) after περιπεσόντα appears, for example, in the edition of Boudon-Millot/Jouanna; see Galien: Œuvres. Vol. IV: Ne pas se chagriner. Texte établi et traduit par V. Boudon-Millot et J. Jouanna. Avec la collaboration de A. Pietrobelli. Paris 2010 (Collection des universités de France. Série grecque – Collection Budé 472), p. 2.

3 See P. Kotzia/P. Sotiroudis: Γαληνοῦ Περὶ ἀλυπίας. In: Hellenica 60, 2010, pp. 63–150, here p. 66.

Ibid. 6.3–9

Ἐδόκει μὲν οὖν ἡ τοιαύτη κατασκευὴ ῥήτορσί τε καὶ γραμματικοῖς εἶναι χρήσιμος, ἢ οἵτινες ὄλως ἀττικίζειν βούλονται τινὰ καὶ τῶν εἰς τὰ πράγματα χρήσιμα διαφερόντων, ὁποῖόν ἐστι καὶ τὸ παρατεθὲν ἔναγχος ὑπὸ τινος ἐν Ῥώμῃ τῶν εὐδοκιμούντων ἰατρῶν, οὕτω τὴν χρῆσιν εἶναι χόνδρου κατὰ τοὺς Ἱπποκράτους χρόνους, διὰ τοῦτο πτισάνην αὐτὸν προκρίνειν πάντων τῶν σιτηρῶν ἐδεσμάτων ἐν τῇ διαίτῃ τῶν ὀξέων νοσημάτων, ὡς, εἴ γε χόνδρος ἐγινώσκετο τοῖς Ἑλλησιν, οὐκ ἂν αὐτὸν ἕτερόν τι προελέσθαι τοῦδε.

The phrase *τινὰ καὶ τῶν εἰς τὰ πράγματα χρήσιμα διαφερόντων* is rendered in the English translation as the object of the infinitive *ἀττικίζειν* (p. 67: “or in general for anyone who might wish to use Attic words from among those that are important for practical affairs”). *Ἀττικίζω*, however, is not used formally as a transitive verb—a *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* search yields no occurrences. Moreover, the meaning of the phrase *τινὰ [...] διαφερόντων* is rather related to what comes after it, for Galen gives in the following an example of two synonym words (*χόνδρος* and *πιτσάνη*) that have to do with practical matters (in this case with foodstuff). The passage would make more sense, if we put a full stop after *βούλονται* and start a new sentence with *τινὰ*; the phrase *τινὰ καὶ τῶν εἰς τὰ πράγματα διαφερόντων* would then be the finite clause of the sentence (controlled by the verb ἦν, which is omitted, or something similar), explained further by the subordinate relative clause *ὁποῖόν ἐστι [...] that follows*.⁴ A refined translation of the passage would be: ‘and part of the material pertaining to/that has to do with practical affairs was also/equally useful, as it results/becomes clear from the example provided recently [...]’.⁵

4 Polemis had also suggested in a previous study that a full stop should be placed before *τινὰ*, without, however, (directly) associating the passage under discussion with the sense of the following clause. See Γαληνός: *Για την αποφυγή της λύπης (Η πραγματεία Περί αλυπτίας)*. Εισαγωγή Σ. Ξενοφώντος, Μετάφραση-Σχόλια Π. Κοτζιά/Π. Σωτηροπούδης, Επίμετρο Ι. Πολέμη. Thessaloniki 2016 (Φιλοσοφική Βιβλιοθήκη), p. 152.

5 A similar interpretation of the passage can be found in the French translation of Boudon-Millot/Jouanna that accompanies the edition of the text in the “Les Belles Lettres” series (note 2, pp. 9–10): “il semblait donc qu’un tel ouvrage était utile à la fois aux orateurs et aux grammairiens ou à tous ceux qui veulent connaître tous les mots attiques ou certains de ces mots qui sont importants pour les réalités utiles, comme c’est le cas précisément du mot récemment mis en discussion [...]”.

Ibid. 15.10

ὁ οὔτε ἑμαυτὸν οὔτε ἄλλον ἄνθρωπον οὔτε ζῷόν τι φέρον οἶδα [...]

The manuscript preserves the reading ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων, which Ivan Garofalo/Alessandro Lami corrected to ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων, while Véronique Boudon-Millot, Paraskevi Kotzia/Panagiotis Sotiroudis and Kai Brodersen emended it further to ἄλλον ἄνθρωπον. Polemis/Xenophontos adopt this last emendation, which is the most ‘normal’ with respect to syntax. However, the formulation ἄλλον ἀνθρώπων (a partitive genitive dependent on a substantive pronoun) is equally correct, both syntactically and semantically, and closer to the paradosis, so that it could be retained. A similar formulation occurs in 13.7 (οὐ γὰρ ἄλλος ἀνθρώπων τις) as well.

As already mentioned, the editors try to keep as close to the paradosis as possible, at least with regard to editorial interventions which are supposed to give the required sense to the text. This editorial principle is totally ‘compatible’ with the rather informal style of the treatises, which seem to lack a final revision on the part of the author.⁶ Nevertheless, in some cases the editors tend to ‘normalize’ the text by applying consistently the rules of classical grammar with regard to formal/orthographical issues. Thus, they systematically delete the final -ν when the following word begins with a vowel (e.g., *On Avoiding Distress* 16.5; *On My Own Opinions* 1.1, 6.14, 12.17–18), and correct οὔτως to οὔτω before a word beginning with a consonant (e.g., *On My Own Opinions* 3.1, 5.3, 5.9, 7.13, 9.31, 12.15). They also apply the elision for avoiding hiatus (e.g., *On My Own Opinions* 11.39, 15.8, 15.28), yet with some inconsistencies, especially as regards the particles δὲ, τε, and γέ; these particles are mostly not elided, except for some cases where the editors opt for the elided type transmitted by certain manuscripts, without, however, explaining their choice (e.g., *On My Own Opinions* 5.17, 10.31, 15.8, 15.23).

The English translation that accompanies the edition of Galen’s treatises is a very useful tool for the non-specialist reader, which facilitates considerably the comprehension of the text. The Greek text is rendered in English very accurately in most cases, except for the passages listed below:

6 Cf. the relative remarks of the editors on pp. 17 and 32 respectively.

On Avoiding Distress

1.12–13 (p. 55) *καὶ συμβολαίων πολλῶν ἀποκειμένων, ἃ διεφθάρη κατὰ τὴν πυρκαϊάν:* and many contracts, which were destroyed in the fire, were in storage] and many contracts, which were in storage, were destroyed in the fire.

2.5 (p. 59) *ὥς δ' εἰς Ῥώμην ἐπανελθὼν:* and when I returned to Rome] but when I returned to Rome.

5.1–2 (p. 65) *ἡ τῶν Ἀττικῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ὅσα πολιτικὰ πραγματεία:* my treatise on Attic nouns and collections of everyday language] expressions of everyday language.

15.8 (p. 85) *μετὰ σπουδῆς:* with an eye to what I would get from this] with avidity/eagerness.

16.3–4 (p. 85) *καθάπερ ἔνοι τῶν φιλοσόφων ὑπέσχοντο μηδέποτε[ε δ]ῆ μηδὲ νῦν λυπηθήσεσθαι τὸν φιλόσοφον:* as some philosophers professed that the [true] philosopher will never be distressed] will never – not even now/under these circumstances – be distressed.

On My Own Opinions

3.37 (p. 103) *ὥσπερ γε καὶ ὅταν τοῖς πολλοῖς ἀνθρώποις:* just I do when I address average people] just as I do [...].

5.11–12 (p. 109) *ἐκάστου τῶν εἰρημένων ἀκούοντας ἢ λέλεκται:* by considering each point of what is expressed from what has been said] each point of what has been said in the way it is/has been expressed.

8.2 (p. 115) *ὥσπερ οἱ τὸν ἥλιον ἀπιστοῦντες:* for example those who do not believe that the sun] as for example [...].

15.46–50 (p. 141) *ἀρκοῦμαι, διὰ τὴν ἀκολουθίαν μόνην ἄχρι τοῦ πιθανοῦ προερχόμενος, ἐπαινεῖν τὸν Πλάτωνα, καὶ ζῶα καλοῦντα τὰ φυτὰ καὶ μετέχειν αἰσθήσεως μόνης φάσκοντα τῆς τῶν οἰκείων τε καὶ ἀλλοτρίων διαγνωστικῆς, ἥτις, ἂν ἀκριβῶς σκοπῆς, τοῦ γένους τῶν ἡδέων τε καὶ οὐχ ἡδέων οὕσα φανεῖται:* I am content to proceed only to the level of plausibility for reasons of consequentiality, and to praise Plato for calling plants as well ‘living beings’ and for saying that they participate in a sense-perception that is the only one capable of distinguishing between the appropriate and the inappropriate, which, if you consider the matter closely, will appear to belong to the genus of the pleasant and not the unpleasant: The translation of the phrase *τοῦ γένους τῶν ἡδέων τε καὶ οὐχ ἡδέων οὕσα φανεῖται*

is rather problematic, for it presupposes the existence of a negative particle, which, however, is missing from the original text.⁷ Moreover, the meaning of the passage is slightly different: the author summarizes Plato's views on the special kind of sensation (γένος αἰσθήσεως) possessed by the plants, which, according to the ancient Greek philosopher, is capable of distinguishing what can bring pleasure and what is unpleasant for them.⁸ Although the phrasing is elliptical (probably due to the informal style of the text),⁹ a more accurate translation of the passage would be: '(which [...]) will appear to belong to the genus that is capable of distinguishing what is pleasant and [what is] unpleasant'.¹⁰

15.50–52 (p. 141) δι' οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλον δυνατὸν εἰπεῖν ἔλκειν αὐτὰ τὸ οἰκείον ἢ ἕξομοιοῦν ἑαυτοῖς, ἢ διὰ τὴν ἀπόλαυσίν τε καὶ τὴν ἐγγινομένην ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡδονήν: for it is possible to say that they attract what is appropriate for no other reason than to assimilate it to themselves, or because of the satisfaction and the pleasure that arises in these cases] for it is possible to say that they attract what is appropriate or assimilate it to themselves for no other reason than the satisfaction [...].¹¹

- 7 The corresponding Greek text would be in this case τῶν ἡδέων τε καὶ <οὐ τῶν> οὐχ ἡδέων or something similar.
- 8 Cf. the preceding passage διὰ τοῦτο οὖν ἐν τῇ λόγῳ τούτῳ παρακοή τις ἐστὶ, καίτοι σαφῶς εἰρηκότος τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἕτερον εἶναι γένος αἰσθήσεως τὸ ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς, οἰομένων τῶν ἀκουόντων εἶναι τινὰ γνωριστικὴν δύναμιν ἐν αὐτοῖς τῶν οἰκείων τε καὶ ἄλλοτρίων. Τούτων γὰρ μόνων ἐστὶν ἡ διάγνωσις αὐτοῖς, εἴτε καθ' ἡδονὴν εἴτε κατ' ἀνίαν εἴτε κατὰ τινὰ παραπλήσια τούτοις ἢ ἀνάλογα ὄντα παθήματα γιγνομένη, τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθητικῶν διαγνώσεων οὐ μετεχούσης τῆς φυτικῆς ψυχῆς (15.32–38).
- 9 The meaning of the phrase would be complete, if we added a partitive genitive depending on the predicate genitive τοῦ γένους (e.g., τοῦ γένους <τῆς> τῶν ἡδέων τε καὶ οὐχ ἡδέων <διαγνωστικῆς> οὐσα φανέται). However, the addition seems not to be necessary for the restoration of the text, considering its loose syntax; the missing word can be inferred from the preceding phrase τῆς τῶν οἰκείων τε καὶ ἄλλοτρίων διαγνωστικῆς.
- 10 The text is similarly rendered in French by Véronique Boudon-Millot (V. Boudon-Millot/A. Pietrobelli: Galien ressuscité: Édition *princeps* du texte grec du *De propriis placitis*. In: REG 118, 2005, pp. 168–213, here p. 212): “celle qui, si tu regardes bien, appartient clairement au genre de celle capable de distinguer entre ce qui procure agrément ou désagrément”.
- 11 Cf. the Latin translation of Niccolò of Reggio (Claudii Galeni Opera omnia. Vol. IV. Ed. K. G. Kühn. Leipzig 1822, p. 766): *non enim ulla de causa familiare eas attrahere vel sibi ipsis assimilare, quam ob fruitionem et ingentiam eis voluptatem, dicere possumus*. See also the modern English translation of Vivian Nutton (Galen: On My Own Opinions.

In conclusion, the publication of Polemis and Xenophontos provides both the unacquainted readers and the scholarly community with a very useful tool for accessing and studying Galen's works. Despite the slight imperfections discussed above, the authors seem to have achieved their goal of establishing an authoritative Greek text and an accurate English translation of the two Galenic treatises, thus offering a new reference work for the study of ancient medical literature.

Edition, Translation, and Commentary by V. Nutton. Berlin 1999 [Corpus Medicorum Graecorum 5,3,2], p. 125): “indeed, one might say that they attract what is appropriate and assimilate it to themselves for no other reason than the enjoyment and pleasure that they derive therefrom”, and the French translation of Boudon-Millot/Pietrobelli (note 10, p. 212): “et de fait, on peut dire qu’elles n’attirent ce qui leur est propre ou assimilable pour aucune autre raison que la satisfaction et le plaisir qu’elles en retirent”.

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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