

# A Long Lost Text: Galen's *Περὶ Ἄλυπίας*

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This volume arises from a one-day conference, the “Galen Day”, held at Warwick University on July 1, 2014 and supported by the Faculty of Arts at the University of Warwick, the Department of Classics and Ancient History, and a Wellcome Trust Medical Humanities Small Grant (105153/Z/14/Z). I wish to express my gratitude to those institutions for their support, and to Simon Swain (then chair of the Faculty of Arts) in particular for encouraging and actively backing the project. The chosen theme of the conference was Galen’s newly discovered *περὶ ἄλυπίας* (henceforth: *PA*), a text that has generated more discussion since its discovery than any other work by the great Galen. Several reasons helped me decide to select the *PA* as the focus of the conference. A new translation by Vivian Nutton had just appeared, as part of a fine new volume edited by Peter Singer.<sup>1</sup> As a new English translation by the most accomplished Galen scholar alive, it signalled a turning point and marked a significant improvement on what was available to scholars. As such, it was a landmark worth celebrating, and a potential starting point for new discussions around the text. Indeed, the Greek text is available in two main editions (Kotzia/Soutiroudis, and Boudon-Millot/Jouanna/Pietrobelli, henceforth *KS* and *BJP*, both published in 2010), which significantly differ from one another; Nutton brings a new take on both, and, with it, new interpretations. No translation is definitive, and neither of the editions cited above is, as recently published conjectures demonstrate;<sup>2</sup> but Nutton’s new translation was certainly instrumental in the speakers’ preparation, and in finalising the papers presented here. It is certainly a new high for many scholars interested in this vibrant little work. Vivian Nutton was present at the conference, which he accepted to introduce, and chair: this volume is dedicated to him with gratitude, for this and the many other times he has given support and advice.

The inspirational nature of the *PA* is exemplified by Peter Singer’s considerable contribution to this volume, in the form of three different, extensive

<sup>1</sup> P. N. Singer, *Galen. Psychological Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> For example Polemis, I. ‘Διορθωτικά στο *Περὶ Ἄλυπίας* του Γαληνού’, *Επιστημονική Επετηρίδα της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών* 43 (2011), 1–8; Kotzia, P. ‘Galen *περὶ ἄλυπίας*: Title, Genre and Two Cruces’. In *Studi sul De indolentia di Galeno*, ed. D. Manetti, 2012, 69–91.

pieces, which were originally supposed to make just one chapter. Peter's offerings shed new light on the significance of the manuscript (*Vlat.* 14) and of the new text, and on Galen's thought as well as his complex compositional strategies. His contribution far exceeds what any editor would expect from a collaborator, and I feel humbled in the face of his dedication to this text and, as a result, to this volume. I owe him very special thanks. I hope readers will feel equally privileged upon discovering his insights on Galen's *PA*.

Simon Swain has kindly read and corrected the English of non-native speakers' papers (notably mine!), for which I am especially grateful.

Beyond the new English translation, another reason to pick the *PA* among so many Galenic texts worth studying, was that its sensational discovery succeeded in *finally* bringing together classicists, historians and philosophers around Galen, well beyond the usual (small) circle of its specialists. The bibliography dedicated to this text demonstrates new, widespread interest in what Galen has to say about the circulation of texts (medical and not), the Great Fire of 192, ancient libraries (especially in Rome), and many additional topics that have little to do with medicine as a technical field. The idea of a "Galen Day" aimed precisely at bringing together a diverse audience, interested in the many facets of Galen's *œuvre*, beyond the 'usual suspects'. The *PA*, having produced so many studies in such a short time by so many different scholars, thus seemed the ideal focus for such an enterprise. The papers gathered here embrace multiple aspects of the text, with a purpose to shed as much light as possible on its various points of interest. It is hoped that they will further the public's passion for it.

As a recently unearthed treasure, the *PA* has invited us Galen specialists to cast a retrospective look at what we knew, or thought we knew about Galen, and how we deal with his texts. The sensational discovery made by Antoine Pietrobelli more than ten years ago, at the very least reminded scholars that, against common preconceptions, nothing is definitive about our knowledge of antiquity: new evidence may resurface any day and invite us to reconsider some of our assumptions. Finding new material is not the privilege of archaeologists. As far as Galen is concerned, it is not impossible that more texts are found in forgotten manuscripts, not necessarily in Greek, but potentially in Latin, Syriac or Arabic.<sup>3</sup> There are already many examples of this. Every time a new text or fragment appears, it might change our notions of Galen's biography

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3 Examples are found in all three languages, and include the *De virt. cent.* written by a rival of Galen and edited by Vivian Nutton on the basis of Latin manuscripts; the *Syriac Galen Palimpsest*, which contains large swathes of Galen's treatise *On simple drugs*; the fragments from Galen's major work *On demonstration* in Arabic, etc.

and ideas, of his literary production or of his medical practices. But the *PA* has shaken those notions to the core, far much than any other text, from Galen's life at the imperial court and his philosophical opinions, to the contents of his library, and the range of his possessions. Its interest extends to areas of ancient history (such as the location of libraries and storerooms in Rome), literature and philosophy that normally stay untouched by those I am tempted to call "Galenists". Meanwhile, it has ensured that those who didn't read Galen regularly now turn towards him a little more often. The *PA* has brought to Galen a new audience.

In the following pages, I intend to offer a very brief summary of the history and points of interest of this text (all of which have already been extensively and clearly presented by Vivian Nutton<sup>4</sup>), and a presentation of the contents of the present volume.

The existence of Galen's *PA* was known through a handful of quotations in Arabic and Hebrew, but the text was reputed forever lost, until a then-PhD student in Paris, Antoine Pietrobelli, started studying a Greek manuscript in the library of the Vlatades monastery, Thessaloniki, Greece, in 2005. The following examination by Véronique Boudon-Millot led to the 'discovery' of the work in the midst of an impressive collection of Galenic texts, some of which unpublished or previously not available in Greek.<sup>5</sup> This is how the *περι ἀλμπίας* resurfaced among modern scholars. The 15th c. manuscript is poor, and has already generated much debate as to how best to interpret several passages.<sup>6</sup> For that reason, several translations have already appeared, in English, French, Italian and German, with different takes on the difficulties posed by scribal errors and other transmission problems.<sup>7</sup> The papers presented here engage with the various interpretations at hand wherever needed. I will give one example. Although the Budé text by Jouanna and Boudon-Millot is the basis used by the contributors, all contributors in this volume agree on *περι ἀλμπίας* as the best possible title, against the conservative *περι ἀλμπησίας* printed by Jouanna and

4 V. Nutton in P. N. Singer (ed.) 2013, 45–76; see also C. Rothschild/T. Thompson 2014, 3–18 and V. Boudon-Millot/J. Jouanna 2010, vii–lxxvi.

5 See A. Pietrobelli, 'Variation autour du Thessalonicensis Vlatadon 14: un manuscrit copié au xenon du Kral, peu avant la chute de Constantinople', *Revue des Études Byzantines* 68, 2010, 95–126.

6 See V. Nutton in P. N. Singer 2013, pp. 100–106; both Garofalo/Lami and Rothschild/Thompson have attempted to provide lists of respective emendations in their editions, and Brodersen offers a list of departure points for his own translation.

7 Available translations include that of Jouanna/Boudon-Millot and Pietrobelli (2010), Rothschild and Thompson (2011), Garofalo and Lami (2012), Vegetti (2013), Nutton (2013) and Brodersen (2015).

Boudon-Millot on the basis of the manuscript.<sup>8</sup> Such disagreements are common with a poorly transmitted text, and chances are that new editions, or at least new conjectures, will appear in the future. Meanwhile, additional examination of the manuscript has led to nuance the importance of *Vlat. 14* in the textual history of Galenic works generally: the manuscript from Thessaloniki is pivotal in supplementing lacunous texts, such as *Propr. Plac.*, a new edition of which is being prepared by Antoine Pietrobelli; but it is of little interest in the case of other texts with richer, well-established manuscript traditions.<sup>9</sup> Readers will find more information on the contents and significance of the manuscript for Galen's textual history in Peter Singer's adjacent *Note on MS Vlatadon 14*.<sup>10</sup>

Generic definition has been at the heart of discussions around the *PA*: a letter to an anonymous friend, a philosophical treatise on the familiar theme of ἀλυπία (absence of distress, to select but one possible translation), the text has also somehow reminded scholars of the genre of *consolatio* well known through Plutarch and Cicero. A fine *connoisseur* of Greek literature and philosophy, Galen conforms to some well-established literary and argumentative codes and delivers many expected quotations on the topic; Stoic, Epicurean, and other traditions underpin much of his argument. In such respects he may simply be following a trend, or rather, trends. But a large part of the treatise is dedicated to a highly personal account of Galen's own losses, and of the impact of the Fire, as well as Commodus and the plague on life in Rome around 193 AD. Galen thus gives us more than a variation on a common topic. The following papers explore in turn, in great detail, the reasons why this text is an original take on the much-debated topic of ἀλυπία; how it changes, to some extent, our perception of the Galenic corpus and of Galen himself; and how it allows us to think again about such major disasters of that period as the Antonine 'plague' and the reign of Commodus. Following up on previous collective projects,<sup>11</sup> the present studies will hopefully supplement nicely the scholarship already available, raise new questions and bridge some gaps.

The present volume is formed of ten chapters of varying length, and falls into three parts, followed by an epilogue investigating possible engagement of Islamic scholars with the text (Pietrobelli). In the first part, titled *The PA in*

8 About the question of the title, see P. Singer in this volume (*Note*) p. 19.

9 See the critical editions of *Libr. Propr.* by V. Boudon-Millot, 2007, pp. 42–49, and of the pseudo-Galenic *Introd. sive medicus* by C. Petit, 2009, p. xciii and n. 137. See also V. Boudon-Millot, 'Un nouveau témoin grec inédit de l'Ars medica de Galien, le Vlatadon 14', 2008.

10 See pp. 10–37.

11 Manetti, D. (ed.) *Studi sul De indolentia di Galeno*, 2012; Rothschild, C. K. and Thompson, T. W. (eds), *Galen's De indolentia*, 2013.

*Galen's Œuvre*, three chapters explore what precious further insight Galen's *PA* gives us to understand his monumental, multifaceted *oeuvre*. In *Death, Posterity and the Vulnerable Self: Galen's PA in the context of his later works*, Caroline Petit studies Galen's *PA* in the context of his later works, looking for new insights into Galen's rhetorical *persona*. Galen's rhetorical mastery, and his concern for public approval appear in most of his works; they especially come through in the autobiographical features of his later writings. The Great Fire of 192 is chosen here as a cut-off date and a turning point in Galen's life. There and then Galen puts the final touches to a character he has created through a lifetime of working and writing, for the sake of his practitioner's reputation, and for posterity. Galen's *PA* holds no insignificant part in this architecture of words: establishing his own character as one of virtue, resilience and courage, yet not exempt of human frailty, Galen finalises the self-portrait that emerges from the wide-ranging set of works he wrote in his old age. This chapter investigates the evidence scattered in Galen's many later works, in order to emphasise the specific features of *PA* as an autobiographical and self-characterising effort in the wake of life-changing events.

In the second chapter, *New light and old texts: Galen on his own books*, Peter Singer investigates what *PA* brings us scholars in terms of new texts (or parts of texts), and explores in some depth new information provided by some passages in *PA* about Galen's understanding of "publication" (*ekdosis*). Although it is often put forward that Galen distinguishes carefully between works written for his friends or *hetairoi* (in other words, his close circle) and works written *pros ekdosin* (usually translated as 'for publication'), close reading of the passages he devotes to this topic in fact show, Singer argues, that Galen did not necessarily exclude wider circulation of his works as a consequence of writing/dedicating them to friends. Evidence from *PA* confirms that Galen was content for his work to spread across larger circles, following adjustments and corrections to preliminary versions circulated in private.

In her paper, *Galen and the Language of Old Comedy: glimpses of a lost treatise at PA 23b–28*, Amy Coker focuses on a specific passage of *PA*, in which Galen provides crucial information on the contents of his lost (and considerable) works on ancient comedy. Based on an extensive review of the available evidence scattered throughout Galen's works and in the *PA*, Coker reveals the possible range of texts used by Galen in his lost works on comedy, and attempts a reconstruction of the latter. In so doing, Coker hypothesises the possible use by Galen of lexicographers' works and standard plays, and demonstrates the close relationship between Galen and contemporary authors, much in the manner of the "sophists" he tends to vilify. The picture of a medical writer profoundly indebted to, and in phase with Second Sophistic figures, emerges at last. This

first part therefore addresses Galen's *PA* as new evidence for our understanding and appreciation of his overall project.

The second and most substantial part of the volume is, understandably, dedicated to Galen's philosophical position in *PA*. All four papers shed light on a particular aspect of Galen's ideas in this text: a long philosophical – not medical – tradition has shaped the ancients' thinking about emotions, especially distress (*λυπή*). In the first chapter, *Galen's PA as philosophical therapy: how coherent is it?*, Christopher Gill explores Galen's new text against the backdrop of long-standing interrogations among Greek philosophers about the possible ways to control our emotions. Galen, although a doctor, deals with those problems in two related surviving works, *Avoiding Distress (De Indolentia, or Ind.)* and the first book of *The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Affections and Errors Peculiar to Each Person's Soul (Aff. Pecc. Dig., and Aff. Dig. for book I)*. Here, Gill argues, Galen focuses on *philosophical* therapy, moving away from medical concerns. Issues of structure and coherence are the starting point of Gill's discussion, who goes on to identify patterns of cohesion both internally and between the two works, showing that *PA* offers an original voice among works dedicated to the same topic. Gill concludes, however, with an open question on the therapy apparently adopted and promoted by Galen in this text: suggesting that ἀπληστία must precede ἀλυπία, Galen seems to rule out the therapeutic value of his own life-long (and well-established) medical and literary project. Somehow, Galen seems at odds with the therapy he advocates.

Jim Hankinson's paper focuses on the skeptical background to Galen's *PA*. In fact, for the sake of appropriate contextualisation, he is led to delivering a thorough account of Galen's Stoic, Epicurean and Skeptical background across his many philosophical works. Arguing in favour of Galen's proximity with the Pyrrhonists, with whom he has fundamental disagreements, is bold; but Hankinson points to discrete points of convergence between their ideas and Galen's attempt at tackling distress. Whilst not quite mentioning *metriopatheia*, a sceptic notion, Galen's point of view in *PA* is evocative of similar ideas, and appeals to the powers of reasoning to fight against any invasive emotions, in a way that is not without reminding Sextus Empiricus.

Peter Singer, in *A New Distress: Galen's Ethics in the PA and beyond*, argues that *λυπή* (distress) is at the crossroads of ethics and medicine. A dangerous emotion if left unchecked and allowed to grow, *λυπή* is medical in so far as it has serious physical and mental consequences. More annoyingly for Galen in the context of *PA*, it can develop into a serious obstacle on an individual's moral quest to fortitude. As such, it is pointless to deny the existence of negative emotions or claim they can be superseded – rather acknowledge them, says Galen,

but work out the way to control them. Thus Galen's voice is unique among the more trenchant opinions of Stoic as well as other philosophers. *Lupè*, and therefore *alupia*, can be approached through a more acceptant, humbler understanding of emotions. This is what is advocated by Galen.

Finally, Teun Tieleman analyses *PA* against the backdrop of a long tradition of ancient philosophical therapeutics, the roots of which are to be found especially in the Stoic tradition. An ardent admirer of Plato, Galen succeeds in combining his Platonic creed and the Stoic heritage to offer a personal take on the virtue of *apatheia*, which he considers neither wholly attainable nor desirable for vulnerable human beings. Tieleman thus confirms and supplements an important strand of Singer's argument: Galen's undeniably profound engagement with the Stoic tradition.

Part three of the volume delivers new insights into the troubled history of the final years of the Antonines: in *Galen and the Plague*, Rebecca Flemming examines afresh our evidence and recent scholarship about the Antonine 'plague', using Galen's new testimony to show how utterly bewildering and challenging the deadly disease was to Galen and his contemporaries. Whilst attempting to pin down the nature of the disease thanks to ancient and medieval (Arabic) sources, Flemming demonstrates that there is no point in trying to draw too much from imperial writers and other sources: a monstrous fatality imposed on the world, the 'plague' was in no way understood and analysed for what it was, but simply conveyed dread, fear, and resignation. This is true of Galen, too, she argues.

Matthew Nicholls, in *Galen and the Last Days of Commodus*, revisits the dreaded reign of Commodus in the light of Galen's testimony. Galen's letter, he argues, may have arisen from the need to clear himself from any wrongdoing or crime by association, as he remained attached to the Palace throughout Commodus' reign until his assassination. A physician at the service of Marcus Aurelius, and of Commodus since childhood, Galen presumably stood no chance to escape back to Pergamum – but his surviving the reign free of any of the calamities endured by many of his friends may have raised questions, or even malignant suggestions as to his integrity. Whether or not Galen felt compelled to write a somehow apologetic work about his Commodus years, his text remains a highly intriguing testimony about life at court during that period.

Finally, Antoine Pietrobelli's paper stands alone in the final section of the book (*epilogue*), titled *Arabic περί ἀλυπίας: Did al-Kindî and Râzî read Galen?* Antoine Pietrobelli's study investigates possible interactions with the text in the Islamic world. Whilst Galen's text was remembered and commemorated, few had a genuine opportunity to engage directly with it: in the Islamic world just like in the West, no known copies of the text survive. According

to Pietrobelli however, this may not always have been the case: close reading shows that Râzi most likely read, pondered and imitated Galen's *PA*. Al-Kindi, on the other hand, perhaps for reasons of inter-school rivalry in Baghdad, was almost certainly not able to interact with the Arabic translation of the text. In any case, it is clear that Galen's *PA* haunted medical minds well beyond its production in 193.

A list of the most common abbreviations and editions used in this volume will be found at the end of the following *Note* by Peter Singer.

With regard to the denomination of the text, a flexible approach has been chosen: each contributor favoured either the Greek title (περὶ ἀλυπίας), the abbreviated *PA*, or the Latin title (*De indolentia*, abbr. *Ind.*) – in the footnotes and in the *index locorum*, however, references to the text will be found under *Ind.* (*De indolentia*).

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## *Editions and Translations of Galen's PA*

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***Editions and Translations of Other Galenic Works***

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