GALEN AND THE PHILOSOPHERS:  
PHILOSOPHICAL ENGAGEMENT, SHADOWY  
CONTEMPORARIES, ARISTOTELIAN TRANSFORMATIONS  

P. N. SINGER  

1. Galen’s attitude and self-definition in relation to philosophy

It is more useful to emphasize the senses in which Galen is a philosopher than those in which he is not. There are a number of reasons for this. One is that recent scholarship has tended to focus more on those areas of his work which could be described as philosophical than on others. Galen’s contributions to logic, to epistemology and scientific methodology and to moral psychology, as well as his position in relation to teleological explanation and to causation in the natural world, have provided material of particular interest to Galenic scholars. The fact that some, if not most, of the detailed studies of Galen’s thought in the last thirty years or so have been done by practitioners of ‘ancient philosophy’ — and indeed by some of its foremost practitioners — is not irrelevant here. By contrast, Galen’s works of diagnostics and therapeutics, and even of physiology outside the philosophical context, remain comparatively neglected. In the context of such philosophically-based studies, moreover, it is usual to trace Galen’s relationship with philosophical schools of thought; to discuss, for example, the extent to which he is a Platonist, or even a Middle Platonist, the influence of Aristotle, the nature of the interaction of Stoicism with his fundamentally Platonist psychology.

Before going any further I should clarify that I do not seek to diminish the validity or interest of such studies (to which, indeed, I have myself contributed). I merely here point out that such discussions of Galen’s philosophical views and philosophical affiliations (e.g. his theory of the soul; the extent to which he is a Platonist) tend, at least implicitly, to reassert the notion that he is a philosopher of at least some kind — in a way which I shall suggest is somewhat misleading.

1 One thinks here, of course, of the work of Barnes, Dorion, Fränkel, Gill, Huxham, Lloyd, Marsyas, Vegter — to name only a handful of the most illustrious contributors to this discipline.

2 There are of course exceptions, such as A. Debu, Le corps régénérant: la parole physiologique chez Galien (Leiden 1996) in the field of physiology. Anatomical texts, meanwhile, constitute something of a special case, having provided a particular focus, or intersection, of the interests of traditional classical scholarship and traditional medical history in the early to mid-twentieth century — interests which have perhaps never entirely faded (especially in view of their connections with other aspects of Galen’s thought), and in any case have been reassessed in particular by J. Roccia, Galen on the brain: anatomical knowledge and physical speculation in the second century AD (Leiden 2003).
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Another reason for the emphasis on Galen's philosophic nature in modern scholarship is Galen's own emphasis on it. There are clearly senses in which Galen wishes to appear as philosophic, if not as an actual philosopher. The lament, "The best doctor is also a philosopher", taken on its own, would certainly make us imagine that Galen wished us to regard him as a philosopher; and the similarly rhetorical Exhortation places medicine alongside philosophy in the hierarchy of arts in a way which tends to make us think that the status of the former is being elevated by association with the latter. Then there is the phrase which Galen reports the emperor Marcus Aurelius as using "continually" about himself, that he was first among doctors, but the only one "[or, unique: mounon] amongst the philosophers."

7 Again, the inference might easily be drawn that the status of philosopher is yet more important to Galen than the status of doctor.

More broadly, furthermore, there is an engagement with philosophical texts and authorities, and an adoption of philosophical language, which runs through a very large part of his oeuvre. The former — engagement with philosophical texts and authorities — is central, of course, in discussions of logic, of causal questions, of moral psychology and ethics, but also in discussions of the soul in physiological and indeed embryological contexts; in discussions of the design and anatomy of the body, and in discussions of physics and element theory. Thus, a large part of what we would call biological science, in Galen, is directly informed by discussions that derive from the philosophical tradition. Furthermore, the latter — adoption of philosophical language — is a considerable extent pervades even texts which do not so obviously belong within this philosophical tradition. Throughout, for example, which overtly belongs within a medical tradition of the definition and subdivision of the art of healing, seems to rely heavily on Aristotelian notions. There must, for example, be a single telos for each art, that telos being the same as the good for the thing in question; and, more broadly, the text is informed by an emphasis on philosophical modes of argumentation — the priority of definition and demonstration, the importance of making divisions in a logically appropriate way — not to mention references to specific philosophical texts, especially of Plato. And such phenomena could doubtless be exemplified in different ways from a wide range of essentially medical texts in Galen's output. To touch on a small number of the large possible range of examples: one might consider the broadly Aristotelian usage, even in medical contexts, of such terms as omen or numen; or the use of the term eudaimonia (taken from the philosophical tradition) in his criticism of the inadequacy of his medical rival's distinctions; or indeed the large importance to Galen in a whole range of authors (e.g. in the pulse, in levers, in nosology) of the activity of subdivision according to a logical procedure — an activity which itself seems fundamentally indebted to the philosophical tradition and to Plato and Aristotle in particular.

It is not merely the case, then, that Galen is imbued with a philosophical culture which informs his work on a number of levels. It is also the case that there are at least senses in which he wishes to adopt the mantle of the philosopher.

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Indeed, Galen's involvement with philosophical culture is so deep that we are inclined to overlook the equally strong sense in which Galen rejects the profession of philosophy, and sees himself as standing outside it.

Let us first return to those comments on philosophy which we have already cited, and first of all to the text: The best doctor is also a philosopher. As so often with Galen, context is all-important. The context in this case is that of a highly rhetorical argument — in fact, a protreptic or exhortatory speech aimed at the advancement of certain kinds of study and attitude. It is indeed true that, at the climax of this rhetorical argument, Galen states that a doctor should be a philosopher. Or, to be more precise, it is true that he pours scorn, via a rhetorical question, on the negation of that proposition:

So are you going to quibble over terms, and utter some nonsense for the sake of arguing, for example that a doctor should be restrained, self-controlled, above monetary matters and just, but not actually a philosopher, or that he should understand the nature of bodies and the activation of organs and the function of parts and the distinctions in diseases and the indications as to treatment, but not actually have been trained in logical theory?

This passage, in fact, provides a good summation of what Galen does regard as essential in philosophy, throughout this short treatise. There are two key factors: the right ethical understanding, and an understanding of nature (each understanding itself being based on correct logical training). This pairing, indeed, is of considerable importance throughout Galen's work. The two go together: as Galen frequently reeaxamines various concepts, you need moral fibre in order to reach the relevant level of intellectual attainment without giving up or being distracted or corrupted; and, of course, you need that level of intellectual attainment for the understanding and practice of medicine. It is interesting in this context to note that the treatise begins with — and for a considerable length of time stays with — Hippocrates. It is Hippocrates who is the model in both the relevant senses: he was an ethical paragon, and he understood nature. The particular senses in which the doctor should be a philosopher, then, in the striking rhetoric of this treatise, are the senses in which Hippocrates (rather than any actual philosopher, past or present) was one. Hippocrates, in this text, appears as the philosopher par excellence.

Galen is, then, appropriating to himself the discipline of philosophy, but he is certainly not doing so in any straightforward or conventional sense. It is not irrelevant here also to point out that in Galen's great reconciliation of the views of Hippocrates and Plato, it is Hippocrates who is regarded as the senior figure — in the fields of element theory, physiology and even, in certain senses, the description of the soul. 


6 In The doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato, Galen emphasizes the chronological priority of Hippocrates, the indebtedness to him of Plato (and other philosophers), and in some cases the superiority of Hippocrates' exposition to Plato's. "Plato followed Hippocrates in element theory": HIP. 8,2 V.655 K = 492-503 De Luca, 8,4 V.675 K = 502-510 De Luca, and of HIP 8,5: V.681-82 K = 506-508 De Luca and 8,9 V.713 K = 532-538 De Luca. "Plato, Aristotel and their followers emulated Hippocrates' discussion of humours": HIP 8,5, V.684-85 K = 510-1, De Luca.

7 On this terminology of P. J. van der Elsje, Medicine and philosophy in classical antiquity: doctors and philosophers on nature, soul, health and disease (Cambridge 2005) Ch. 10 and esp. 260-81 n.7.
it irrelevant that this pairing—ethical distinction and attainment in logic (with a relevance of mathematically-based studies)—is precisely that which he attributes to his own father, and which he regards as having been so important in his own formation. That point is made clearly (both with regard to his father and his own education) in *The affections and errors of the soul*; and, it is also summarized neatly in *Good and bad humour*. The latter passage runs as follows:

I had a father who was extremely skilled in geometry, architecture (architectura), arithmetic, mathematics and astronomy, and admired by all who knew him for justice, goodness and self-control—like none of the philosophers.

*Hom. Med. Soc. 1, VI. 775 K = 392-21-24 Helmeich

The phrase which I have italicized is surely quite significant here. The desired ethical and intellectual qualities are, in fact, things that set one apart from the philosophers.

Let us turn to the second example mentioned above, the hierarchy of the technai in the *Exhortation*, and look at the passage in question in more detail. The context, when we remind ourselves, is a contrast between the followers of Fortune (bosch) and those of Hermes, who is the representative of the arts or specialized skills (technai)—a contrast which takes its starting-point from a traditional pictorial or sculptural representation of this theme. In the following passage we are *looking* at the latter set, which is subdivided into three bands (choroi). The other band consists entirely of men, practitioners of specialized skills:

... in their midst is the god ... Those nearest the god, ranged in a circle about him, are geometers, mathematicians, philosophers, doctors, astronomers, and scholars. Next, the second band: painters, sculptors, grammarians, carpenters, architects [or engineers] and stone-workers; and after them the third order: all the other specialized skills.

*Prov. 5, 16-7 K = 88-19-89.5 Borden*

We should again not forget the literary context. At one level, Galen is doing no more than describe a tradition of visual representation—how precisely, may be a matter of debate. Furthermore, the *overall* rhetorical force of the treatise should be borne in mind: the exaltation of specialized skills in general, and the importance of education, rather than the

'Hippocrates placed the source of the spirited capacity in the heart before Plato did'. *PDP* 6.8, V.737 K = 416-34-35 De Lacy. Senses in which Plato would have done better to follow Hippocrates more closely are discussed at *PDP* 8.6, V.696-99 K = 518-26-520.35 De Lacy; 8.8-9, V.710-13 K = 530.12-532.27 De Lacy. Here, too, then, we have a certain sense in which the traditional status of philosophy is downscaled at the expense of medicine.

*Aff.Prec.Dig. 1.8, V.60-42 K = 27,22-28,21 de Boer. It is hardly coincidental that it is the discipline of architettura which provides the prime example of the truth-giving logical procedure in Chapter 5 of *Aff.Prec. Dig. 2, V.80-82 K = 54,20-55,27 de Boer*, or that it is, specifically, an architect who exist through the intellectual frontloading of the philosophers in Chapter 7 of the same work: ibid. V.96-101 K = 63,16-67,1 de Boer.


making of precise distinctions between skills. Still, his particular presentation of the material surely gives scope for the reflection of his own views. And here the perception mentioned earlier has some validity: in a social context where philosophy had—at least traditionally, and at least in some people's eyes—no higher, more educated, status than medicine, the historico-force of the inclusion of medicine in the same band as philosophy is to elevate the former. It is noteworthy, though, that philosophy here certainly does not have the *highest* status: both it and medicine are at the same level as four other skills; and it may indeed be of some significance that geometry and mathematics are mentioned first among these. What are being elevated to prime position here are in fact the precise sciences, those which involve *logike* and, of course, of course, the inclusion of medicine amongst these is of great significance for Galen's view of the status of medicine and of his own intellectual activity. Crucially, medicine belongs here with the intellectual or contemplative speculations and not with those in the second band—surprisingly, in this case, even architecture—which might be summarized as practical or productive. Galen indeed makes explicit the principle of this 'trinary distinction' (*dichos ... diaphora*) in the technai, later in the treatise: some are logical and noble, others are inferior (*subfasophrainetai*), involving bodily labour—and the latter we call artisanal (*tousinaios*) and manual.

Again, then, we seem to have—at least by implication—a view of philosophy which accords with that seen in *The best abetor is also a philosopher*: what matters about philosophy is its logical rigour, the relations it has with the geometrical, mathematical and astronomical sciences and with the truth-giving claims of those disciplines. The philosophers Galen sees in this first band, we are tempted to think, are really logicians, or perhaps by extension pharisees.

It is also interesting, incidentally, to consider the sixth category which Galen includes in this first band: scholars (*grammatikoi*). We do not have space to explore this point in any detail here; but this positive assessment of scholarly activity—and the possible implication that this is a *technai* to which he would like to lay claim personally—are interesting in a way which I think has not been appreciated. With the term *grammatikoi*...10 There is a question whether the full title of the work was *'Exhortation to [the study of the arts] (the traditional form in which it is cited) or rather 'Exhortation to [the study of medicine], the matter is discussed in detail by V. Boudon (Galen, *Oeuvres. Tome 1. Exhortation à l'étude de la médecine*, ed. and trans. V. Boudon (Paris 2000) 35-38), who argues for the latter. If this is correct, however, it seems that the text we have must then correspond to the first, more general, part of that original text (encouraging the study of the arts), rather than the past (now missing) which focused specifically on medicine.


12 A similar list of extant 'rational' or 'logical' arts, including that of the *grammatikoi*, appears at *Aff.Prec.Dig. 2, 7, V.103 K = 68,14-15 de Boer. I do not mean to imply that Galen's scholarly activity has itself been neglected by modern scholarship—far from it—but only that his attitude to the technai of the *grammatikoi*, and the extent to which he may lay claim to that, has not been directly addressed. For example, A. E. Hines, 'Galen: author and critic', in *Editing texts—Texte redigiren, ed. O. W. Most (Otteningen 1998) 22-53, rightly draws attention to Galen's concern for scholarly skills and even specialization (which, however, he associates with the concept of the
Galien refers to the scholarly specialists which involves the ability to understand, establish the correct text of, and comment on 'classical' texts from the past. An enormous amount of Galen's intellectual activity, especially but not only through commentaries, was, in fact, scholarly in this sense. The third example cited above – Marcus Aurelius's alleged statement that Galen is first amongst doctors and 'the only one' amongst philosophers – should be seen in its context, too. It comes pretty much at the cithors of Galen's self-publicizing account, in Prolegomena of his successors, both in actual cause and in gaining respect, amongst the highest echelons of the social and intellectual elite of Rome. The remark Galen reports would, if actually uttered, have been a casual, semi-humorous aside on the part of a cultured emperor – a gently ironic phrase of flattery addressed to one who had found favour with him. Indeed, it seems to me not implausible that the emperor might have spoken to Galen in such a spirit. By the same token, of course, such a remark cannot be taken too literally as identifying a label to which Galen wishes to lay claim. But even here, two more specific aspects of the context merit attention. One is the explanation that Galen gives in the words immediately following the attributed remark. As if by way of gloss on the emperor's rather striking phrase, Galen continues: 'for he had already had experience of many who were not just greedy, but also quarrelsome, conceited, envious and spiteful.' Again, the ethical aspect (alongside the logical rigour that Galen exemplifies elsewhere in the work) is central to Galen's positive view of what it is to be a 'philosopher' – and, of course, what in fact marks him out from his contemporaries. The second aspect of the context that seems to me worth considering here – perhaps, but not strictly for the grammatical or of grammatical. Galen's scholarly activity on Hippocrates, in particular (evidenced by a vast body of commentary), has been very widely explored. The extent of his scholarly activity, ranging far beyond that, can be clearly appreciated by a glance at the last five chapters (and especially the last of My Own Books); and, now, by the range of his own library, and his own scholarly activity with manuscripts, described in Avoiding disputes; see esp. Inf. 3-30, 3-11 Boudon-Milot, Jouanna, Pirotte-Bell: and of n. 14 below specifically on his Aristotelian activities. For discussions of Galen's scholarly activity, see e.g. P. Manuelli, 'Lo stile del commento: Galeno e la tradizione ippocratica', in Lo studio classico: atti delle terze giornate di studio tenutesi a Parma dal 14 al 16 aprile 1982, ed G. Gliozzetti and M. Vezzoli (Naples 1984) 375-394; D. Manuelli and A. Roselli, 'Galeno commentatore di Ippocrate', in ANRH 23.72, ed. W. Haase (Berlin and New York 1994) 159-1635, 2071-80; D. Manuelli, 'Galeno, la lingua di Ippocrate e il tempo', in Galeno et le philosophe, Entre eux: sur l'Antiquite chassee de la Fondation Hardt 49, ed J. Barnes, Joanne and V. Barea (Vandenhove, Geneva 2003) 171-228; id., 'Galeno and Hippocratic medicine: language and practice', in Galien and the world of knowledge, eds C. Gill, T. Whitmarsh, and J. Wilkins (Cambridge 2009) 137-189; H. Von Staden, 'Science as text, science as history: Galen on morphè', in Ancient medical in its socio-cultural context, ed. M. van der Eijk, F. F. J. Hermanshoff, and P. H. Schrijvers, 2 vols (Amsterdam 1995) II 499-518; id., 'Galien and the Second Sophistic', in Aristotele and after (c.5, t.14, 35), ed. C. Gauvin and O. Pellegrino, Galien über Wahrheit und Lehretheorie, in Gartgenen wissenchaftlicher Literatur in der Antike, ed W. Kullmann, J. Althoff, and M. Anger (Tübingen 1998) 65-94; V. Nutton, 'Galen’s library' in Galien and the world of knowledge (this note, above) 19-34.

13 Proem. 11, XIV.660 K = 128.23-30 Nutton.
doeth some connection (as Nutton suggests) between the Aristotelianism of this narrative and the fact that Galen's work, especially The function of the parts, enjoyed a positive response in specifically Aristotelian circles. Here again, the fact that Galen wishes to impress, appeal to, and (to some extent) defeat Aristotelian philosophers in argument does not mean that he is himself to be defined as a philosopher (or an Aristotelian). Indeed, that phrase "the only one of the philosophers" can be seen as again underlining the way in which intellectual and ethical excellence actually set one apart from "the philosophers". It is in certain other texts, however, that we find more explicit statements on Galen's part of his self-exclusion from the discipline of philosophy.

The affections and errors of the soul is, of course, a philosophical treatise. And the attacks on the mistakes made by other philosophers could, to some extent, be taken as attacks made by one philosopher against another — attacks on certain bad ways of doing philosophy. To an extent, of course, that is true. Galen is above all, as so often, attacking lack of logical rigour, rashness in jumping to a conclusion, and slavishness to the doctrines of a sect. But one must do justice to the number of passages in this text where "the philosophers" is used as a negative term, and as a term which certainly excludes Galen himself. The 'philosophers' make declarations about good and bad.16 Amongst those who avoid logical schooling are "a number of those who claim to practice philosophy".17 And Galen describes discourses held, as to a distinct group, 'to many of the philosophers'.18 As the treatise progresses, the extent to which 'philosophers' and 'philosophy' are treated, not courts, as negative terms seems to increase. 'Philosophy', its findings and its theorems, are contrasted with the logically-based method which leads to the truth,19 people from philosophy are castigated with the intellectually inadequate and logically incompetent followers of sects,20 and, in the whole passage following that last quotation, in Chapters 5-7 of Book II of the work, the philosophers and their mode of conducting arguments cannot stand the scrutiny of other intelligent persons. In particular, the architect's explanation is understood by all 'except the philosophers'.21 There is even

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may be set alongside the information already available in Ch. 14 [ex-11] and 17 [ex-14] of My own book, detailing Galen's production of a range of commentaries on Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Eudemos, as well as indicating his knowledge of other Aristotelian commentators.


17 A.P.C. Dem. 2.1, 8,68 K = 42.18-19 de Boer. Not all of these conflicting definitions can be true, although it is possible that they are all false. It is not in fact clear whether Galen wishes to commit himself to any of the 'official' doctrines within the tradition; of my discussion ad loc. in Singer, Galen: psychological writings (p.14, above).

18 A.P.C. Dem. 2.3, 7.71 K = 49.9 de Boer, cf. the reference to 'many who have grown old in philosophy', A.P.C. Dem. 2.3, 7.75 K = 51.15 de Boer, and again to 'many who profess to do philosophy', A.P.C. Dem. 2.3, 7.75 K = 51.33 de Boer.

19 A.P.C. Dem. 2.3, 7.82 K = 52.6 de Boer.

20 A.P.C. Dem. 2.3, 7.88 K = 59.23-27 de Boer.

21 A.P.C. Dem. 2.3, 7.92 K = 62.6-7 de Boer.

22 A.P.C. Dem. 2.7, 100 K = 66.23-24 de Boer.
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questions themselves far from uninteresting, let alone meaningless: it is just that actual philosophers have (so far) had nothing to offer. They have not been able to add to Galen's own, securely based, knowledge on the subject, with its admitted limitations.

It is true that in a passage to which we have already alluded – Chapter 7 of Book II of The affections and auras of the soul – Galen seems to mock, as in themselves pointless, certain kinds of enquiry, as much as that into the notion of 'bodies placed in the void'.27 (Yet, even in this case, closer attention would suggest that it is the way the philosophers address the question, rather than the question itself, which is at fault.) One should simply not waste time, Galen seems at points to be saying, on subjects which are 'not necessary to understand either for cures of illnesses or for the preservation of health' – nor even for ethical philosophy, [that which is] both practical and political. Those are the areas in which Galen expresses himself, while referring to his own ignorance of the identity of the substance (materia) of the soul, in his summary, My own doctrines.28 And, that particular statement of ignorance occurs pretty consistently throughout his work – sometimes in conjunction with a similar statement regarding the usefulness or not of different types of enquiry.29 But one should not overestimate this 'practical' or 'anti-metaphysical' quality in Galen. First, as we have seen, he is completely committed to a certain kind of theological position, in broad outline – it is just that he is unable to provide all the detail. In the above passage from The shaping of the embryo, it seems clear that he would like to provide that detail if he could. Both in this case and in that of those statements which we have just mentioned of the ignorance of the substance of the soul, one's exact interpretation will depend on one's understanding of Galenic irony; but, it seems to me that Galen is, in certain moods at least, expressing a genuine aporia, and a genuine wish that he could solve it.

The fact that the 'uselessness' test is not the central, or universal, one for Galen is in fact further supported by the very text to which we have just referred, My own doctrines. For while the words just cited seem to reflect a Galenic impartiality with abstract enquiry, the passage in which they are situated, looked at in more detail, gives a rather different impression. A few pages earlier, discussing, now, the substance (materia) not of the soul but of the capacities (dynamis) in general, Galen states his ignorance; he does not persuade himself, as others do, that he has secure knowledge of things of which he has not had a sure demonstration.30 He goes on, however, to identify another category of enquiry, about which he does wish to speak: 'things whose knowledge is not necessary for health of the body or for the ethical virtues of the soul, but which would – if securely known – be

27 Eff.Proc.Dig. 27. V.98 K = 65-16-21 de Boe. Cf. R. J. Hankin's discussion of this passage in the context of his account of 'Galen on the limitations of knowledge', In Galen and the world of knowledge (n. 12, above) 296-42 (229-30).
28 Prop.Plac. 15. 120.5-10 Nutton = 189.13-15 Broaden-Millet and Petrobelli = Sub Nat.Fac. IV.761 K.

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an additional adornment (epothesmos) to the things accomplished by medicine and ethical philosophy.31 He proceeds in this same context to declare his views on element theory.

It is not, it seems to me, that certain kinds of enquiry are rejected because they are abstract or not of direct practical use (as we have just seen, Galen is capable of putting his own element theory in that category), or because they are metaphysical and not capable of completely precise answers (like the theory of intelligent design put forward in 'The shaping of the embryo' and 'The function of the parts'). What is rejected, rather – in either context – is the practice of purporting to put forward such precise answers, when, in fact, one has not got the demonstrations to support them. And that is precisely what 'the philosophers' actually do.

We have seen, then, a strong sense in which Galen identifies 'the philosophers' as a group to which he does not belong.

Of course, as I have already suggested, context is crucial. 'Being a philosopher' does not always mean the same thing: it may depend on whom one is talking to, whom one is talking about, and the particular claims one wishes to make for oneself – or not for oneself – in a particular argumentative context. (One might compare the way in which a professional politician will at times dissociate him- or herself from the dirty activity of 'politics', or claim not to be acting or speaking 'politically'; in another context, or for another audience, the same person would of course wish to be thought of as a hard or unskilled politician.) And the apparent contradiction here is in one sense easily enough resolved. The philosophical culture to which Galen wishes to align himself is that of Plato and (with certain reservations) Aristotle, to which he rejects the debased philosophical culture of his own day, and in particular the Slavish adherence to a particular sect. The sense in which 'the best doctor is also a philosopher' is that a serious enquiry into nature, and in particular into causes, must underlie medical theory and practice: the sense in which he is not is that it is of no value in Galen's view to engage in unanswerable speculations of the sort that present-day school philosophers do engage in. One might want to say that what Galen rejects here is not philosophy, but present-day actual philosophy. He wants to see himself as a philosopher, but an idealized one of the sort that no longer exists. Galen's independence of mind here – the fact that he refuses to define himself as part of a school – is important, and this much is often enough mentioned by Galenic scholars.

31 Prop.Plac. 14. 114.19-27 Nutton = 188.13-17 Broaden-Millet and Petrobelli = Sub Nat.Fac. IV.761-62 K. And this aesthetic aspect – the beauty and value of knowledge of nature in its own right, irrespective of its practical usefulness – is surely supported by the well-known 'byre' passage of Book 17 of The function of the parts; cf. esp. UP 17.1, IV.360-61 K = 2.447.21-485.5 Holzinger: '... he will understand the excellence of the intelligence in the heavens. Then a work on the understanding of the parts ... will be reckoned truly to be the source of a perfect theology, which is a thing far greater and far nobler than all of medicine. Hence such a work is serviceable only for the physician, but much more for the philosopher who is eager to gain an understanding of the whole of Nature'. And I think that all men ... whoever the gods should be initiated into this work...'; and UP 17.2, IV.362-63 K = 2.448.15-18 Holzinger: 'This is one very great advantage which we gain from this work, not as physicians but, what is better, as men seeking to understand something of the power responsible for usefulness' (trans. May).
That, it seems to me, is true as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. For it seems to me that what Galen is, importantly, rejecting in the texts considered above is, in fact, the professional status of philosopher altogether. And this rejection has been less clearly stated, if not indeed overlooked. It may, of course, be argued that to be a professional philosopher in Galen’s time automatically involved the adherence to a school; and therefore that in rejecting sects he is, ipso facto, rejecting professional philosophy. Nonetheless, the fact that there is the latter rejection seems to me important in its own right.32

We should consider, then (albeit briefly), the question: if Galen does not define himself as a philosopher, what professional self-definition(s) would he accept? Well, that of a doctor, presumably. That, certainly, will be a correct answer as far as it goes; and there are, not as far as I know, any contexts in which Galen states definitely that he is not a doctor. The position in relation to certain other definitions, however, is more complex, and perhaps in need of more work. We have touched, for example, on the fact that the skills of a grammaticus are among those to which Galen would, at least in certain contexts, wish to lay claim. It seems to me, too, that, in spite of their obvious associations, such terms as sophisti and rhetor do not always or exclusively bear negative connotations in Galen. This last point is perhaps one which would merit further research.33 Another kind of answer to the above question would be to say that – in the context of his own unique, intellectual project, or projects – there are a number of professional disciplines that Galen wishes to show himself both skilled in and distanced from.34

With our finding regarding Galen’s attitude to philosophy in mind, let us now turn to some of the works which are central to what people (including myself) have defined as Galen’s Platonism.35

Galen’s treatise The capabilities of the soul depend on the mixtures of the body is particularly interesting here. Again, it is tempting to see the work as functioning in a sense

32 The question, of course, has broader implications for Galen’s relationship with the literary environment of the second century AD, and in particular the Second Sophistic (whatever one thinks of the actual term) – something I cannot address here. I would refer the reader to Von Staden, ‘Galen and the Second Sophistic’ (p.12, above), both for the most detailed and compelling account of Galen’s activity in this context and for references to the considerable literature in this area. On my specific point here, Von Staden discusses a number of negative references by Galen to sophists and their cognizance. But, as we have seen with philosophy, the sense of such references may vary according to context, and the situation may be rather more complex than at first appears.

33 One may easily gain the impression (as has emerged from the discussion above, esp. n.14, and will emerge further below; cf. esp. pp. 20-25 with nos. 38, 45, and 61) that, both socially and by virtue of a number of points of intellectual contact, Galen might more happily have defined himself as an Aristotelian. The priority of Plato is, of course, explained in a fairly straightforward and mundane way by Galen’s finding support for his own physiological and anatomical theories – especially his view of the brain – in Plato’s tripartite psychology. A different kind of explanation, in terms of the particular kind of moral-intellectual (and even theological-intellectual) elite that Plato seems to represent for Galen, was explored in my N. Singer, in Aspects of Galen’s Platonism, in Galeno: obra, pensamiento e influencia, ed. J. Lópiz Frese (Madrid 1991) 41-55 – which, however, double-bets overstates the centrality of Plato in Galen’s thought. Of R. Chierchia, ‘Galen and Middle Platonism’, in Galen and the world of knowledge (n.12, above) 242-60 (243) for an overview of scholarly views in relation to Galen’s Platonism.

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within Platonism, Plato is the rhetorically central figure of the work; the central aim is to prove to Platonists that the body has influence on the soul; and all this seems to be in keeping with the fact that Galen’s psychology, both here and elsewhere, is fundamentally Platonist.

But in fact, as I argue much more fully elsewhere, the hypothetical nature of the arguments here is a crucial feature of their structure.36 Galen, for rhetorical purposes, adopts the hypotheses of different philosophers to demonstrate what should be, from their own point of view, the correct conclusions. If you are a Platonist, you are committed, as a consequence of a correct reading of Plato, to conclusion X; if an Aristotelian, to conclusion Y. Conclusion X here is, roughly, that ‘the soul is (at least) slave to the mixtures of the body’; conclusion Y, that ‘the substance of the soul actually is the mixture of the body’.37 Galen is not, in fact, presenting himself in propria personae as subscribing to either of these positions; or to those of the Stoics or of Hermelius, who are also brought within his authority-assimilating rhetoric. Now, the force of that rhetoric, to be sure, is in pushing the reader towards certain kinds of conclusion – and indeed in giving the impression, at times, that Galen does subscribe to either the Platonist or the Aristotelian position that he has constructed on behalf of these schools – is, to my last, considerable. Of course Galen is trying to show that both Plato and Aristotle, properly understood, support a Galenic position better than they support the views of their actual followers.

It is tempting to think that, when Galen talks disparagingly of certain ‘self-styled Platonists’ or ‘false Platonists’ who misrepresent the Master38 and then goes on to put them right by detailed textual exegesis, he is using those terms to distinguish them from himself, the true Platonist. In reality, however, his argument is far more subtle than that. I am not a Platonist, Galen is saying (in spin of his approval of certain of his doctrines, in particular tripartition);39 nor indeed an Aristotelian. But if I were a Platonist, or an Aristotelian, I would make a better job of it than those individuals actually do. I would argue more correctly on the basis of their texts. And in the process of this thought-

34 In Singer, Galen: psychological writings (n.14, above), introduction to The capabilities of the soul.

35 I am here summarizing very crudely the argument of a text which is extremely subtle and ambitious; cf. ch. 34, above.


37 All the references to ‘Platonists’ in The capabilities of the soul are in fact adversarial or at least critical; alongside those cited in the previous note, the reference to ‘Platonic teachers’ at GQM 9, IV,775 K – 38,14 Miller. Furthermore, Galen addresses Plato himself as a critical or questioning spirit (GQM 3, IV,775 K – 38,4-13 Miller. Such evidence of a distanced, rather than always reverential, attitude to the great platonist tends to be overlooked; and further such evidence was supplied in n.7 above, in the context of the comparison with Hippocrates. One should consider in this light also the fact that Galen is quite capable of disagreeing with Plato in his core (partially) surviving commentary-style work on the philosopher. Medical statement in the Timaeus – as he presumably was also in some of the lost works whose titles he records, e.g. ‘The Platonic seat’ (in Ch. 16 [n.13] of My own books) and ‘Apparent self-contradictions in Plato’s writings on the soul’, not mention in my own books but in the (probably later) The shaping of the embryo (Fasterr Form. 6, IV,720 K – 104,11-12 Nickelsen).
experiment we find (generally, but not always, and subject to important covenants about what views I am able to commit myself to) that their views turn out to be in agreement with my own. Detailed features of a somewhat similar argumentative stance, in the particular context of Aristotle’s biological theory, have been analyzed by Philip van der Eijk. Galen criticizes Aristotelians for their misinterpretations of the master in a way which would superficially give the impression that he is presenting himself as a better Aristotelian. In a sense, that is true; but we also find that— even within the same work— Aristotle himself becomes the subject of Galen’s, at times quite harsh, criticism.  

We have identified a rather complicated, but ultimately disturbed, view towards the profession of philosophy, and towards philosophers, on Galen’s part. With this in mind, let us turn to the second part of our discussion.

2. Galen and Aristotelian discussions

In this part of the paper, I wish: to point to some of the peculiar ways in which this Galenic attitude towards philosophy and philosophers— simultaneously engaged and distanced— plays out in terms of some specific philosophical arguments. Basing our argument on a series of individual passages, we shall see that Galen is individualistic in some of his interpretations of what other philosophers have said; and that some of these interpretations, or summaries, have a vagueness, or slight imprecision, with regard to the original texts to which they seem to refer. Both these points— the individualism and the vagueness— are interesting in their own right. For present purposes, though, I shall consider them conjointly. Both seem to me to be signs of the way in which Galen (a) develops his own, independent and sometimes original, interpretation of philosophical texts— in particular, in the examples we consider, texts of Aristotle; (b) responds to discussions which he hears around him on the part of (especially) Platonists and Aristotelians, in some cases rather than concocting actual texts in detail.

Now, (a) and (b) may here co-exist and overlap, rather than necessarily being mutually exclusive explanations of a particular discussion in Galen. It should also be mentioned that (b) is a more speculative hypothesis than (a); and that, whatever particular view one may take in relation to (a) and (b), the transformations of Aristotle that emerge from the process are of considerable interest in their own right, as well as of considerable importance for Galen’s thought.

In the examples that follow, I shall not try in each individual case to separate the two phenomena (a) and (b). What would be at issue in such a separation would be the extent to which such original, and/or vaguen, formulations of philosophers’ views result from Galen’s own response to his reading of a philosopher, as opposed to the extent to which they result from the way in which such texts were discussed and summarized by others at Galen’s time. And the answer to this (leaving aside certain concrete parallels between Galen’s formulations and those found in other texts in the Aristotelian tradition of around his time, as we discuss below) would be inevitably speculative. I believe, however, that if

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13 P. J. van der Eijk, “Aristotle! What a thing for you to say!” Galen’s engagement with Aristotle and Aristotelians’, in Galen and the world of knowledge (c.12, above) 201-81 (277-78) (discussing in particular the argument of Galen’s De somnis).

14 See now I. Konuova, Aristotle’s dynamics in the 3rd century school debate: Galen and Alexander of Aphrodisias on organic powers and movements”, in Philosophy, science and sagacity in Greek, Arabic and Latin commentaries, eds P. Adamson, H. BäHRer, and M. W. F. Stone, Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 83.1-2, 2 vols (London 2004) 1-71-95, both for a recent analysis of similarities between Galen and Alexander and (1, with n.) an overview of the state quaestionis. Relevant discussions of Alexander, and of Galen in relation to him, are also

will emerge from what follows that we do seem to be looking at the traces, however shadowy, of discussions and summaries of philosophers that were part of the (partly oral) culture of Galen’s time. In this sense, the results are interesting— though, as already admitted, shadowy— in that they function to some extent as a pre-echo of the later, very well-documented, commentary tradition on Plato and Aristotle.

Galen, of course, makes explicit mention of this commentary tradition, or of figures within it; but such remarks are scattered and fairly inconclusive in their import. The fact that Galen attended the lectures of a “Platonist pupil of Galen”, during his youth in Pergamum, and then later, in Smyrna, close of “Albinus the Platonist” may or may not be of significance for some of the ways in which Galen reads Plato.15 Galen mentions a specifically Aristotelian teacher, again from the time in Pergamum: “a pupil of Aesclapius the Peripatetic.”16 We do not know any other details of this pupil. As regards Aesclapius himself, although we do have substantial portions of his passages of his commentary on Aristotle’s Ethics, it does not seem possible to make any clear link between the summarization of Aristotle’s views given there and what we find in Galen.

To continue with Galen’s explicit references to the Aristotelian commentary tradition: one very clear reference he makes is to the much earlier figure— indeed, the father of Aristotelian commentary— Andronicus. Attributing to him a specific doctrine, Galen “approve[s] him highly” and adds that he finds him “similar in many other areas, too.” The sentence represents a fascinating but frustrating glimpse into what may have been a significant relationship. But again, it is not possible to establish (on the basis of the fragmentary evidence we have for him) how important that commentator actually was for Galen.17 Then, there is the major Aristotelian commentator who was a near-contemporary of Galen’s, Alexander of Aphrodisias. Alexander is not mentioned by Galen but, as recent scholarship has shown, seems to be connected with him in some interesting ways— at least co-representing some common strands of Aristotelianism, and possibly being influenced by him (though most scholars here would reject a reverse influence of Alexander upon Galen).18

15 Platonist pupil of Galen”: AEEPEccDig.18, V.4: K = 28.12 de Boer; Albinus the Platonist: Lib.Prop. 2, XIX.16 E = 140.16 Roodoo-Millen. Cf also below, 36, for a reference in The shaping of the embryo to “one of my Platonist teachers”.

16 Aesclapius: AEEPEccDig.18, V.4: K = 28.16 de Boer; he is also mentioned in Ch. 14 [xiv-ix] of My own books, alongside Aetarnus, as an example of a commentator who may play a useful role in a student’s Aristotelian education (Lib.Prop. XIX.44 = 167.6 Roodoo-Millen).

17 GAMA. IV, 833 K = 44.12-18 Millen.

congruence have been given a very full discussion by recent scholars. My present discussion focuses on the obviously related, but rather more elusive, areas where Galen is reflecting contemporary debates in a way not directly reflected in extant commentary texts, especially those of Alexander.

Finally, I do not enter here (except very much in passing) into the question of Galen in relation to 'Middle Platonism'—again a subject much discussed in recent years. This is not because I take the subject to be exhausted. It happens that the specific examples I have concentrated on here relate mostly to Galen's relationship with an Aristotelian, rather than a Platonist, discourse. But this does not represent anything like an exhaustive account of Galen's engagement with contemporary debates, and I suspect, in fact, that further interesting connections may emerge between Galen and some of the specific formulations that appear in some of his Platonic contemporaries or near-contemporaries.

Examples

1. We take our first example from The capacity of the soul depend upon the mixtures of the body—the most well-known and well-discussed text in the context of Galen's engagement with Aristotelianism. As already stated, I do not intend here to discuss the nature of Galen's relationship with known literary figures, either from the period before or that after his own time. It may, however, be worth summarizing the most striking 'Aristotelian' positions that have been discussed in this text. There are in fact two key passages, which offer closely related, but distinct, arguments in relation to the Aristotelian definition of the soul. The first, in Chapter 3, relies on the Aristotelian notion of soul as form of the body; and argues from that, via some categories in Aristotelian-Galenic biology, to the equation of form in this particular sense with mixture. The second, in Chapter 4, is a passage already touched on above, where Galen attributes to Andronicus the view that the substance of the soul is 'either a mixture or a capacity dependent upon mixture'. (Without, as I have said, going into the details of the Galen-Alexander relationship, let us remind ourselves that it is this 'capacity-dependent-on-mixture' view which is one of the central points which seems to connect the Galenic text with the tradition represented by Alexander.)

For our present purposes it is the former passage which is the more interesting. It may be worth citing a part of it verbatim:

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It is interesting in this context again to remind ourselves of the number of people whom Galen mentions from his Roman milieu who are adherents of Aristotelianism. The point was made above in our overview of the treatise Prognosis (cf. esp. n.14). Of the Aristotelians mentioned in the autobiographical context there, one, at any rate, had been an actual teacher of Galen, and another, Boethus, recurs as an important figure at other points in Galen's life. Again, any notion of influence from, or indeed interaction with, these individuals on specific areas of Galen's thought would be highly speculative. The fact, however, that they were in his social circle at least served to give some background support to the argument of the present article, in the sense that it reinforces the likelihood of his having spent some considerable time listening to the discourses of contemporary Peripatetics.

In this context, I should distinguish several subjects which I am not aiming to deal with in what follows—subjects which are beyond the rather specific aims I have in view, and which, in any case, have already received more or less extensive discussion in recent literature. In particular, I do not aim to give any general overview of Galen's indebtedness to Aristotle nor to enter into the complex question of his relationship with the extant commentary tradition, in particular with Alexander. In the former case, I believe that an increasing consciousness of this indebtedness is of considerable importance, especially in the biological and physical areas of Galen's thought; this has been very well brought out recently by Philip van der Eijk. In the latter case, too, the interesting areas of intellectual


44 The text from Avoiding disease cited in n.41 above points to an active scholarly engagement with some of these Aristotelian figures.

45 In van der Eijk, "Aristotel! What a thing for you to say!" (n.38, above), which also gives a good account of previous work in this area.

46 cf. n.43 above. Connections with the Aristotelian commentator tradition are also surveyed in Singer, Galen: psychological writings (n.14, above), introduction to OeM.

47 Most recently by Chiramonna, 'Galen and Middle Platonism' (n.32, above), who gives a negative account of Galen's 'Middle Platonism', but at the same time a very useful survey of the literature. In addition to the works he cites, cf. also P. N. Singer, Galen on the soul: philosophy and medicine in the second century AD (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge 1992); and Singer, Galen: psychological writings (n.14, above), general introduction.

48 The passage is complex, the text not completely certain, the argument extremely condensed, but its progress not easy to follow. See further my notes ad loc. in Singer, Galen: psychological writings (n.14, above).
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Though this may seem, Aristotle, says that the soul is form of the body, one
must ask him — or his followers — whether we should understand 'form' here to
have been used by him in the sense of shape, as in the organic bodies, or in
the sense of the other principle of natural bodies, that which crafts a body which is
'homogeneous' and simple in terms of our perception of it.

QM 3, IV.771-74 K = 37.5-12 Miller

There are, it seems to me, two hints at the fact that Galen's engagement with Aristotle
here is rather informal one, dependent either on a somewhat distant relationship with an
actual text, or perhaps on summarizations of Aristotle that he has frequently heard in
discussion. One hint is in the very way that the engagement with Aristotle is mentioned:
'when... Aristotle... says... one must ask him — or his followers'. Galen clearly here
does have in mind a group of actual Aristotelian that one could question; we may gain
the impression that he has them, rather then an actual text of Aristotle, in mind. That is,
indeed, no more than an impression. Let us then consider the second hint. This is the
vague way in which Aristotle's definition is cited: 'when he says that soul is form of the
body'. If Galen has a precise text in mind, it must be De anima 412a19-21: 'it is
necessary, then, that the soul be substance in the sense of form of a natural body which
has the capacity for life' (διότι δὲ τὸ γὰρ τῆς ψυχῆς ψυχὴν ὁ πνεῦμα, σώματος κάρα φύσεως καὶ κατά
νόμον καὶ προτέρους ὑπαρχός). Galen's is an abbreviated formulation of Aristotle's
position here. How much distortion arises from the abbreviation is debatable; it seems
to me at least possible to argue that a citation of the full sentence would make Galen's
argument more difficult at this point in his text.

I do not have space to elaborate that suggestion in detail here. But one might consider,
for example, that the way in which the term οὐσία appears in this passage, with its attendant
implication that the term may be understood in a plurality of senses, as well as its identity in
a particular sense with πνεῦμα, would, at least, sit awkwardly with the precise terms in which
Galen discusses πνεῦμα and οὐσία in The capacities of the soul. In the latter text (and
elsewhere) the question for Galen is "what is the substance (ousia) of the πνεῦμα?" The
notion that the πνεῦμα actually is an οὐσία is not explored; and this (as also, perhaps, the
notion that there might be more than one way of understanding the term οὐσία itself in such
a context) would doubtless complicate the terms of his argument. To move to the second
half of the Aristotelian sentence: the polysemic nature of εἰδῶς is, indeed, mentioned by
Galen; here, however, it is important to note the present context of the term — 'of
a natural body with the capacity for life' — would readily fail to support Galen's
identification of εἰδῶς with mixture. The apparent reference of these words to a whole
animal organism, with the structural or 'higher-level' considerations that (even for Galen)
this would seem to involve, would seem to speak against such an interpretation.

But, leaving aside the complexities of Aristotelian interpretation, how significant is
Galen's abbreviation of the text in terms of what it tells us of Galen's relationship with
Aristotle's De anima? To accuse Galen of a cursory knowledge — or at least of something
less than an in-depth, recent study — of the text of Aristotle might seem
audacious, given his ability to quote from Aristotle verbatim and at considerable length;
and especially so since this very text, The capacities of the soul, is one in which this
ability is demonstrated to the highest degree.

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But it is, I would suggest, precisely this contrast between the way in which the
relevant passage of De anima is cited, on the one hand, and those verbatim quotations,
written in his very useful overview of the Aristotelian texts Galen uses (P. Morax, Der
Aristotelismus im 1. und 2. Jh. n. Chr. (Berlin and New York: 1964) 729-35; see also
Anselm, and B. Jh. n. Chr. (Berlin and New York: 1984) 5.1871
and 5.1871 b). There are passages of Book II of De anima is cited in the very specific context of the physiological
and anatomical accounts of perception — a use which does not alter one's view of Galen's non
engagement, in detail, with the philosophical/psychological arguments of that work.

46. P. Morax, 'Galen and Aristotle's De partibus animalium', in Aristoteles on nature and living
things: philosophical and historical studies presented to David M. Baines on his seventieth birthday.
ed. A. Gootkind (Pittsburgh and Bratislava: 1985) 327-44; van der Kijk, "Aristotel! What a thing for you
to say!" (n. 36, above).

47. Cf. esp. n. 14 above. The material in Ch. 14 (ex-11) of My own books highlights largely Galen's
logical interests in relation to Aristotle, while the recently-discovered material in Avoiding divides
(esp. 16-17); p. 167). Thus Polybius' biological interests — the works on plants — in the foreground, but of
course this latter fact may simply be because Galen is here focusing on works whose loss was most
important, because of its rarity. It would be very strange to suppose that the De anima was not as
important, because of its rarity. It would be very strange to suppose that the De anima was not as
important, because of its rarity. It would be very strange to suppose that the De anima was not as
important. It is hard to believe this is the case, as witnessed by the work of e.g. Alexander of Aphrodisias.
The lack of detailed engagement with the work which I am here suggesting would therefore
presumably have to be seen as reflecting Galen's personal intellectual tastes, or selective reading.
But in any case, the fact that Galen does not make explicit reference to the De anima in its
commentaries in such bibliographical contexts is striking.

48. The only case of an actual citation of, or verbatim citation from, the De anima cited by Morax
in his very useful overview of the Aristotelian texts Galen uses (P. Morax, Der Aristotelismus bei
Aristotelismus im 1. und 2. Jh. n. Chr. (Berlin and New York: 1964) 729-35; see also
Anselm, and B. Jh. n. Chr. (Berlin and New York: 1984) 5.1871
and 5.1871 b). There are passages of Book II of De anima is cited in the very specific context of the physiological
and anatomical accounts of perception — a use which does not alter one's view of Galen's non
engagement, in detail, with the philosophical/psychological arguments of that work.
2. Our next example comes from Book II of De sanitate animae. This is a work which contains much of interest on matters of soul and body and their complex interrelationship in the context of upbringing and daily regime. It also has some particularly interesting material on the spiritual part of the soul (phantasma, phantasmale) and its relationship with the heart and the internal heat. The specific passage I want to look at now comes in the context of a discussion of exercise (gymnasia). Almost in passing, Galen finds himself addressing the relative value of descriptions of certain psychological events in physical and mental terms:

And this [an increase in innate heat, arising from the bodies themselves] is common to all exercise; but it is not specific to them, since, indeed, an increase in innate hotness arises also in those experiencing rage (thumoboleia), anxiety (agathia) and shame (aidarsetheia). Now, rage (thumos) is not simply an increase, but in a way a kind of boiling of the hot in the heart; which is why the best-reputed philosophers state such and such to be the essence (osia) of it (i.e. rage); for the separate for revenge is an incidental feature (trabebolhek) and not the essence of the rage. The internal heat increases in those suffering shame too, as all of the hot courses together to the inside, and then gathers deep down, and then increases both because of that gathering and because of the constant motion. For the breath (pneuma) is not at rest in people in a state of shame, but is stirred about (tuksetai) all over the place both inside and about itself, just as it is in people in a state of anxiety.

Sto, 2.9, VI.138-39 K = 61.21-24

As so often in Galen, what appears to be a crucial philosophical point is summarized in a sentence (the second one quoted above) — in fact, in an aside. What Galen seems to be saying here is that, with regard to at least some mental states (or, in his terms — though he does not use the term in this particular passage — pathos), one should prioritize a definition which picks out the key physical events taking place in the body; that phenomena we refer to by certain psychological terms — rage, shame, anxiety — have precise physical correlates, the description of which, in fact, represent better definitions of those phenomena than definitions relying on mental or intentional terms. This is not the place to explore all the implications of this fascinating passage, its relationship with other passages in Galen which appear to discuss the "mental" and "physical" aspect of the same event, or whether the kind of view outlined here is one which he could hope to maintain consistently. It is, for our purposes, the doxographical aspect of the passage which is of most interest — the reference to the "best-reputed philosophers". Who, exactly, are these persons to whom Galen attributes the view that "the boiling of the hot in the heart is the essence of rage"?

There is much here that puts one in mind of Aristotle. The terms in which the distinction is couched, between 'incidental feature' and 'essence', are themselves Aristotelian. (The latter term, osia, referring to the key definitional element in a subject, is of course the same as that translated 'substance' in our first example; here The capacites of the soul; and indeed there seems an interesting connection between the usage here and that one, regarding the 'substance of the soul'.) If, however, one takes what Galen says literally, it seems difficult to identify this specific proposition with something that can be clearly attributed to a particular philosopher (let alone a whole group of the 'best-reputed').
Beyond the general Aristotelianism of the terminology, however, there is a specific passage in Aristotle that has such verbal similarities to this Galenic one that it is difficult to imagine that the latter is not a response to the former. Again it is a passage from the De anima, this time from Book I. Aristotle is, in fact, addressing this same question, of mental and physical descriptions of pathos, and the correct way to understand the relationship between the two. The sentences which Galen seems to echo run as follows:

So a phainos and a dialectician would define each of them [e.g. affections of the soul], such as what anger is, differently: the latter would define it as the appetite (or thezis) for retaliation, or something of that sort, while the former would define it as the boiling (or thezis) of blood and of the hot around the heart. Of these, the one gives the matter, the other the form or a condition (logos). For the account is the form of the thing, and this must be realized in a certain kind of matter, if it is to be...

De an. 403a29-403b2

But the echo is a subtly distorting one. We have the same contrast as Galen’s between a definition in terms of desire for revenge and one in terms of heat, and indeed we have close similarities in terminology: or thezis (boiling), or thezeis (appetite). But Galen’s claim that the account in terms of the material conditions captures the ‘essence’ is wrong, for Aristotle. Although this passage does not in fact use the term or thezis in this context, it is, in Aristotelian’s view, the dialectician who captures the or thezeis or logon of anger and these definitional terms here refer to the mental aspect of the pathos. Aristotle is here rather far from associating the or thezeis of anger with the boiling of blood. Now, it is also true, as the passage immediately preceding that quoted makes clear, that the mental aspect encapsulated by this or thezeis is always embodied or ‘enanimated’. But here again Galen’s discussion shows the Aristotelian emphasis significantly, because in the passage immediately following that quoted, Aristotle asserts the superiority of an account which would capture both the formal (i.e. or thezeis-based) and the material in a single formula.

(Such a person would in fact be the true phainos, De an. 403b7-12.) Galen, in this passage which seems so closely to echo Aristotle’s, has, in fact, fundamental altered his two control perceptions: (i) that it is the mental, not the physical, account which gives an affection’s essential nature; (ii) that we should aim, ultimately, to get beyond that opposition, and arrive at an account which includes both elements.

The specific formulation ‘appetite for revenge’, meanwhile, seems to have Stoic echoes. For the precise term which Galen uses for ‘revenge’ (apatheia) does not derive from the passage of Aristotle (where the equivalent term is antistimoros). This variation could, of course, be a further instance of Galen’s slightly vague memory of the text. But it may, rather, reflect a Stoic formulation, and indicate that it is a Stoic view which (he believes) he is here attacking. A term related to antistimoros – e.g. timoros, timorosathedos – seems to have been used in a standard Stoic definition of anger: it is the desire for such ‘revenge’ on the part of one who believes himself wronged.55 It is probable, then, that he is here trying, as is so often his practice, to line up ‘the best philosophers’ behind him and against the position that he wishes to criticize. And it does

above" and in the second as "some more divine source." In the first passage, he seems open-minded as to which is the correct answer; the second seems to make clear that he favours the higher, "divine" option (at least to account for some of the relevant phenomena). And it is the second passage, too, that attributes such a view to Aristotle.

The precise term in which he does so are of particular interest — in particular, the verb ἐπισημάνει. This could be taken to mean "was in doubt"; in a commentary context, however, the verb may also simply mean "raise a question." In either case, Aristotle is here being stated to have raised, as an explicit problem, the question as to which of two models of causal explanation should be adopted, in the specific context of the shaping of human bodies: material causation on the four-element theory, or causation from a divine source.

Of course, causal questions in Aristotle are famously complicated and have generated an immense modern literature; and one is led to attempt any summary in such an area. But it does seem, again, that the specific statement here attributed to Aristotle — that he ἐπισημάνει on this particular subject — is difficult to locate in an Aristotle's actual work. That divine intelligence and material elements co-exist as causal agents could be taken as a reasonable interpretative statement of Aristotle's biological work. Even here, though, the terminology is not, in detail, precisely Aristotelian. Both the terms "more divine" and "from above" seem to represent vague allusions to what Galen takes to be Aristotle's position, rather than attributable citations — or at least, rather than attributable citations to an argument which is recognizably the same as the Galenic one. 38 Galen's summarizations can hardly be said to map precisely on to any particular Aristotelian discussion of causation in the biological world. On the other hand, they could be said to provide a rough characterization of what is going on in those different causal accounts —

38 I am grateful to Philip van der Bijl for pointing out to me the similarity between anköhen and the somewhat similar term ἀνκαθάριστον, which Aristotle uses in the rather different context of the relationship of ἐνοσία to the rest of the soul in De generatione animalium. Actually, this same term does present some kind of verbal parallel, both for "from above" and for "more divine." But again, if one looks in detail at these pre-echoes, it is the difference in argumentative context and intent that are as striking as the similarities. At G 2.1, 730b23-24, Aristotle uses the very phrase, ἀνκαθάριστον ἐν ὑποθέσει — "this source from above"; but the context here is the picking-out of the final cause (because of the better, for the sake of something), which is to be understood alongside the material or efficient causes. Then, at G 2.3, 736b17-18, it is specified that reason alone (now) enters from outside (ὅπως ἐνέλθων) and alone is divine (ὁμοίως, for bodily activity has nothing in common with it. This separate, non-bodily, status of, specifically, mind, belongs to a different area of discussion from that which Galen is addressing in De temperamentis. (It is also true, incidentally, that the Aristotelian term now is one hardly employed by Galen in his philosophical psychology.) This latter passage from G 2 continues — in what again appears as a clear verbal echo-pee of the De temperamentis — to suggest that "the power of all that has to do with another body, more divine (ὁμοίως) than the so-called elements." But again, the direction of Aristotle's argument seems quite different from that of Galen's: the former goes on to assert that differences between different souls in terms of value (ἀξίαν) will be reflected in their physical nature (ἐφαρμολογεῖ) — and thus seems to be attempting to reconcile an account in terms of "the divine" with one in terms of physical substance. Indeed, it is a particular kind of body that is "more divine" in this Aristotelian text. And yet, again, the terms of Aristotle's discussion are somewhat distinctly reflected in Galen's.

albeit, perhaps, a characterization which may appear somewhat philosophically unsophisticated. And it is here, I think, that we have what is the most striking feature of Galen's version of Aristotle at this point, precisely in the fact that he presents him as offering an either-or distinction between models of causation, and a hesitation between them. Now it may or may not be the case that we as readers experience some difficulty in reconciling the different causal accounts that Aristotle gives: the language of "for-the-sake-of" on the one hand, and the accounts in terms of, e.g. qualities of the blood, on the other. But it seems pretty clear that Aristotle does not himself see the accounts as conflicting. Indeed, as the above quotation from De anima makes clear, he is at least in principle — committed to the notion of an account which simultaneously captures the material and "higher" levels of explanation. (The De anima passage may not be dealing with exactly the same exact issues that we are here discussing, but it is indicative of the kind of account which Aristotle believes a student of nature should give.) It is, at least, a possible reading of Aristotle's Para of animals (as we have seen, a central text for Galen) that Aristotle there concomit of material causation in a way which is difficult to reconcile with formal or teleological causation. Yet even if one follows such a reading, one would have to say that, far from highlighting any such 'aporia' arising from different causal mechanisms, Aristotle seems, if anything, to avoid addressing any such 'direction-of-causation' problem head-on.

Here, too, then, we have Galen's very particular — one is tempted to say, creative — take on Aristotle. 39 And here, too, I suggest, it is difficult to be sure to what extent this very particular take is due to Galen himself and to what extent it is due to summaries or simplifications of Aristotle that existed in Galen's milieu.

We might pause for a moment here, and consider together the three examples of 'transformation of Aristotle' given so far, since they have something very significant in common — significant for the way in which Galen reads Aristotle, and perhaps for his thought more generally. For each of these three examples is, in a way, also an example of Galen's failure to understand what we would see as an absolutely crucial feature of Aristotle — basically, his teleology. In suggesting the equation of bodily mixture and form; in positing a state of blood as the essence of rage (in contradistinction to an account in mental terms); in claiming that Aristotle raised the question of whether a material or a 'higher' account should be given of human formation — in each of these cases, Galen seems to show that he misses something central to Aristotle's thought in this area. If we were to summarize Aristotle's position by saying that a form (φύσις), or indeed an essence (ὕλη) is not identical with any particular material, nor something distinct from or outside it, but inheres in or is instantiated in particular materials, we would, I think, simultaneously be summarizing (to put it negatively) the concept which it is, at points at

39 It would be interesting, though beyond our scope here, to see Galen's remarks on alternative views of causation quoted above from Minuțean alongside the discussion (also Aristotelian in its inspiration) of the different types of cause in De partibus causarum et causarum causarum et causarum causarum and to consider to what extent there too it is suggesting an 'either-or' approach to certain causal explanations. The views of these tests are summarized by R. J. Hankinson, "Philosophy of nature", in The Cambridge companion to Galen, ed. R. J. Hankinson (Cambridge 2008) 210-41 (223-33).
PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES IN GALEN

4. Let us take refuge, for a moment, in a rather less complex and exalted field of inquiry. In Affections and errors we seem to find another transformation—albeit a much smaller and probably less significant one—of a text of Aristotle, this time in the ethical context. Galen is listing some of the different candidates for the 'goal of life' advocated by different philosophical schools, without mentioning explicitly which school he has in mind. The summary in question is not presented as exhaustive, and is quite condescending; the context, in fact, is a sentence which raises the question whether any of the philosophers has found the right candidate. And the options mentioned are: pleasure; freedom from disturbance (anēklēstia), and virtue, or the activity in accordance with it. These last two appear to be paired grammatically, so that it would seem that Galen is attributing them both to one philosophical school. In any case, the last phrase, 'activity in accordance with virtue' seems Aristotelian; and, it seems that this is the school which Galen has in mind in using this phrase. Again, though, the specific phrase of Aristotle which is here being echoed is not being echoed quite accurately. For the passage underlying the Galenic formulation would seem to be that from the Nicomachean Ethics arguing that human good consists in the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue (Ethics I.7, 1097b22-1098a20).

Again, one could debate how significant the differences are between the line of Aristotle and Galen's summary of it. But it is the nature of Galen's interaction with the text which is of interest here. It is very probable that Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics is, at some level, in the background to Galen's ethical thought; indeed, there are works, in particular Character ethics, in which this seems strongly to be the case. But again it is a work, which (as far as I know) receives no verbatim citations in Galen's work, and for which—in stark contrast to his knowledge of the biological works—he seems to be relying either on a somewhat distant memory or on the discussions of Peripatetics.

5. I turn again, after that ethical interlude, to another level of greater difficulty and abstraction, namely that of physical theory. Here, both Galen's own theory and its relationship with its predecessors constitutes questions of considerable complexity. This, too, is an area where Aristotle seems to be a central— if not the central—figure in the background to Galen's thought. The fact emerges, among other things, from a reading of Elements according to Hippocrates and, especially, Mixtures; and, it has been emphasized persuasively by Philip van der Eijk.42

Galens thought in this area seems to rely closely on Aristotle, and it seems to be informed by a detailed knowledge of Aristotelian biological and physical texts. The one most directly relevant in this context is Generation and corruption (although he does not quote from the work in extenso).

But again there seems to be something other than straightforward Aristotelianism going on here. There are two texts which are central to the understanding of Galen's element-theory at its most fundamental level: Elements according to Hippocrates and the Commentary on Hippocrates' Nature of man. Jim Hankinson has given a very good summary, both of the essentials of Galen's element theory and of the way in which it is related to Aristotle's, and I refer the reader to that discussion for the detail in relation to those texts. In particular, Hankinson identifies a range of features in these texts which underline Galen's Aristotelianism, as well as his anti-Aristotelism: the pairing of qualities in relation to elements (e.g. fire in hot and dry), as opposed to the one-to-one linking of qualities and elements; the notion that there are not equal pairings (e.g. one quality predominates); and, the association of air with moisture and water with coldness. There is also the preference (though it is not an absolutely decided one) for the theory that juxtaposition alone is subject to total mixture over the Stoic view of interpenetration of substances (total mixture).

So far, then, so Aristotelian. And, as Hankinson also points out, the distinction between stoicheia and archai is in Aristotelian, too, even if Aristotle does not perhaps maintain it as strictly as Galen does. (Essentially, stoicheia are the fundamental things that actually occur, while archai are the fundamental things into which they are conceptually divisible.)

But there are at least a few passages that seem to go beyond anything that we find explicitly in Aristotle:

And indeed that the first principles of the generation of fire are the matter which underlies (hupodechomai) all the elements and is without qualities (upostasis), and the extreme heat that enters into it, this too has been similarly agreed to.

For it is clear that they seek to expand what sort of thing the primary substance (prōtēn ousian) is, which they say is ungenerated and eternal, and which underlies (hupodechomai) all bodies which are subject to generation and destruction.

This seems to be another case where Galen apparently believes that he is being Aristotelian, but with (from our point of view) inadequate textual support. Galen's view of what happens at the most fundamental level of physical analysis is that matter, which at this level of analysis is devoid of any qualities, receives qualities (hot, dry, etc.) which make it into the sort of actual matter we encounter in the phenomenal world.

42 The question whether Alexander takes a similarly 'reductionist' step has been discussed in modern literature; see the useful summary by Koppes, 'Aristotelian dynamics' (n.41, above) 72, of this discussion in the recent literature; and cf. n.42, above. But Galen explicitly, in the course of his reference to Aetnureus, rejects the supervenience theory which we find in Alexander and to that extent (here at least) markedly more materialist or 'reductionist' in his Aristotelianism.

43 In van der Eijk, "Aristotel. What a thing you say!" (n.38, above).

44 R. J. Hankinson, 'Philosophy of nature' (n.59, above), esp. 214-17.
The terms prêdo oûvia and opoiôs seem both to be used in reference to this uniformed matter.\(^43\) The former term is of particular interest: in the context of the kind of transformation being performed on Aristotle, it is merely not insignificant that prêdo oûvia, which is an Aristotelian term, is here being used in a non-Aristotelian way. In the Categories, the phrase refers to what is most properly a subject of predication; here it refers to underlying matter.\(^44\) This notion of a quality-less prime matter is, as Hankinson says, "absurdly Aristotelian.

We have here, it seems to me, a further example of Galen’s simultaneous indebtedness to, and departure from, authentic Aristotle. And again, the precise nature of his engagement with a specific text – here Generation and corruption – is difficult to determine (though in this case it would be difficult to argue that he did not know the text well). And this turns out to be another example, too, of Galen’s particular take on the Aristotelian form-matter distinction. The reception of qualities by quality-less nature is an example of matter being informed (cf. what is said about this also in The capacities of the soul, in a passage immediately following that quoted earlier: ‘it is Aristotle’s own belief that the natural body comes about through the four qualities arising in the matter’).\(^45\) but this particular relationship of form and matter is not quite identical to anything we get cleanly in Aristotle.

It should be mentioned here that connections may be made between this particular departure from Aristotle and both Stoeic thought, on the one hand, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, on the other. In relation to the former, we should point out that Galen quite frequently adopts Stoic ‘technical’ terms in a decontextualized way which does not imply that he is adopting the intellectual framework to which they originally belonged.\(^46\) As regards Alexander, there may indeed be similarities; as already stated, I will not here engage in the complexities of this relationship, on which there is already a large literature. But – at the risk of a simplification of those complexities – I will at least remark that the chief discussion of mixture by Alexander seems to me remarkably distinct from Galen’s, both in its wish to address head-on a question (the truth or falsity of the ‘total mixture’ doctrine) about which, as we have seen, Galen is fairly relaxed, and in the particular language used in relation to matter and form.\(^47\)

6. It is worth at least mentioning a couple of other examples of ‘Aristotelian transformation’ which have already been identified in the scholarly literature, though I have nothing to add to the analyses that have been made of them. In each of these cases, too, it seems possible to interpret the transformation as stemming from Galen’s originality, from his slightly-distanced engagement with relevant texts, or from discussions within contemporary Aristotelianism – or indeed from some interaction of these factors.

The first is Galen’s detailed analysis of different types of cause. The situation here is summarized by Hankinson,\(^48\) again we find a distinctively Galenic version of ‘Aristotle’s causes’.

The second is the particular version of an ‘Aristotelian’ hierarchy of types of argument that appears in The doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato. In this case the peculiarity of Galen’s version, and its slightly complex and unclear links to specific texts of Aristotle (and the scholarly tradition), have been well analyzed by Tielenman.\(^49\)
7. Our discussion has focused almost entirely on a certain kind of response to, or reporting of, Aristotelian and Aristotelianism on Galen’s part. Let us end with a few examples of what appears, at least, to be a similar phenomenon in relation to Plato and Platonism.

The first is represented by a single word: prōtos γόνος. This, Galen tells us, is the Platonic term equivalent to the Aristotelian body: uniform parts of a body (e.g. blood or bone). Galen asserts the equivalence more than once. Yet the adjective prōtos γόνος is not found in the text of Plato as we have it. The closest parallel in the adjective prōtos γόνος, which is found in the Politeia (288e and 289b), and the context there would not support an equivalence with homočōrnia. Is Galen here relying on a distant memory of a text of Plato – or rather on some other text or discussion among Platonists of his time, unknown to us?

Our next example is equally simple. At Poet.41.6, IV.700-01 K = 104.25-26 Nickel, Galen attributes to an unnamed ‘Platonic teacher of mine’ the view that the ‘soul extended throughout the whole cosmos’ is the entity responsible for the formation or ‘shaping’ (epiphanias) of embryos. There seems little reason to doubt the report, but, as noted by Nickel ad loc., the view cannot be related to any identifiable Platonist of Galen’s time. In this case, then, Galen is reporting a Platonic discussion which we do not have in an extant text.

Our final example similarly involves certain possibly Platonic discussions or usages relevant to the soul, which Galen reports, but for which we do not have clear evidence elsewhere. The material here, however, is somewhat more complex. We begin again with The capacities of the soul. In the second chapter of that work, Galen criticizes a misunderstanding of the nature of ‘capacity’ (dynamis) in the following terms:

[M]any of the philosophers ... seem to me to imagine capacities as if they were some object inhabiting the substances, in the same way that we inhabit our houses.

The capacity, Galen is arguing, is not something separate or separable from the thing that has that capacity. The rather striking terminology of inhabiting houses finds a parallel – albeit in the different context of soul and body – in The affected places:

But if this part of the soul is in the body that contains it in the same way as we are in a house, we would perhaps not imagine that the archē itself was damaged at all by virtue of the place [that contains it] ... While the philosophers differ on this point, some saying that it is contained as in a dwelling, and some as a form (eidos), it is difficult to find out how it is damaged; that it is damaged, though, can be learned by experience.

Loc.41.2.10, VIII.127-28 K.

Who, one wonders, are these philosophers who state, either that capacities inhabit substances as we inhabit houses, or that the soul is contained in a dwelling? For the usage of ‘house’ or ‘dwelling’ in the latter context it seems to me to be difficult to find a direct parallel elsewhere. Perhaps, however, a rather indirect Platonic connection can be made.

For an overview of the concept and its history, see R. Scahii, The philosophy of the commentators 260-694 A.D.: a sourcebook, 3 vols (Loudon 2004) 1: Psychology 221-41. Some of those Neoplatonists, of course, can be clearly seen as the intellectual descendants of Galen’s body-denying, ‘self-styled’ Platonists of The capacity of the soul.

A further possible parallel for the phonology which Galen reports is suggested to me by Peter Adamson. Platon.4xv. 4.3.4, uses the analogy of light, which is divided up amongst different houses on earth, but still remains one, for the soul’s relationship with the body (and for this analogy houses are used). But in the Platonic connection here the analogy of light is not drawn at all.

We may, finally, consider one more pre-echo of what was certainly to become a debate within Platonism and may – though more speculatively – be seen as a specifically

7) QAMJ, IV.773 K = 37.4-5 Miller; NHH XV.6.8 K = 6.19-20 Mewald.

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Platonist usage. Porphyry, at *de Abstinencia* 3.2.1, makes a distinction between προφορικός (‘outward’) and ἔνωθεντος (internal) λόγος, in the context of the discussion of the sense in which animals can be said to have reason. Both this question, and this precise terminology, are directly paralleled by Galen in his *Exhortation*.\(^{74}\) It is true that this, or similar, usage also occurs elsewhere,\(^{75}\) and also true that it has been regarded as a specifically Stoic distinction (and has been canonized as such by its inclusion in *SVF*). But we should be aware that the Stoic heritage of the terminology is only attested by Porphyry, while both Galen and Sextus Empiricus attribute it respectively to ‘the philosophers’ and ‘the dogmatics’.\(^{76}\) Quite what Galen is doing with the distinction in the two passages in question, and indeed the broader question of Galen’s view of the rationality of animals, are much bigger questions; but, there seems, here too, to be at least some relation between the debate in his mind and that attested in the Platonic tradition about a century later.

**Conclusion**

It is, to be sure, a frustrating enterprise to try to discern Galen’s engagement with the unknown Aristotelian, or Platonist, shades of his time. It seems to me, however, that the attempt has not been without interest; we seem, at least, to glimpse some traces of a live debate, before the period for which (from Alexander onwards) such debate was transformed into a substantial body of surviving texts.

As I have suggested, it is not possible to determine with any certainty where the effects of such engagement end and where Galen’s originality, or even eccentricity, takes over. If the Aristotelian transformations outlined above arose largely [*without*] reference to contemporary debates, that, of course, would be no less interesting.

I hope, in fact, that the above has shown the originality and (from our point of view, at least) uniqueness of Galen’s engagement with the Aristotelian tradition – an originality and uniqueness which of course contributed to a model of the human body and soul which were of immense influence over a period of centuries. At the same time we have, perhaps, cast some light, however dim, on the murky picture of the living Platonic and Aristotelian traditions in Rome in the second century AD.

\(^{74}\) *Protr.* 1, 1.1 K = 84.5-6 Boudon (and cf. *Hipp.Off.Med.* 1.3, XVIII.650 K., which again mentions the term ἔνωθεντος).

\(^{75}\) For parallels cf. Boudon ad *loc.* on the *Protr.* passage (119, where, however, the passage cited from Aristotle, *APo.* 76b24-27, is similar in sense but not in precise linguistic terms); and Sodano ad *loc.* on the passage from Porphyry (*Porfirio: Astinenza dagli animali*, ed., with intro. by G. Girgenti, trans. into Italian, with notes by A. R. Sodano (Milan 2005) 445-56, citing among others Plutarch).

\(^{76}\) Galen in the passage from *Hipp.Off.Med.* already cited (n.74); Sextus Empiricus at *M.* 8.275. These, indeed, are the passages that provide ‘Stoic’ testimony, appearing as *SVF* 2.135 and 223.