Galen and the Sceptics (and the Epicureans) on the Unavoidability of Distress

R. J. Hankinson

I will be flesh and blood;
For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING, V 1

...

For he was not sprung from some ancient oak, nor from a rock
<But from the race of men>.¹

ODYSSEY 19.163+, QUOTED BY SEXTUS, *AGAINST THE PROFESSORS* [M] 11.161

...

For this reason, we say that while in the case of matters of opinion, the end for the sceptic is tranquillity, in the case of what is forced upon us it is moderation in affection.

SEXTUS, *OUTLINES OF PYRRHONISM* [PH] 1.30

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One of the most extraordinary scholarly events of recent years was Antoine Pietrobelli's discovery in 2005 of a hitherto unknown manuscript containing, among other things, a previously lost work of Galen, *περὶ ἀλγπτίας*: *Avoiding Distress* (*Ind.*). Since then, it has been edited and translated several times,² and

1 This half-line is not in our MSS. of Homer, but it is metrical and may well derive from a lost alternative tradition known to Sextus: see Bett, 1997, 166.

2 Notably in Boudon-Millot et al., 2010, to which edition subsequent references will be keyed. An English translation, by Vivian Nutton, appears in Singer, 2013. The text is sometimes also

provoked a flurry of articles. It contains invaluable biographical information, in particular concerning the disastrous fire of 192, in which Galen lost many unique exemplars of his own writings, as well as a vast store of *materia medica* (some of it decades old and very valuable), and a large number of surgical instruments, several of his own devising. His experience of the loss, and his observation of that of others, prompted him to write this short treatise on the subject of how to deal with distress, motivated, or so he says, by his colleagues' astonishment at the equanimity with which he dealt with the catastrophe. The treatise falls recognizably into the category of consolation literature, as well as into that of the ancient anticipations of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). It thus bears comparison with Cicero and Seneca's *Consolations*, and also with Galen's own surviving treatise on the *Diagnosis and Cure of the Passions of the Soul*.³ This latter is aimed against a particular Epicurean, and also retails some anecdotes from Galen's life illustrating his own stoicism (with a lower-case 's') in the face of adversity, as well as his attempts to help people deal with their anger issues, which again connects with both ancient and modern concerns (cf. Seneca's and Plutarch's treatises *On Anger*).

The fire, which began at the Temple of Peace and spread rapidly to neighbouring parts of central Rome, destroying a variety of buildings, including a depository in which Galen stored much of his important professional equipment and library,⁴ was a shattering event for many people. Galen himself mentions it, and his loss, in a number of places; and he contrasts his own attitude of quiet resignation with the more extreme reactions of others, such as the grammarian Callistus, who died of a fever caused by insomnia brought on by grief at his losses (*Hipp.Epid.* VI, 486,19–24 Pfaff; see Hankinson, 'The man and his

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referred to as *Freedom from Distress*, which is perhaps a more accurate rendering of the title, although arguably less appropriate to the actual content of the treatise.

- 3 *Aff.Dig.* V 1–57; its companion piece, *Diagnosis and Cure of the Errors of the Soul* (*Pecc.Dig.*: V 58–103), is also relevant and important, not least because it is a separate treatise – errors, failures of the rational part, are to be rigorously distinguished from the irrational passions, or affections (*pathê*). Both are edited in Marquardt, 1884, and De Boer, 1937, and translated in Singer, 1997 (revised in Singer, 2014). In general, on a first reference to a text of Galen, I give a full English title, followed by an abbreviation if it is referred to again, followed by a reference to the Kühn edition, followed by references to later, better editions (if any).
- 4 Among the works he took to be irretrievably lost (wrongly, as it turned out) was his own *On Prognosis*: "I wrote about these prognoses in one book of the same title. But shortly after its publication this book was consumed in the great fire that burnt down the so-called Temple of Peace, along with many other books which were also burnt" (*On Hippocrates' Epidemics*' (*Hipp.Epid.*) VI, CMG V 10,2,2, 495,2–12, Pfaff, 1956. Galen also refers to his losses in the fire at *My Own Books* (*Lib.Prop.*) XIX 19, 41, = 143,2–4, 166,1–5 Boudon-Millot, 2007 (*Lib.Prop.* is also edited in Müller, 1891; see Boudon-Millot, 2007, 198 n.2).

work', in Hankinson ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, 2008, pp. 21–2). This was not the right sort of response at all, and Galen wrote *Ind.* to underscore this fact, and to explain how it was that he managed to avoid such self-destructive excesses, or even lesser versions of them, such as a decline into melancholic apathy.⁵

My main concern here, however, is not with Galen's response to this, or with the advice he gives to those in danger of being so afflicted. Rather I want to explore a possible, and at first sight surprising, connection between Galen's self-expressed attitude in *Peri Alupias* and that of a group of philosophers to whom he is invariably implacably (indeed frequently offensively) hostile: the sceptics, especially Pyrrhonian sceptics; and, to a lesser extent, with another philosophic persuasion with which he has almost as little sympathy: atomism.⁶ But let's start by sketching the relevant parts of Galen's text.

1 Avoiding Distress: the Philosophical Examples and Galen's Own Story

Galen begins by drawing attention to some relevant philosophical examples, starting with the story of the founding Cyrenaic Aristippus's indifference to wealth, exemplified by his calm acceptance of the loss of one of his four fields (*Ind.* 41–2, 13,21–14,7 BJP).⁷ He draws the following morals:

- (i) Those unsatisfied with moderate means will be insatiably greedy, and as a result always poor (42–3, 14,7–18)

5 A curious inconsistency is worth pointing out here: at the beginning of the second part of *Therapeutic Method* (MM x 456–7), which Galen took up again after a lengthy interruption in the 190s, he writes of his own tendency (well known, apparently, to his addressee) to fall into despondency about such matters. On this, and other Galenic inconsistencies, see Vivian Nutton's Introduction to his translation of *Ind.*, in Singer, 2014, 66–8.

6 Attacks on atomism figure at *Nat.Fac.* II 44–51, = 133,16–138,14 Helmreich, 1893 (on magnetism); *Elements according to Hippocrates* I 416–26, = 58,16–68,24 De Lacy, 1996 (on the inadequacy of a physics that denies genuine alteration to account for such obvious phenomena as pain). He is also relentlessly hostile to the atomist denial of teleology; see *Functionality of the Parts, passim* (Helmreich, 1907–9; May, 1968). On Galen's willingness to countenance some Epicurean approaches to psychotherapy, see now, in the context of *Ind.*, Kaufman, D. H., 'Galen on the therapy of distress and the limits of emotional therapy', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 47, 2014, 275–96 (p. 287–9).

7 Elsewhere Galen recounts another well-known story concerning Aristippus; when asked by people on their way to his hometown of Cyrene if he had any message for his relatives, he replied "tell them to acquire only those goods which can survive a shipwreck", i.e. intellectual ones: *Protrepticus* I 8–9, = Boudon, 2002, 90,4–18.

- (ii) Someone who isn't envious of others' wealth will bear any loss, as long as they still have enough left to live (44, 14,18–15,2)
- (iii) But if someone loses everything, they will "be justifiably distressed" (45, 15,2–4)

This is a perfect anticipation of Galen's own view. The self-defeating nature of avarice is an ancient commonplace, one often linked with a contempt for the love of monetary gain for its own sake, and the advocacy of true wealth as consisting in satisfaction with a modest provision of necessary and advantageous possessions. Aristotle expresses the idea trenchantly at *Politics* 1.8–9, 1256b26–58a18; pursuit of wealth for its own sake is both pointless, and, since wealth has no natural limit, intrinsically unsatisfiable. Similar views are expressed by Epicureans (Lucretius 3.59 ff.), and others. But the position outlined in (i)–(iii) is not without its problems, primarily in the interpretation of "enough still left to live"; how much is enough? And to live how? Presumably not as a pauper, a beggar, or a day-labourer, a fact suggested by his attitude to the Cynic Crates: it is indeed remarkable that he was satisfied with no possessions, and even more so Diogenes, who didn't even have a proper house⁸ (45, 15,4–10). So Galen's own *alupia* is nothing special, since he was left with more than sufficient, presumably for a decently comfortable life (46, 15,10–13).

Still, it is people's greed and insatiability that are responsible for thinking, wrongly, that fortitude in the face of bearable losses remarkable. What really is remarkable is the indifference to complete loss, as supposedly exemplified by Zeno after losing all his possessions in a shipwreck, when he praised fate for reducing his worldly goods to a coat and a Porch (48, 15,18–16,2).⁹

Galen then turns to his own case, saying that it was no harder for him to shrug off his own losses than it was to adopt the same attitude towards his (mis)treatment by the Imperial court, which, or so he says, he had never

8 Galen doesn't really think that the Cynics are praiseworthy exemplars of superhuman moral fortitude; rather the succeeding paragraphs suggest that their indifference is extreme, amounting to an unreasonable, undesirable, and unattainable, *apatheia*, of which more below. Elsewhere, he is acerbically hostile, at least to contemporary adherents of the school: *Pecc.Dig.* v 71–2, = 49,1–22 De Boer (1937) – Cynicism "is a quick route, by way of ignorance, to self-regard". However, he does commend Diogenes for his no-nonsense, Johnsonian refutation of philosophical arguments against motion (*Antecedent Causes* ix 116–17), and for relieving his lust by masturbating, rather than seeking out a prostitute (*Affected Parts* VIII 419). On these passages in *Ind.*, see Boudon-Millot et al., 2010, 124–30.

9 Cf. Plutarch, *Tranquillity of the Soul* 467d; the Porch is a reference to the Stoa itself (hence my capitalization of it); it is probably also intended to recall Cynicism, the porch standing in for Diogenes' kennel (the 'cloak' too may be metaphorical). Zeno was supposedly a pupil of Crates (DL 7.1–5); Diogenes retails several different versions of the shipwreck story (DL 7.5), one of which seems to make it merely metaphorical: see Boudon-Millot et al., 2010, 131.

aspired to be part of in any case (49–50a, 16,3–10).¹⁰ His experience of living in constant apprehension of being unjustly exiled to a desert island (or worse) as a result of slander and the capricious and tyrannical, not to say sociopathic, temperament of the emperor helped inure him against possible loss (54–6, 18,1–13). It was also responsible for his ‘magnanimity’ when loss, the extent of which he emphasizes in 50b (16,10–18), finally came. He attributes his fortitude not only to this experience of living in unsettled and unpredictable times (he recommends visualizing and preparing for the worst that might happen to you as a way of minimizing the impact of the blows of fate: 56, 18,13–16),¹¹ but also, characteristically, to his own character and upbringing, particularly to the influence and example of his revered father (57–62, 18,17–20,2).¹²

Here, as elsewhere, the legacy of Galen’s father is multifaceted. He is an exemplar not just of moral excellence, but also of the *engagé* life: “he never praised those who despise such [sc. disreputable] pleasures, and who are simply satisfied that their soul is never pained or distressed, proclaiming that the good was in its nature something bigger and better than this” (62, 19,19–20,2). Here too Galen parts company with some of his philosophical contemporaries, notably the Epicureans, but to some extent also the Stoics (not to mention the Cynics). An untroubled life, *ataraxia*, the common goal of a variety of Hellenistic schools, including (but only up to a point, as we shall see) the Pyrrhonists, is sometimes equated with a sort of quietistic withdrawal from the world. This is not something Galen, as a busy and committed professional, has any time for, any more than he has for the unrealizable (indeed inhumane) goal of *apatheia*, lack of affection (or feeling) of any kind.

10 The reference seems to be to some slight or slights he underwent during the reign of Commodus, about whom he is generally tight-lipped (although he opens up a little in what follows: 54–7, 18,1–20); elsewhere he emphasizes his reluctance to enter imperial service even under the benign Marcus: *Lib.Prop.* XIX 17–19, = 141,17–142,25 Boudon-Millot, as well as the dangers of being too publicly successful (*Praen.* XIV 599–605, = *CMG* V 8,1, 68,3–74,13 Nutton); Quintus, “the best doctor of his time”, was forced into exile from Rome on trumped-up charges by jealous inferior practitioners. See Boudon-Millot et al., 2010, 132–3. The title of a lost text he describes as containing autobiographical material is relevant: *On Slander: Lib.Prop.* XIX 46, = 170,8 Boudon-Millot.

11 On visualization of unpleasant possibilities as a means of drawing their sting, see *The Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato (PHP)* V 417–8, = 282,7–16 De Lacy, 1978, on Posidonius; Kaufman, D. H., ‘Galen on the therapy of distress and the limits of emotional therapy’, 2014, pp. 281–3, offers a good discussion of this aspect of Galen’s account, in the course of stressing the eclecticism of Galen’s general approach. He makes no mention of the sceptics, however.

12 Cf. *Aff.Dig.* V 40–3; for more on human insatiability and its malign effects, see ib. 45–8.

2 Ataraxia and Its Antecedents: the Atomists

Let us turn, then, to consider the ideal of *ataraxia*, freedom from disturbance, or tranquillity.¹³ As David Sedley ('The motivation of Greek skepticism', in Burnyeat, 1983, 9–29) notes, it is common property to the major Hellenistic schools, Stoic, Epicurean and Sceptic, even if rejected by Peripatetics and Platonists. As such it is supposed to be the appropriate way of understanding *eudaimonia*, happiness or human flourishing, which everybody (at least verbally: see Sextus, *PH* 3.175; *M* 11.35–6), following Aristotle, agrees to be the fundamental human goal, even if they differ as to what it consists in. It amounts, crudely, to the claim that we do best when we are undisturbed by anything, or at least anything which we are capable of controlling, including our emotional, affective reactions to things. The last two riders indicate just how differently the notion may be construed.

The ideal of the undisturbed life had a long philosophical history, stretching back at least to Democritus, who advocated *athambia*, freedom from wonderment: Fr. 68 B 4 DK;¹⁴ as well as the presumably equivalent *euthumia* (B 191).¹⁵ The term *ataraxia* itself was attributed to him, and while that is probably an anachronism,¹⁶ what matters is not the terminology but the attitude and ideal it indicates. In Democritus's case, this seems to amount to an avoidance of excessive states of emotion, indeed of sensations in general. His attitude to sex was at best equivocal, indeed tending towards the disapprovingly prudish, if not without a certain wit: male orgasm "is a mild form of madness – for a man rushes out of a man" (B 32), while the pleasure of sex is not really different from that derived from scratching oneself (B 127). Of the large number of fragments and testimonia attributed to Democritus concerning the good life, pleasure, duty, and so on, many are of disputed authenticity; but the overall picture is clear enough. For Democritus, excessive preoccupation with physical pleasure is self-defeating:

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- 13 The literature on the issue is large; see classically, on Timon Fr. 842 (68 Diels, 1901), Burnyeat, M. F., 'Tranquillity without a stop: Timon Frag. 68' *The Classical Quarterly*, 30.1, 1980, 86–93; Striker, G., 'Ataraxia: happiness as tranquillity', *The Monist* 73.1, Hellenistic Ethics, 1990, 97–110; and in general Hankinson, R. J., *The Sceptics*, 1995, chs. 17–18.
  - 14 Presocratic Fragments are referred to, standardly, by way of Diels/Kranz, 1952.
  - 15 Cf. Cicero, *Fin.* 5.87: "he calls the highest good *euthumia* and also frequently *athambia*, that is, a mind free from terror. But though what he says is all very fine, it is still not very polished, for he has little to say, and that not very articulately, about virtue".
  - 16 On the terminological issues, see Striker, G., 'Ataraxia: happiness as tranquillity', *The Monist* 73.1, Hellenistic Ethics, 1990, 97–110 (p. 97–8).

All those who get pleasure from their bellies, exceeding the measure in food, drink and sex, find the pleasures slight and short-lived ... But the pains are many. For they always desire the same things, and when they obtain what they desire, the pleasure swiftly goes, and they find nothing but a brief joy, and the desire for such pleasures again. (B 235)

Unrestrained desire brings misery, and also injustice, as men are driven to seek to acquire the goods of others, as well as ruining their own health (B 219–24); justice is something that should be welcomed for its own sake (B 62), and its “glory is confidence of judgement and imperturbability” (B 215).

None the less, properly construed as moderate contentment, pleasure is indeed the end: “Joy and the absence of joy are the boundaries of advantage and disadvantage” (B 4, 188); where people go wrong is in their understanding of what pleasure really is. Anticipating Epicurus’ distinction between static and kinetic pleasure, “He calls happiness contentment, well-being, harmony, orderliness and tranquillity. It is constituted by distinguishing and discriminating among pleasures” (Stobaeus, 2.7.31). A proper education should involve instilling, by habituation and persuasion, a desire for healthy moderation and avoidance of excess (B 178–83). The desired way of living “with as much contentment and as little distress as possible ... will come about if he does not take his pleasure in mortal things” (B 189), which is another way of exalting the claims of the soul over those of the body (cf. e.g. B 36–7). A recurring theme is satisfaction with what one has. “The man of sound judgement is not distressed by what he does not possess, but rejoices in what he does” (B 231). On the other hand ‘fools’ who always want more are never satisfied, and terrified of death: “Fools get no pleasure in the whole of their lives” (B 204; cf. 197–206); yet “with self-sufficiency in upbringing, the night is never long” (B 209).

I have outlined Democritus’s position at some length because, initial impressions aside, it is not one of unalloyed asceticism. Just as Epicurus was to think that pleasure was the end, and that pleasure was primarily physical (Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.41, = 21L Long and Sedley, 1987 [‘LS’]; below, 163), and that no pleasure was wrong *per se*, but only unchoiceworthy if it entailed countervailing pains (*Men.* 127–32, = 21 B LS), Democritus, for all his apparent distaste for the pursuit (the excessive pursuit) of some pleasures, does not simply advocate trying to get rid of all desire. Desire is a necessary part of human existence, but it requires careful moderation if it is not to be allowed to take over and ruin a life. Balance is everything, as the perennial truism has it; but properly interpreted it does not entail asceticism and the avoidance of all indulgence.¹⁷

17 Compare B 229: “thrift and hunger are good – but so too on occasion is extravagance; it is the mark of a good man to recognize the occasion”; and B 230: “A life without a feast

The key is self-mastery: “Men pray to the gods for health, not knowing that they have the power to attain it within themselves; lacking self-control, they act contrary to it, and sacrifice health to their desires” (B 234; cf. B 69–74). This is underlined by fragment 191:

Men gain contentment from moderation in joy and a measured life ...
Thus you must set your judgement on the possible and be satisfied with
what you have, giving little thought to those who are envied or admired ...
Consider those who are badly off, so that what you have ... may seem
great and enviable and so that you may no longer suffer in your soul by
desiring more ... If you hold fast to this judgement, you will live in greater
contentment and drive away those not inconsiderable plagues of life,
jealousy, envy and malice.

STOBAEUS, 3.1.210; cf. B 219–24 on the destructiveness of avarice; B 88 on the pains
of envy

Money itself is not itself evil, although acquiring it unjustly is “the worst of all things” (B 78); in fact, “when used with thought promotes generosity and charity” (B 282). Indeed, “If you do not desire a great deal, a little will seem a great deal to you; for a small appetite makes poverty as powerful as wealth” (B 284). Properly considered, “Poverty and wealth are names for want and satisfaction, so that one who is in want is not wealthy, while one who is not in want is not poor” (B 283). Resting content with “moderate goods”, and being aware of and prepared for life’s inevitable disappointments, is critical (B 285–6; cf. 3, 42, 46, 58, 287–92), as is the lack of distress, envy, at what one does not own (B 231, above). Finally, two remarks about courage: “A courageous man not only conquers his enemies, but also ... his pleasures” (B 214); and perhaps most significantly for our purposes: “Courage makes disasters small” (B 213). Many of these attitudes will find their echoes in Galen’s own approach to distress.

Epicurus adopts a very similar position, albeit one given a greater theoretical density by his explicit distinction between static and kinetic pleasures, and his elevation of the former at the expense of the latter: all real and enduring pleasure is the static enjoyment of the absence of pain (*Sovereign Maxims* [KD] 3, = 21C LS). Equally important is his distinction between desires which are natural and necessary (sc. for the preservation of one’s life), natural but unnecessary (fine dining, and certain kinds of sex, perhaps all sex),¹⁸ and ‘empty’ pleasures,

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is a long road without an inn” (cf. B 232–3); note also B 271: “if a woman is loved, then no blame attaches to lust”.

18 “You say that the movement of your flesh is too inclined to sex; but as long as you do not break the laws or disturb proper and established conventions or distress any of your

which are neither (such as the desire for crowns or honorific statues: sch. to *KD* 29, = 21I LS). The latter are empty because they rest on the mistaken opinion that not satisfying them will cause pain (*KD* 30, = 21E LS). His hedonism, then, is very much in the restrained, Democritean mould: "When we say that pleasure is the end, we do not mean the pleasures of the dissipated¹⁹ ... but freedom from pain in the body and disturbance in the soul" (*Letter to Menoeceus* 132, = 21B(5) LS). Even so, he says, "I cannot conceive of anything as good if I remove the pleasures perceived by taste, and sex, and listening to music, and the pleasant motions felt by the eyes through beautiful sights"; but this is because mental delight consists in remembering and anticipating them, rather than necessarily experiencing them (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3.41, = 21L(1) LS).

Still, mental pleasures outweigh physical ones, even though they are dependent upon them. The wise man will be comforted in painful circumstances, and his pain thereby alleviated, by reflecting on past pleasures and anticipating future ones; and this what it is to be untroubled. Epicurus himself allegedly exemplified this attitude on his death-bed: "Strangury and dysentery had set in, with all the extreme intensity of which they are capable; but the joy in my soul at the memory of our past discussions was enough to outweigh all of this" (DL 10.22, = 24D LS). Perhaps most importantly from our point of view, "*ataraxia* and *alupia* are static pleasures": DL 10.136, = 21R LS.

So Epicurus's hedonism is, paradoxically, ascetic – indeed, the central claim of his death-bed letter (which is of extremely doubtful authenticity) may seem as extravagantly implausible as the notorious contention that the wise man can remain untroubled even on the rack (DL 10.118). Even so, a weaker and hence more plausible version of the thought is readily constructible, consistently with another unimpeachably genuine feature of Epicureanism, namely the idea that error (typically regarding perceptual judgements, but the idea is readily extendible) involves *prosdoxazomena*, unfounded additional beliefs (this term will become important later on: §5). Physical pain may well in certain cases, such as Epicurus's death, be unavoidable; but it can be mitigated by cultivating certain mental attitudes, and made worse by other suppositions, paradigmatically the idea that death is in itself something to be feared.²⁰ How

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neighbours or ravage your body or squander the necessities of life, act in any way you like. But it is impossible not to be constricted by any of these. For sex is never advantageous, and one should be pleased if it does no harm". *Vatican Sayings* [VS] 51, = 21 G LS.

19 Among which Epicurus singles out 'the enjoyment of women, small boys, and fish'.

20 Fear of death is, for Epicureans, the most pernicious and destructive of all irrational fears; the centrality of the attempt to eradicate it is exemplified by the famous slogan "Death is nothing to us": *Letter to Menoeceus* [Men.] 124, = 24A(1)–(4) LS; cf. Lucretius 3.830 ff. (= 24E LS).

plausible that might be is another (still much-controverted)²¹ issue; but however that may be, the Epicurean prescription does not amount to recommending complete freedom from affective states, or *apatheia*. Painful and damaging mental conditions can be mitigated, but not eradicated. Even so, freedom from distress, *alupia*, is at least something to be aimed at, and secured insofar as that is possible; and is clearly related, as DL 10.136 shows, to the fundamental goal of tranquillity itself.

3 Ataraxia and Its Antecedents: Pyrrho and the Sceptics

There are important points of contact between atomism and scepticism, both genetic and (to some extent) doctrinal²² (insofar as it makes sense to speak of sceptical 'doctrine': *PH* 1.13–17; cf. 21–4).²³ Anaxarchus, a pupil of the atomist Metrodorus, is a transitional figure, who anticipates some standard sceptical contentions regarding the veridicality of perception.²⁴ More important from our point of view is the following: "Anaxarchus was called *ho eudaimonikos* (the happy one) because of the *apatheia* and contentment of his life; he was able to induce moderation in the easiest possible way" (DL 9.60, = 1E LS). His *apatheia*, however, was apparently of a superhuman nature; while being beaten to death in a large mortar at the behest of an enraged tyrant, he is said to have remarked: "You may pound the envelope containing Anaxarchus, but not Anaxarchus himself" (DL 9.58). Such heroic *apatheia* anticipates rather the attitude later attributed to the Stoics, and implicitly characterized by Galen as being beyond the capacity of mere humankind. Another, no doubt equally apocryphal, story links him directly with Pyrrho, the eponymous founder of the sceptical way (who was said to have been his pupil: DL 9.61, = 1A(1) LS). One day, as philosophers will, Pyrrho stumbled abstractedly into a dungheap, and Anaxarchus passed by without helping him out; while others present

21 For an influential modern discussion, see Nagel, T., 'Death', *Nous* 4.1, 1970, 73–80; repr. in Nagel, 1979, *Mortal Questions*, Cambridge, CUP, 1979, 1–10.

22 The collection of individual sceptical essays against the practitioners of the various liberal arts (*M* 1–6) contains some arguments explicitly attributed to the Epicureans, against the arts' utility; see Hankinson, R. J., *The Sceptics*, 1995, ch 15; Barnes, J., 'Scepticism and the arts', in R.J.Hankinson (ed.), *Method, Medicine and Metaphysics: Apeiron* 21.2, Supp. Vol. 19 (Edmonton, Alberta: Academic Printing and Publishing), 1988, 53–77.

23 On this issue, see Hankinson, R. J., *The Sceptics*, 1995, ch 17.

24 On Anaxarchus's epistemology, see now Burnyeat, "All the world's a stage-painting": scenery, optics, and Greek epistemology', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 52, 2017, 33–7.

condemned him for failing to render assistance, Pyrrho himself praised him for his indifference, *adiaphoria* (DL 9.63).

As for Pyrrho himself, Timon, his satirical amanuensis, made him into a paradigm of *ataraxia* (2B–D LS): “This, Pyrrho, my heart yearns to hear: how can you, human though you are, act most easily and calmly, never taking thought and consistently undisturbed (*atarachos*)?” (DL 9.65, = Fr 841, = 2D LD). He is said to have demonstrated his *adiaphoria* by washing pigs (however that was supposed to work: see below, §7), and to have endured surgery “without so much as a frown” (DL 9.66). In the most important testimonium to his philosophical ‘position’, albeit one that survives only at fourth hand and is multiply controversial, Timon (according to Aristocles, *ap* Eusebius 18,18,1–5, = 1F LS) says that Pyrrho held that being ‘unopinionated’, ‘uncommitted’, and ‘unswayed’ (*adoxastoi*, *aklineis*, *akradantoi*) leads first to *aphasia*,²⁵ and thence to *ataraxia*. Even so, Pyrrho’s version of *ataraxia* strays close to a more severe *apatheia*; and Cicero, pairing Pyrrho with the extreme Stoic Aristo, as he often does (cf. 2G–H LS), explicitly describes it as such (*Academica*, 2.130, = 2F LS; cf. *Fin.* 3.11–12), in contrast with Aristo’s mere *adiaphoria*.²⁶

It is worth emphasizing at this point that *apatheia* comes in different forms, partly corresponding to the varying semantic range of the root-term *pathos*. Galen himself takes care to distinguish the latter’s various senses in order to guard against potential fallacies of ambiguity, and to clarify its relation with the various meanings of *energeia* (PHP V 506–13, = 360,15–366,30 De Lacy). Thus a *pathos* may simply be something that happens to something (as opposed to something it does); but it may also be an abnormal affection of something, something in some sense contrary to its nature. In fact:

In this way both anger and desire will be called both *pathê* and *energeiai*; for since they are certain immoderate and unnatural motions of the soul’s intrinsic powers, they are *energeiai* of those powers, because the powers have their motions from themselves; but because they are *immoderate* motions, they are *pathê*. And these motions of the whole soul of the two powers that are themselves set in motion are contrary to nature. This is

25 Not literally speechlessness, but the refusal to make dogmatic assertions, positive or negative; the whole fragment is the subject of much dispute, not least as to the appropriate reading of the Greek; see Hankinson, R. J., *The Sceptics*, 1995, 59–64.

26 Here not in the sense of being indifferent to one’s circumstances, but rather in supposing that all the things that Stoics considered neither actually good (virtue) nor actually bad (vice), such as health, were not merely technically ‘indifferent’, but not even the object of rational preference (or dispreference), as the orthodox view, rather paradoxically, held: see 58 A–J LS, esp. (for Aristo) F, G and I.

so for the irrational powers because of their lack of measure, and for the whole soul because we say that it is in accordance with nature for our life to be governed by the rational part, not by the motions of the affective (*pathêtikos*) part.

PHP V 511–12, = 364,31–366,4 De Lacy

All of this is, obviously enough, Platonic in inspiration (it immediately follows a discussion of the charioteer image of the *Phaedrus*), and as such is part and parcel of Galen's anti-Chrysippean project of a large part of *PHP* (effectively the bulk of Books II–VI). This need concern us only insofar as it is relevant to Galen's understanding of the proper roles of emotion and desire in the well-ordered human soul (and consequently the well-managed human life). Emotions and desires can get out of hand, and usurp the properly-governing role of reason; and they are intrinsically non-rational. But for all that, if properly constrained by reason, they need not render the animal itself irrational (for Galen's detailed, if polemical, examination of the senses of *alogos*, see *PHP* V 370–2, 383–5, = 242,12–244,9, 252,20–254,12 De Lacy). Indeed, so constrained, they are essential components of the overall performance of the complex economy of parts and functions that is the human soul.

Here Galen's account leans towards the Peripatetic; it is central to the Aristotelian tradition that anger (for example), provided that it meets the appropriate criteria of appropriateness, is not only unavoidable: it is actually a good thing (*NE* 4.5, 1125b27–26b10, esp. 1125b31–26a2). It is not clear whether Galen would actually endorse this position – certainly he wants to restrict the terms for anger (*orgê*, etc.) to the excessive, blameworthy (indeed from his perspective pathological: *Aff.Dig.* v 7–8) conditions. Still, he praises moderation, while admitting that “No-one is free from the *pathê* or errors, not even the person with best natural endowments, brought up to the best of practices. Always there will be some failures, especially when one is young” (*Aff.Dig.* v 14). Becoming as good as humanly possible, which in this context means ridding oneself as far as is possible of the tendency of being swayed by irrational emotions, is a lifelong project (14–16). After much practice, “one may eventually reach the goal of getting only slightly angry even over the greatest matters” (17), which implies that the goal is that of eliminating all angry impulses, but only as far as is humanly possible. This is backed up in what follows (17–27): one must be constantly aware of the ugliness and bestiality of anger indulged, and keep one's eyes constantly on the prize of freedom from enslavement to unreason: “If you act in this manner, you may succeed in taming and softening the irrational power of the spirited part of your soul” (26–7). The Platonic language is deliberate and unmistakable:

Is not anger a sickness of the soul? Or do you deny the wisdom of the ancients who gave the name of “affections of the soul” to the following five: distress, rage, anger, desire and fear? The following seems to me to be the best course of action for one who wants to rid himself as far as possible of these affections.

Aff.Dig. V 24, = 17,7–12 De Boer

Desire figures here simply among the irrational affections. Galen thus elides the Platonic distinction between the spirited and the desiderative (although later he re-introduces it: 27–34); he is operating, at least provisionally, with a straightforward distinction between the rational and the non-rational, which again might be owed to Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* [NE] 1.13, 1102a16–1103a10), although Aristotle too subdivides the irrational part of the soul.

So where does this leave Galen's confrontation with Stoicism? That is an extremely complex question, and one whose details lie beyond the remit of this study; but ultimately, perhaps, there may be less to the dispute than initially meets the eye. Galen does indeed think that the outright elimination of the *pathê*, even the destructive ones, is not something which is humanly possible; but then Stoic total *apatheia* is something only achievable by the sage, and notoriously they were in extremely short supply. Quite a lot also turns on the precise nature of the Stoics' *eupatheiai*, the desirable counterparts of (at least some) of the normal human affections (DL 7.115, = 65F LS): joy (*chara*), corresponding to pleasure, in being “a well-reasoned swelling”, caution (*eulabeia*: “a well-reasoned contraction”) to fear, and wish (*boulêsis*) to desire. There is no eupathetic counterpart to *lupê*, perhaps because it is (or is at least consequent upon) a false judgement concerning a present evil, and there can be no corresponding true judgement for the sage, since for the Stoics true happiness is always within one's grasp. So while the Stoic Sage may be no more than an ideal, this is exactly the sort of high-minded fantasy which Galen has no time for.

4 Galen and Scepticism

So let us turn at last to Scepticism. In a well-known passage, Galen tells us that, as a young student of logic, he was so disheartened with the apparently undecidable and interminable (as well as practically useless) disputes among the representatives of the schools, that he might have succumbed to a Pyrrhonian despair concerning the attainability of truth, had he not reflected on the unassailable certainty of mathematical demonstration (*Lib.Prop.* XIX 39–40, = 164,2–165,2 Boudon-Millot). He often makes little distinction between the Pyrrhonian and Academic forms of skepticism in the course of his polemics,

lumping them both together as equally hopeless. Both schools, for example, reject the possibility of distinguishing between veridical perception and delusion:

There are some things which we think we see, hear, or in general perceive, such as in dreams or delusions, while there are other things which we not only think we see, or in general perceive, but actually do so. In the case of the second class everybody, other than the Academics and Pyrrhonists, thinks that they have arrived at secure knowledge, while they consider everything of which the soul produces images while asleep or delirious to be false.

The Best Method of Teach. (Opt.Doct.) I 42, = 94,14–18 Barigazzi, 1991

And, in the case of ethical argument,

Academics and Pyrrhonists, who do not accept that we have scientific demonstration of the matters at issue, believe that any assent is hasty, and may also be false.

Pecc.Dig. v 60, = 42,16–18 De Boer

Of course, it is not just in these matters where they (perhaps reasonably) reject the possibility of *apodeixis epistêmonikê*; they do so quite generally. But elsewhere Galen distinguishes between the sceptical schools, and while frequently hostile to what he takes to be Academic excesses (such as Carneades' alleged rejection of the Euclidian equality axiom (cn 1): *Opt.Doct.* I 45, = 96,20–98,9 Barigazzi),²⁷ none the less he believes that the dispute between Academics and others regarding epistemological justification is largely verbal:

27 Galen is sarcastically dismissive of this; reports of this Carneadean 'refutation' as well as "of many others which are evidently and persuasively valid" are attributed to 'his own pupils', pre-eminent among whom was his amanuensis Clitomachus (Carneades, in good Socratic – and subsequently sceptic – tradition left nothing in writing himself). This was almost certainly discussed in Galen's lost *Clitomachus and his Refutations of Demonstration* (*Lib.Prop.* xix 44, = 168,8–9 Boudon-Millot). This seems the most likely translation of the title; Boudon-Millot renders it 'Sur Clitomaque et ses solutions de la démonstration', which hints at a general 'proof against proof', and could be right; Morison (2008, 67) translates 'On Clitomachus and his solutions to demonstrations', which would require a (very minor) emendation, and suggests a more piecemeal approach. Certainly the denial of the axiomatic status of cn. 1 hints at a general argument against the possibility of discovering unimpeachable axioms, freestanding, certain and necessarily-true fundamental premises; and if there are no such things (or we can't recognize them) then there are no demonstrations (at least none that we can recognize).

Discrimination between these things²⁸ is reduced to an impression (*phantasia*) which, as the philosophers from the New Academy say, is not only 'persuasive' (*pithanê*), but 'tested' (*periôdeumenê*) and 'unshaken' (*aperispastos*); or which as Chrysippus and his followers put it is apprehensive (*katalêptikê*); or as all men believe in common, it is reduced to evident (*enargês*) perception (*aisthêsis*) and intellection (*noêsis*). These expressions are thought to differ in meaning from one another, but if one examines them more carefully they have the same import; just as, indeed, when someone says that they begin from common notions (*koinai ennoiai*), and sets them up as the primary criterion of all things which is trustworthy in itself (*ex heautou piston*). That the first criterion must be trustworthy without proof is admitted by everyone, although not everyone supposes that it must be natural and common to all men.

PHP V 778, = 586,16–25 De Lacy

I have assessed the plausibility of this claim elsewhere.²⁹ I think there is something to it; but that need not detain us. What matters is that Galen never shows any such respect, grudging as it might be, to Pyrrhonists, at least when they are considered on their own. Mostly they simply serve as suitable targets for insult. The following is typical:

If you are looking for logical demonstrations in the area of perceptible fact, perhaps you would like to embark on an investigation of snow. Should we think it white (following the way it appears to all men), or not white (following the 'proof' of Anaxagoras)?³⁰ We could make similar inquiries on the subject of pitch, ravens, or indeed anything else ... Swans should not said to be white without first being subjected to logical investigation ... At this point, we may realize we are faced with a Pyrrhonian *aporia*; or rather with a complete load of bollocks.

Mixtures I 589, = 50,25–51,10 Helmreich, 1904; trans. after – quite a long way after – Singer, 1997

Aporia is indeed a Pyrrhonian technical term (drawn ultimately of course from Plato's Socrates); an *impasse* from which there is no exit, the result of

28 I.e. between the plausible but false and the true, and cases where plausible and implausible are very similar and hard to distinguish: *PHP* V 777–8, = 586,9–16 De Lacy.

29 Hankinson, R. J., 'A purely verbal dispute? Galen on Stoic and Academic epistemology', in A.-J. Voelke (ed.) *Le Stoïcisme: Revue internationale de philosophie* 45.3, 1992, 267–300.

30 Reported at *PH* 1.33 (= 59 A 97): "snow is frozen water and water is black; so snow is black" (or perhaps rather 'dark'); cf. Cicero, *Acad.* 2.100.

endemic, undecidable dispute: *PH* 1.26, 165. For Galen, while there are such hopeless cases (in the useless parts of logical theory, but also in 'speculative philosophy': issues such as the eternity of the world, the essence of the divine or of the soul, the existence of an extra-mundane void),³¹ resolution of them is of no practical importance. In the practical cases, we have 'natural criteria' (senses and reason),³² by the practice and refinement of which we can come to legitimate and grounded understanding of the world and its functioning. It is simply a gross, indeed jejune, error to look for demonstration in matters of perceptual clarity (and intellectual clarity as well, such as in the case of the axioms of equality).

Galen's animus against what he takes to be pointless Pyrrhonian resistance to the obvious is particularly apparent in his dismissive language; on numerous occasions he refers to *agroikoi Pyrrhōneioi*, peasant Pyrrhonists, for instance at *Differences of Pulses* VIII 711; *Blood in the Arteries* IV 727; and *Distinctions of Pulses* (*Dig.Puls.*) VIII 780–3. In the latter passage, Galen allows that you can, if you are so inclined, adopt an extreme phenomenalist language. Instead of saying things like "excessive rain caused the river to rise in flood and wash away the bridge", you may talk of 'the apparent rain', 'the seeming river', 'the ostensible flood'. and so on; but this doesn't (or shouldn't) make any practical difference whatsoever to the way you behave. Any individual of any degree of sanity will still take rapid and unseceptical evasive action.³³ This is pointedly directed towards Pyrrhonists like Sextus, who insists that the Pyrrhonian is perfectly capable of living (indeed of practising an art), by following the 'criterion' of the appearances (*PH* 1.21–4) It is simply idle and disingenuous, Galen thinks, not to take evident perceptual facts as being true.³⁴ When he asks the Peripatetic Alexander of Damascus to adjudicate his demonstration of the nerves responsible for vocalization by vivisectional experiments on pigs and goats, and

31 See e.g. *PHP* V 766, 779–82, = 576,27–578,2, 588,7–590,11 de Lacy; *Prop.Plac* 2, 56,12–24; 3, 58,22–60,6 Nutton; *Pecc.Dig.* V 67, = 52,13–18 Marquardt; see Hankinson, 'Epistemology', in Hankinson ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, 2008, 178–80; *eiusd.* 'Philosophy of nature', in Hankinson ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, 2008, 233–6.

32 On the natural criteria, see *Opt.Doct.* I 48–9, = 102,10–104,2 Barigazzi. 1991.

33 On this passage, see Hankinson, R.J., 'A purely verbal dispute? Galen on Stoic and Academic epistemology', in A.-J.Voelke (ed.) *Le Stoïcisme: Revue internationale de philosophie* 45.3, 1992, 267–300. Relevant here are the ancient characterizations of Pyrrho as being so indifferent to possible physical suffering that his associates had to prevent him from walking over cliffs and in front of oncoming traffic, as we'll as into dungheaps; but they are canards, as Aenesidemus said (*DL* 9.62, = 1A LS).

34 He is following a tradition here: see Hankinson, 1997; on his refutation of scepticism, Hankinson, 'Epistemology', in Hankinson ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, 2008, 162–5; see also *SMT* XI 462.

Alexander inquires whether we are supposed to rely on the evidence of our senses, Galen takes characteristic umbrage and walks out, saying that there is no point continuing the discussion if we are to be reduced to such a peasant Pyrrhonism as to fail to credit the clear evidence of the senses (*Prognosis* XIV 626–8, = 96,4–98,8 Nutton, 1979).

So Galen is unequivocally hostile to Pyrrhonian scepticism, and not much friendlier to the Academic variety. At first sight, then, it might seem absurdly quixotic to suggest any serious point of contact between them.

5 Tranquillity and Moderation in Affection

Sceptics – like many other Hellenistic philosophers – aimed (in a sense) at *ataraxia*. Pyrrho, allegedly, managed it in a pretty heroic fashion. However, his later eponymous followers moderated (in a very real sense) this position:

We do not think that the sceptic is in every respect untroubled (*aochlêtos*); rather he is distressed by what is forced upon him, for we concede that he is sometimes cold and thirsty, and is affected by things of this sort. But whereas in these cases ordinary people are afflicted by two conditions, namely by the affections themselves and by the belief that these conditions are by nature evil, the sceptic, by doing away with the additional belief (*prosdoxazomenon*) that each of these things is evil in its actual nature, gets off more moderately in these cases as well. For this reason, then, we say that tranquillity (*ataraxia*) is the end in matters of opinion, and moderation in affection (*metriopatheia*) in the case of things forced upon us.

SEXTUS, *PH* 1 29–30

The “things forced upon us” are the unavoidable sources of distress that any human life entails, the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. This represents an obvious, and self-conscious, retreat from the pretence of heroic detachment from the travails of the physical which we have seen characterizing a variety of otherwise quite distinct earlier philosophies. Towards the end of *Outlines*, Sextus sums up his sceptical attitude to ethics. The sceptic

Suspends judgement as to the existence of anything good or bad by nature, or generally which should or should not be done, and in this way distances himself from dogmatic precipitancy and follows the dictates of ordinary life (*hê biôtikê têrêsis*). Because of this he remains unaffected

(*apathês*) in matters of opinion, while in the case of things forced upon him his affections are moderate (*metriopathei*). Being human, he is affected perceptibly (*aisthêtikôs paschei*); but since he does not also believe in addition (*prosdoxazôn*) that what he is affected by is bad by nature, his affections are moderate. For the additional belief that something is actually bad is worse than the suffering itself, just as sometimes those undergoing surgery or something similar put up with it, while those observing it faint away because of their belief that what is happening is appalling.

PH 3.235–6

That latter claim has not commanded universal assent, at least in the stark form in which it is put here; but there is surely something to it. My extreme cowardice makes the anticipation of a visit to the dentist deeply distressing (perhaps not actually as distressing as the visit itself, but at the very least a supplementary source of pain); to the extent I could rid myself of that, no doubt my life would be more tranquil, and as such preferable. But more important is the nature of the “things forced upon” us. There are certain things we can’t avoid experiencing, and some of those experiences are unpleasant, some of them extremely so. Philosophy, as Shakespeare’s Leonato so rightly said in my epigraph, can’t do anything about that. In other words, in Sextus’s mature scepticism, the pretence of heroic philosophical indifference has been explicitly abandoned. The example of the surgical operation is pointed, given that Pyrrho supposedly underwent surgery with total equanimity (DL 9.66). But as Sextus says at the end of his programmatic prologue, “We do not think that the sceptic is in every way untroubled; we do say he is troubled by what is forced upon him; for we allow that he is sometimes cold and thirsty and is affected by things of that sort” (*PH* 1.29).

Sextus expands on what he has in mind in his longer treatment of ethics in *M* 11. He again makes the distinction between affections induced by belief, and those forced by necessity. The general injunction to total suspension of judgement only applies to matters of judgement: “In the case of sensory and non-rational judgements, one yields” (148); you can’t reason your way out of being troubled by hunger and thirst (149). But for all that, the sceptic is better able to bear distress in presence of the inevitable (150). The unavoidable pains are “not excessively disturbing”; serious pain is not long-lasting (153–5); the *tarachê* which disturbs the sceptic is moderate and not so fearful (155). We are not responsible for unavoidable pains: nature is (156–7). But the additional belief that this is bad by nature, or in itself, is up to us and is the cause of further suffering. Someone who suspends judgement about all things dependent on belief reaps the fullest well-being, and when disturbed by involuntary and

non-rational movements, he is affected only moderately (*metriopathôs*); we are not sprung from oak and rock, after all (158–61).³⁵

The invocation – and recommendation – of *metriopathea* has something of a history. It is attributed to the early Platonist Crantor, where the context seems to be that of putting up with physical ailments. According to Chrysippus, the *theôrêtikos* will be *apathês*, while the *spoudaios* will be *metriopathês*. Philo of Alexandria uses the term in the context of Moses and Aaron. There are five occurrences in Plutarch, two of them in the *Consolation to Apollonius* 102cd, where Plutarch stresses that it is normal to feel distress at the death of a son; in fact not to do so would be harsh and callous, a case of fundamentally inhuman *apatheia*: for “*metriopathea* of grief is not to be censured”.³⁶ Congruently, Alcinous (*Handbook* 30.5) contends that it is not *metriopathês* to feel no grief at all at the death of, or at violence done towards, one’s parents, but rather *apathês*, which is clearly here an unreasonable response.³⁷ *Metriopathea* is also contrasted with *apatheia* in Clement; while Diogenes says that for Aristotle the wise man not *apathês* but *metriopathês* (DL 5.31); and this is surely right (for Aristotle). Finally Iamblichus, in his *Life of Pythagoras* 27.131, says that his hero cultivated *metriopathea*. The general tendency among such sources is unmistakable. Not all experience of *pathê*, and specifically of distress, should be avoided, even if such avoidance were humanly possible, which it isn’t.

6 Galen and *Metriopathea*

Galen himself never deploys the actual terminology of *metriopathea*; but he is, for all that, clearly in the camp of the moderately affected:

35 The Epicurean echoes in all of this are unmistakable: cf. *KD* 4, 33, 59 (= 21C, G LS), *Men.* 133 (= 20A LS).

36 See also *adv Col.* 1119c, where Plutarch attacks Stilpo, a man known among other things and in other contexts for *metriopathea*. In *Restraining Anger* 458c, he recalls the advice given to Philip of Macedon when attacking Olynthus not to exact too harsh a retribution from the city, since restraint is the way of mildness, pity and *metriopathea*. These latter cases are not of course technical; indeed they recall several similar usages in Appian concerning Philip’s more famous son. But they are significant in the general context of the disapproval of actions performed in the grip of rage, and the corresponding exaltation of the contrasting mildness of disposition.

37 See Dillon, J. M., *Alcinous. The Handbook of Platonism*, 1993, 188; *eiusd.*, ‘*Metriopathea* and *apatheia*: some reflections on a controversy in later Greek ethics’, in J. Anton ad A. Preus (eds.) *Essays in Ancient Philosophy*, New York, 1983.

Since you say you have never seen me distressed, you may possibly imagine that I am going to make the same pronouncement as some of the philosophers who hold that the sage will never suffer distress.

IND. 70, 21,13–17 BJP

But of course he isn't, at least in his own case. His own restraint is not superhuman. Moreover, the implication is pretty clearly that such moral heroism is a chimerical fantasy:

I cannot say if there is anyone so wise that he is entirely free of affections; but I have a precise knowledge of the degree to which I am such. I do not care about the loss of possessions, as long as I am not deprived of all of them and sent to a desert island, or of bodily pain, without quite making light of being placed in the bull of Phalaris. What will distress me is the ruination of my homeland, or a friend being punished by a tyrant, and other similar things ... So since nothing like this has happened to me until now, you thus have never seen me distressed (71–2, 21,17–22,7).

Not for him the Stoic sagely ideal, even if it is merely an ideal, or Epicurus' claim that the wise man will be happy even on the rack, even while screaming and groaning (DL 10.118, = 22Q(4) LS). Equally, he will not actually welcome material disaster, unlike Stoics such as Musonius (cf. the story of Zeno: above, §1). He prays for health, mental and physical, while trying to prepare himself to meet disaster with moderation. He himself is not superhuman: he could not maintain his equanimity in the face of total destitution, or in the case of pain severe enough to render conversations with friends an impossibility (73–6, 22,7–23,1).³⁸

Finally, it is worth quoting the following:

If someone regards all of these things as of little value, why should he worry about them or be worried by them? ... Someone who supposes that he has been deprived of something big must always be distressed and

38 This looks like another dig at the Epicureans, for whom the pleasures of friendship were the primary good: *vs* 23, 28, 34, 39, 62, 66, 58, 66, 78 (= 22D, F LS); *KD* 27–8 (= 22D LS); cf. 22G, H, O, Q LS. Epicurus allegedly claimed in his last letter that it was recollection of philosophical conversations that assuaged his agony; Galen pointedly retorts that too much agony makes such things impossible. But see also Kaufman, D. H., 'Galen on the therapy of distress and the limits of emotional therapy', 2014, pp. 284–6, esp. n 33, who stresses the non-heroic aspects of the Epicurean attitude which would appeal to Galen.

fret, unlike the person who thinks them small and continues to despise them. (65–6, 20, 17–22)

That is the summation of Galen's *metriopatheia*. Let us finally see how congruent it is with Sextus's.

7 Galen and Pyrrhonism: Comparisons and Conclusions

We may begin with Pyrrho himself. Largely legendary though his legacy no doubt is, the legends are themselves instructive insofar as they illustrate the lessons which later reporters, friendly as well as hostile, sought to derive from his example:

They say he showed his indifference by washing a pig. Once he got enraged on his sister's behalf (her name was Philista), and he told the man who chided him for it that it was not over a weak woman that one should display indifference. When a dog rushed at him and terrified him, he responded to one who censured him for it that it was not easy entirely to strip oneself of one's humanity (*ekdunai ton anthrôpon*); but one could struggle against one's circumstances, at first by actions, and if they failed, by reason.

DL 9. 66, = 1C LS [part]

So it seems that Pyrrho was not entirely successful in cultivating the sort of indifference manifested by his pig-laundering. Some things, apparently, demand an emotive response; and some things provoke it willy-nilly. The phrase *ekdunai ton anthrôpon* is striking, since it vividly expresses what is apparently an ideal, and yet in a sense a self-stultifying one, and one which someone of Galen's stripe would reject even as an ideal, although the Stoics (and perhaps also the Epicureans) would not.

The Sextan sceptic is in a similar case. Not believing pain to be really bad, he will suffer less than the normal person who does; but he will still suffer. Equally, Galen thinks that some distress is unavoidable; and he too places a comparable (albeit differently oriented) emphasis upon the importance of not thinking that certain apparent goods really are goods.

Galen is a busy, engaged man; and so too, albeit presumably less frenetically so, is the Sextan sceptic. Properly understood, scepticism does not induce *apraxia*, since the sceptic is free to follow the 'criterion' of the *phainomena* (PH 1.22):

We follow a sort of doctrine (*logos*) which, in accordance with what appears, directs us to live in accordance with our inherited customs and laws and ways of life, and our own *pathê*.

PH 1.17

Sceptics do not do away with appearances, in spite of what their opponents allege. They are swayed, albeit involuntarily, by the “affective impression (*phantasia pathêtikê*)” (19), even if on occasion they will argue against appearances as a counterweight to ‘dogmatic precipitancy’ (20):

Adhering to the *phainomena*, we live in accordance with the dictates of ordinary life (*hê biôtikê têtêsis*: cf. 3.235, quoted above), but without opinion, since we cannot remain wholly inactive. And the dictates of ordinary life are apparently four in number, the direction of nature; the constraint of the *pathê*, as when hunger drives us to food and thirst to drink; the tradition of the customs and laws; ... and the instruction of the arts (*technai*).

PH 1.23–4

That last matters. Sextus, after all, was, like Galen, a doctor; a man of action, and a benefactor of humanity (*philanthrôpos*: PH 3.279–80). And Galen's views on these issues are closer in some respects to Sextan Pyrrhonism than he might have been willing to allow. But then Sextan Pyrrhonism is not ‘rustic’;³⁹ and Galen could easily have thought that in many important respects it was simply a version of the sensible, non-heroic view of life,⁴⁰ albeit one couched in a pointlessly phenomenalist language (*Dig.Puls.* VIII 780–3; above, §4), although he would no doubt also have accused them of denying the appearances, precisely because it does appear that pain, for example, is actually bad. Galen often elides the differences between the contemporary representatives of the schools he attacks, and earlier, and perhaps caricatured, versions of their views

39 At least I don't think so; but the issue is controversial. For a forceful expression of the view that, Sextus's own protestations notwithstanding, it must be, see Barnes, J., ‘Sextan scepticism’ in D. Scott (ed.) (2007) *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford: OUP), 2007, 322–34 (he derived his own term ‘rustic’ from Galen's ‘*agroikos*’). Compare his earlier views of 1982 and 1988; and those of Frede, M. (‘Des skeptikers Meinungen’, *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* 15/16, 1979, 102–129), and Burnyeat, M. ‘Can the sceptic live his scepticism?’, in J. Barnes, M. F. Burnyeat, and M. Schofield (eds.) *Doubt and Dogmatism* (Oxford: OUP), 1980, 20–53; all are collected in Burnyeat and Frede 1997.

40 Cf. his assimilation of Academic to Stoic – and indeed his own – epistemology: see Hankinson, R. J., ‘A purely verbal dispute? Galen on Stoic and Academic epistemology’, in A.-J. Voelke (ed.) *Le Stoïcisme: Revue internationale de philosophie* 45.3, 1992, 267–300.

(this is clearly the case in regard to his treatment of Methodism); and in so doing, he is no more than a representative (admittedly a flamboyant one) of the traductive tendencies of his time.

One might still object that the connection I have sketched between Galen and his sceptical rivals is a tenuous one. I have stressed the sceptical emphasis on the unavoidability of the *pathê*; but these *pathê* are apparently physical pains, rather than excessive emotional states (such as anger and grief). One minimizes their unpleasant reality not by cultivating an indifference to them, but by ridding oneself of the additional painful belief that such things are really, essentially, bad. By contrast, Galen's cognitive behavioural approach stresses the importance of reflecting on the intrinsic hideousness of the manifestations of rage, as well as its self-defeating consequences, as a means of gradually curing oneself of an addiction to it. *Metriopatheia* in this sense (again it should be stressed that Galen himself does not employ the term) is something to be cultivated, rather than simply the best one may humanly hope for.

All of these differences (and some others) are genuine. But for all that, particularly in the case of distress, *lupê*, and the appropriate response to loss of any kind, the convergences of Galen's programme and that of the Pyrrhonists are clear. Some of the prescriptions are certainly different – there appears to be no sceptical counterpart to the injunction to visualize bad possible outcomes in order to immunize yourself (partially at least) against their eventuality, and by extension against less severe setbacks. Indeed there are obvious and well-known problems with the idea of sceptics issuing injunctions of any kind. But the appeal to persuasion certainly strikes a chord; scepticism is a therapy founded centrally on the practice of argument. What goes wrong in both cases involves false (or at least toxic) beliefs, beliefs which we would be much better off without, even though ridding ourselves of them (or at least minimizing them) will not (and perhaps for Galen at least should not) involve the construction of the wholly unaffected individual as some sort of ideal, even as one which is practically unattainable, as most Stoics believed it to be. Neither for Galen nor the sceptics are emotions simply reducible to beliefs, and mistaken ones at that; they are the compulsions of a fundamentally non-rational, reactive part of the soul. Even if we are essentially rational animals, there is still a humanity there is no point in trying to strip ourselves of.⁴¹

⁴¹ This is a very considerably altered, written version of a talk I gave at the Warwick conference splendidly organized by Caroline Petit, on July 1st, 2014. I am grateful to the participants, many of whom were old friends, and some of whom have since become so, for their engagement with my ideas, both during the session and less formally afterwards.

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