

PART 1

Περὶ Ἀλυπίας *and Galen's Œuvre*





## Death, Posterity and the Vulnerable Self: Galen's *Περὶ Ἀλυπίας* in the Context of His Late Writings

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The form and contents of Galen's newly recovered letter *περὶ ἀλυπίας* have come under intense scrutiny, especially since 2010, when both critical editions by Kotzia/Soutiroudis and Boudon-Millot/Jouanna respectively were published. Galen's philosophical mindset, in particular, has attracted considerable interest, since he addresses a number of issues around pain and grief that have concerned philosophers before and after him. Similarly, the additional clues given away by Galen about his own life, possessions and opinions have overall been carefully studied, although some degree of controversy affects the interpretation of the text itself. Most specialists of Galen have come to grips with the meaning of the letter in the context of the rest of his production. But seldom has the text been subject to rhetorical analysis, beyond identifying its main logical articulations and unfolding its overall argument. Galen's words, however, lend themselves quite well to a rhetorical reading: the notion of *μεγαλοψυχία* ('magnanimity'), prominent in the text,<sup>1</sup> is as typical of a good rhetor's *ēthos* as of a philosopher's. In this chapter, I intend to explore what the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* brings us in terms of self-characterization by Galen at this point in life. In other words, what does the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* add to, or transform, in terms of our understanding of Galen's *ēthos*? Is this just a typical old man stance about wisdom and knowledge, or is there more? How does it supplement Galen's other extant texts about himself, especially among the works of his later life?

To answer this question, I will include some thoughts on the evidence about Galen's last few years (a relatively neglected topic) and about the role of old age in his texts, both as a fact and as a literary construct. Indeed, with Galen issues of biography and autobiography and self-portrayal are closely intertwined. Separating the facts of Galen's life from the way he writes about them is near impossible, firstly because he is our only source about himself, and

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1 As noted by V. Boudon-Millot and J. Jouanna, *Galien. Ne pas se chagriner*, 2010, p. xlvii; see Galen, *Ind.* 50–51. The edition of *De indolentia* I refer to is Boudon-Millot/Jouanna 2010 throughout. About the interpretation of magnanimity as a Stoic virtue, see Tieleman's demonstration in the present volume.

secondly because he is a skilful, conscious author whose every statement must be read in light of his authorial purposes. In other words, Galen's person and *ēthos* intersect largely in his writings – a difficulty that has its benefits for the modern reader, for Galen has left us a particularly vivid portrait of his scholarly and authorial self. I will therefore take the gaps in our knowledge about the last period of his life as a starting point, before turning to the elements of self-portrayal that can be established through his own account. Finally, I will examine the contribution of the newly discovered text to Galen's *ēthos* as we understand it from other works. My point is that Galen, far from simply conforming to the conventional image of a wise old man delving into *otium litterarum*, in fact transforms the traditional *ēthos* of his situation into a powerful intellectual and personal testament that supplements and nuances the self-portrait of his maturity. The path I have chosen is, admittedly, a meandering one, starting from a seemingly remote point towards the actual object of my study through concentric circles; but I hope my combined enquiry of Galen's biography and self-portrayal will show a perceptible shift in Galen's late life and shed some light on the importance of the new text. I am here building on my work on Galen's rhetoric, in which the notion of *ēthos* proves fundamental.<sup>2</sup>

## 1 Old Age: Facts and Literature

Defining old age, as shown in recent scholarship, is partly a matter of convention (the age of retirement from various duties in Rome was 60, but 70 seems to have been seen as the genuine threshold of old age). To an extent, old age was a subjective matter. Cicero, and, later, Seneca, have provided us with priceless insights into experiencing old age. As Mary Harlow and Ray Lawrence put it:

There is a host of literary material on the survival into old age, because the elderly used the *otium* or leisure time associated with this period of life as time to write. They wrote as consolation for themselves in old age facing death and it is this format that produces much of what we today associate with a stoic philosophy of survival in adversity. That adversity was old age.<sup>3</sup>

2 Petit, C., *Galien ou la rhétorique de la Providence. Médecine, littérature et pouvoir à Rome*, Brill, 2018.

3 Harlow, M. and Lawrence, R., "Viewing the old: recording and respecting the elderly at Rome and in the Empire", in C. Krötzel and K. Mustakallio, *On Old Age. Approaching Death in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Brepols, 2011, 3–24. Naturally, not all references to old age in antiquity are negative: Plutarch, *An seni res publica gerenda sit*, offers an upbeat vision of old

Of course, that is not the entire story: writing about old age has developed into a long, complex literary tradition, culminating with highlights such as Petrarch's *Letters of old age*, in which, coincidentally, Galen does play a role next to Cicero and other prominent inspirational authors of the past.<sup>4</sup>

For all the stoicism attached to them, such ancient testimonies about *otium* in old age are not entirely devoid from complacency, as old age becomes the time of reflecting on the past, recording earlier achievements and distributing prizes (to oneself) – Aristotle had long noticed this negative aspect of old age, conveniently opposed to the feelings experienced by the young. Old age, so it seems, is as much a social construction as it is a personal experience. Naturally, it also develops into a rhetorical *topos*. The characters of youth and old age feature prominently in rhetorical theory, starting with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, with which Galen was familiar. Several Plutarchan works deal with aspects of growing older, such as dealing with the fear of death, and the possibilities of continued public activity beyond retirement (*De tranquillitate animi*, *An seni respublica gerenda sit*). As suggested by Plutarch, health, not age, should be a criterion for continued activity – the benefits of stable, serene characters of older men are also praised by Cicero. But how does Galen fit in this literature on old age?

Galen's testimony features prominently in recent studies on old age in antiquity, but he is usually quoted as a medical authority: as a physician, Galen has dealt in relatively great detail with old age, especially in his six-book work on hygiene (with the ancient meaning of "preserving health"), *De sanitate tuenda*. He saw aging as the natural process of the human body drying out and withering away over time.<sup>5</sup> Man, of course, mirrors the wider *cosmos*. Like a country, it has seasons. Like a plant, or indeed any living being, the body gradually loses its moisture until its functions fail and it eventually returns to dust. In the process, Galen adds further periodisation to the last part of life: using a rarely found terminology, he highlights three theoretical stages of old age, a feature that singles him out in the extant literature.<sup>6</sup> More importantly, however, he

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age (*Mor.* 783a–797f). In Plutarch's view, retiring to be a farmer or simply stay at home (like a woman!) are a waste and a shame for the once successful man.

- 4 Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age (Rerum senilium libri)*; for an analysis of the theme of old age in Petrarch, see Skenazi, C., *Aging Gracefully in the Renaissance. Stories of Later Life from Petrarch to Montaigne*, Brill, 2013.
- 5 Galien, *De sanitate tuenda* – now available in a new English translation by Ian Johnston (Loeb, 2 vols., 2018). See also Minois, G., *Histoire de la vieillesse en Occident*, Paris, Fayard, 1987 (chapter on 'la médecine romaine et la vieillesse'); Morand, A. F., '« Chimie » de la vieillesse. Explications galéniques de cet âge de la vie', In L. Mathilde Cambron-Goulet and Laetitia Monteils-Laeng (ed.), *La Vieillesse dans l'Antiquité, entre déchéance et sagesse, Cahiers des études anciennes* 55, 2018, pp. 125–143.
- 6 Galen, *San. Tu.* V, 12 p. 167 Koch.

analyses aging in the context of nutrition and lifestyle, and provides advice and cures to live longer, and in better health – thus answering widespread anxiety in Roman society about the vicissitudes of the last part of life, as witnessed by Pliny the Younger, whose account of the old age of Spurrina exemplifies the desirable outcome of a well-managed life in the Roman upper classes.<sup>7</sup> According to Galen, regimen, appropriate exercise, bathing and massage all contribute to aging gracefully: his own health history, he claims, demonstrates the quality and the validity of his lifestyle choices and should incite others to follow. Naturally, he also illustrates his point by recording a number of cases of old men thriving under his care, the most famous being Marcus Aurelius.<sup>8</sup> Galen's insight as a physician is therefore priceless, but his contribution on experiencing old age and facing death has been overlooked. In the *περὶ ἀλυστίας*, written in 193 AD or slightly later, a 63-ish Galen advocates patience and courage in the face of loss and grief; he writes to his anonymous friend in a posture that is, to some extent, similar to that of Cicero writing to Atticus in their early sixties (*Att.* VI, 14, 21, 3),<sup>9</sup> or to that of Seneca writing to Lucilius in his late sixties (*Ep.* 24). He is thus framing his thoughts in a literary and philosophical context.

Indeed, Galen could not ignore the rich literary background to writing on old age: Cicero's *De senectute* and Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius* are only the most famous ancient texts on aging. Countless aphorisms and maxims about the elderly appear in tragedy, comedy and poetry; aging was also a rich philosophical theme even before Plato. Either pictured as epitomes of wisdom or laughing stock for the younger ones, educated elderly men were not always comfortable with their situation, as demonstrated in their texts (again, consider Plutarch's *An seni resp. gerend. sit*); those who provided a personal testimony on old age postured as wise old men (the archetypal wise old man being the Homeric Nestor), whilst acknowledging debilitating conditions (such as Seneca's asthma) or moodiness and irritability (Cicero). Between philosophical posturing and genuine confession, aging *litterati* made old age a matter for discussion. Galen's medical representation of old age is not just the objective stance of a doctor; it is combined with a subjective account in his later works, some of which he penned in his sixties and maybe later. The two areas conflate when

7 Pliny *Ep.* 3, 1, the old age of Spurrina – “the ideal old age for the upper class Roman male” (see Harlow, M. and Lawrence, R., *Growing up and Growing old in ancient Rome: A Lifecourse Approach*, Routledge, 2001, pp. 123–124). About the (three) stages of old age, see Galen *San. Tu.* v, 12 = p. 167 Koch and for a survey of similar notions in ancient Greek texts, see Parkin, T. G., *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003 (Appendix C., pp. 299–301).

8 Galen, *De praen.* 11 Nutton.

9 See his *De senectute*, written when Cicero was 62 and dedicated to a 65-year old Atticus.

Galen shows off his own excellent health in the above-mentioned *De sanitate tuenda* (he was then in his early fifties<sup>10</sup>), a work in which his own healthy state serves as a selling point for his general method. But the promotional dimension seems to fade in the later hints at his weakening body and faltering convictions. As we will see, Galen no less chisels his own aging self-portrait than others do in the same period; and he no less cares for his own image than he did as a younger, ambitious doctor eager to promote his skills and methodology. I am interested in tracing this shift in Galen's writing, looking for clues in his extant later works, before turning to the *περί ἀλυπίας*.

## 2 Can the Enigma of Galen's Last Years be Solved? Looking for a 'testament'

Galen's later years have been left out of most accounts on his life, partly due to the lack of evidence. In the penultimate chapter of her authoritative biography of Galen, Véronique Boudon-Millot explores the available evidence on the "diseases and death of a doctor".<sup>11</sup> While Galen is comparatively loquacious among ancient doctors about his own ailments, he is less and less inclined to record such personal information in his later works.<sup>12</sup> As for the date of his death, accumulated evidence from Byzantine (beyond the *Souda*) and Arabic sources points to the later part of Caracalla's reign, hence the now commonly accepted date of 216 instead of 199.<sup>13</sup> Of course, issues regarding the authenticity of late works<sup>14</sup> cast a shadow on Galen's last years: but it seems safe to assume that Galen lived for another twenty to twenty-three years after he wrote his *De indolentia* in 193; this fits well with the picture of a still-prolific author, who penned *inter alia* the best part of thousands of pages of pharmacological works. Nonetheless, it is impossible to establish with certainty when Galen actually stopped thinking and writing, for his testimony does not hint at any significant late life impairment.<sup>15</sup> In this hazy context, Galen's mentions of health

10 Written shortly after the death of Marcus Aurelius (c. 180) according to Heiberg, followed by Koch.

11 Boudon-Millot, V., *Galien de Pergame. Un médecin grec à Rome*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2012, pp. 225–245.

12 *Ibid.* pp. 225–226.

13 *Ibid.* pp. 241–244.

14 Especially in the case of the *Theriac to Piso*, of disputed authorship.

15 Pace V. Boudon-Millot, *Galien de Pergame*, 2012, p. 233. Hearing a book read aloud was considered a soothing form of entertainment in old age, not a sign of physical decline, as shown by Pliny the Younger's famous description of Spurrina's perfect regimen; Cf. Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* III, 1.

problems linked with aging are rare: a recurring issue seems to have been the state of his teeth, since he comments on his difficulties as early as *Alim. fac.* (written before Marcus Aurelius died in 180), when he couldn't chew on lettuce any more, and as late as *Comp. med. sec. locos* (written after 193), where he comments on the nature and location of toothache, in the gum or in the tooth itself (without quite referring to an actual pain at the very time of writing).<sup>16</sup> Allusions to disease in *Character Traits* (cf. P. N. Singer, *Galen's Psychological writings*) are tricky, because the date of the treatise is uncertain, although recent scholarship points to a post-192 date as plausible. More to the point, it is an epitome, surviving in Arabic: it is therefore relatively delicate to use. What we have, then, in Galen's later works, is a body of indications of another nature. He is focussing on his legacy.

Galen famously has relatively few explicit mentions among writers in his lifetime;<sup>17</sup> later biographers often sought to re-write his life in a colourful way, following new agendas.<sup>18</sup> Therefore we have to rely on internal evidence in the Galenic corpus to understand how the Pergamene dealt with his physical decline – if it is at all represented or even hinted at. As 192 AD marks a shift in his priorities, namely the recording and preserving of his own works in the form of his catalogue (*Libr. Propr.*; *Ord. libr. propr.*) and of additional copies of his own works, it is perhaps useful to use this date as the conventional beginning of Galen's old age – at the very least, the devastation caused by the great fire made the preservation of his works a pressing matter such as he never felt before, trusting the safety of the Palatine storage rooms. This is a turning point in Galen's life, seemingly shifting his priorities. In order to gather the evidence given by Galen himself about his later years (roughly after the fire of 192), it is necessary to focus on the extant works clearly written after the event.<sup>19</sup> Those include the last seven books (VII–XIV) of the *De methodo medendi*, the last three books (IX–XI) of *De simpl. med. fac. ac temp.*, and the bulk of his other

16 Galen, *Alim. fac.* II, 40 (K. VI, 626); *Comp. med. sec. locos*, V, 4 (K. XII, 848). Cf. V. Boudon-Millot, *Galien de Pergame*, pp. 232–233; D. Gourevitch & M. Grmek, 1986, 45–64 (p. 58–59).

17 See, however, Nutton, V., 'Galen in the eyes of his contemporaries', *BHM* 58, 1984, pp. 315–324 (Nutton refers especially to Athenaeus I, 1).

18 Illuminated by Swain, S. C. R., 'Beyond the Limits of Greek Biography: Galen from Alexandria to the Arabs', in B. McGing and J. Mossman (eds), *The Limits of Ancient Biography*, The Classical Press of Wales, 2006, pp. 395–433. To my knowledge, the first 'biography' of Galen based on his own account is given by Symphorien Champier in his *Speculum Galeni*, 1517 (about which see Petit, C. 'Symphorien Champier (1471–1539) et Galien: Médecine et littérature à la Renaissance', to appear in C. La Charité & R. Menini eds., *La médecine au temps de Rabelais*).

19 Cf. V. Boudon-Millot, *Galien de Pergame*, 2012, pp. 220–224.



pharmacological works (*Comp. med. sec. locos; Comp. med. sec. gen.; Antid.*<sup>20</sup>). The last book of *De sanitate tuenda* should be added, together with the brief *De bonis malisque sucis*; the *De foet. formatione*, and the last four books (preserved only in Arabic) of *De anatomicis administrationibus*. Last but not least, Galen's *De propriis placitis*, dubbed "Galen's philosophical testament", highlights the issues that really matter to him now that his life has reached its course and his work is completed. Several psychological writings, including the *περὶ ἀλυπίας*, are also thought to belong to the later period of Galen's life (again, post-192 AD): the evidence is, however, slightly more contentious for some of them and in all cases, one should bear in mind Peter Singer's cautious remarks on Galen's compositional style.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, there are reasons to envisage multiple layers of writing in many, if not most, Galenic works. Supposed dates of composition are thus relative, and one should be mindful of the fact that Galen may have more or less constantly altered his own writings. All in all, though, those works represent a considerable amount of text (thousands of pages in the standard edition of Kühn) and must have been written over many years in the aftermath of 192–193, although it is difficult to be more accurate than that, and to pin down the moment when Galen stopped writing (just as it is impossible to establish the date of his passing). Just like many of his predecessors and literary models, Galen may have enjoyed enhanced *otium* in his old age, perhaps retiring from everyday medical practice in order to dedicate his time to writing; he may also, we can speculate, have appreciated a loosening of the imperial grip over the Palace in the wake of Commodus' death. Still, such a considerable volume of work could not have been achieved without exceptional personal abilities and outstanding material support, in the form of personnel, books, and other resources.

Galen gives us hints about his working priorities: by his own account in *De simpl. med. fac. ac temp.*, it sounds like he is on a mission to complete a large section of his oeuvre, namely his pharmacological project, covering simple and compound drugs, as well as the so-called *εὐπόριστα* (easy to procure remedies), purgatives and antidotes. Galen is not without expressing a certain sense of urgency. In one of the later books, Galen indeed makes the following statement:

ταῦτα καίτοι τῆς προκειμένης οὐκ ὄντα πραγματείας, ἔγραψα διὰ τὸ θαρρεῖν τῷ φαρμάκῳ, μηδενὸς μηδέποτε ἀποθανόντος τῶν ὡς εἴρηται χρησαμένων αὐτῷ.

20 It is unclear whether any of the three books of the *Euporista* currently preserved in the Kühn edition is authentic.

21 P. N. Singer, *Galen. Psychological Writings*, 2013, pp. 34–41; see also his contribution 'New light and old texts' in this volume.

ποιήσομαι δὲ καὶ κατὰ μόνας ἑτέραν πραγματείαν περὶ τῶν ιδιότητι τῆς ὄλης οὐσίας ἐνεργούντων, ἐν οἷς ἔστι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα. συγγινώσκειν οὖν χρὴ τῷ τῆς γραφῆς ἀκαίρῳ καὶ νῦν καὶ κατ' ἄλλα χωρὶα τῆσδε τῆς πραγματείας ἐνίοτε γεγονότι, διὰ τὴν ἐκ τῶν λεγομένων ὠφέλειαν μεγίστην οὖσαν, ἣν διασώζεσθαι βούλομαι τοῖς μεθ' ἡμᾶς ἀνθρώποις, εἰ καὶ μεταξὺ θάνατος γενόμενος ἀποκωλύσει με γράψαι τὰς ἐφεξῆς τῆσδε τῆς πραγματείας.<sup>22</sup>

Even though such details do not belong to the present work, my faith in this medicine<sup>23</sup> leads me to record it, for no one who has used it according to the prescription has ever died. I shall write a particular treatise about medicines that work as a result of the specific character of their general composition, including all such remedies as this one. You will need to forgive me for passages that are beside the point both here and occasionally elsewhere in this book, because the information is extremely valuable and I wish to preserve it for the sake of posterity, in case death should prevent me from writing treatises following this one.

A few pages away from completing his major work on simple drugs, then, Galen hints neatly at his age and the lurking possibility of death, with dramatic effect – and potentially dramatic consequences for posterity, he suggests: Galen is so worried that he may not finish his work, that some exceptionally useful remedies might be lost forever if he doesn't record them at once. This explains, Galen says, why his treatise *On simple drugs* includes material that should not be there.<sup>24</sup> This sense of urgency (and fear?) is not found anywhere else in Galen's works. But it is not the first time Galen attributes a change in his text to a particular circumstance in his life: in book x of the *De usu partium*, he explains that he was persuaded by a divine warning in a dream to include a development on the eye at this point in his work, against the plan he had initially formed.<sup>25</sup> Contemplating imminent death seems to have prompted Galen to alter his plan in a similar way. In both cases, the urgency is compelling. At any rate, the evidence of the many pages that were subsequently added to his work *On simple drugs* in the form of additional treatises shows that Galen was blessed to continue writing for quite a while, and his fears, if genuine, unfounded. Had Galen not been in his late sixties when he wrote those

22 Galen, *Simpl. med. temp. ac fac.*, XI, 34 (K. XII, 357–358).

23 Galen has just discussed the usefulness of burnt crab powder in rabies cases.

24 Another passage in the same work echoes this sense of urgency, when Galen apologises for inserting a digression on the preparation of theriac, for fear of not completing the rest of his pharmacological works (chapter XI, 1 on vipers' flesh, K. XII, 319).

25 Galen, *Usu part.* x, 12 (Helmreich vol. II, 92–93).

lines, there may have been a case for a rhetorical device here. But, given his age and the scale of the remaining books to be written to fulfil his publication plans, it should be stressed that Galen's concerns are plausible – just as when he was persuaded in a dream to add this piece about the eye in book x of the *De usu partium*. Whilst he apparently brushes aside any considerations about his health at this point, age and the possibility of sudden death clearly are on his mind. This, in fact, fits well with the conspicuous haste affecting many of his late writings; as already observed by Vivian Nutton, “several of the books he wrote in old age end abruptly”, especially the final section of the *Method of healing*.<sup>26</sup>

A debated question is whether or not Galen stayed in Rome until he died: could he have travelled back to Pergamum, his native city, as suggested by some? Or did he enjoy the comfort of his home (in one of his several houses) to complete his work in the best possible conditions, instead of risking an exhausting, potentially fatal journey home? Again, later sources cannot be relied on, and there are hardly any clues to be gleaned from Galen's own words about a change of scenery; but why would a court physician who stayed through Commodus' horrendous reign depart at any point following the relief brought by his death? Galen must have had either good reasons to stay, or no choice at all. In order to return to Pergamum permanently, Galen may have needed imperial permission, indeed to be granted a favour. We know, however, that apart from his special relationship with Marcus Aurelius, with whom he was able to negotiate to an extent, there is no evidence of similarly relaxed relationships with later emperors such as Septimius Severus: as noted by Alain Billault, Galen may have been part of Julia Domna's circle – but we have no evidence.<sup>27</sup> In any case, this is pure speculation.

I am tempted to interpret (even more tentatively) some features of his later works as signs that he may have stayed on in Rome. For example, in one of his last works, *De antidotis* I, 1 (K. XIV, 3–5), Galen recalls at some length the effects of theriac on Marcus Aurelius' health, which might hint at a Roman readership; in *Comp. med. sec. genera* III, 2 (K. XIII, 603), he also evokes briefly his disciples' disciples (in other words, a second generation of students) now reading anatomy (through *his* books on anatomy), hinting at an educational context. Many additional references to his dedicated audience, his *ἐταῖροι*, appear in his later pharmacological works, especially *Comp. med. sec. locos* and *Comp. med. sec. genera* (in the latter, he often addresses them in the second

26 Nutton, V., 'Galen's Philosophical Testament', in J. Wiesner ed., *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet* Berlin/New York, vol. II, 1987, 27–51 (p. 44).

27 Billault, A., *L'univers de Philostrate*, Bruxelles, 2000, p. 6.

person).<sup>28</sup> Where better than Rome could this have taken place, a city in which he has almost entirely built his career, reputation and network?

A “philosophical testament” does survive among Galen’s later works: his *De propriis placitis* (On my own opinions), a work in which the physician’s customary references to time and circumstances are absent. It is thus difficult to date, but definitely belongs to Galen’s late production. As pointed out by its first editor Vivian Nutton before the discovery of a full Greek text in ms. *Vlatadon* 14, this work does not aim at promoting new ideas, or firm conclusions about any philosophical issue; rather, it states Galen’s final opinions on debated questions (notably the role of the soul) for the sake of posterity. Just like his *De libr. propr.* and *Ord. libr. propr.* aim at excluding any inauthentic work from his oeuvre, similarly his *On my own opinions* aims at dissipating any misunderstanding about his actual opinions, in order to disprove forgeries and avoid misguided criticism.<sup>29</sup> Thus in this work and others from the same period, Galen emphasises his concern to see his own, authentic voice echoing through ages: posterity is as central to this work, as the actual contents of his own opinions about the covered topics. This genuine concern contrasts with the old man’s frailty, as the work lacks the hallmarks of Galen’s previous rhetorical mastery. Vivian Nutton notes about the book’s abrupt ending:

The old man’s powers to control the overall structure of his investigations are noticeably weaker, his judgment less forceful, his criticisms less vigorous. Whether death, or simply reaching the end of his secretary’s book roll, caused Galen to break off here is a matter only for sad conjecture.<sup>30</sup>

Whether Galen intended the apparent lack of order and completeness of his work is unclear. It may hint at Galen’s decline, or haste, or it could be a draft which he could not complete or rework for whatever reason. In any case, as we shall see, this sheer concern for posterity is central to Galen’s late *ēthos*.

But what Galen lets us know is certainly not the whole story; there are gaps in our information. Those are essentially due to accidents, such as works missing: either they were lost, or simply were not deemed authentic or worth copying.

28 The dozens of mentions of ἐταῖροι in Galen’s later pharmacological works are only matched by his *Anat. adm.*, also aimed at a students readership. I echo Peter Singer’s remarks in ‘New Light and Old Texts’, note 14.

29 Galen, *Propr. Plac.* 1 Nutton. Cf. Nutton, V., ‘Galen’s Philosophical Testament’, in J. Wiesner ed., *Aristoteles. Werk und Wirkung, Paul Moraux gewidmet* Berlin/New York, vol. 11, 1987, 27–51 (p. 51); *eiusd.*, *Galen. De propriis placitis*, CMG V, 3, 2, 1999, introd. pp. 45–47; comm. p. 127.

30 V. Nutton, *Galen. De propriis placitis*, CMG V, 3, 2, 1999, comm. p. 218.

Among lost works from his later life, we could mention a work κατ' Ἐπικοῦρον mentioned in the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* (*Ind.* 68); a brief work *περὶ τῶν φιλοχρημάτων πλουσίων*, also mentioned in the same work (*Ind.* 84); and probably a work in two books *On medicine in Homer* (*περὶ τῆς κατ' Ὀμηρον ἰατρικῆς*), mentioned by Alexander of Tralles and Hunayn ibn Isḥaq alike. Gaps thus occasionally get filled by later sources, although their credibility has been questioned. In the case of the latter work, *On medicine in Homer*, authenticity has been dismissed on account of Galen's 'rationalist' approach to medicine; Hunayn himself was unconvinced by the contents of the work.<sup>31</sup> If we follow Alexander, however, Galen recognised the power of amulets and other magical remedies late in life, a fact that was reflected explicitly in the lost treatise. In fact, a simple comparison between the contents (as described, and quoted by Alexander) and Galen's statements in the last three books of *On simple drugs* shows remarkable agreement, and demonstrates a change in Galen's opinions, or at least, enlarged views.<sup>32</sup> As argued by Alexander of Tralles, Galen held more pragmatic, inclusive views about remedies in his later life. It is therefore necessary to acknowledge this additional evidence in assessing Galen's final viewpoint on the medical art. More importantly, in all likelihood this episode shows that we are missing part of the picture: Galen's exact feelings and thoughts may only come through partially, a limitation we must acknowledge.

### 3 *Self-characterization in Galen's Later Works: a Moraliste*<sup>33</sup>

A distinctive tone creeps into Galen's later works, away from the boisterousness of some of his earlier works. Galen appears as a *moraliste*, displays revised (in a more sceptical fashion) views on the soul, shows off his experience and, finally, his detachment from the more materialistic aspects of life. Galen's moralistic statements seem to echo the Plutarchan preoccupations<sup>34</sup> showed by his later works (see above, Galen's lost *περὶ τῶν φιλοχρημάτων πλουσίων*) as well

31 Kudlien, F., "Zum Thema 'Homer und die Medizin'", *Rheinisches Museum* 108, 1965, 293–299.

32 See Petit, C., 'Galen, Pharmacology and the Boundaries of Medicine: A Reassessment', in M. Martelli and L. Lehmhaus eds., *Collecting Recipes: Byzantine and Jewish Pharmacology in Dialogue*, De Gruyter, 2017, 50–80 (p. 77–80).

33 In the following pages, I understand the French *moraliste* in the acceptance of an author describing the mores and ills of the society he lives in, in order to offer a reflection on human nature and condition. As there is no English equivalent to the best of my knowledge, I am using the French term.

34 See Plutarch, *De cupiditate divitiarum*.

as his long-standing interest in ethical philosophy.<sup>35</sup> One such text appears at the beginning of book x of *Simple drugs*.<sup>36</sup> In a long preface to the book, which is dedicated to animal parts in medicine, Galen provides precious information about past scholarship on the topic; faithful to his sharp and critical mind, he exposes others' lack of dignity and lawfulness. One victim of this charge is Xenocrates of Aphrodisias, the author of a comprehensive study about the use of animal parts. Animal parts famously include *human* body parts and fluids; Galen stresses his disgust (as expected from an educated Greek, and a Roman citizen) at the ingestion of bodily secretions such as earwax and menstrual blood. This statement is important in providing finishing touches to his self-portrait: by criticising Xenocrates and his followers, he distances himself from dubious medical practices and presents himself as an enlightened practitioner (and somehow a *καλός κάγαθός*). Undoubtedly, Galen is aware that slander could affect him as a medical practitioner in a hardly-regulated field,<sup>37</sup> and aims at diverting them through a clear statement; whether or not he is genuinely disgusted by the very thought of drinking menstrual blood does not really matter here. Prefatory rhetoric is instrumental in his authorial and medical posture.

Ultimately, however, this statement comes at a defining self-characterization moment in the context of his later works: a supremely experienced physician, Galen dominates the field and its turpitudes and stresses the usefulness of *some* animal-based remedies. In the last two books, Galen accepts a number of them, including those involving animal, even human excrements. But displaying a moral condemnation of the remedies closest to black magic gives him the higher ground; it conveniently puts him in a *moraliste's* position. The tone of this very preface sounds distinctive, if compared with another preface in the same work, namely the preface to book VI, written much earlier in his life (before 180): in book VI, Galen simply ridicules Pamphilus as an incompetent writer, whereas in book x Galen directs his criticism towards an apparently similar target, Xenocrates, only to turn his attention and indignation towards more dangerous prescriptions. Let us read indeed the last section of the preface to book x. Galen's stance turns bitter as he accuses rogue practitioners of writing down harmful, even lethal recipes:

35 Galen, *Libr. Propr.* 15; the extant works of this category appear in P. N. Singer's *Galen. Psychological Writings*, 2013.

36 For a study of this preface (*Simpl. med. temp. ac fac.* x, 1) in the context of Galen's work *On simple drugs*, see my article cited n. 24.

37 As demonstrated in subsequent statements, for example dismissing crocodile blood for eye diseases, "because slanderers are swift to condemn physicians as sorcerers" (*Simpl. med. temp. ac fac.* x, 6 = K. XII, 263).

As far as I am concerned, I will not mention basilisks, elephants, hippopotamuses or any other animal of which I have no personal experience; as for the so-called philtres and charms to generate love, dreams or hatred (I am deliberately using their very words), I would not mention them in writing even if I had sufficient experience in them, just as I would not record deadly poisons or those they call disease-makers. Their alleged properties are ridiculous: binding adversaries, for example, so they cannot speak in court, causing a pregnant woman to miscarry, or preventing a woman from conceiving, and other similar stupidities. Experience has shown that most such charms are ineffective, and a few of them, albeit effective, are harmful to human life, which makes me wonder, by the gods, by what line of reasoning they came to write them down. For how could they believe that the knowledge that brings them infamy in life would bring them fame after death? If they were kings who tested these things on people sentenced to death, they would not be doing anything wrong. But since they had the arrogance to write these things down as laymen, over their entire life, then it can be only one of two explanations: either they write about things they have neither tested nor know, or, if they have tested them, then they are the most impious of all men, giving deadly poisons to people who have done no wrong, sometimes even to excellent men, for the sake of experimenting. A man noticed two physicians next to some hawkers and approached them to sell them some honey, as it seemed. Upon tasting it, they discussed the price, and, since they offered little, he quickly vanished, but neither physician survived. In sum, it is just to hate those who have written <about such poisons> more, not less, than those who commit all such poisonings, insofar as it is a lesser crime to do evil alone than it is to do so with the help of many others. And the knowledge of one's evil deeds dies with the perpetrator, while knowledge of all the writers is immortal, providing weapons to criminals to perform their evil deeds. Let us now discuss things that are useful to men to the best of our knowledge.<sup>38</sup>

Here Galen gradually moves beyond the realm of the use of dubious (or magical) remedies and practices; this passage is about authorial responsibility and the very core of medical deontology: *to help, or to do no harm*. From the wide embracing look that he casts upon the field of medicine, Galen castigates criminals and the lack of law enforcement against them. He is asking strong questions from his professional field, but also, indirectly, from the Empire he

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38 Galen, *Simpl. med. temp. ac fac.* X, 1 (K. XII, 251–252). As per my article cited above.

lives in. A *moraliste* he definitely is in those late-life pages. His 'virtuous' self, whilst befitting a good orator's posture in general, is of course part of a more complex project of characterization: Galen offers an authorial perspective on the dangers of medical practice, especially of pharmacology. Galen's insistence here on the lasting power of his writings and the responsibility that comes with authorship is also essential to his self-definition – as a scholar concerned with his legacy.

The posture of a righteous, Hippocratic doctor is ideally supplemented by Galen's life-long experience and concern for patients outside his usual elite practice. In a small work, *De bonis malisque succis*, Galen begins with an illustrative tale about the direct effects of poor nutrition on health: his long opening paragraph describes the effects of imperial economy on the health patterns of the countryside, which he links with hunger and emergency alimentation practices triggered by the cities, which absorb most or all of the good crops, leaving nothing but alternative roots and herbs for countryside people. This detailed description of the ever-increasing symptoms of malnutrition and rise of diseases can be read, at some level, as criticism of imperial policy, but Galen is careful not to explicitly condemn his rulers. What Galen is clear about, however, is how his life-long experience helps him identify and correct such patterns, to the best of his knowledge. His description plays as a demonstration of his experience and talent for observation, which he stresses in the final sentence of this paragraph.<sup>39</sup> It also potentially demonstrates a caring personality, a doctor who is interested in the welfare of people generally beyond the small Roman elite that he is supposed to work with exclusively. The catastrophic fate of those poor people at the other end of the Empire resonates through Galen's words. It is unlikely that his intention was primarily to draw attention to their plight; rather, his extremely accurate description is a display of competence and knowledge, of observational powers and experience. At no point does Galen describe the facts in a way to arouse *pathos*. In my view, however, this description echoes Thucydides' description of the plague of Athens, and thus contains more than facts. It is, once again, arising from a *moraliste's* gaze, beyond its medical theme. A keen observer of Roman society, Galen is eager to transfer his experience into an informed, perceptive narrative, conveying authorial prowess and superior insight.

In the above mentioned "testament" of his *De propriis placitis*, Galen adds some finishing touches to the parts of his oeuvre that confine to philosophy. As pointed out by Vivian Nutton, not all topics broached by Galen through a lifetime of work are present in the text. Rather, this is a selection of particularly

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39 Galen, *Bon. Mal. Succ.* 1, 14 (CMG V, 4, 2, p. 392= K. VI, 755).



sensitive topics about which his views could easily come under fire or be misrepresented. In terms of contents, what is striking is the lack of firm answers to some questions, such as the role of the soul or its exact relationship with the body. In stark contrast to the ‘rhetoric of certainty’ that pervades his earlier works,<sup>40</sup> his final texts exude intellectual prudence. This openly stated uncertainty is no carelessness on Galen’s part. Rather, the relative scepticism that comes through this testamental work is emphasised, so as to lay bare an old man’s humility. By finally saying “I don’t know”, Galen chisels a more humane portrait of himself as a scholar and physician; perhaps, even, the portrait of a vulnerable old scholar. As we will see, this emphasis on uncertainty is no slip. On the contrary, it finalises Galen’s self-portrayal as a honest intellectual and gentleman. This “philosophical testament”, together with the revised approach to borderline remedies that he expresses towards the end of *On simple drugs*, give the reader an impression of a non-dogmatic scholar: a firmly grounded physician, whose knowledge is essentially down to experience and hard work. Another late work, *De dubiis motibus* (*On unclear movements*), also projects the image of a pragmatist.

A moraliste, a humble scholar, an old, experienced physician who has seen it all and understands the very mechanisms of Nature in and around the body, Galen is also deprived of greed, or any of the common human flaws chastised by philosophers. He is not accessible to sorrow or desire, to anger or envy. His famous pages about his education and values, if they are as late as is often suggested (they are echoed in *De bonis malisque succis* and in the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* anyway), show off in retrospect a good natured young man, keen to imitate only the virtues around him, namely those displayed by his father. Discussing problems of character and temper among his peers, Galen is keen to dismiss anger as a particularly degrading flaw. Galen’s self-characterization is thus finalised with reference to philosophical ideals of peace, self-control and *ἀπάθεια*. As we shall see, the newly discovered treatise adequately completes this self-portrait of humble wisdom – by contrast with the more confident texts of his youth, such as the self-promotional *On prognosis* (*De praecogn*).

#### 4 Galen’s *περὶ ἀλυπίας*: Finalising a Scholar’s Self-portrait?

It is now time to go back to Galen’s *περὶ ἀλυπίας* and our proposed investigation. Much of the treatise (about half of it) revolves around Galen’s personal

40 See Nutton, V, ‘Galen and the Rhetoric of Certainty’ in J. Coste/D. Jacquart/J.Pigeaud (eds.), *La rhétorique médicale à travers les siècles*, Genève, Droz, 2012, 39–49.

experience and losses in the Great Fire of 192 AD. It is worth examining how Galen talks about himself, in a highly codified literary context. *Periautologia* or ‘discourse about oneself’ has its pitfalls, and Galen more than anyone else is aware of the way he should (or should not) present himself to his chosen audience.<sup>41</sup> The virtues of the orator correspond to a great extent to the philosophical virtues commonly extolled in the imperial period (and hailed by Galen himself). The same virtuous conduct is expected of physicians in particular, who, at least in principle, model their lifestyle onto high moral standards.<sup>42</sup> Galen is one of the most vocal promoters of the “doctor-philosopher” in ancient literature.<sup>43</sup> Thus in his ethical discussions, Galen demonstrates awareness of the character he should be displaying and promoting; in displaying and promoting it, he certainly shows his abilities to play on the social and literary codes of moral excellence. Yet, how original is his self-characterization, in the light of this newly discovered text? What special character, exactly, is Galen constructing here? Do we get a new picture of the great Galen?

It is not my purpose here to describe the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* in terms of rhetorical devices and strategies: this would require extensive space. In the wake of my previous remarks on Galen’s later works, I want to examine a limited aspect of Galen’s rhetoric in this text: the way he constructs his own *ēthos* here, and how this echoes his other late works. Among the many features that invite a rhetorical reading in the *περὶ ἀλυπίας*, the theme of moral strength (or resilience) is of particular relevance. It is not by chance that *μεγαλοψυχία* (usually translated by ‘magnanimity’ but clearly revealing a form of strength, of resistance in this context, hence the term of ‘resilience’ I have chosen here) features at the turning point of the treatise, when Galen moves from exposing and narrating the facts to his moral stance on detachment from material goods. The term has a deep background in rhetoric and philosophy, as one of the chief components of *ἀρετή*;<sup>44</sup> *μεγαλοψυχία* is rarely used by Galen, but always in contexts of stark

41 Pernot, L., ‘*Periautologia*. Problèmes et méthodes de l’éloge de soi-même dans la tradition éthique et rhétorique gréco-romaine’, *Revue des Etudes grecques* 111–1, 1998, pp. 101–124; Rutherford, L., ‘The poetics of the *Paraphthegma*: Aelius Aristides and the Decorum of self-praise’, in D. Innes/H. Hine/C. Pelling (eds), *Ethics and Rhetoric. Classical essays for Donald Russell on his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 193–204. Both studies explore in depth the precious hints provided by Plutarch in *De laude sui ipsius*.

42 Cf. Von Staden, H., ‘Character and competence. Personal and professional conduct in Greek medicine’, in H. Flashar/J. Jouanna (eds), *Médecine et morale dans l’antiquité. Entretiens de la Fondation Hardt vol. 43*, Genève, Droz, 1997, 157–195.

43 Galen, *The best doctor is also a philosopher*; see edition with tr. and commentary by V. Boudon-Millot, *Galen. Oeuvres, Tome 1*, 2007.

44 See Aristotle, *Rhet.* I, 6; I, 9; II, 12. Cf. Woerther, F., *L’ēthos aristotélicien. Genèse d’une notion rhétorique*, Paris, 2007, pp. 222–223. According to Aristotle, *μεγαλοψυχία* belongs to young

admiration (talking about Chrysippus, *PHP* III, 2, 18, 1; Hippocrates, *Dieb. crit.* II, 12 = K. IX, 894) or as a virtue enabling the soul to overcome grief (λύπη): in *Loc. Affect.*, v, 1 (K. VIII, 302) quoted below, Galen identifies those with a strong “tension” (τόνος) in the soul as the most resilient and less vulnerable patients. Others, weak in their souls and lacking education, are more likely to die from sudden, violent causes of distress.

ὅσοις γὰρ ἀσθενής ἐστὶν ὁ ζωτικὸς τόνος, ἰσχυρά τε πάθη ψυχικὰ πάσχουσιν ἐξ ἀπαιδευσίας, εὐδιάλυτος τούτοις ἐστὶν ἡ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐσία· τῶν τοιοῦτων ἔνιοι καὶ διὰ λύπην ἀπέθανον, οὐ μὴν εὐθέως ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς προειρημένοις· ἀνήρ δ' οὐδεὶς μεγαλόψυχος οὐτ' ἐπὶ λύπαις οὐτ' ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα λύπης ἰσχυρότερα θανάτῳ περιέπεσον· ὁ τε γὰρ τόνος τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτοῖς ἰσχυρὸς ἐστὶ τὰ τε παθήματα μικρά.

In all those whose vital tension is weak and who are afflicted by grave psychological ailments as a result of their lack of education, the substance of the soul is readily dissolved. Some of these even died of distress (λύπη), though not always instantly as in the cases I mentioned before; but no high-minded (μεγαλόψυχος) man ever died as a result of distressing experiences or of any other affliction stronger than distress. With them the tension of the soul is strong, the ailments are small.

This passage clearly foreshadows Galen's argument in the *περὶ ἀλυπτίας*, in which resilience naturally accompanies a strong (masculine) soul, just like Galen's, which was shaped and strengthened through generations of instilled virtue, as he carefully and pointedly explains (*Ind.* 58–60). It is thus most appropriate to find *μεγαλοψυχία* twice within a couple of lines in the very centre of a work dedicated to *ἀλυπτία* (*Ind.* 50–51); it is also a self-conscious assessment of Galen's own moral accomplishment and, consequently, of his reliability as an «orator», or author.<sup>45</sup> The intertwining of moral strength and authorial *kudos* is essential to our understanding of Galen's *ēthos*. As we have seen above, Galen's sharp authorial self-awareness is one of the defining features of the last period of his life, after 192 and the destruction of a great part of his library; his *μεγαλοψυχία*, in turn, allows him to move on and complete his authorial

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men rather than old. Galen is certainly playing on the expectations of his audience here. See also Teun Tieleman's contribution in this volume.

45 As demonstrated in great detail by F. Woerther, the notion of *ēthos* or character is consistent and coherent throughout Aristotle's works on ethics and rhetoric. Cf. Woerther, F., *L'ēthos aristotélicien. Genèse d'une notion rhétorique*, Paris, 2007.

destiny by gathering scattered copies of his works and rewriting whatever can be rewritten, and completing the works he has intended to write, such as his pharmacological texts.

There is no connotation of arrogance in μεγαλοψυχία; rather, as suggested by Galen, it represents the core of human resilience in front of adversity. The detailed, precise account of his losses in the first part of the letter serves, of course, as a proof of his μεγαλοψυχία; the various echoes to his other ethical and psychological works (such as the reference to cultivating his family virtues, *inter alia*) not only strengthen his case: they confirm the authenticity of his *ēthos* as a virtuous, resilient individual. In this sense, Galen's *περὶ ἀλυπίας* definitely fills a gap in his production: this is the work where he best combines proofs of his superior nature, of his moral awareness, and of his drive towards posterity. If Galen's concern for his legacy is apparent in many works of his later period, as shown above, only the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* brings together with such intensity and effectiveness all the strings of Galen's last push towards immortality. The factual details of a defining event, the 192 catastrophe that struck him and so many of his contemporaries, help build a truly resilient figure and a towering moral individual.

Others have rightly stressed Galen's apparent humility in the *περὶ ἀλυπίας*: far from boasting of his resilience, Galen emphasises the limits of his powers of resistance, both physical and psychological.<sup>46</sup> Under Commodus, Galen was not exempt from fear (*Ind.* 54–55); and he would not want to undergo the tortures of the Phalaris bull (*Ind.* 71). His core aspiration, in this later period of his life, is health (*Ind.* 74). In confessing his vulnerability in the wake of this proof of resilience, Galen probably scores higher than a standard, heroic Stoic. Galen's *περὶ ἀλυπίας* thus portrays him in a special light, that of a humble creature eager to outlive Commodian terror, to enjoy his home and to finish his job as a medical author. In so doing, is Galen not distancing himself from the standard old man posture of imperial literature? Is he not giving us more than the strength of character involved in μεγαλοψυχία? While he plays on a number of commonplaces and standard *exempla* in his argument, and uses well-known literary quoting liberally, Galen, through a sincere self-assessment, succeeds in portraying himself as the quintessentially honest and strong gentleman he has always advocated for others.

Galen's confessed vulnerability in the *περὶ ἀλυπίας* should not be downplayed. In confessing fear during the reign of Commodus, for himself and for his friends, fear at the prospect of exile or excessive physical pain; in reporting

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46 See for instance V. Boudon-Millot and J. Jouanna, *Galien. Ne pas se chagriner*, intr. pp. liii–lv.

others' collapse through similar experiences (for example the grammarian who lost everything to the great fire and died of sorrow, *Ind.* 7), Galen displays a facet of his personality that is, as far as I am aware, hardly ever highlighted: he offsets his tale of *μεγαλοψυχία* with expression of natural human feelings. This chimes with rare passages highlighted above, such as his indignant stance against rogue practitioners in *Simple drugs*; or the prospect of death in the same work, and the fear that he will be unable to complete his project. Thus Galen's vulnerability may not be due simply to the familiar context of a letter; according to me, it is deliberately underscored as part of Galen's finishing strokes to his self-portrait, as the necessary counterpart to his moral and intellectual excellence. Humbly affirming his uncertainties and emotions, though downplaying them for the sake of rhetorical and social conventions, Galen may seem no exception in the light of recent scholarship.<sup>47</sup> But it must be stressed that Galen does so consciously, and purposefully: indeed, the last section of the treatise is a personal comment following up on what he thinks is an accurate answer to his addressee's question (how does he avoid distress, in the face of such adversity?): in *Ind.* 70–78 in particular, Galen insists that he is not inaccessible to the feelings of fear and sorrow that he has seemingly beaten. As a precise qualification (*διορισμός*) offsetting the narrative of resilience that has dominated his treatise, this section builds on hints Galen gave his reader earlier on about the draining circumstances of living at court under a tyrant. It also mentions health and disease as essential components, not of happiness, but simply of "absence of distress" (*ἀλυσία*). Galen does not want to come across as this infallible, invincible human citadel he has been describing all along. He lists all the circumstances that could break him, and he prays to the gods to spare him such events that he may not overcome. He therefore deliberately brings in humility and vulnerability as the finishing touches to his self-portrait. The importance of this last twist to his argument is underpinned by the very phrasing of *Ind.* 70, in which he uses his signature coordinating device *ἀτὰρ οὖν καί*, which he seldom uses, perhaps once per work, but always with a view to emphasise an important moment in his argument.<sup>48</sup> Prayer (*εὐχόμεαι*), too, is an unusual word in Galen's texts, highlighting his loathing and fear of any unnecessary toils. He is thus offering an original take on the characteristic old man of rhetorical treatises – and cunningly playing on his reader's expectations in this respect.

47 Cf. Harris, G. W., *Dignity and Vulnerability. Strength and Quality of Character*, University of California Press, 1997; McCoy, M., *Wounded Heroes. Vulnerability as a Virtue in Ancient Greek Literature and Philosophy*, Oxford, OUP, 2013.

48 C. Petit, 'Greek particles in Galen's *Œuvre*' (forthcoming).

## 5 Conclusion

Galen's self-characterisation is an ongoing, long-term process that starts off in his earlier works and becomes finalised, quite logically, in the works of his old age. It is an important component of his diverse compositional strategies, aiming at presenting himself under the best possible light to his educated audience of students and *philiatroi*. In so doing, Galen demonstrates his sound rhetorical training and his acute awareness of the power of words. The image conveyed by Galen's later works exudes humility and detachment, whilst also highlighting his exceptional experience and intellectual honesty. A gentleman unafraid of displaying his vulnerabilities, Galen bares his profound nature to his readers, taking the last opportunities offered by his remarkable longevity to bring essential finishing touches to his self-portrait. Whilst this self-portrait will never be really complete for us, due to the loss of part of his works, characteristically the *περι ἀλυσίας* brings added insight into Galen's psyche and self-assessment. It chimes with other extant works, hinting at a humble, authentic and vulnerable scholar whose chief purpose and desire is to finish the immense task he has set for himself, and whose core values remain *philanthropia*, friendship, a simple life, and self-respect. Galen's *περι ἀλυσίας* may convey the views of a philosopher;<sup>49</sup> it may reflect the concerns of a man potentially compromised by his status as court physician to a despicable, recently assassinated emperor;<sup>50</sup> it certainly completes Galen's conscious self-portrait in view of posterity. Galen's concern for his intellectual and practical legacy comes through in many of his later works; in the *περι ἀλυσίας* it revolves around his moral fortitude as well as his lack of heroism in the face of adversity. Combined with his conscious, repeatedly asserted authorial project and the strong sense of responsibility that accompanies it, this display of authenticity creates a powerful intellectual and personal testament.

There is no easy way to untangle the real from the fictional Galen, especially in this later part of his life, when his authorial voice seemed shaped by urgency and anxiety (of influence, at least). There is nevertheless a case to be made for an enquiry into Galen's last years: however speculative, such investigations are unseparable from the analysis for his post-192 production. If Galen, as an author, wears a mask, this was, for his learned readers, a transparent one; his conscious play on the literary and philosophical codes of his time could only delight his *hetairoi* (not fool them). It is important to bear in mind

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49 As shown in the thorough analyses of this text by Peter Singer, Christopher Gill, Jim Hankinson and Teun Tieleman in this volume.

50 A path explored by Matthew Nicholls in this volume.

Galen's essentially artificial *persona*. But, like his advisory dreams and his patient encounters, Galen's allusions to imminent death, tyranny, or unsavoury practices in his later years are all rooted in his personal experience. By all accounts, his *περὶ ἀλυπίας* is the most troubling testimony about his life to date; it shines back, in turn, on other later works and illuminates their significance and urgency.

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