THE TREATISE IN OUTLINE

In section 1 of the treatise, Theophrastus offers a brief introductory statement. He announces that a (fundamental) question will not be discussed and that attention will be given to certain qualities of sweat. The question is whether sweat occurs when moisture is secreted, or when breath passes through the skin and condenses. The qualities which will be discussed include being salty and having bad odor, i.e., the subjects of sections 2–4 and 5–10. By mentioning "other differences," Theophrastus appears to indicate that he will do more than deal with saltiness and bad odor. At the very least he seems to be thinking of variations in sweat during a single episode, i.e., the subject of sections 11–12.¹

In discussing saltiness and bad odor, Theophrastus offers explanations.² He tells us that sweat is salty because matter which is foreign to the body and unconcocted is secreted. He attributes bad odor to lack of concoction resulting from a bad condition of the body. Similarly, his discussion of variations in sweat during a single episode includes explanation. He refers in particular to the intensification of exertion and the alteration of the body; and he comments generally that because the condition of the sweat is dissimilar, clearly the cause too is dissimilar.³ This concern with explanation runs throughout the treatise.

In sections 13–17, Theophrastus discusses eruptions of the skin. The discussion is an excursus, prompted by previous references to exertion and bodily condition.⁴ Exercise may remove impurities along with sweat, but when that does not happen, eruptions may result.⁵ In sections 18–23, Theophrastus returns to sweat and explains why some people have difficulty sweating, while others sweat easily. The explanation involves age, bodily condition and external temperature.

¹ See the Additional Notes on 1.5: ἥ τὰς ἀλλὰς ἔχων διαφορὰς.
² διότι at 1.5 is picked up by διότι at 2.7. Cf. the repeated use of αἵτια at 5.29, 33, 6.36.
³ δηλον γὰρ ὡς ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνομοίας διαθέσεως ἀνόμοιον καὶ τὸ αἵτιον, 11.72–3.
⁴ For previous references to exertion and bodily condition, see 11.71–2 and 12.80–2 (a general statement concerning all cases, ἐπὶ πάντων); for references within the discussion of eruptions, see 13.83–5, 15.95–104, and 17.115–19.
⁵ See 13.83–9. The text at 13.86 is condensed but not corrupt. See the Additional Notes ad loc.
In sections 24–40, a series of problems are addressed. That the treatise makes, as it were, a new start is clear from Theophrastus’ use of the verb “to sweat.” In sections 1–23, the verb is not to be found, but beginning with section 24, it occurs with considerable frequency, especially in the third person plural, which takes two forms: ἰδροῦσι and ἰδρῷσι. Moreover, most of the problems set forth in sections 24–40 are discussed with comparative brevity. In addition, there is unresolved inconsistency between sections, and the ordering of the problems is not always perspicuous. Some problems seem to form a group, but there are places where a different order seems preferable. The general impression conveyed is that of an open ended string of problems which could be added to and modified at will. Indeed, the variation between ἰδροῦσι and ἰδρῷσι may reflect addition and modification over an extended period of time. In any case, it is not surprising that the third person plural is absent from the last two or three problems, i.e. from sections 38–40, for these problems are likely to be later additions either by Theophrastus or by someone else.

What follows is a schematic outline of On Sweat.

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6 On the two forms, ἰδροῦσι and ἰδρῷσι, see the Introduction, Section 1.
7 That most of the discussions found within sections 24–40 are brief when compared with those of sections 2–23 is immediately clear on observation. Exceptional is the discussion of why men sweat more once they cease exerting themselves. It runs 14 lines (25.166–26.179), which is the length of the shortest discussion in sections 2–23, i.e., that of variations in sweat during a single episode (11.69–12.82).
8 In 25.166–72 and 29.189–91, we are told that restraining the breath during exertion prevents sweating; in 34.216–21, restraining the breath and exertion are said to be the cause of increased sweating. With the latter passage, cf. 33.212–13. N.B., I am not claiming that the inconsistency is irresolvable. My claim is only that the treatise exhibits apparent inconsistency which needs to be addressed. The fact that the relevant passages, sections 25, 29 and 34, are not contiguous, may be said to obscure the problem, so that the need for further discussion is not immediately obvious, but that is not the kind of explanation, which is needed to resolve the inconsistency. See the Additional Note on 33.212–13.
9 Sections 24, 32 and 33 might be grouped together (all concern sweating on the upper parts of the body), 36 might follow 33 (36 considers an exception to what is said in 33), and 30 and 35 might be placed next to each other (both discuss parts of the body submerged in water). On 25, 29 and 34, see the preceding note. However, the separation of 25 and 29 admits explanation. See the Additional Note on 29.189.
10 The shift from third person plural to first person plural in the course of section 34 is puzzling. It may reflect uneven composition or intervention at a later period. Or it may reflect no more than a shift in perspective. See the Additional Notes on 34.218–19.
11 In sections 39 and 40, the absence of the third person plural, either ἰδροῦσι or ἰδρῷσι, is not in doubt. In section 38, codex A has ἰδρῷσιν in line 236, but the text is corrupt. An emendation, ἰδροῦντες, has been printed in the text.