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Galen's Self-Understanding and the Platonic *Phaedrus*

1 Introduction

Galen's (129–c. 216 CE) double role of physician-cum-philosopher did not mean that he alternated between two different roles but should be taken to represent a project of a medical philosophy, or philosophical medicine, aimed at human well-being, both physical and moral.¹ In his charming little tract *The Best Doctor is also a Philosopher* he argues that the ideal physician is well-versed in all three parts of philosophy (physics, logic, ethics) – an ideal he projects onto the legendary Hippocrates, whom he reveres as not just the founder but the paragon of medicine.² At Hippocrates' side Galen places, as the philosophical fountainhead of his medical philosophy, Plato. He devoted his great treatise *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* (hereafter *PHP* after its Latin title *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*) to showing that the intellectual heroes of its title were correct and in harmony on the main issues of philosophy and medicine.³ Here Galen produced a highly personal synthesis, including, in so far as possible, reputable successors of Hippocrates and Plato such as Aristotle⁴ in the

1 Galen himself speaks of 'medical philosophy' (ιατρικὴν φιλοσοφίαν) once: *Prop. Plac.* 15, 190.5 Boudon/Pietrobelli. Garofalo & Lami in their less conservative edition give ιατρικὴν <τε καὶ ἡθικὴν> φιλοσοφίαν, presumably in view of the occurrence of the expression ἡθικὴν φιλοσοφίαν a bit further on (190.15 B–P). Galen usually links the two nouns, speaking of ιατρικὴ τε καὶ φιλοσοφία much to the same effect, e.g. *Nat. fac.* II 27, *Praen.* XIV 629 and 649 K., *PHP* VIII 1, 3 and 9, 13 De Lacy; *Lib. prop.* Prol. 4, 135.5–6 Boudon (and *passim*). In what follows references to *PHP* give book, chapter and section number in De Lacy's edition.

2 For Galen's relation to Hippocrates see Diller 1933; Diller 1974; Harig & Kollesch 1975; Smith 1979, 61–176; Manetti & Roselli 1994; Jouanna 2012 (where see note * on p. 313 for further references).

3 E.g. the tripartition and trilocation of the soul known from such Platonic works as the *Republic*, *Phaedrus* (tripartition) and *Timaeus* (trilocation) (*PHP* I–VI), the virtues and the senses (VII), elemental theory (VIII) and methodology (IX). The Arabic tradition according to which *PHP* originally comprised ten books is confirmed by *Lib. prop.* V 4, 155.10 in the new edition by Boudon (who could draw on the recently discovered MS Vlatadon) but we know nothing about the contents of book X. For an analysis of books I–VI see Tieleman 1996b and 2003, ch. 1–2.

4 For Galen and the Aristotelian legacy see the overview by Moraux 1984. See also the observations by van der Eijk 2009.

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tradition of good philosophy-cum-medicine as he saw it.⁵ Progress consists in further developing the basic insights of the distinguished members of this tradition.⁶ But Galen did not suffer from a negative self-image. In addition to past authorities, he held out himself as the embodiment of his ideal. The numerous biographical episodes he relates are stylized in such a way as to fit some of his most deeply held convictions as to what may count as good science and philosophy, what its epistemic foundations are and how the philosophical doctor should act. In this chapter I will argue that the Platonic *Phaedrus*, with its explicit linking of Hippocrates and Plato (270c–d), but also in other respects, occupied a special position in creating his persona as a physician-cum-philosopher.⁷

2 Galen and Plato. Galen and Platonism

Galen may have placed Hippocrates before Plato: Hippocrates was born before Plato, who, Galen believed, had derived some important ideas from the great doctor. Being no medical expert, Plato had been mistaken on certain anatomical and physiological issues, though not the really important ones. But overall he stressed the broad agreement between the two authorities. In fact, Galen studied philosophy before he started his medical studies. Among the representatives of the four main schools (Platonism, Stoicism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism) whose classes he took in his native Pergamum, Galen tells us most about his Platonist professor, ‘a pupil of Gaius’ with whom, however, he studied only for a brief period of time.⁸ This Platonist, he explains, had become unavailable after the citizens of Pergamum had pressured him into assuming political office because he seemed to them ‘just, incorruptible, accessible and mild’.⁹ Later Galen would make up for what he had missed by going to Smyrna to study with the Platonist Albinus (who may have been a pupil of Gaius too).¹⁰ The few pages in question suggest an early

5 See the pioneering study by Vegetti 1986; also available in an English version (see Bibliography).

6 See Hankinson 1994, 1779–1781 (“The Hippocratic Tradition of Medicine”).

7 Tieleman 2015. In section 3, I deal with *Phdr.* 270c–d from a different angle, viz. Galen’s notion of art (applied science, τέχνη) as combining the study of the universal and the individual.

8 On Gaius see the fragmentary evidence presented and discussed by Gioè 2002, 47–86; Dillon 1977, 266–267.

9 On Galen’s philosophical studies in Pergamum see *Aff. Dign.* VIII 3–4, p. 28.9–15 De Boer (= Gaius 3 T Gioè).

10 *Lib. prop.* II 1, 140.15–17 Boudon (= Albinus 1 T Gioè, T 10 Göransson). Albinus is on record as having published an outline of Platonism ‘based on the lectures by Gaius’: see 4 and 5 T

preference for Platonism, or at least Plato. After his studies Galen combined an admiration for Plato with keeping his distance from Platonism as a school, in line with his general attitude towards schools, or sects, with their reliance on the principle of authority and dogmatist speculation. Plato could count as the most eminent philosopher, not because he was Plato but because he could be *proven* to be correct, or at least on the right track. Galen likes to present himself as directly and independently conversing with Plato and to criticize the Platonic readings of his self-styled followers (e.g. *PHP* IX 9).¹¹ But this self-positioning, or perhaps rather posturing, should not lead us to discount in advance any influence of the exegetical tradition concerned with the Platonic dialogues, including the *Phaedrus*, to which he had been exposed when studying with the likes of 'the pupil of Gaius' and Albinus.¹²

Galen composed summaries of all Platonic dialogues, summaries on which the Arabic world of later times came to rely for its knowledge of Plato.¹³ His own works are full of Platonic echoes showing that his admiration for Plato extended to language and style. Clearly, then, we are dealing with an author who is intimately familiar with all of Plato's work. Of course, he has his preferences among the dialogues. He reflects the dominant role played by the *Timaeus* in the Platonist tradition, taking a particular and unsurprising interest in physical and medical matters. Apart from the *Compendium Timaei* (one of the summaries, extant in Arabic only) he dedicated a separate commentary to the medical passages in this dialogue.¹⁴

Gioè (= Gaius 7 and 8 T Gioè). On Albinus' life, works and philosophy, see Gioè (2002) and Dillon (1977) 267–305. The anonymous 'pupil of Gaius', a citizen of Pergamum, mentioned in *Aff. Dign* (see previous note) probably cannot be identified as Albinus for whom Galen moved over to Smyrna according to *Prop. Lib.* Taken together, the two testimonies indicate that Galen went from one Platonist teacher (who became unavailable) to the other.

11 On Galen's attitude toward his Platonist contemporaries see De Lacy 1972, 28–29; cf. Rocca 2006, 49–50.

12 Galen's Platonist contemporaries have come to be called 'Middle Platonists' in modern scholarship: apart from its being a modern term of periodisation it is good to realize that behind the appeal to Plato rather different views could lurk. Even so, what sets Galen apart from most of them is his principled refusal to take a stand on those metaphysical issues from which the Platonists (and other dogmatist schools) derived their distinctive positions. For explorations of Galen's thought against the Middle Platonist backdrop see (very briefly) Dillon 1977, 339–340; Donini 1980 and 1992; Singer 1991; Tieleman 1996b, xvii–xxii; Chiaradonna 2009, with further references, who arrives at a rather emphatically negative conclusion (260); cf. also Tieleman 1996. Galen's use of Aristotle cannot be subtracted from the status he accorded to Plato in so far as Aristotle could be taken to have further developed Platonic thought, as many Platonists at the time held.

13 Galen includes them in his list of writings concerning the philosophy of Plato at *Lib. prop.* XVI 1–3, 170.15–171.5 Boudon, with Boudon's note (17).

14 See Schröder 1934.

Galen quotes extensively from a group of twelve dialogues and in particular from the *Timaeus*, the *Republic* and, to a lesser extent, *Phaedrus*, which, as we shall see, added ideas to the other dialogues that were of special importance to him. According to Michael Trapp, who has specifically studied this topic, “few works were more firmly entrenched in the ‘cultural syllabus’ of Hellenic *paideia* by the 2nd century AD than Plato’s *Phaedrus*”.¹⁵ So given Galen’s education and response to Plato’s work, it is only to be expected that the *Phaedrus* is to a greater or lesser extent present in his work. Indeed we find ten direct quotations from this work, including seven in *PHP* book IX, some of them quite extensive (see § 4 below), which are to be supplemented with equally relevant allusions and echoes.

3 *Phaedrus* 270c1–d7: Plato and the Hippocratic Method

The first passage we turn to is from the proem of Galen’s commentary on the Hippocratic *Nature of Man* citing *Phaedrus* 270c1–d7, a passage that links Plato and Hippocrates in a way that illuminates Galen’s self-image as a scientist and philosopher. In the proem Galen discusses, among other things, the title of the Hippocratic tract at issue and in particular the notion of nature (φύσις). He distinguishes between perceptible nature and ‘higher and primary’ nature as corresponding to the attributes and the ‘being’ (οὐσία) of the thing under investigation respectively. This distinction counts as one of the possible forms of *diaeresis* (i.e. division) and can be operationalized by using an inquiry into the attributes as a way of getting to being in the sense of essence – a principle of method that can be paralleled from Middle Platonist literature.¹⁶ Here are Galen’s own words:

For in these (*scil.* attributes) resides the perceptible nature of each of the things that are; but the other (*scil.* kind of nature) is higher than these and primary, about which both I have spoken before and Plato advises the person who wants to deal methodically with whatever matter to know it. I will cite for you also the passage in Plato: “Do you think,

¹⁵ Trapp 1990, 141. Trapp does not study Galen’s references to *Phdr.* though he lists the ones to be found in *PHP* IX.

¹⁶ This distinction can be paralleled from Middle Platonist literature: see Alcinous, *Didasc.* 5, 156.24–33 with Tieleman 1996b, 30–31 (in relation to the argument of *PHP* II). Alcinous emphasizes the need to know the essence (οὐσία), ‘what each thing is’. Cf. Plato, *Phdr.* 237b7–c3. If the essence is unknown one may start from the perceptible attributes and investigate whether any of these provides an indication as to the essence of the thing: see e.g. the way that Galen starts his inquiry into the essence or function of the heart at *PHP* II 4, 5–6.

then, that it is possible to gain insight into the nature of soul in a noteworthy manner without the nature of the whole? — Well, if we should believe Hippocrates of the Asclepiad family, we cannot even inquire into the body without this method. — Yes, he speaks well, my friend; however, we should put Hippocrates' line of reasoning to the test and see whether it agrees with the facts. — Yes. — Regarding nature, what, then, do Hippocrates and the true account say?¹⁷ Do we not have to consider any nature in the following way? First whether that about which we want to be experts ourselves and be able to make others experts, whether it is either simple or pluriform, and next, if it is simple, consider what natural power it has for acting on what or what power for being acted upon and by what; but if it has more forms, to enumerate them and then observe in the case of each what we did in the case of the single one, namely what it by nature does to what, or how it is acted upon and by what?" Here, then, you have the passage from Plato's *Phaedrus* teaching both the meaning of the word 'nature' and how one should study its being methodically (*In Hippocratis de natura hominis*, Proem. 4.18–5.9 Mewaldt = XV 4–5 Kühn).¹⁸

In the preceding context of the passage quoted by Galen Plato had referred to the art (or science, τέχνη) of medicine as involving not just knowledge but the ability to actually bring about changes in the patient's state (268a–b).¹⁹ Here Hippocratic medicine is taken to illustrate dialectical method and in particular the best way to start one's inquiry.²⁰ On Plato's authority Hippocrates is

17 The MSS of Galen omit a phrase that is in Plato and is unjustifiably printed by Mewaldt for that reason, viz. (say) "that an examination of nature consists in?" Cf. Hankinson *ad loc.* The phrase is however found in the parallel quotation at *MM X 14 K.* for which see *infra*, p. 31.

18 ἐν τούτοις (scil. sensible attributes) γὰρ ἡ αἰσθητὴ φύσις ἐκάστου τῶν ὄντων ἐστίν· ἡ δὲ τούτων ἀνωτέρω καὶ πρώτη· περὶ ἧς ἐγὼ τε προεῖρηκα καὶ Πλάτων ἐπίστασθαι συμβουλεύει τὸν βουλόμενον ὀτιοῦν πρᾶγμα μεθόδῳ μεταχειρίζεσθαι. παραγράφῳ δὲ σοὶ καὶ τὴν ῥῆσιν αὐτοῦ (270c1–d7). "ψυχῆς οὖν φύσιν ἀξίως λόγου κατανοήσας οἶε δυνατόν εἶναι ἄνευ τῆς τοῦ ὄλου φύσεως; — εἰ μὲν οὖν Ἴπποκράτει τῶ τῶν Ἀσκληπιαδῶν δεῖ τι πειθεσθαι, οὐδὲ περὶ σώματος ἄνευ τῆς μεθόδου ταύτης. — καλῶς γάρ, ὦ ἑταῖρε, λέγει· χρὴ μέντοι πρὸς τῶ Ἴπποκράτει τὸν λόγον ἐξετάζοντας σκοπεῖν εἰ συμφωνεῖ. — φημί. — <τὸ τοῖνον περὶ φύσιν σκοπεῖ> τί ποτε λέγει Ἴπποκράτης τε καὶ ὁ ἀληθὴς λόγος; ἄρ' οὐχ ὧδε δεῖ διανοεῖσθαι περὶ ὀτουοῦν φύσεως; πρῶτον μὲν εἰ ἀπλοῦν ἢ | πολυειδές ἐστίν, οὗ περὶ βουλευσόμεθα εἶναι αὐτοῖ τε τεχνικοὶ καὶ ἄλλοις δυνατοὶ ποιεῖν, ἔπειτα δέ, ἂν μὲν ἀπλοῦν ἦ, σκοπεῖν τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ, τίνα πρὸς τί πέφυκεν εἰς τὸ δρᾶν ἔχον ἢ τίνα εἰς τὸ παθεῖν ὑπὸ του, ἐὰν δὲ πλείω εἶδη ἔχη, ταῦτα ἀριθμησάμενον, ὅπερ ἐφ' ἐνός, τοῦτο ἰδεῖν ἐφ' ἐκάστου, τὸ τί ποιεῖν αὐτὸ πέφυκεν ἢ τὸ τί παθεῖν ὑπὸ του;" αὕτη σοὶ καὶ ἡ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ῥῆσις ἐκ τοῦ Φαιδρου διδάσκουσα τοῦ τε τῆς φύσεως ὀνομαστος τὸ σημαίνόμενον ὅπως τε χρὴ μεθόδῳ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτῆς ἐπισκοπεῖσθαι. The Platonic passage is cited again 54.13–25 Mewaldt = 103–115 Kuhn.

19 Galen at *PHP IX 2*, 25–32 similarly argues that in order to master an art (τέχνη) it is essential to train and become practiced in its method and thus become a competent practitioner of the art, saying that Hippocrates and Plato provide many examples (*IX 2*, 31). For Galen's stress on training as part of an art see *PHP II 3*, 17, *De opt. doct.* III 1, 46–47 K., *MM XIII 11* and *X 901 K.*

20 The way Plato appeals to Hippocrates indicates that he was a famous physician at the time of writing; see Jouanna 1999, 6. Plato's reference to Hippocrates as guide on how to start one's

taken to have applied this method to the study of the body just as the theory of philosophical discourse the dialogue's interlocutors are looking for involves the study of the soul with a view to teaching and convincing others. Thus a link is forged, and an analogy drawn, between the study of soul and that of body as represented by Plato and Hippocrates. At least, this, I would like to suggest, is how Galen is most likely to have read these passages in which philosophical procedure is modelled on medicine and his two intellectual heroes are found in agreement on the central issue of correct method. As we shall presently see, Galen returned to the method proposed by Plato, division, and other relevant passages from the *Phaedrus* in *PHP* book IX (where, surprisingly given the purpose of *PHP*, *Phdr.* 270c1–d7 is not quoted).²¹ Galen's reading of the *Phaedrus* and what it says about the method of the arts was no doubt conditioned by the exegetical tradition concerned with the *Phaedrus* and other relevant dialogues and reflected in manuals on Platonic philosophy such as the one preserved under the name of Alcinoüs.²² Galen rarely refers to his use of that kind of literature, although he does, crucially, at *On the Method of Healing* (hereafter *MM* after its Latin title *De methodo medendi*) II 10, 145 K. Having spoken about the need to correctly define and divide one's subject-matter, he says:

But you have not practiced in these things, so as to come to an understanding of them, even though *they are among the first things taught in introductions to logical theory*. (tr. Hankinson, italics mine)

Here 'these things' refers to points he has made about logical methods such as definition and division with respect to notions of special concern to him such as disease. But elsewhere he includes terse passages of the schoolbook type, such as the one on division found right at the end of *PHP*, viz. IX 9, 43–46, where he provides a brief overview of kinds of division distinguished by dialecticians (a 'division of division,' as one might say) and including that between being (albeit 'underlying unqualified' οὐσία) and its attributes and that between being and its powers reminiscent of the *Phaedrus* passage he cites in *HNH*. In sum, passages such as these confirm that Galen used or at any rate was influenced by the Platonist tradition and its literature on the notion of

inquiry is taken up by Galen in the first two chapters of *PHP* IX, with reference to Hippocrates' *Prognostic* and *Surgery* and, on Plato's side, the *Phaedrus* and other dialogues. See *infra*, p. 31–37.

²¹ It is tempting to speculate whether it had been mentioned in the lost part of book I or the lost book X; cf. *supra*, n. 3. On this see further *infra*, p. 36 with note 43.

²² See *supra*, n. 16.

division and related dialectical tools, just as he turned to the doxographical tradition when it came to dividing the available options in a given debate.²³

The modern interpretative controversy²⁴ as to how to read the reference to the whole as the required starting point (i.e. the body as a whole or nature as a whole, i.e. the cosmos) seems absent from Galen's treatment. But the fact that he takes Plato to refer to the (authentic part of) *On the Nature of Man* indicates that he understood it as the individual object of inquiry, given the Hippocratic author's disquisition on the elemental constitution of the human body. A correct *diaeresis* starts from a complete view of the thing under investigation (in this case the human body) before considering whether one is dealing with one or more forms.

As we have seen, Galen went further than drawing an analogy between philosophy and medicine as others had done before him but developed a synthesis between them, a synthesis embodied by himself. There can be no doubt that *Phaedrus* 270c1–d7 was a key text for him, providing as it did welcome confirmation and further encouragement for how he understood his own position in intellectual history, notably this double role as physician-cum-philosopher. This is also clear from *On the Method of Healing* X 13–14 K., where Galen cites the same passage, or, more precisely, its second half giving Socrates' explanation of Hippocrates' method (270c9–d7, see above). Galen continues:

You hear, my noble friend (*scil.* his adversary, the Methodist physician Thessalus – TT), that Plato thinks it proper to use in the investigation of the soul the same method as that employed by Hippocrates in the case of the body. Or would you prefer me to quote many passages from many different parts of his works in which he particularly exalts Hippocrates of all those who came before him?²⁵ However, I have already done this in another work in which I comment on the doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato, to which I refer anyone interested. The complete agreement between the two men in many of their views, particularly the most important of them, has in my view been absolutely and plainly demonstrated. (X 14 K., tr. Hankinson, slightly modified)²⁶

²³ Cf. Tieleman 2018.

²⁴ On which see Jouanna 1999, 59.

²⁵ The only other occasion on which Plato refers to Hippocrates of Kos, 'the famous physician', by name is at *Prot.* 311c. But here Hippocrates features simply as an expert, to whom one might expect to pay fees for his teaching. Thus Galen may be exaggerating, though one cannot exclude the possibility that he takes on board passages such as *Charmides* 156c–157c, where 'certain eminent doctors' are referred to as holding that in order to cure the eye one must cure the whole body – an idea that certainly appealed to Galen, who may even have connected it with Plato's point about starting from the nature of 'the whole' at *Phdr.* 269c–270d.

²⁶ ἤκουσας, ὦ γενναϊότατε, Πλάτωνος ὁμοίᾳ μεθόδῳ τὰ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ἀξιούντος εὐρίσκειν, οἷα περὶ Ἴπποκράτης τὰ κατὰ τὸ σῶμα· πότερον ἔτι βούλει πολλὰς πολλαχόθι αὐτοῦ τῶν συγγραμμάτων ἐκλέξω σοι ῥήσεις, ἐν αἷς ζηλοῖ τὸν Ἴπποκράτην πάντων μάλιστα τῶν ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ γεγονότων; ἢ τοῦτο μὲν ἐν ἑτέρᾳ πραγματείᾳ πεποιηκῶς, ἐν ᾗ περὶ τῶν

In the context Galen heaps scorn on Thessalus of Tralles, who had been active in the time of the emperor Nero but was still influential enough to feature as the quintessential culprit in Galen's complaint about the decline of medicine with which *On the Method of Healing* opens. In some of his writings Thessalus had seen fit to denounce Hippocrates and the other Asclepiads, proclaiming himself the victorious founder of a sect with a novel physiological theory, viz. Methodism (X 7–8 K.). In particular, he rejected the theory of the four physical elements or elementary qualities defended by Galen. In doing so, Galen points out, Thessalus opposes a long and powerful tradition starting from Hippocrates and including eminent philosophical authorities who followed in Hippocrates' footsteps: not only Plato, but also Aristotle and the Peripatos (X 14) and Chrysippus and the other Stoics (X 17–18) belong to it, at least with regard to elemental theory: so how can Thessalus be victorious over Hippocrates when judged by a tribunal consisting of these big names?²⁷ For our purposes it suffices to note that this polemic provides Galen with another opportunity to present his great tradition of medicine–cum–philosophy, with *Phaedrus* 269c–270d as a key witness.

4 PHP IX: The *Phaedrus* and the Methods of the Arts

I now turn to the work that has already been mentioned and is referred to by Galen himself in the passage from *MM* book I we have just cited: *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*.²⁸ Its ninth book is designed to demonstrate the basic agreement between Hippocrates and Plato on the question of the correct method to be followed in science, in particular medicine, and philosophy alike (*PHP* IX 1, 1–3). Galen presents method as essential to the construction (σύστασις)²⁹ of any art or (applied) science (τέχνη), with the important addition

Ἱπποκράτους καὶ Πλάτωνος δογμάτων ἐπισκέπτομαι, εἰς ἐκείνην ἀναπέμψω τὸν βουλόμενον; ἀποδέδεικται γὰρ, ὡς ἐγὼ νομίζω, πάνυ σαφῶς ἢ περὶ πλεῖστά τε καὶ μέγιστα δόγματα συμφωνία τῶν ἀνδρῶν.

²⁷ Galen's polemic invites comparison with Pliny the Elder's in his *Natural History* XXIX 5.9; 8.26–27, from which we learn that the epitaph on Thessalus' memorial among the select graves on the Appian Way referred to him as ἰατρονικής, 'conqueror of physicians' or 'champion physician' (Nutton 2013, 191).

²⁸ See *supra*, p. 25.

²⁹ Galen later devoted a separate monograph to this subject entitled Περὶ συστάσεως ἰατρικῆς (*De Constitutione Artis Medicae* I 224–304 K.). Modern editions by Boulogne/Delattre 2003 and Johnston 2016.

that practice and experience are no less indispensable (IX 1, 26; 2, 23; 5, 37), just as practice and experience on their own cannot constitute an art either (IX 5, 24).³⁰ The method, or methods, Galen has in mind and which he illustrates with extensive quotations from Hippocrates and Plato, are the method of distinguishing between similars and the method of *diaeresis* (including the opposite procedure of synthesis, or composition, IX 5, 13).³¹ He deals with the first method in the book's first half (IX 1, 1–5, 10), with, on the Platonic side, the *Phaedrus* as his main witness, especially Plato's disquisition on the true art of rhetoric, i.e. on the dialectical method as the tool of the philosophically responsible type of rhetorician, which stretches from *Phdr.* 261a to 274b, and from which Galen provides sometimes extensive quotations. Indeed, Galen takes Plato's account to pertain to the construction of all the arts in general, not just rhetoric (IX 5, 27). As Julius Rocca observes, "Galen's reading concentrates rather on mastering a skill *per se*".³²

Galen starts by quoting *Phdr.* 262a5–7: "Therefore the person who intends to deceive another and not be deceived himself must know accurately the similarity and difference in things" (IX 1, 4). For Plato (or Socrates taken as his persona) this requires knowledge of the truth about a thing: one cannot discern any similarity, great or small, to the thing one is ignorant about (*Phdr.* 262a9–b1, quoted IX 1, 5). For Galen this holds a lesson about where to start one's inquiry, viz. from truths that can be, without any doubt, known by our natural or common criteria, viz. the human senses and mind in their ordinary, sound state, starting from larger and more easily discernible similarities (IX 1, 10–17). On the basis of the natural criteria scientific or 'technical' criteria may be developed for dealing with the harder cases that lie within the remit of philosophers and scientists with the specialized logical and experiential procedures that mark out any art worthy of the name (IX 2, 14–16,

³⁰ See also *supra*, n. 19 with text thereto.

³¹ De Lacy 1966 claims that for Galen the two methods amount to exactly the same thing, but this is incorrect (and would have been problematic anyway): Galen, *PHP* IX 5, 11 merely says division resembles (is adjacent to, γειτνιῶ) the distinction between similar things.

³² Rocca 2006, 54. Rhetoric in the common sense – as is also implied by Plato in the *Phaedrus* – is insufficient for the seeker after truth. Galen regards rhetoric in this sense as inappropriate to scientific discourse and inferior to demonstrative and dialectical modes of argument (only sophistical forms of reasoning rank lower) according to the fourfold classification of types of premises at *PHP* II 1–4, esp. 2, 5 and 3, 11; cf. Tieleman 1996b, 12–23. According to Galen, rhetorical arguments are not derived from the actual attributes of the thing under examination but rely for their persuasiveness on the principle of authority; cf. *supra*, p. 27. In Galen's case it certainly makes sense to distinguish between *rhetorica docens* and *rhetorica utens*. As to the latter, see Petit, *Galien de Pergame ou la rhétorique de la Providence: Médecine, Littérature et Pouvoir à Rome* 2018; Curtis 2009.

with 261e–262e). Indeed, these experts typically deal not with obvious similarities and differences, but issues that are unclear and marked by disagreement and controversy, as explained by Plato, *Phdr.* 263a2–d1, quoted in its entirety by Galen, IX 2, 18–22. According to the Platonic Socrates this calls for methodical investigation aimed at establishing whether one is dealing with the clear kind of issues or the unclear and controversial one (IX 2, 20–21, i.e. *Phdr.* 263b6–c5). Galen explains this again in terms of the natural criteria, taking Plato to have taught us that controversy does not arise about things that fall under these criteria, whereas it does arise about those that do not fall under them at all or in an unclear, dim way (ἀμυδρῶς) (IX 2, 23). The last expression reminds one of the characterization of the non-obvious impressions technically called akataleptic in Stoic epistemology, to which Galen was hospitable (for an example from *PHP* see IX 7, 1–5).³³ It is one of the marks to be taken into account in judging a particular proposition or position: an unclear idea may not be qualified as certifiably true but could qualify as similar to or resembling truth (as opposed to the ones that lie beyond our natural and technical criteria and belong with the type of issues that are definitely insoluble) (IX 7, 9–15).³⁴ That is to say, the class that Plato seems to distinguish at 262a9–11 (quoted *PHP* IX 1, 5; 2, 15) when he says that one needs to know the truth or reality of something in order to be able to decide whether and how far something else is similar to it. In fact, Plato had marked out his own argument in the *Timaeus* as a likely or verisimilar account (εἰκότα λόγον)³⁵ or myth or perhaps rather story (εἰκότα μῦθον, at *Tim.* 29c–d quoted by Galen IX 9, 6, and elsewhere).³⁶ For Galen this showed Plato to be epistemologically sensitive and well aware of the fact that the cosmological issues addressed in his work were not amenable to empirical testing (πείρα), e.g. whether the world has been created or is ungenerated, or not yet

³³ *SVF* II 70; 458; Sextus *M* VII 177 (not in *SVF*); cf. Gal., *Mot. Musc.* IV 445 K.

³⁴ On this passage see Tieleman 2018, 454–458.

³⁵ Plato, *Tim.* 29e, 30b, 48d, 55d, 56a, 57d.

³⁶ For Galen's interest in the *Phaedrus* myth (246e–257b), see *infra*, p. 27. Galen shares Plato's rejection of traditional (as opposed to Platonic) myths in scientific or philosophical discourse. Thus Stoics like Chrysippus are wrong in assuming that they contain useful insights waiting to be uncovered through ingenious interpretive moves: see *PHP* III 8, 33, where he supports this point citing *Phaedrus* 229d3–e4: “Now, *Phaedrus* such explanations are otherwise charming, but as the work of a man who is excessively ingenious and laborious and not entirely enviable, for no other reason than that after this he must straighten out the form of the hippocentaur and then the Chimera; and a multitude of such shapes comes flooding in, Gorgons and Pegasus and an absurd crowd of other impossible and fabulous natures; anyone who does not believe in them, who wants to explain them away and make them plausible by means of some rough kind of ingenuity, will need a great deal of time” (tr. Nehamas & Woodruff, modified).

but possibly amenable to it, e.g. the location of the soul-parts (IX 9, 7; cf. III 1, 20). In the context, Galen refers to the epistemic status of the arguments in question as 'plausible and likely' (τοῦ πιθανοῦ καὶ εἰκότος, IX 9, 6; 7 = p. 598, ll. 20, 26 De Lacy; cf. *On My Own Opinions* (*Prop. Plac.*) 13 186.35–38 Boudon-Pietrobelli). The addition of the 'plausible' here reflects the post-Platonic, Hellenistic epistemological debate in which the Academics and Stoics were dominant and to which Galen refers at *PHP* IX 7, 1–5.³⁷ So Galen connects Plato's comments on truth and similarity to truth on controversial and uncontroversial issues at *Phdr.* 262a–263d to the Hellenistic notion of the plausible. The upshot is that Galen's use of it appears to have full backing from Plato. In addition, the true/plausible/unknown distinction is made part of the notion of an art (τέχνη) as understood by Plato:

It is not surprising, then, that some consider the precise knowledge of similars and dissimilars sufficient for the methodical construction of every art, if indeed it is also an adequate guide to the resolution of disputed points. For as some arguments that are plausible but false have much similarity to those that are genuinely true, the person trained to distinguish between them will know clearly which opinions he is to trust as true and which to reject as false; and in the case of the plausible (τὸ πιθανόν) that resembles the implausible, the relation to truth being obscure, as also of opinions that are on an equal footing, whether they extend to two or three or more, he will know that none is to be considered more trustworthy than the rest. (*PHP* IX 7, 1–2, tr. De Lacy, slightly modified)³⁸

At *PHP* IX 5, 11 Galen turns to the second method essential for the construction of the arts, namely division, together with synthesis, or composition (the former descends from the first and most general class to units that are no longer divisible; the latter goes from the lowest species to the first genus, IX 5, 13). Its use has been demonstrated most clearly in the *Philebus* and the *Phaedrus*. He first cites three passages from the *Phaedrus* where the method is explained and called essential for the 'science of discourse' (τέχνη τῶν λόγων), viz. *Phdr.* 265c8–e3 (IX 5, 14–16), 271c10–272b2 (IX 5, 18–23), 273d6–e4 (IX 5, 26), before turning to what he characterizes as the more detailed account in the *Philebus* (which is also represented by a long quotation, *Phil.* 17b3–18d2 at *PHP* IX 5, 28–35). The second of

³⁷ On which see further Tieleman forthcoming. On Galen's concept of the plausible (πιθανόν) see also Debru 1991; Chiaradonna 2014.

³⁸ Εἰκότως οὖν ἐνιοὶ τὴν τῶν ὁμοίων τε καὶ οὐχ ὁμοίων ἀκριβῆ γνῶσιν αὐτάρκη νομίζουσιν ὑπάρχειν εἰς μεθοδικὴν σύστασιν ἀπάσης τέχνης, εἴ γε καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀμφισβητουμένην κρίσιν ἰκανὴ ποδηγός ἐστιν. ὁμοιότητος γὰρ οὕσης πολλῆς ἐνίοις τῶν πιθανῶν μὲν, οὐκ ἀληθῶν δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ὄντως ἀληθεῖς λόγους, ὁ γεγυμνασμένος διακρίνειν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων αὐτοὺς εἴσεται σαφῶς ὅσοις τε χρὴ δόγμασι πιστεύειν ὡς ἀληθεῖσιν, ὅσων τε καταγιγνώσκειν ὡς ψευδῶν, ὅσων τε τὸ πιθανὸν ἀδηλον ὅπως ἀληθείας ἔχον προσέοικε τῷ ἀπιθάνῳ, ὥσπερ γε καὶ τῶν ἐπίσης ἀλλήλοισι, εἴτε ἐν δυσὶν εἴτ' ἐν τρισὶν εἴτε ἐν πλείοσιν ἢ ἀλλήλοισι, εἴτε ἐν δυσὶν εἴτ' ἐν τρισὶν εἴτε ἐν πλείοσιν ἢ ἑκτασις γένοιτο, μηδὲν ἡγεῖσθαι πιστότερον.

these comes right after the crucial passage linking Hippocrates and Plato with respect to the best method of inquiry (*Phdr.* 270c1–d7) and provides the application of the method to the soul: the orator, whose job it is to influence the soul, should know about its structure and so be able to make different kinds of speeches geared to people’s character. Galen returns to this passage at IX 6, 62–63, now providing a summary including, it seems, what follows from 270c9 onwards:³⁹

Therefore that account also in which Plato says that we must know accurately the nature of the essence of every entity about which we wish to construct an art, is closely allied to the methods just mentioned⁴⁰ and makes common cause with them. For a person who knows that there is not one simple form of soul in us, such as the desiderative in plants or the rational in gods, but that men have both of these and the spirited besides as a third, knows along with this the number and the nature of the virtues and how they are acquired, just as the person who knows the natural constitution of our bodies – that the natural state of every animate body results from the right proportion of the elements in the homoeomerous⁴¹ parts, and in the organic members from the quantity and size of the homoeomerous parts, and also from the conformation and position of each, the proportion of the things mentioned being of course preserved in every animal in the way that is appropriate to it – that person unaided will succeed in finding the right treatment and prophylaxis for every disease. (IX 6, 62–63, tr. De Lacy)⁴²

In sum, the technique of division is absolutely basic, as is demonstrated here by reference to the moral philosopher and the practicing physician, both of whom ply a useful art. Why Galen does not seize the opportunity to present verbatim quotations from, or at least refer to, the passage in which Plato refers to Hippocrates, must remain a moot point. It may seem surprising not to find an explicit reference to or indeed presentation of it here.⁴³ But possibly, given its

³⁹ Rather than *Phdr.* 261–262, as De Lacy *ad loc.* suggests.

⁴⁰ *Scil.* examples of division from Hippocratic works he has cited in the preceding context.

⁴¹ Or ‘uniform’: bone, flesh, hair, etc.

⁴² ὥστε κάκεινος ὁ λόγος ἐν ᾧ φησιν ὁ Πλάτων <ὡς> ἐκάστου τῶν ὄντων περὶ ὃ τέχνην τινὰ συστήσασθαι βουλόμεθα τὴν φύσιν τῆς οὐσίας ἀκριβῶς χρῆν γινώσκειν, συνήπται τε καὶ κοιωνεῖται τῶν εἰρημέναις μεθόδοις. ὁ γὰρ γνοὺς οὐχ ἀπλοῦν ἐν εἶδος ἐν ἡμῖν εἶναι ψυχῆς, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς φυτοῖς μὲν τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, ἐν θεοῖς δὲ τὸ λογιστικόν, ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ δ’ ἄμφω τε ταῦτα καὶ τρίτον ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς τὸ θυμοειδές, ἔγνω σὺν τούτῳ τῶν ἀρετῶν τὸν ἀριθμὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν καὶ τὴν κτῆσιν, ὥσπερ ὁ γνοὺς τὴν φυσικὴν κατασκευὴν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν, ἐν μὲν τοῖς ὁμοιομερέσι συμμετρίαν τῶν στοιχείων, ἐν δὲ τοῖς ὀργανικοῖς ἐκ τῆς τῶν ὁμοιομερῶν ποσότητός τε καὶ πηλικότητος ἔτι τε διαπλάσεως ἐκάστου καὶ θέσεως ἀποτελεῖσθαι τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἐν ἐκάστῳ σώματι ζῶου, τῆς συμμετρίας δηλονότι καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐν ἐκάστῳ σώματι ζῶου, τῆς συμμετρίας δηλονότι καθ’ ἕκαστον ζῶον τῶν εἰρημένων φυλαττομένης οἰκείας, αὐτὸς δὲ τῶν νοσημάτων εὐπορήσει τῆς προσηκούσης ἐκάστῳ θεραπείας τε καὶ προφυλακῆς.

⁴³ Rocca 2006, 57n13 argues “(...) although it (*scil. Phaedrus* 269c–d) provides Galen with an example of Hippocrates and Plato in accord, it does not give Plato’s own views on division and

importance, he had done so right at the outside of the entire work, which is no longer preserved (only about the last third of *PHP* book I is extant).

5 Galen's *Protrepticus* and the *Phaedrus* Myth

Galen's engagement with the *Phaedrus* in *PHP* IX has further borne out the importance of this dialogue for him as the champion of the arts and of the art of medicine in particular.⁴⁴ It should therefore not be considered too far-fetched to look for more cases of inspiration from the *Phaedrus* in Galen's *Protrepticus* or *Exhortation to Medicine*, which opens with a general praise of the arts in general. Its patron deity is Hermes, who is described as leading a procession of worshippers, i.e. the craftsmen and scientists, who never complain about him (unlike the devotees of Fortune, who do complain about *their* god), are never abandoned by or separated from him, but keep following him (*Protr.* III 1–3, 87.3–18 Boudon):

You could see his devotees being as cheerful as the god who leads them and never complaining about him as the adherents of Fortune do, and never being left behind or separated (*scil.* from him), but following him and constantly enjoying his providence. (*Protr.* III 3, 87.13–18 Boudon)⁴⁵

More than anything else this end of Galen's hymnic description recalls the procession of the gods from *Phaedrus* 247d–248a, where the souls who more or less successfully join the procession try to become *like* the gods. This last point makes this one of the passages that later was to give rise to the notion of 'becoming like god as far as possible' (ὁμοίωσις τῷ θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν) as the Platonist end (τέλος) of life.⁴⁶ But nothing less is at issue in this Galenic passage: becoming a practitioner of one of the arts transforms, or should transform, one's life, for which one may seek divine support and confirmation. It stands to reason to select one *particular* god who is appropriate to one's chosen profession. This is

synthesis, which is what Galen needs in book IX of *PHP*". But this seems beside the point given that book IX is concerned not only with Plato but also with Hippocrates and the agreement between them concerning method in line with the overall purpose of *PHP*; cf. Rocca's own comments 2006, 50–51.

44 This is brought out powerfully by Vegetti 1986.

45 ἴδοις δ' ἂν τοὺς θιασώτας αὐτοῦ φαιδρὸς μὲν ὁμοίως τῷ καθηγουμένῳ θεῷ, μεμφομένους δ' οὐδέποτ' αὐτὸν ὡσπερ οἱ τὴν Τύχην, οὐδ' ἀπολειπομένους ποτ' οὐδὲ χωριζομένους, ἀλλ' ἐπομένους τε καὶ διὰ παντὸς ἀπολαύοντας τῆς προνοίας αὐτοῦ.

46 The clearest statement of this ideal is *Theaet.* 176a–b. See e.g. the study by Sedley 1999.

in fact indicated by Plato at *Phdr.* 252c–d. Thus he writes at 252d1–2: “So it is with each god: everyone spends his life honouring the god in whose chorus he danced, and imitates that god as far as possible. . .” Indeed, Galen actually described the artisans, being the followers of Hermes, as being like him especially, he writes, through their radiant (φαιδρός!) appearance. When Galen focuses on medicine as one of the arts (though for him of course the most important one) the god that belongs with his life and career cannot be other than Asclepius, as is attested by many passages throughout his works.⁴⁷

6 Conclusion

Plato in *Phaedrus* 269c–270d presented the relation between Hippocrates and Plato in a way that was exquisitely suited to support Galen’s project of a philosophical medicine, or medical philosophy, aimed at human well-being. Indeed, this passage and its context in this Platonic dialogue may have stimulated and guided him in developing this project in the first place, alongside other influences and experiences connected with the applied sciences (τέχναι). Galen’s project was highly individual in character but no less in need of a venerable ancestry than competing ones were. With Platonic support he could present Hippocrates and Plato as the founders of a tradition of good philosophy-cum-medicine. As we have seen, he could appeal to this tradition, including the *Phaedrus* passage, in polemical contexts such as his broadside against the Methodist Thessalus of Tralles in *On the Method of Healing*. Galen fleshed out this view of the intellectual past in his great work *On the Doctrines Hippocrates and Plato*, in book IX giving prominence to *Phaedrus* 261a–274b as teaching us about the methods that, together with training and practice, constitute not just the art of rhetoric but any art. With *Phaedrus* 269c–270d lurking in the background, Galen in *PHP* IX provides several quotations, some of them substantial, from the *Phaedrus* as well the Hippocratic corpus to substantiate his claim that the two authorities were agreed on the subject of methodical procedure, focusing on the distinction between similarities and on the method of division (*diaeresis*). We have found some evidence that Galen’s reading of Platonic-style division combines original features with reflections of his philosophical education and in particular its Platonist component.

The distinction between similarities raises certain epistemological issues, most notably that of the criterion of truth, addressed by Galen in a way that

⁴⁷ See Tieleman 2016, where I already pointed to the *Phaedrus* myth (29).

reflects Hellenistic debates such as that between Stoics and Academics on the notion of the plausible (πιθανον). Here Galen found support in the notion of verisimilitude as found in the *Phaedrus* (together with the idea of the 'likely account' of the Platonic *Timaeus*), which he aligned with the Stoic and Academic concept of the plausible. If we are correct about the intertextuality between the third chapter of the *Protrepticus* and the *Phaedrus*, Galen also derived some religious inspiration from this dialogue. Clearly, Galen's self-understanding as a philosophically educated medical scientist and practitioner was in many ways informed by his engagement with the *Phaedrus*.

