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**Disease and Desire:
Perspectives on Addiction from Ancient Greek Poetry, Philosophy, and Medicine**

A dissertation presented

by

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to the

Department of the Classics

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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**Disease and Desire:
Perspectives on Addiction from Ancient Greek Poetry, Philosophy, and Medicine**

Abstract

This dissertation investigates addiction in the ancient Greco-Roman world, a phenomenon which I show not only existed in the ancient past, but was also conceptualised in unique ways. Based on a method that balances biological aspects of addiction with factors from the social and environmental context, I investigate how addiction was diagnosed, explained, and treated in the ancient world. I focus on cases and examples from Aristophanes's *Wasps*, Plato's *Timaeus* (as well as a few other texts), and Galen's psychological writings. I lay out a previously unnoticed dialogue among these authors in relation to the topic of addiction, and reveal their various approaches to addiction as a problem (or not) of health, habit, and environment. Finally, I suggest that the alternative perspectives found in the ancient material might be used to think critically about unexamined assumptions and values surrounding the conceptualization and treatment of addiction today.

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Abbreviations, Editions, and Translations

Abbreviations of Greek authors and their works are from Liddell, Scott, and Jones (LSJ). Works in the Hippocratic Corpus are cited using the section and line numbers from the Littré edition. Works of Plato are cited using the Stephanus page numbers. The Greek texts of Aristophanes's *Wasps* and of Plato's works are from the Oxford Classical Texts editions. The translations of the Aristophanes are my own. The translations of Plato are from the Cooper Hackett edition. Works of Galen are cited mostly using the page and line numbers from the Kühn (K) edition, with the following exceptions: *Avoiding Distress*: the Budé edition, edited by Boudon-Millot, Jouanna, and Pietrobelli (BJP); *Character Traits*: the Kraus (Arabic) edition (Kr.); *Diagnosis and Treatments of the Passions and Errors Peculiar to Each Person's Soul*: the De Boer edition (DB) is cited in addition to the Kühn; *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the Mixtures of the Body (QAM)*: the Müller Teubner edition (M) is cited in addition to the Kühn. The translations of Galen are from the Singer Cambridge edition, unless otherwise noted. All other texts and translations are cited in footnotes.

Chapter 1

Introduction:

Approaching Addiction in the Ancient World

1. A Case of Opioid Addiction in the Ancient World

The opioid epidemic continues to devastate families and communities across the United States and around the world, making addiction a continually relevant topic of study.¹ But opium use and potential misuse has existed for a long time. One of the most famous—and controversial—cases of addiction from antiquity is that of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius’s addiction to opium.² In Marcus Aurelius’s case, evidence of his addiction to opium is found in the writings of his doctor Galen—another figure from the ancient world, well-known

1 Though the opioid epidemic has been somewhat displaced from headlines since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, addictions to opioids continues to be a major public health problem, with official numbers tallying now over 100,000 people dying per year in the US due to overdose or other causes related to opioid use: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, (2021, November 17), “Drug Overdose Deaths in the U.S. Top 100,000 Annually” [Press Release], https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm.

2 On arguments in favor of Marcus Aurelius’s addiction to opium, see: Thomas W. Africa, (1961), “The opium addiction of Marcus Aurelius,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22.1: 97-102; S. Ainslie, (2001), “Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the History of Opium Addiction,” in W. A. Whitelaw (ed.), *The Proceedings of the 10th Annual History of Medicine Days*, Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary, 21-25; cf. F. Jevons, (1965), “Was Plotinus influenced by opium?” *Medical History* 9.4: 374-80 and the most recent call for papers from the Society for Ancient Medicine and Pharmacology, for a panel on “Addiction, Dependency, and Habit”: cf. “Addiction, Dependency, and Habit,” [societyforancientmedicine.org](https://www.societyforancientmedicine.org), retrieved Feb. 7, 2022, from www.societyforancientmedicine.org/#h.5i652zkc219d.

There are, however, many scholars who argue against interpreting Marcus Aurelius as being addicted. See: Danielle Gourevitch and Michel Gourevitch, (1983), “Marc Aurèle devint-il toxico-dépendant?” *L'évolution psychiatrique* XL.1; 253-256; Paolo Nencini, (1997h), “The Rules of Drug Taking: Wine and Poppy Derivatives in the Ancient World. VIII. Lack of Evidence of Opium Addiction,” *Substance Use & Misuse* 32.11: 1581-1586; Francois P. Retief, (2007), “Marcus Aurelius: was he an opium addict?” in L. Cilliers (ed.), *Asklepios: studies on ancient medicine*, Bloemfontein: Classical Association of South Africa, 132-137; Ana Maria Rosso, (2010), “Poppy and opium in ancient times: remedy or narcotic?” *Biomedicine International* 1.2: 81-87; John Scarborough, (2010), *Pharmacy and drug lore in antiquity: Greece, Rome, Byzantium*, Farnham: Ashgate; Vivian Nutton, (2019), *Galen: A Thinking Doctor in Imperial Rome*, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.

for his large influence on the history of medicine.³ In his treatise on *Antidotes*, Galen gives the following example about the emperor's opium addiction (K 14.3-4):

Every day he took as much as the size of an Egyptian bean, drinking it either straight or mixing it with water or wine. When he found himself drowsily dozing during his daily activities, he removed the poppy juice. But then it recurred [to him] because of his previous habit, as he naturally had a drier mixture and the drug that he took for so long dried [him out further], he spent the greater part of the night awake, and because of this it was necessary to add the poppy juice back into his regime, since the poppy mixture had been taken for a long time already. For I have often already said that such drugs, when taken for a long time, make him calmer.⁴

Opium, the juice from the poppy, was part of the emperor's daily regime: it was common, especially for ancient rulers, to consume various herbs and medicines to augment their health. However, Marcus Aurelius was finding himself drowsy during the performance of his daily duties. So, he had Galen remove the poppy juice from the mix, presumably knowing that one of its typical side effects was drowsiness; its removal would allow him to be more alert on the job. However, then a counter-problem arose: he began to experience great insomnia, staying awake for most of the night. Galen attributes this to the emperor's habitually "dry constitution" and the drying effects of the drug (a reference to medical notions that were in circulation at the time). We

³ One the significance of Galen, see, for example, Owsei Temkin, (1973), *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Vivian Nutton, (2005), "The fatal embrace: Galen and the history of ancient medicine," *Science in Context*, 18.1: 111-121; E. H. Ackerknecht, (2016), *A short history of medicine*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press; P. Bouras-Vallianatos and B. Zipser (eds.), (2019), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Galen*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.

⁴ The translation is my own. The Greek text reads: ἐκάστης ἡμέρας, ὅσον Αἰγυπτίου κυάμου μέγεθος ἐλάμβανεν, ἢ καταπίνων ἄνευ μίξεως ὕδατος ἢ οἴνου ἢ τοιούτου μίγνυς. ἐπεὶ δὲ συνέβαινεν αὐτῷ νυστάζειν καρῶδῶς ἐν ταῖς ὁσημέραι πράξεσιν, ἀφεῖλε τὸν ὀπὸν τῆς μήκωνος. πάλιν οὖν αὐτὸν συνέβη διὰ τὸ πρόσθεν ἔθος, ὡς ἂν αὐτῷ τε φύσει ξηροτέρας ὄντι κράσεως, καὶ ξηραῖνον φάρμακον ἐκ πολλοῦ προσφερόμενον, τό γε πλεῖστον μέρος τῆς νυκτὸς ἄγρυπνον διατελεῖν, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἠναγκάσθη προσφέρεισθαι, καὶ τοῦ τὸν ὀπὸν ἔχοντος ἤδη πως κεχρονικότος. εἰρηται γάρ μοι πολλάκις ἤδη τὰ τοιαῦτα φάρμακα χρονίζοντα πραότερον ἴσχειν αὐτόν (C.G. Kühn (ed.), (1965), *Galen Opera Omnia*, Vol. 14, 'On antidotes' et al, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 3-4).

might also imagine that the emperor had a lot keeping him up at night, as the leader of the Roman Empire who was in the process of leading a military campaign. In any case, the nightly insomnia turned out to be even more unacceptable to the emperor and his doctor than his opium-induced daily drowsiness, so he wanted the poppy juice to be added back in again. At the end of this anecdote, Galen notes that the emperor, through his long use, needed the poppy juice: he now depended on it simply to be able to sleep.

This example suggests that addiction was a real phenomenon in the ancient Mediterranean world. But what, exactly, does that mean? It is my aim in this dissertation to explore some of the ways of understanding addiction in the ancient world, and to offer some suggestions about what those might mean to us looking back today.

2. Broad Considerations About Addiction

When we talk of addiction now, it generally refers to a repeated behavior in pursuit of some pleasure, but that brings with it certain negative consequences. This way of using the concept “addiction” covers all sorts of substance addictions, as well as addictions to behaviors like gambling, sex, work, and shopping. In these addictions, whether it is consuming a substance or engaging in a pattern of behavior, you typically start out from something pleasurable. At first, it feels good to pursue it. So good that you want to do it again. So, you do. And maybe again. And again. And again. There is some fuzzy boundary that you cross at a certain point and that is when you are hooked, feeling a compulsive need to seek out the same pleasure over and over again. Yet at the same time, the pleasure might stop feeling so good: you need to take more or do more to achieve the same effect. Indeed, the compulsive need takes over and drives your pursuits, even after the experience has stopped being as pleasurable as it first was. And yet you

continue. At some point, it can also have negative consequences for your health, finances, relationships. And yet you continue. The consequences can become graver: you might end up in the hospital, out of money, living on the streets, in and out of broken relationships. And yet you continue. This is roughly what addiction is: a cycle that may start out well, yet goes badly across a certain period of time. Pleasure-seeking transforms into a burden that is heavy to bear and difficult to shed.

We saw this pattern in the example of Marcus Aurelius's opium use. He appreciated the opium for the calmness that it brought to him, enabling him to sleep through the night. Yet it also had the negative consequence of affecting his alertness during the day, not allowing him to do his work successfully. Without the opium he experienced insomnia—a withdrawal symptom—driving him immediately back to using it once again because he had become so habituated to it. Due to the limits of the evidence, we do not know much more about Marcus Aurelius's opium addiction, whether it continued and how it may have impacted the rest of his life. But from Galen's brief account of it, we can see some of the typical dynamics of addiction at work in Marcus Aurelius's case, such as not being able or wanting to live without it despite negative consequences.

As a topic, addiction has the potential to open up many areas of research in different fields, from scientific research on the chemical reactions in the brain's reward system, to public health and sociological work on the institutions and systems that support—or fail to support—individuals living with and suffering from addictions. The idea of “suffering from” addiction, too, raises interesting questions in psychology and ethics: do individuals voluntarily choose to do themselves harm? What does it mean to choose a course of action? (Do we have free will and agency?) What is the relationship between a biological drive (something like a natural impulse,

driven by brain reward systems and habituated neural pathways) and the conscious experience of desire? What actually “drives” addiction: is it substances themselves? Individuals and their genetic predispositions that make them prone to addictive behavior? Contexts that fuel the need for pleasurable escapes? All of the above? And moreover, is addiction a disease, a habit, a *bad* habit, or simply a different way of life? How do we measure or qualify what makes for a good life and health, and how do we think and talk about what varies from our own conceptions of that? Questions like these and more are all on the table in studying addiction.

When it comes to addiction in antiquity, many of these questions can be raised. Studying addiction in antiquity also offers the unique opportunity to consider the patterns and meanings of addiction in a context that is different and distant from the present. This distance entails a kind of alienation or estrangement that allows us to see things about addiction that may escape our notice today, such as the moral assumptions behind its conceptualization.⁵ It is easy to take many factors for granted when it comes to addiction, especially when there is an immediate need to respond to crises such as the opioid epidemic. But one of the advantages of doing historical research on a topic like addiction is that it allows the distance to consider aspects of the topic that

⁵ This is one of the basic ideas behind a historicist approach to studying materials from the past. As a touchstone for this approach, I often go back to a passage from Quentin Skinner: “According to the view I have been outlining, the history of philosophy is only ‘relevant’ if we can use it as a mirror to reflect our own beliefs and assumptions back to us. If we can do this, it takes on ‘intrinsic philosophical significance’; if we cannot, it remains ‘of purely historical interest’. The only way to learn from the past, in short is to appropriate it. I wish to suggest instead that **it may be precisely those aspects of the past which appear at first place to be without contemporary relevance that may prove upon closer acquaintance to be of the most immediate philosophical significance. For their relevance may lie in the fact that, instead of supplying us with our usual and carefully contrived pleasure of recognition, they enable us to stand back from our own beliefs and the concepts we use to express them, perhaps forcing us to reconsider, to recast or even (I shall next seek to suggest) to abandon some of our current beliefs in the light of these wider perspectives**” (Q. Skinner, (1984), “The idea of negative liberty: philosophical and historical perspectives,” in R. Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Q. Skinner (eds.), *Philosophy in History*, Cambridge: University Press, 202, emphasis added).

are not of immediate, pressing concern. What constitutes addiction has been deeply contested throughout its history, and how societies respond to it reveals a lot about their conceptions of value, health, practices, and more. By understanding addiction in history, we can better understand how we arrived at the ideas about addiction that are currently in use, and reflect on alternative possibilities in light of the different perspectives that emerge from studying the past.

In a different sense, stories about addiction from the ancient world are also directly relevant to discussions of addiction today. Many psychological and ethical concepts in “Western” thought (broadly conceived) trace their origins to Greek philosophy. These include ideas about free will, rational autonomy, the separation between the mind and body, the motivational power of appetites and desire, and more. Understanding the origins and histories of such concepts, again, can enable us to view them with a critical distance, rather than take them for granted as “natural” or given. Addiction scientists and scholars also often look back to the ancient world as a source of inspiration or as a predictor of modern scientific findings.⁶ In light of this, there is work to be done in elaborating the historical ideas and examples they draw upon, to give a fuller picture of what addiction might have meant in the past.

For me, studying ancient addiction is motivated by a combination of these concerns: I aim to think differently about current approaches to addiction, understand how addiction was

⁶ Referring to the ancient origins of addiction or concepts related to addiction and its treatment is a trend in recent work on addiction by people working outside of the fields of classics or ancient history. This alone might warrant a study by someone within the field of the materials that are appealed to (or not) in relation to addiction. I will be citing various examples of this trend in work on addiction. A few key recent examples include: Carl Erik Fisher, (2022), *The Urge: Our History of Addiction*, New York: Penguin Press; B. Alexander, (2010), *The globalization of addiction: A study in poverty of the spirit*, Oxford: University Press; J. Grisel, (2019), *Never enough: The neuroscience and experience of addiction*, New York: Doubleday (for more on this last work, see my discussion in chapter 3 below).

approached in antiquity, notice the similarities and differences between addiction then and now, and consider the assumptions made around addiction in general.

But studying addiction in the ancient world is not without its challenges. Before diving into different cases and perspectives, I want to spell out some of the assumptions that I have made in approaching the study of addiction in the ancient world.

3. Possible Ways to Study Addiction in the Ancient World

In studying addiction in antiquity, we might first ask what, exactly, we are studying: what kind of thing is addiction? This is a hugely debated question. Thinking in terms of broad categories, there are basically three ways one can approach the study of addiction: 1) as a biological disease, 2) as a socially constructed phenomenon, or 3) as some combination of these two.⁷ Another way of putting this might be to consider addiction in terms of the nature/nurture debate: are addictions caused by an individual's nature (e.g., genes, neurobiology), their nurture (e.g., the cultural context within which they are raised), or some combination of both?⁸

⁷ Narrowing down the conceptions of and approaches to addiction is a complex task. R. West and J. Brown's (2013) *Theory of addiction* (Second edition) (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell) offers some thirty different current theories of addiction. Compare Carl Erik Fisher's categorization of approaches to addiction into 4 basic types: "A *prohibitionist* approach has sought to control addiction through punishment and other law enforcement strategies. A *therapeutic* approach has argued that addiction is best handled as a disorder to be treated by the medical field. A *reductionist* approach has sought to explain addiction in scientific terms, often seeking biology-based cures. And a *mutual-help* approach has sought community healing and grassroots fellowship—and sometimes, but not always, spiritual development—to recover from addiction" (Carl Erik Fisher, (2022), *The Urge: Our History of Addiction*, New York: Penguin Press, 12-13).

⁸ Such debates over nature vs. nurture have their roots in Greek antiquity, see: Clarence J. Glacken, (1976), *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press. As Chiara Thumiger points out in her recent book, investigating mental health in Greek medicine necessarily explores the relationship between nature and culture. In particular, questions arise such as: "When we address concepts of mental life and health, can we rely on the universality of human mental functioning and disorders? Or should our main object be taken as entirely culturally and socially determined?" (C. Thumiger, (2017), *A history of the mind and mental health in classical*

Approaching addiction as a biological disease has predominated in scientific research for the past several decades.⁹ In this approach, the basic idea is that addictive behavior corresponds to certain changes in the physical structure of the brain's reward system, which explains why addictions are like a compulsive force that lies outside an individual's control. Yet there is hardly consensus about this approach, and there have been an increasing number of critiques of it.¹⁰ One key critique is the idea that, in studying addiction as purely or even primarily a biological disease, one risks missing out on aspects of social contexts, which are essential to how addiction is experienced and understood—how we make sense of it as people living in various contexts. In other words, leaving the context out and focusing on the individual as the site of a physical

Greek medical thought, Cambridge: University Press, 23). Thumiger's object of study is mental health and mental illness in antiquity, which is different from studying addiction in the ancient world, insofar as addiction is not necessarily a mental illness. Yet, her study also provides a useful analogy, based on similar methodological problems about classifying mental phenomena, the possible biochemical foundations of mental illnesses, the dynamic role of environment and culture, and the uncertainty over detecting and determining the effectiveness of different treatments.

⁹ For various discussions of the predominance of the medical model of addiction, see: David Courtwright, (2012), "Addiction and the science of history," *Addiction: Addiction and its Sciences*, 107.3: 486-492; Michael J. Kuhar, (2010), "Contributions of basic science to understanding addiction," *BioSocieties*, 5.1: 25-35; Bruce K. Alexander, (2014), "Rise and Fall of the Official View of Addiction," Bruce K. Alexander's Globalization of Addiction Website, <https://brucekalexander.com/articles-speeches/277-rise-and-fall-of-the-official-view-of-addiction-6>; Marc Lewis, (2015), *The biology of desire: why addiction is not a disease*, Melbourne: Scribe Publications.

¹⁰ For various perspectives and critiques of the medical model, see: J. Netherland (ed.), (2012), *Critical Perspectives on Addiction*, Bingley, UK: Emerald; R. Hammer, et al., (2013), "Addiction: Current criticism of the brain disease paradigm," *AJOB neuroscience*, 4.3: 27-32; R. West and J. Brown, (2013), *Theory of addiction* (Second edition.), Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell; R. Granfield and C. Reinarman (eds.), (2014), *Expanding Addiction: Critical Essays*, New York: Routledge; Bruce K. Alexander, (2010), *The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*, Oxford: University Press; Steve Sussman and Alan N. Sussman, (2011), "Considering the Definition of Addiction," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 8.10: 4025-4038; David Courtwright, (2012), "Addiction and the science of history," *Addiction: Addiction and its Sciences*, 107.3: 486-492; Marc Lewis, (2015), *The biology of desire: why addiction is not a disease*, Melbourne: Scribe Publications; L. Hogarth, (2020), "Addiction is driven by excessive goal-directed drug choice under negative affect: translational critique of habit and compulsion theory," *Neuropsychopharmacology*, 45.5: 720-735; Carl Erik Fisher, (2022), *The Urge: Our History of Addiction*, New York: Penguin Press. See also my discussion of the contemporary brain disease model and its limitations in chapter 3 below.

pathology misses important components about the phenomenological and social experience of addiction.

This critique seems especially relevant for studying addiction in history, as context is what helps us understand what different pieces of data meant. And, while there is some research on bio-archeological evidence of various substances, there are also limitations in the evidence for using a strictly biological or material focus for studying ancient addiction. For example, we obviously cannot do brain scans of ancient individuals to analyze the biochemistry of their addictions. The biodegradable nature of pharmacological substances associated with addictions makes that kind of material evidence difficult to access, and even then, substances themselves can only tell us so much about their use. Despite these limitations, most previous scholars studying addiction in antiquity have approached it by focusing on substances and the biological evidence surrounding their use, assuming the modern conception of addiction as a brain disease caused by the consumption of addictive substances.¹¹

¹¹ Though there have not been any overarching studies of addiction in antiquity, there have been a few focused studies, including studies of particular cases like Marcus Aurelius (see footnote 2 above) and Alexander the Great. For the most part, scholars measure ancient cases against modern understandings of addiction to judge whether a particular case was an instance of addiction or not. See: John H. D'Arms, (1995), "Heavy Drinking and Drunkenness in the Roman World: Four Questions for Historians," in O. Murray and M. Tecusan (eds.), *In Vino Veritas*, London: British School at Rome in association with American Academy at Rome, 304-317; Danielle Gourevitch, (1998), "Les sociétés antiques connaissaient-elles l'addiction?" in Kamel Malek (ed.), *Les passions dangereuses: addiction et conduites de dépendance*, Les dossiers de l'Institut d'études des politiques de santé, Paris: IEPS. Flammarion médecine-sciences, 9-11; Danielle Gourevitch and Gilles Demigneux, (2013), "Two Historical Case Histories of Acute Alcoholism in the Roman Empire," in C. Laes, C. Goodey, and M. L. Rose (eds.), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 73-87;; Jacques Jouanna, (1996), "Le vin et la médecine dans la Grèce ancienne," *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 109: 419-434; J. O. Leibowitz, (1957), "Acute Alcoholism in Greek and Roman Medicine," *British Journal of Addiction* 62: 83-86; Paolo Nencini, (1997a), "The Rules of Drug Taking: Wine and Poppy Derivatives in the Ancient World. I. General Introduction," *Substance Use & Misuse* 32.1: 89-96 (see also Nencini 1997b-i, listed in the bibliography); John Maxwell O'Brien, (1992), *Alexander the Great: The invisible enemy: A biography*, London and New York: Routledge; John Maxwell O'Brien and Barney L. Rickenbacker, (2005), "Alcoholism," in Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd rev. edition), Oxford: University Press; J. D. Rolleston, (1927), "Alcoholism in Classical Antiquity," *British Journal of Inebriation* 24: 101-120; Michel Rosenzweig, (1998), *Les drogues dans l'histoire: Entre remède*

On the other hand, we might consider studying addiction as a purely socially constructed phenomenon.¹² This approach points to how addiction is a linguistic concept used to signify or mark out (perhaps even create) a variety of experiences belonging to a particular category, “addiction,” though the contents of that category have changed over time, and both the contents and the category itself have undergone various conceptual shifts. A recent example of changes to the content is the on-going debate over which behavioral addictions to include in official diagnostic manuals: gambling addiction is in, but gaming, sex, and shopping addictions (among others) remain contested.¹³ Including one or the other of these as addictions, according to a social

et poison: Archéologie d'un savoir oublié, Bruxelles: De Boeck & Belin: Prospective jeunesse; Jean-Charles Sourria, (1987), “L’alcoolisme dans la Grèce antique,” *Archéologie et médecine. VII Rencontres internationales d’archéologie et d’histoire d’Antibes, 23, 24, 25 octobre 1986*, Jean-les-Pins: A.P.D.C.A., 523-530; John E. Thorburn, (2005), “Philocleon’s Addiction,” *Classics Ireland* 12: 50-61; Pierre Villard, (1982), “Pathologie et thérapeutique de l’ivresse dans l’Antiquité classique,” *Histoire des Sciences Médicales* 16: 193-198; *idem*, (1983), “L’alcoolisation dans l’Antiquité classique: aux origines de l’alcoolisme,” in H. Bernard, et al (eds.), *Alcoolisme et psychiatrie: Rapport présenté au haut comité d’étude et d’information sur l’alcoolisme*, Paris: Société française d’histoire de la psychiatrie, 15-36; *idem*, (1988), “L’ivresse dans l’antiquité classique,” *Histoire, Economie, Société* 7: 443-459.

¹² On social construction in general, see: Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, (2013), *Laboratory life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, Second Edition, Princeton: University Press; I. Hacking, (1999), *The social construction of what?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. On the social construction of addiction in particular, see: P. D. Cohen, (2000), “Is the addiction doctor the voodoo priest of western man?” *Addiction Research*, 8.6: 589-598; C. Reinerman, (2005), “Addiction as accomplishment: The discursive construction of disease,” *Addiction Research & Theory*, 13.4: 307-320; M. Clark, (2011), “Conceptualising addiction: How useful is the construct?” *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1.13: 55-64; Richard J. Rosenthal and Suzanne B. Faris, (2019), “The etymology and early history of ‘addiction,’” *Addiction Research & Theory*, 27.5: 437-449.

¹³ See, for example: M. Piquet-Pessôa, G. M. Ferreira, I. A. Melca, and L. F. Fontenelle, (2014), “DSM-5 and the decision not to include sex, shopping or stealing as addictions,” *Current Addiction Reports*, 1.3: 172-176; J. C. Wakefield, (2015), “DSM-5 substance use disorder: How conceptual missteps weakened the foundations of the addictive disorders field” [Editorial], *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 132.5: 327–334; F. Pinna, *et al.*, (2015), “Behavioural addictions and the transition from DSM-IV-TR to DSM-5,” *Journal of Psychopathology*, 21.4: 380-389; J. E. Grant and S. R. Chamberlain, (2016), “Expanding the definition of addiction: DSM-5 vs. ICD-11,” *CNS spectrums*, 21.4: 300–303; P. Zachar, M. B. First, and K. S. Kendler, (2022), “Revising substance-related disorders in the DSM-5: a history,” *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, 83.1: 99-105.

constructivist approach, is more a matter of negotiation among interested communities (scientific, medical, public health) than of discovering of new facts about the human body, substances, and behaviors. Moreover, a social constructivist might point out, conceiving of addiction as a disease, to be studied and treated as a biomedical phenomenon, is just one way to conceive of it; in different contexts, addiction has been conceived of as a sin, a choice, or another kind of compulsion. As such, addiction might be better thought of not as a specific biological disease entity with a special ontological status, but rather as a discursive signifier used by linguistic communities to mark out certain behaviors as acceptable or unacceptable. This approach is a helpful reminder of the value judgments involved in questions of addiction and disease more broadly: addiction is not a value-free object of “objective” scientific research. Yet, a common critique of the social constructivist approach is that it is too theoretical, spending time in debates over language and ontology, rather than attending to the real, physical suffering of individuals. Even if addiction is created or constructed in language, there is a pragmatic ethical need to treat it as real and care for people experiencing addictions.

For studies concerned with the ancient world, one of the most serious problems with a social constructivist approach is how to identify cases of addiction in the ancient world. Discourse is one of the main ways to track social construction and changes to a concept, yet there is no single word to start with for a concept of addiction in Greek or Latin. Without a word, where might we find evidence that addiction was a functional concept in antiquity? It seems hard or even impossible to study addiction as a concept internal to ancient culture. Indeed, from a strict social constructivist perspective, studying addiction in the ancient world might be seen as

simply an anachronistic application of contemporary concepts and categories back onto ancient materials.¹⁴

So, studying addiction strictly in terms of either biological disease or social construction comes with certain limitations, especially when it comes to historical research about the ancient world. Yet, both approaches also have insights to offer. The obvious alternative is to try to find a middle ground between them, rather than strictly approaching through one lens or the other. Ideally, this means understanding addiction as a “real,” biological phenomenon that causes suffering, but not one that is separate from the discourses and social practices within which they occur. Rather than asking whether addictions are caused by either nature or nurture, whether they are best understood biologically or socially, we ought to attend to how these two interact and impact each other.

Such a hybrid approach to studying health and disease in different contexts has been advanced by scholars working in the history of medicine and medical anthropology, such as Owsei Temkin, Charles Rosenberg, and Arthur Kleinman.¹⁵ In their work, the biological

¹⁴ Some scholars have even claimed that addiction is a modern phenomenon, an experience that only developed in the modern period in response to increased globalism and trade of substances such as tobacco, sugar, and caffeine during the modern period, as the result of European colonialism. See, for example, Anna Alexander and Mark S. Roberts (eds.), (2003), *High culture: Reflections on addiction and modernity*, Albany: State University of New York Press; cf. Daniel Smail, (2008), *On Deep History and the Brain*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

¹⁵ See, for example: Owsei Temkin, (1977), *The double face of Janus and other essays in the history of medicine*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; *idem*, (2002), *“On Second Thought” and Other Essays in the History of Medicine and Science*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; C. Rosenberg, (1962), *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; *idem*, (2003), “What is disease? In memory of Owsei Temkin,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77.3: 491-505; Arthur Kleinman, (1980), *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture: An Exploration of the Borderland between Anthropology, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; *idem*, (1988), *Rethinking psychiatry: from cultural category to personal experience*, New York: The Free Press; *idem*, (2004), “Culture and depression,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, 351.10: 951-953.

existence of diseases is taken seriously, though not dogmatically or reductively. Rather, their scholarship has shown how biological phenomena need to be understood within cultural contexts. This attention to context applies to historical instances of disease, such as the responses to the three different cholera epidemics in the United States in the nineteenth century. In an early study of these, Rosenberg showed how the different responses to cholera corresponded to changing social attitudes and beliefs, from a religious understanding of the illness as a punishment brought upon sinners, to a scientific understanding of it as a biologically transmissible disease, then to a more political understanding of cholera as a matter of public health. Such attention to changes in understandings of disease is not just relevant to historical studies; it also applies to contemporary medicine and understandings of disease. In Western medicine, there is a general preoccupation with specific disease entities that are characterized by patterns of physical changes and are thought to be caused by specific viruses, bacteria, genetic mutations, etc. This way of understanding disease arose in particular (social, economic, political, scientific) contexts in the last two centuries, and does not necessarily translate into other contexts. For example, in some of his early research, Kleinman showed how people raised in east Asian societies (China, Taiwan), whom Western psychiatrists would tend to diagnose with major depressive disorder, often only reported physical symptoms such as headaches and fatigue, without accompanying mental symptoms, such as feelings of helplessness or hopelessness. Moreover, antidepressant medication was found to be only partially effective for these patients. So, patients were reporting somatic symptoms, but did not respond to somatic-oriented treatment in the ways expected by Western doctors. This work served to show that even mental illnesses that correspond to specific biochemical changes in the brain need to be diagnosed and treated with attention to the cultural context in which they arise. Again, this is not to say that diseases

are only social constructs; but rather that the context is essential for understanding how various biological phenomena are perceived and categorized, across different times and cultures.

4. An Ancient Hybrid Model of Health and Disease

The contextual approach to questions of human health and disease modeled by scholars like Rosenberg, Kleinman, and others can be compared to or even situated within a tradition of integrative and holistic medicine that goes back to Greek antiquity and the Hippocratic medical tradition.¹⁶ This tradition approaches questions of health and disease in terms of situating individuals and their symptoms within their environments and communities. This means not judging individual cases in isolation but taking the context in which an individual is situated into account when identifying, explaining, and treating individual cases. Context involves both the natural environment (climate, air quality, urban vs. rural, etc.) as well the culture within which one dwells (including laws, norms, representations, etc.). Historically, one of the key features of the Hippocratic medical tradition was its move towards naturalistic, physical explanations of illness, away from traditional religious explanations. According to the latter, illnesses were thought to be caused by the gods afflicting an individual (or group), for one reason or another

¹⁶ On the various meanings of holism, especially in relation to ancient Greco-Roman medicine, see: C. Thumiger (ed.), (2021), *Holism in Ancient Medicine and Its Reception*, Boston and Leiden: Brill (particularly the Introductory essay by Thumiger, p. 1-21). As noted above, one of the difficulties in studying addiction in the ancient world is the seeming impossibility in arriving at an emic (internal to the culture) conception of addiction. There may be some consolation in this respect by adopting the *AWP* approach to health. It is not the same as finding an internal cultural conception of addiction, but it at least gives us an internally based framework for trying to approach the problem.

(caprice, revenge, punishment, etc.). Hippocratic medicine, by contrast, began to explain illness in terms of physical changes.¹⁷ The task of a physician in the Hippocratic tradition was to understand the “nature” of a disease, its material causes, symptoms, and treatments. But this did not just mean understanding different diseases in isolation, but also having knowledge of different environmental and cultural contexts, and how they impact people’s bodies and characters, illnesses and health outcomes.¹⁸

¹⁷ Despite this contrast, Hippocratic doctors were not secular pre-modern equivalents to Western doctors. They still fit their naturalistic explanation into some of the theological ideas of the time. For example, the author of the *AWP*, in discussing the cause of Scythian illnesses (see discussion below), makes a special point of noting, “The locals attribute the cause to God, and they revere and worship these people, each fearing for his own sake. I myself also think that these diseases, and all others, are divine, and none is more divine or more human than any other, but all are similar and divine. But each also has nature of its kind and does not arise without nature” / οἱ μὲν ἐπιχώριοι τὴν αἰτίην προστιθέασι θεῶν, καὶ σέβονται τουτέους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ προσκυνέουσι, δεδοικότες περὶ ἐωυτῶν ἕκαστοι. ἐμοὶ δὲ καὶ αὐτέῳ δοκεῖ ταῦτα τὰ πάθηα θεῖα εἶναι καὶ ἄλλα πάντα, καὶ οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἐτέρου θεϊότερον οὐδὲ ἀνθρωπινώτερον, ἀλλὰ πάντα ὁμοῖα καὶ πάντα θεῖα. ἕκαστον δὲ ἔχει φύσιν τῶν τοιουτέων, καὶ οὐδὲν ἄνευ φύσιος γίνεται (22.3-9, my translation). The author is appealing to a notion of divinity, perhaps a cosmic one, that clashes with the local religious beliefs regarding disease. Though the precise notion of divinity is not spelled out, it is clearly compatible with the naturalistic explanation the author is advancing. For a discussion of religion in the *AWP*, see: P. Van der Eijk, (1991), “‘Airs, Waters, Places’ and ‘On the Sacred Disease’: Two Different Religiosities?” *Hermes*, 119.2: 168–176.

¹⁸ There is a question here regarding whether the *AWP* advances a notion of disease that corresponds to a fixed biological reality, or whether it promotes an idea of disease as something without a fixed essence, that changes according to context. Regarding the former possibility, there are statements like the one at the end of the quote in the previous footnote, in which the author claims that diseases have a nature, i.e., physical symptoms and causes, as opposed to being simply the result of divine punishment. This gives evidence of something like the “biological reality” of disease. Yet, the author also claims through the *AWP* that humans (and other living things) have different natures depending on where they come from, which suggests that nature, including something like the nature of a disease, might be a changeable entity. I think the author uses “nature” (φύσις/phusis) to signify a few different things in the text, including the material composition of the environment, inherited physical and character traits, and material patterns and causes (i.e., things for which one can trace material causes and effects, things that behave in ways predictable according to understandings of physical changes, etc.). It is generally meant to capture something fixed/stable; the exceptions to this are interesting examples that the author brings up to alert the reader of the possibility that nature can take different forms in different contexts. In the end, the author seems less interested in making a strong ontological claim about nature, disease, and the environment; the more important thing is the epistemological and ethical claim, that nature is something that a physician needs to have knowledge of in order to effectively treat patients.

This tradition can be traced back to medical writing such as the Hippocratic text, *Airs, Waters, Places* (AWP).¹⁹ This text is thought to be one of the earliest Hippocratic writings, dating back to sometime in the 5th or 4th century BCE, and written by someone practicing in the Hippocratic medical tradition.²⁰ The first half of the text describes how the physical environment affects health in terms of physiology in general (Sections 1-11). The impact of the seasons, winds, waters, soils, and lifestyles is highlighted for their impact on physical health outcomes. The author stresses that different places, with different natural environments, shape people's bodies accordingly and lead to various risks of disease. The second half of the text is spent describing the effects of the environment—here meaning both physical landscape and customs and institutions—on both bodies and characters (Sections 12-24). Just as in the first half where the physical landscape was shown to shape the body, the author works to show that it can also shape character traits such as strength, endurance, and courage (e.g., promoted by bare, arid, rough land) and their opposites: softness, cowardice, laziness (e.g., promoted by fertile, soft, humid land). But people's bodies and character traits are not only shaped by the physical

¹⁹ On this text and its reception, see: Charles E. Rosenberg, (2012), "Epilogue: *Airs, Waters, Places*. A Status Report," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 86.4: 661-670; R. L. Presti, (2012), "Shaping the Difference: The Medical Inquiry into the Nature of Places and the Early Birth of Anthropology in the Hippocratic Treatise *Airs Waters Places*," in Patricia A. Baker, Han Nijdam, and Karine van 't Land (eds.), *Medicine and Space: Body, Surroundings and Borders in Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 169-195; D. Guidolin, et al., (2019), "A new integrative theory of brain-body-ecosystem medicine: From the hippocratic holistic view of medicine to our modern society," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16.17: 3136: 1-20; V. Nutton, (2020), "Epidemic Disease in a Humoral Environment: From *Airs, Waters and Places* to the Renaissance," in C. Thumiger (ed.), *Holism in Ancient Medicine and Its Reception*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 357-376.

²⁰ N.b. the writings in the Hippocratic Corpus are not written by a single author named Hippocrates, but rather by different authors working within the same tradition. On dating and authorship, especially regarding *Airs, Waters, Places*, see, for example: G. E. R. Lloyd, (1975), "The Hippocratic Question," *Classical Quarterly*, 25.2: 171-192; P. Van der Eijk, (1991), "'Airs, Waters, Places' and 'On the Sacred Disease': Two Different Religiosities?" *Hermes*, 119.2: 168-176.

environment; the author gives examples to show how customs and institutions can shape these, too.

One of the most illustrative examples that the author of the *AWP* gives of the impact of customs on people's natures is that of the Scythian men (Section 22). These men spend most of their time riding horses (a cultural practice), and they tend to develop painful physical symptoms on their legs and groins as a result (swellings, sores). In attempt to rid themselves of pain, they cut certain veins behind their ears. This traditional medical practice apparently cures some, but not others. Importantly, these Scythians also tend to discover afterwards that they have become impotent. The author of the texts believes that this is due to the ear cutting—a naturalistic explanation that is meant to correct the Scythian's traditional belief that their impotence is unrelated to their ear cutting and is rather a divine punishment for some bad behavior. In response to their impotence, the Scythian men adopt women's customs, clothing, modes of discourse, and they start performing traditional women's work. In doing so, they become softer and more effeminate.

In this example, the cultural practice of riding horses and treating the accompanying symptoms is thought to result in physical changes (swelling, sores, impotence). These physical changes then lead the Scythian men to adopt different cultural practices. So cultural practices affect their bodies, which in turn provoked different practices, affecting their characters and bodies further. The impact of culture and nature on bodies and character here is more like an on-going feedback loop than something reducible to one or the other.²¹

²¹ Compare Canguilhem's comments on Greek medicine in general: "By contrast, Greek medicine, in the Hippocratic writings and practices, offers a conception of disease which is no longer ontological, but dynamic, no longer localizationist, but totalizing. Nature (*physis*), within man as well as without, is harmony and equilibrium.

This example is important because it shows the mutual influence of culture and nature on people's bodies and health. A focus on just one or the other would not allow for a full appreciation of what is going on with the Scythians. This marks *AWP* as an important text in the tradition of holistic medicine, which tries to bring in different parts of the context in order to understand issues of health and disease. The Scythian example is also notable for the author's attention to the different beliefs that he and the Scythians bring to the issue. The attempt to cure their riding injuries by cutting behind the ear made sense as a treatment according to the Scythians' understanding of the body, though they did not connect this treatment to their impotence. The author's intervention to connect the two is meant to demonstrate his superior expertise concerning the body and how it functions, though he also shows respect to the Scythians' theological beliefs and tries to find common ground with them. So the example not

The disturbance of this harmony, of this equilibrium, is called disease. In this case, disease is not somewhere in man, it is everywhere in him; it is the whole man. External circumstances are the occasion but not the causes. Man's equilibrium consists of four humors, whose fluidity is perfectly suited to sustain variations and oscillations and whose qualities are paired by opposites (hot/cold, wet/dry); the disturbance of these humors causes disease. But disease is not simply disequilibrium or discordance; it is, and perhaps most important, an effort on the part of nature to effect a new equilibrium in man. Disease is a generalized reaction designed to bring about a cure; the organism develops a disease in order to get well. Therapy must first tolerate and if necessary reinforce these hedonic and spontaneously therapeutic reactions. Medical technique imitates natural medicinal action (*vis medicatrix naturae*). To imitate is not merely to copy an appearance: but to mimic a tendency and to extend an intimate movement. Of course, such a conception is also optimistic, but here the optimism concerns the way of nature and not the effect of human technique" (G. Canguilhem, (1991), *The normal and the pathological*, New York and Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 40-41).

In light of our example from *AWP*, the symptoms that come from the Scythian men's riding practices are not a disease or do not cause a disease. Rather, it is their response to the symptoms that appear and their attempt to cure their symptoms that brings about the new physiological condition or disease (*παθή* and *νόσος* in the Greek)—impotence. This then also comes with the need for a new way of life—a new equilibrium—represented by the Scythian men's adoption of female habits. The role of the doctor within this system seems to be to persuade the Scythians that their disease has natural, rather than divine causes—or, at least, this is the stance that is taken by the author of the text. This is the only correction or intervention into their practices that is offered: there is no further word on how to cure the symptoms more effectively, or how to return them to their previous state of virility.

only shows nature and culture, biology and context, influencing each other; it also highlights how different beliefs and understandings lead to different interpretations of the same phenomenon. This is a key point for the study of history of medicine and medical anthropology: it is not just that health and disease are influenced by various contextual factors, but also that the context, personal and societal beliefs, and different ways of understanding influence how questions of health and disease are approached.

5. My Approach to Studying Ancient Addiction

Inspired by this kind of self-reflexive, hybrid approach to studying disease, my approach for studying ancient addiction has involved starting from contemporary biologically grounded notions about addiction, and then connecting these to ancient cases and trying to develop a nuanced understanding of these different cases within their contexts. I will try to spell out the different steps that have been involved in this, while acknowledging that the steps have not quite been so discrete in my research process.

I tend to start from substances or behaviors that are commonly recognized as addictive now, such as alcohol, opium, gambling, and sex. When I say that these are “commonly recognized,” I mean that they are part of general cultural discourse around addiction, they are represented as addictions in various media, and they are the things that people who write books and articles and blog posts about addictions tend to address. To be sure, there is a lot of idiosyncrasy and variety in all of these sources of cultural discourse. But there are common patterns and conceptions of addiction that form part of the background knowledge that I bring to this study.

To connect these commonly recognized objects of addiction to biology, I have followed what many authors and researchers do, which is turn to look at what counts as addictions in the most recent editions of the *DSM* and the *ICD*.²² These are widely-used guides for mental illness and disease, even if the specific categories and diagnostic criteria that they include are not entirely agreed upon.²³ For addiction, the *DSM-5* identifies nine different categories of drugs, including alcohol, opioids, and cannabis, which are associated with “substance use disorders,” as well as one behavioral addiction, “gambling disorder.”²⁴ Similarly, the *ICD-11* identifies fourteen different “disorders due to substance use” and addictive behaviors, including both

²² American Psychiatric Association, (2013), “Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders,” *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5* (Fifth edition), Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association; World Health Organization, (2022), *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD)* (11th edition), Zurich: World Health Organization.

²³ For discussions of addiction-related controversies in these manuals, see for example: M. Piquet-Pessôa, G. M. Ferreira, I. A. Melca, and L. F. Fontenelle, (2014), “DSM-5 and the decision not to include sex, shopping or stealing as addictions,” *Current Addiction Reports*, 1.3: 172-176; J. C. Wakefield, (2015), “DSM-5 substance use disorder: How conceptual missteps weakened the foundations of the addictive disorders field” [Editorial], *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica*, 132.5: 327–334; F. Pinna, *et al.*, (2015), “Behavioural addictions and the transition from DSM-IV-TR to DSM-5,” *Journal of Psychopathology*, 21.4: 380-389; J. E. Grant and S. R. Chamberlain, (2016), “Expanding the definition of addiction: *DSM-5* vs. *ICD-11*,” *CNS spectrums*, 21.4: 300–303; P. Zachar, M. B. First, and K. S. Kendler, (2022), “Revising substance-related disorders in the *DSM-5*: a history,” *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, 83.1: 99-105.

²⁴ The *DSM-5* (and the *ICD-11*) uses the language of “substance use disorder” and “gambling disorder,” rather than that of “addiction.” As the authors of the *DSM-5* explain,

Note that the word addiction is not applied as a diagnostic term in this classification, although it is in common usage in many countries to describe severe problems related to compulsive and habitual use of substances. The more neutral term substance use disorder is used to describe the wide range of the disorder, from a mild form to a severe state of chronically relapsing, compulsive drug taking. Some clinicians will choose to use the word addiction to describe more extreme presentations, but the word is omitted from the official *DSM-5* substance use disorder diagnostic terminology because of its uncertain definition and its potentially negative connotation (American Psychiatric Association, (2013), “Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders,” *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5* (Fifth edition), Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing).

I use “addiction” because of its common usage and because I am interested in exploring the uncertainty surrounding its definition. I do not intend to convey negative connotations, and I try to use person-centered language (e.g. “someone suffering from an addiction” or “a person experiencing addictive behavior”).

gambling and gaming (i.e., video games, online gaming, etc.). These lists give us the basic range of things that are currently considered addictions, even as it is important to note that these are changing and expanding as more research is performed and as scientific consensus shifts.²⁵ But one useful aspect of these manuals is that what they count as addictions are things that have been extensively researched, generally according to the biological model of addiction (i.e., the substances and behaviors they identify correspond to certain biochemical changes in the brain). So, the range of addictions that are identified in the *DSM* and *ICD* are biologically grounded in some ways.

This biological grounding offers a potential connection and way to identify addictions in the past based on present categories. The idea is that, just as there are biologically fixed aspects of various illnesses (e.g., cholera, depression) that occur in different contexts, there are biological aspects of addiction that are shared between present and past. Thus, the identification of these “addiction-related” substances and behaviors gives us ideas about what to look for in relation to addiction in the past.

Of course, addiction is not just a substance or behavior in and of itself. It is a dynamic process, a way of relating to certain substances and behaviors. While this process is highly idiosyncratic, the criteria of diagnosis in the *DSM* or *ICD* are meant to capture different behavioral patterns related to this process.²⁶ For example, the *DSM-5* offers eleven criteria for

²⁵ One notable example is the inclusion of gaming as a kind of behavioral addiction in the *ICD-11*, which came into effect at the start of 2022; there is thought that the same will be included in the next edition of the *DSM*, and that other behavioral addictions (shopping, sex, etc.) will be included as more research is conducted.

²⁶ There is a curious feature of these manuals, where the substances and behavior that are included are based on neurobiological research, but the criteria for diagnosis are all behavioral—i.e., physicians generally do not diagnose

diagnosing substance use disorder, noting that addictions can manifest in different degrees of severity: a patient demonstrating just two or three of the behaviors might have a mild addiction, whereas one demonstrating more than six has a severe addiction. These criteria include dedicating a lot of time to using a given substance; prioritizing it over other aspects of one's life such as work, relationships, and health; dysfunction in these areas; and experiencing physical symptoms such as tolerance and withdrawal.

These behavioral criteria provide further useful starting points for investigating addiction in the ancient world. They offer concrete examples to look for in ancient texts, both in reading widely and also doing specific word searches. This is basically how I have identified discussions of potentially addictive substances and behavior, and symptoms that match criteria for addiction.

Such is the case with Marcus Aurelius's opium addiction. Opium is one of the substances identified by both the *DSM-5* and the *ICD-11* as related to addiction. Marcus Aurelius also demonstrated some of the behaviors used to diagnose addiction, such as continued use despite attempting to stop and withdrawal symptoms. Based on this, it seems like we have grounds to consider his experience as a case of addiction in antiquity.

But this biological grounding is just the starting point. All of this work on building up a biologically grounded understanding of substances, behaviors, and symptoms of addiction that can be translated into the past is only the first stage of researching and considering addictions in antiquity. Then, it is a question of contextualizing cases and trying to understand how the

someone with a substance use disorder by performing a brain scan; they diagnose based on reports and observations of behavior that are correlated to changes in the brain's material based on the research.

cultural context shaped the experience of engaging with different substances and behaviors. This stage—which has comprised the bulk of my work—involves examining the cases closely, the language used in them, the intellectual and imaginative connections drawn between them, the assumptions that lie behind them, and so on. This second stage allows us to grasp some of the specificities and differences in the ancient conceptions and experiences of addiction, which offers a fuller understanding of ancient addiction than a strictly biological approach might. Indeed, this is where we can try to understand what addiction, as an individual and cultural experience, meant in the ancient world. So, with some biological grounding established, it is a question of understanding the individual experience and cultural context that shaped addiction.

To follow the case of Marcus Aurelius a bit further, we might note various contextual features that contribute to the ancient experience of addiction and our understanding of it. For example, there is the rhetorical context in which Galen tells the anecdote: it appears in a medical text about antidotes, in which Galen is trying to promote his authority on this matter over other medical practitioners at the time. This is in part a feature of Galen's wish to promote best practices, but it is also a common feature of Galen's authorial voice in general: he is well-known for his self-promotion.²⁷ The anecdote about the emperor needs to be read with that in mind: how does it contribute to Galen's reputation? From a different angle, we might also ask what, if any, implications Galen's description of the emperor's addiction had on the emperor's own reputation. Drug use and addiction among politicians and celebrities in our current culture is generally cause for judgment and scandal, followed by a stint in a rehabilitation center and then

²⁷ For an informed discussion of Galen's self-presentation, see: V. Nutton, (2020), *Galen: A Thinking Doctor in Imperial Rome*, Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge.

public atonement. Marcus Aurelius was generally very well-regarded as an emperor, and it is unclear if Galen's discussion of his opium habit would have affected that at all. Opium was more seen as a commonly used medicine than a malicious agent of addiction and death.

In addition to this, there are features of Galen's ancient medical understanding to be considered, such as the conception of the humors or different internal substances and mixtures, which make someone like Marcus Aurelius have a "drier constitution" and what this was thought to imply regarding their habits, rationality, susceptibility for mental illness, and so on. Another example of medical understanding is the common belief in antiquity that insomnia could lead to death and thus called for what would otherwise be considered an extreme form of treatment.²⁸ Indeed, in another of his writings, Galen comments that painkillers such as opium ought only to be used in cases of extreme pain or insomnia that risk the life of the patient; otherwise, no responsible physician ought to be prescribing them because they would simply be gratifying their patients' desire for pleasure rather than attending to their need for health (*Method of Medicine* XII.1 815K-819K). This gives us a further glimpse into some of the norms around the use of opium in the ancient world, such as its common association to pleasure, including pleasure that goes beyond an appropriate amount, and Galen's condemnation of this as a goal in medicine as well as life. Galen's comments about the restricted use of opioids and other such painkillers also complement how he prescribed it for the emperor, who was suffering from insomnia. In other words, the emperor's case was conveniently one of the extreme cases in which Galen viewed

²⁸ Though there are many metaphorical associations of sleep and death, insomnia is generally not currently considered a cause of death, except in cases of an extremely rare genetic disease—on the latter, see: E. Lugaresi *et al.*, (1986), "Fatal familial insomnia and dysautonomia with selective degeneration of thalamic nuclei," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 315.16: 997-1003.

opium use as justified, reinforcing his own authority. Even further, we could consider the use of various drugs and poisons in daily medications known as *theriaca*, which ancient kings and rulers used to build up their immunity against potential attempts to murder them with poison.²⁹ Though opium was not commonly used as a poison (many more efficient poisons were well-known), it is worth considering this vaccine potential in the use of such daily medications, which is how Marcus Aurelius was practicing opium consumption. These few examples serve to show that there are many cultural and contextual factors that contribute to understanding what it might have meant for Marcus Aurelius to be addicted, how he and his doctor and community might have understood something like his biological dependence on opium, and what action they thought was appropriate in relation to the substance.

So, to summarize, my approach to studying ancient addiction considers both biological factors, as well as contextual factors in the shaping of addiction. I try to start from commonly recognized addictive substances and behaviors, and their corresponding symptoms. This provides some biologically grounded basis for identifying cases of addiction in the ancient world. Then, I try to explore what these cases meant in their historical context, what they reveal about the ancient experience and conception of addiction.

6. Overview of the Dissertation

²⁹ *Theriaca* was a mixed substance that combined various herbs and animal products. Ancient rulers commonly consumed these in attempt to maintain health and, regarding poisons in particular, to build up immunity against enemy attempt to poison them. See: A. Mayor, (2019), “Mithridates of Pontus and his universal antidote,” in P. Wexler (ed.), *Toxicology in Antiquity*, London/San Diego: Academic Press, 161-174.

There is a huge range of materials to consider in studying ancient addiction. For the sake of focus, I decided to organize my study around the texts of three authors, Aristophanes, Plato, and Galen, whose writings provide insights into different aspects of addiction in antiquity. They all write in Greek, though in different genres and contexts: Aristophanes's comedies come from late fifth century BCE Athens; Plato's philosophical writings from a generation or so later, in the early fourth century, also in Athens; Galen wrote his medical philosophical texts in the second century CE, largely in Rome, though he was from Pergamon (a city in what is now western Turkey) and wrote in Greek.

In addition to the fact that each addresses different aspects of addiction, these three authors are also variously connected. Aristophanes was an important figure in fifth century Athens and his infamous depiction of Socrates in the *Clouds* is one of the factors that contributed to the demise of Plato's teacher. So, there is a certain sense in which Plato is responding to Aristophanes. We will also see, in Chapter 2, that both were concerned with questions of desire, motivation, action, mentality, obsession, and more—all of which bear on their discussions of addiction. Meanwhile, Galen, writing several centuries later, was a close reader of both Aristophanes and Plato, but especially the latter, and he writes many of his texts in response to Plato's. Chapter 3 is an analysis of Plato's *Timaeus*, a vast cosmological dialogue that was very influential in antiquity, and Galen responds directly to it in some of the texts that I examine in Chapter 4. So, the material that I cover in these chapters is interconnected and forms an interwoven narrative about the views on addiction among these ancient Greek authors.

I have also organized the discussions of addiction across these three authors into the themes of diagnosis, explanation, and treatment. These three themes were commonly used to structure ancient medical writings, as ancient physicians developed ways to understand how the

body worked and how to respond to the experiences of patients. The material in Aristophanes, Plato, and Galen fits nicely into these themes. Chapter 2 on diagnosis is a discussion of Aristophanes's *Wasps*, a comedy in which the protagonist, Philocleon, is addicted to serving on the jury, and serves as a striking foil to Socrates and his dedication to wisdom, as presented in Plato's *Apology* and other dialogues. The comparison of Socrates and Philocleon allows us to raise questions about how exactly addictions were identified and judged—before things like the *DSM* or *ICD* offered guidance. Chapter 3 is a close reading of Plato's *Timaeus*, in which the eponymous main character offers a theory of sex addiction, within his grand cosmology. His explanation reads as remarkably similar to the contemporary, physically-focused brain disease model of addiction, though I argue that it is actually better understood as a biopsychosocial approach. Lastly, in Chapter 4, I give an overview of the types of treatment mentioned in both Aristophanes and Plato before focusing on four short texts in which Galen discusses various ways of responding to different psychological experiences, including addiction.

While there is a lot about ancient addiction that this study leaves out, focusing on these three authors and the themes of diagnosis, explanation, and treatment provides an organized way to approach different questions about addiction and give a sense of how different authors from antiquity addressed them.

7. Conclusion

Studying addiction opens up many questions regarding the relationship between substances and behaviours, physical and mental illnesses, passions and diseases, pleasures and pains, the individual, their communities, and environments. Such a wide range of ethical topics are, in a certain sense, always implicated in discussions of health and disease, and addiction is just one way to approach these questions.

But addiction is also specifically important since it is a topic that continues to be debated, with major societal implications. Understandings of addiction play a substantial role in public health policy, for example with the current, ongoing opioid epidemic. On top of this, debates surrounding addiction are involved in contemporary questions of law and punishment: the ongoing war on drugs in the US and around the world is justified, in part, due to the allegedly addictive nature of certain substances. Not only is addiction important due to these public policy and legal concerns, but also as an experience that is all too familiar to many people, myself included.

Studying addiction in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds might seem very far away from these more immediate personal and societal concerns. But studying cultures of the past, distant and distinct from our own, can offer alternative perspectives and different solutions to contemporary problems. This does not mean that there is a “cure” for contemporary addictions to be found in the wisdom of the past. But rather, by considering how addiction was approached in the past—how it was talked about, how it was evaluated, how it was explained and treated (or not treated)—we might find new ways to think about addiction today.

Chapter 2: Diagnosis, or: What is the difference between addiction and philosophy?

1. Questions about Behavioral Addictions

In January 2022, the new edition of the *ICD—International Classification of Diseases—* came into effect and included one major change regarding addiction: video game addiction, officially “Gaming Disorder,” was recognized as a behavioral addiction, only the second behavioral addiction to be officially recognized in such a manual, after gambling disorder.³⁰ The main symptoms of this addiction include lack of control over one’s gaming; spending a lot of time gaming or thinking about it; prioritizing it over other activities, interests, and relationships, and continuing to play despite negative consequences for oneself and/or one’s family and community. The final element of the negative consequences is key: an activity like playing video games is a common hobby for many people, and many play, even a lot, without it becoming dysfunctional. Gaming disorder is meant to capture the experience of those for whom it is dysfunctional. An interesting question thus arises: dysfunctional for whom, or according to whose judgment? The main population that suffers from gaming disorder, according to the *ICD*, is adolescent males, but the diagnostic criteria leave it open whether it is these young men

³⁰ World Health Organization, (2022), “Gaming Disorder,” *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD)* (11th edition), Zurich: World Health Organization, 6C51; K. Lindenberg and M. Holtmann, (2021), “Inclusion of gaming disorder as a behavioral addiction in ICD-11,” *Zeitschrift für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie und Psychotherapie* 50.1: 1-7; J. Long *et al.*, (2021), “Public health approaches and policy changes after the inclusion of gaming disorder in ICD-11: Global needs,” *BJPsych International, First View*: 1-4; J. Billieux *et al.*, (2021), “Rationale for and usefulness of the inclusion of gaming disorder in the ICD-11,” *World psychiatry: official journal of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)*, 20.2: 198–199; S. Márquez Arbués *et al.*, (2021), “Adicción al Fortnite con necesidad de desintoxicación hospitalaria,” *Revista de Psiquiatría Infanto-Juvenil* 38.2: 59-65.

themselves who feel that they have a problem, their parents or caretakers, or the culture in which they live.

In the ancient world, there is a story about a behavioral addiction that resonates with these questions about diagnosing behavioral addictions and ethics. It is the story that is told in the ancient Greek comedy, *The Wasps*, by Aristophanes, of a man named Philocleon, who was addicted to serving on the jury in Athens, in the fifth century BCE.³¹ He loved the feeling of being in the court, holding on to his voting pebble, dropping it in the urn to cast his vote, and simply everything about the practices of the ancient court—he was obsessed with all of them. In Aristophanes’s play, his addiction is actually compared to a gambling addiction—to someone who is a “lover of dice,” as it is called. He is also compared to someone with a problem with excessive drinking—a so-called “lover of drink.” These comparisons invoke substances and behaviours that are addictive today. So, though jury addiction sounds quite strange (and it is—the play is a comedy, so it is not meant to be totally serious), these comparisons to widely-accepted addictions give us some common grounds to consider Philocleon’s relationship to the jury as an addiction.

In the Introduction (Chapter 1), I established a middle road for approaching addiction in the ancient world. In brief: it seems plausible that there are bio-chemical features of addiction that are shared across time and cultures, but different contexts also shape the concepts and

³¹ Over the course of this chapter, I explain why I consider Philocleon’s condition to be a type of behavioral addiction, but it is also notable that referring to him as addicted to the courts/jury has been very common in scholarship on the *Wasps*, with very little analysis of what this means. Exceptions to this (though with their own limitations), include: John E. Thorburn, (2005), “Philocleon’s Addiction,” *Classics Ireland* 12: 50-61 (which uses criteria for alcoholism from the 1950s as the basis for comparison), and Dwora Gilula, (1983), “Four Deadly Sins? (Arist. *Wasps* 74-84),” *Classical Quarterly* 33.2: 358-362.

experiences of addiction in various ways. So, while biologically-based evidence offers us some starting points for studying addiction, it is also always necessary to contextualize cases, if we want to have a fuller understanding.

In Philocleon’s case, the language that is used to describe his and other addictions in Aristophanes’s play gives us insight into the contextual details of addiction in the Classical period in Athens. The play uses *phil-* compounds to describe addictive behaviours—that is the “love” part of the “lover of dice” and “lover of drink” above. These *phil-* compounds are related to the verb *phileō* (φιλέω), which is one of the verbs for love in ancient Greek, and they are one of the most common ways ancient Greek authors wrote about people experiencing addictions. But perhaps the most well-known such compound from the period—and one that has cognates in many modern languages—is *philosophia* (φιλο-σοφία, “love of wisdom”). Philosophy in the Classical period did not just refer to thinking deeply and working out logical understandings about particular topics, as philosophy is generally practiced today.³² Rather, it involved dedication to a whole way of life that questioned traditional norms and behaviours, leading people (especially adolescent males) to challenge their family members and other traditional sources of authority, abandon previous ambitions and interests, and dedicate their time to an elusive object, described as wisdom. Noticing the similarity between the language of addiction and philosophy, as well as similar behavioral aspects of both, it is possible to pose the question:

³² Academic philosophy, that is. It is interesting that the word philosophy is used metaphorically almost as liberally as the word addiction is, for example, in common discourse (e.g., “that’s might be your philosophy but it’s not mine”), in branding (philosophy, the luxury beauty brand), in marketing/advertising (“Our philosophy—luxury yachts, Italian design”). In marketing, philosophy is associated with elite luxuries—as though a sign of how elite education fails to teach actual philosophy, though it does offer the cultural capital of, for example, knowledge and esteem for elite-sounding things like philosophy. Also interesting is the use of Plato in framing the “philosophy of luxury” in: J. Armitage and J. Roberts (eds.), (2016), *Critical luxury studies: Art, design, media*, Edinburgh: University Press (esp. chapter 1, p. 1-21).

what exactly was the difference, if any, between addiction and philosophy in the Classical period?

The answers to this question, I believe, depend on value judgments that cannot be taken for granted. Instead, they have their origins in particular norms and beliefs from the period. Some of those norms and beliefs are shared with us today. But actually, it is the differences in value judgments and norms—between what we see in the Greek Classical period and what we have today—that can also serve as a reminder to us that judgments about addiction, including contemporary categories and conceptions of addiction, are not value-free. This is an ethical point and it bears on how addiction is diagnosed today, what we think causes it, and how it is treated. What are the assumptions behind the currently accepted classification of addictive substances and behaviours? What are the values involved in conceiving of addiction as a disease rather than a sin, lifestyle choice, or anything else, for that matter? What value judgment makes addiction something that one can or should “treat”? These are some of the questions that thinking about addiction in a different time and place like antiquity can open up.

But before going into all of that, we can look back at antiquity to see how addiction was talked about, identified, and evaluated. We start with *The Wasps*.

2. Aristophanes’s *Wasps*

2.1 Setting the Stage

The Wasps was written and performed for the first time in the winter of 422 BCE.³³ This date means that it first appeared during a brief pause in an ongoing war between the city-states of Sparta and Athens. There was a one-year truce in 423-422, that ended in the summer of 422 with a battle that resulted in the death of important generals on both sides of the war, including Cleon, who is referred to in Aristophanes's play. The play was performed in Athens at the Lenaia festival, a festival for Dionysus, the god of theatre; the festival took place in the winter, in the month of Gamelion (roughly, January).³⁴

So, it is Athens, during the winter, there is a pause in the war, and there is the festival. The performances of tragedies and comedies at these festivals were always done as a competition: normally three playwrights would produce plays, and these were evaluated by a panel of judges, whose judgments are thought to have represented popular opinion or the mood of the audience.³⁵ Aristophanes, by the time he wrote *The Wasps*, had been competing in these festivals for five years, and he had already won first prize three times with overtly political satires like *The Acharnians* and *The Knights*. Notably, though, he had not been so successful in

³³ For background information about the *Wasps*, see the commentaries: Douglas M. MacDowell, (1971), *Aristophanes Wasps*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Z. P. Biles and S. D. Olson, (2015), *Aristophanes: Wasps*, Oxford: University Press; as well as, for example, David Konstan, (1985), "The Politics of Aristophanes' *Wasps*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115: 27-46.

³⁴ The standard source of information about ancient festivals remains: A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, (1968), *The dramatic festivals of Athens* (2nd ed. Revised by John Gould and D. M. Lewis), Oxford: University Press. N.b. the Lenaia, though a dramatic festival for Dionysus, was distinct from the big Dionysian festival at which the great tragedies of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus were performed. Tragedies and comedies were performed at both festivals in Athens.

³⁵ On judging at the festivals, see for example: C. W. Marshall, and S. Van Willigenburg, (2004), "Judging Athenian dramatic competitions," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 124: 90-107; S. Goldhill and R. Osborne (eds.), (1999), *Performance culture and Athenian democracy*, Cambridge: University Press; D. K. Roselli, (2011), *Theater of the people: spectators and society in ancient Athens*, Austin: University of Texas Press, among many other sources.

the previous year, 423, when he had produced the intellectual satire, *The Clouds*. Though indirectly political, *The Clouds* is mainly about higher education and sophistry, and it features Socrates as one of the main characters, as a representative of the new intellectuals who were going around questioning traditional wisdom and boasting of rhetorical skills that could win any argument. Though this play had a lasting impact on Socrates's reputation in the city, it did not help Aristophanes win the first prize in 423. So, in 422, he came back with another openly political satire, *The Wasps*. This is some of the background context for the play.

The set-up of the play is as follows: the main character, the elderly Philocleon, is addicted to serving on the jury in Athens. Jury duty was an important matter at the time, with up to 500 jurors needed per day, and—according to a relatively recent political decision—the jurors were also paid a small amount (a ration amount, but not a living wage) for doing their duty.³⁶ This means that there was some financial incentive to Philocleon's addiction, though it was relatively small. The tension in the play comes from the fact that Philocleon's adult son, Bdelycleon, has decided that his father's love of jury practice is a bad habit, and, in attempt to curb it, he tries to keep him locked in the house so he cannot leave and go down to the court with his friends, the fellow jurors, the so-called "wasps" from the play's title.

In response to the lockdown imposed by his son, Philocleon tries to come up with creative, somewhat absurd ways to escape the house: a series of slapstick sketches brings us

³⁶ On the composition and payment of the jury see, for example: M. M. Markle, (1985), "Jury pay and assembly pay at Athens," *History of Political Thought*, 6.1/2: 265-297; R. Sing, (2010), "Jury Pay and Aristophanes," *ASCS Proceedings* 31: 1-5 <classics.uwa.edu.au/ascs,31>; and *ibid.*, (2021), "The Rates of Jury Pay and Assembly Pay in Fourth-Century Athens," *Classical Quarterly*, 71.1: 119-134.

through the first part of the play. We witness Philocleon trying to escape as a bird, then clinging to the belly of a donkey (like Odysseus escaping the cyclops in book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey*), then even as smoke wafting out through the chimney. It is all meant to be very funny.

But then, finally, Philocleon and his son, Bdelycleon, decide to have a talk. This is where the main political aspect of the play is articulated by the characters. As hinted at in the second component of both of their names, the issue is Cleon, the Athenian politician and general, and the influence that he has over the jury. Philocleon, whose name means "Lover of Cleon," thinks highly of Cleon for ensuring pay for the jurors, for continuing to advance for Athens' military prestige (Cleon was very pro-war, in the ongoing war with Sparta), and for voicing popular concerns against the aristocratic elite in Athens. Bdelycleon, whose name can be translated as "Cleon-Hater," sees it differently: to him, the jury pay is meager and even embarrassing, especially when compared to how much he thinks Cleon is taking for himself in the form of bribes. Bdelycleon thinks his father is being used as a pawn in Cleon's political games that are about winning himself more power, rather than actually caring for the interests of the people.

After some back and forth, and a satisfactory at-home trial, Bdelycleon wins over his father—to a certain extent. He does manage, by the end of the play, to get Philocleon to see Cleon in a new light and give up the jury obsession. However, it is not total victory: the play ends in comedic revelry, with Philocleon replacing one addiction (jury obsession) with another (aristocratic partying).

There is a lot to be said about all of this, but that at least gives the general overview and the political and dramatic context of the play. As I mentioned at the start, the language used to describe addictions in this play is important, so I want to briefly look at a scene that illustrates that, as well as one other scene that gives insight into the meaning of addiction in the play.

2.2 The Language of Addiction

At the start of the play, when we are introduced to Philocleon, his condition is compared to a few other types of addictive behaviors. The characters who speak in the scene, Xanthias and Sosias, are two enslaved people whom Philocleon's son has set to keep watch over his father throughout the night, to ensure that he does not escape. The following is the dialogue they have back and forth, in which they introduce Philocleon and his addiction (*Wasps*, 67-90):

Xanthias: That is our master there, sleeping up above, the big guy, on the roof. He ordered the two of us to watch over his father, whom he locked in the house, in order to prevent him from going out. His father, you see, has a strange disease that no one of you could ever grasp or even guess at, unless you heard it from us. So: guess! Amynias here, son of Propanus, says that this guy is a **lover of dice**, but that's wrong.

Sosias: Gosh, he's guessing his own sickness!

Xanthias: Indeed, though "**love**" is the start of the trouble. Here, now, Sosias says on behalf of Derkylus that he is a **lover of drink**.

Sosias: That can't be it, since that's a gentleman's disease.

Xanthias: Next, Nikostratos, the Scambonian, says that he is a **lover of sacrifices or of strangers**.

Sosias: Geez, Nikostratos, he isn't a lover of strangers, since Mr. Lover of Strangers (Philoxenos) likes to be penetrated, doesn't he?

Xanthias: You're all blabbering in vain; you're not going to guess it. If you want to know, be quiet and I will tell you about the master's disease. He is a **lover of the Heliaia** like no other: he loves it, judging cases, and he complains unless he's sitting in the first row.³⁷

³⁷ The passage in Greek reads:

Ξανθίας: ἔστιν γὰρ ἡμῖν δεσπότης ἐκεινοσὶ
ἄνω καθεύδων, ὁ μέγας, οὐπὶ τοῦ τέγους.
οὗτος φυλάττειν τὸν πατέρ' ἐπέταξε νῶν,

According to Xanthias's initial framing, we are dealing with some sort of condition that is deemed abnormal or pathological: as he says, the father is suffering from a kind of sickness or disease, and a strange one at that. The strangeness of Philocleon's sickness is that he is addicted to the jury. This is part of the humor of the play: it is funny that he is obsessed with the jury because that is not something that people normally think of as an object of obsession. But this comic idiosyncrasy aside, simply describing his condition as a sickness frames it as something

ἔνδον καθείρζας, ἵνα θύραζε μὴ 'ξίη.
νόσον γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἀλλόκοτον αὐτοῦ νοσεῖ,
ἦν οὐδ' ἂν εἷς γνοίη ποτ' οὐδ' ἂν ξυμβάλῃ
εἰ μὴ πύθοιθ' ἡμῶν: ἐπεὶ τοπάζετε.
Ἀμυνίας μὲν ὁ Προνάπους φήσ' οὐτοσί
εἶναι **φιλόκυβον** αὐτόν: ἀλλ' οὐδὲν λέγει.

Σωσίας: μὰ Δί', ἀλλ' ἀφ' αὐτοῦ τὴν νόσον τεκμαίρεται.

Ξανθίας: οὐκ, ἀλλὰ **φιλο** μὲν ἐστὶν ἀρχὴ τοῦ κακοῦ.
ὁδὶ δέ φησι Σωσίας πρὸς Δερκύλον
εἶναι **φιλοπότην** αὐτόν.

Σωσίας: οὐδαμῶς γ', ἐπεὶ
αὕτη γε χρηστῶν ἐστὶν ἀνδρῶν ἢ νόσος.

Ξανθίας: Νικόστρατος δ' αὖ φησὶν ὁ Σκαμβωνίδης
εἶναι φιλοθύτην αὐτόν ἢ φιλόξενον.

Σωσίας: μὰ τὸν κύν' ὦ Νικόστρατ' οὐ φιλόξενος,
ἐπεὶ καταπύγων ἐστὶν ὁ γε Φιλόξενος.

Ξανθίας: ἄλλως φλυαρεῖτ': οὐ γὰρ ἐξευρήσετε.
εἰ δὴ 'πιθυμεῖτ' εἰδέναι, σιγαῖτε νῦν.
φράσω γὰρ ἤδη τὴν νόσον τοῦ δεσπότου.
φιληλιαστής ἐστὶν ὡς οὐδεὶς ἀνὴρ,
ἐρᾷ τε τούτου, τοῦ δικάζειν, καὶ στένει
ἦν μὴ 'πὶ τοῦ πρώτου καθίζηται ξύλου.

For a discussion of this passage, whether it is meant to be a monologue or dialogue, and whether there are lines missing, see Dwora Gilula, (1983), "Four Deadly Sins? (Arist. *Wasps* 74-84)," *Classical Quarterly* 33.2: 358-362, as well as the commentaries: Douglas M. MacDowell, (1971), *Aristophanes Wasps*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Z. P. Biles and S. D. Olson, (2015), *Aristophanes: Wasps*, Oxford: University Press.

abnormal, deviating from the norm of health. In other words, the sickness frame already introduces a judgment about normal vs. abnormal, healthy vs. sick into the way that we understand Philocleon's character and behavior from the outset.

Philocleon's illness is also compared to a number of others, which are indicated by the *phil-* compounds used throughout the passage (bolded above). These include *philo-kubos* (love of dice), *philo-potēs* (love of drink), *philo-thytēs* (love of sacrifices), and *philo-xenos* (love of foreigners). These compounds are formed by using *phil-* or *philo-* (related to the verb *phileō*, to love) and a form of whatever is the love object.³⁸ These different *phil-* compounds are rhetorically presented as guesses from different members of the audience. The first guess, that he suffers as a *philo-kubos*, lover of dice, is jokingly dismissed as one that reflects the guesser's own illness (an instance of solipsistic diagnosis). The dice referred to here are not meant to signify any random dice game, but rather the gambling associated with playing dice.³⁹ So, the lover of dice is addicted to gambling. The second guess, that Philocleon might be a *philo-potēs*, lover of drink, is dismissed as the disease of "good men." This conveys the idea that the "drink" part of the "love of drink" refers to wine, a main feature of the ancient symposium or drinking party, an important social institution for elite men in Athens (and the ancient world more

³⁸ On the formation and meaning of these compounds, see: P. Cipriano, (1990), *I composti greci con φίλος*, Viterbo: Università della Tuscia Istituto di Studia Romanzi; R. Schmitt, (2018), "Greek Personal Names with Philo- as First or -Philos as Second Element," in L. Alfieri *et al.* (eds.), *Linguistica, filologia e storia culturale: in ricordo di Palmira Cipriano*, Rome: Editrice "Il calamo," 293-207; Christopher Moore, (2020), *Calling Philosophers Names: On the Origin of a Discipline*, Princeton: University Press. And on the language of love in Aristophanes more broadly, including the *Wasps*, see: James Robson, (2013), "The Language(s) of Love in Aristophanes," in Ed. Sanders *et al.* (eds.), *Erōs in Ancient Greece*, Oxford: University Press, 251-266.

³⁹ On this association, see: Dwora Gilula, (1983), "Four Deadly Sins? (Arist. *Wasps* 74-84)," *Classical Quarterly* 33.2: 358-362; David Konstan, (1985), "The Politics of Aristophanes' *Wasps*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115: 27-46; Sara Hobe, (2018), "Political Nosology in Aristophanes's *Wasps*," *Illinois Classical Studies* 43.2: 351-365; and others.

broadly).⁴⁰ So, love of drinking is understood to be a socially-accepted or functional form of alcoholism. The dismissal of this guess also contains the insult to Philocleon: love of drinking is a sickness for noblemen, and he is not one of those.⁴¹ The third guess, that Philocleon is a *philothytēs*, a lover of sacrifices, is passed by without further comment. This serves to show that Aristophanes is piling up examples of *phil*-compounds to add to the humor of the scene. It is also notable that the love of sacrifices is probably not best understood as an expression of piety, but of gluttony or addiction to eating the meat that was served at religious feasts, one of the few instances that the average person in the ancient world would have the chance to consume meat.⁴² The final guess, that he is a *philoxenos*, a lover of foreigners, is here also used in a subversive way: it does not refer to benevolent hospitality, but rather makes a joke about hiring foreign-born male prostitutes.⁴³ This is said in reference to an elite figure, Philoxenos, who was apparently well-known for this habit, and the joke thus offers a literalization of his name.

All of these *phil*- compounds point out behaviors that are meant to be understood as sicknesses or deviances away from norms, involving excessive, repetitive behavior. An audience member might be able to grasp this signification from the *phil*- compounds themselves. In their

⁴⁰ There was not a single, over-arching category word like “alcohol” in ancient Greece, though there were certainly specific names for different types of alcohols, wine, beer, etc. These specific names show up in various *phil*-compounds, such as *phil-oinos* (lover of wine) or *phil-akratos* (lover of unmixed wine). *Phil-potēs* is also used in other contexts, e.g., Herodotus, *Histories* 2.174, to describe a person with excessive drinking and disrupting behavior.

⁴¹ This insult highlights one of the normative tensions in the play between the son’s aristocratic aspirations and the father’s populist habits. On class conflict in the play, see: David Konstan, (1985), “The Politics of Aristophanes’ *Wasps*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115: 27-46; *idem.*, (1994), “The Classics and Class Conflict,” *Arethusa* 27.1: 47-70; and a counter-argument to Konstan’s reading: S. D. Olson, (1996), “Politics and Poetry in Aristophanes’ *Wasps*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-), 126, 129–150.

⁴² Dwora Gilula, (1983), “Four Deadly Sins? (Arist. *Wasps* 74-84),” *Classical Quarterly* 33.2: 358-362.

⁴³ *Ibidem.*

early usage, these compounds were “marked somehow by a counter-normative relation... perhaps especially one of repetition.”⁴⁴ Moreover, the humor of the passage relies on the idea that these *phil-* compounds, as sicknesses, were somehow familiar and understandable to audience members. They were all too familiar, in some cases (e.g., the gambler’s solipsistic guess). But even without such personal experience, they were all familiar enough to make sense to the audience. This is key for understanding Philocleon’s addiction to the courts as an analogical extension of the other types of *phil-* sicknesses.

We get a clear picture of the excessive, repetitive, addictive connotation of the *phil-* compounds through the way that Philocleon’s behavior is described in the lines that follow the ones quoted above. Xanthias, again, is describing how Philocleon manifests his obsessive love for the jury (*Wasps*, 91-112):

He doesn’t get a wink of sleep all night. Even if he does, it’s just a speck, while his mind still flies there around the water clock. Because of his habit of holding a voting pebble, he wakes up with three fingers clenched, just like a religious fanatic. By god, if he sees the son of Pylilampes’s name has been written on a door, “Dēmos is beautiful,” he goes and adds, “the voting urn is beautiful.” He claims that the rooster, which crows in the evening, woke him up late, having been bribed by a corrupt official. Right after dinner he calls for his slippers, and then he goes straight there and sleeps very early, like a barnacle clinging to a pillar. Because of his bad temper, he condemns everyone to a harsh penalty and, like a bee, goes around plastering up his nails with wax. Fearing lest he ever lose the pebble that he uses to judge, he keeps a whole beach as back-up. This is how he’s mad, and if he’s chastised for it, he always judges even more.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Christopher Moore, (2020), *Calling Philosophers Names: On the Origin of a Discipline*, Princeton: University Press, 88.

⁴⁵ The text in Greek reads:

ὑπνου δ’ ὄρα τῆς νυκτὸς οὐδὲ πασπάλην.
ἦν δ’ οὖν καταμύση κὰν ἄχνην, ὅμως ἐκεῖ
ὁ νοῦς πέτεται τὴν νύκτα περὶ τὴν κλεψύδραν.
ὑπὸ τοῦ δὲ τὴν ψῆφόν γ’ ἔχειν εἰωθέναι
τοὺς τρεῖς ξυνέχων τῶν δακτύλων ἀνίσταται,

Jury duty is on his mind all the time, including when he is asleep. It affects him physically, keeping him awake all the time and when he does sleep, he dreams of it and wakes up with clenched hands. It also affects his behaviour, with him going to the courts early in the morning, or even sleeping there over night; he stocks up on wax and pebbles to support his habit, makes graffiti about it all over town, and loses his temper if anyone tries to limit his court time. All his life is oriented around his obsession with serving on the jury.

This description offers some of the best evidence of the behavioral symptoms of his addiction. Recall that behavioral symptoms, like those listed in the *DSM* and the *ICD*, are some of the initial criteria we can use to identify addictions in the ancient world. These include things like lack of control regarding the behavior; giving it increasing priority in one's life over other interests and activities; and continuing with it despite negative consequences.⁴⁶ In Philocleon's

ὥσπερ λιβανωτὸν ἐπιτιθεῖς νουμηγία.
καὶ νῆ Δί' ἦν ἴδη γέ που γεγραμμένον
υἷὸν Πυριλάμπους ἐν θύρᾳ Δήμον καλόν,
ἰὼν παρέγραψε πλησίον 'κημὸς καλός.'
τὸν ἀλεκτρυόνα δ', ὃς ἦδ' ἀφ' ἐσπέρας, ἔφη
ὄψ' ἐξεγείρειν αὐτὸν ἀναπεπεισμένον,
παρὰ τῶν ὑπευθύνων ἔχοντα χρήματα.
εὐθὺς δ' ἀπὸ δορπηστοῦ κέκραγεν ἐμβάδας,
κᾶπειτ' ἐκεῖσ' ἐλθὼν προκαθεύδει πρὸ πάνυ,
ὥσπερ λεπὰς προσεχόμενος τῷ κίονι.
ὑπὸ δυσκολίας δ' ἅπασι τιμῶν τὴν μακρὰν
ὥσπερ μέλιττ' ἢ βομβυλιὸς εἰσέρχεται
ὑπὸ τοῖς ὄνυξι κηρὸν ἀναπεπασμένος.
ψήφων δὲ δείσας μὴ δεηθεῖη ποτέ,
ἴν' ἔχοι δικάζειν, αἰγιαλὸν ἔνδον τρέφει.
τοιαῦτ' ἀλύει: νουθετούμενος δ' αἰεὶ
μᾶλλον δικάζει.

⁴⁶ Based on the ICD-11 criteria for gaming disorder (World Health Organization, (2022), "Gaming Disorder," in *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD)* (11th edition), Zurich: World Health Organization, retrieved from <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2fcd%2fent%2f1448597234>), whose essential features are:

case, he is generally preoccupied with jury duty, thinking about it day and night (even in his dreams). He acts in such a way that demonstrates his preoccupation with it (e.g., getting there as soon as possible, stock-piling equipment, etc.). He prioritizes jury duty over other relationships, as we know from the strain his jury obsession has placed on his relationship with his son. He is also restless or irritable if someone tries to prevent him or, like the late-crowing rooster, disrupts

- A persistent pattern of gaming behaviour ('digital gaming' or 'video-gaming'), which may be predominantly online (i.e., over the internet or similar electronic networks) or offline, manifested by all of the following:
 - Impaired control over gaming behaviour (e.g., onset, frequency, intensity, duration, termination, context);
 - Increasing priority given to gaming behaviour to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other life interests and daily activities; and
 - Continuation or escalation of gaming behaviour despite negative consequences (e.g., family conflict due to gaming behaviour, poor scholastic performance, negative impact on health).
- The pattern of gaming behaviour may be continuous or episodic and recurrent but is manifested over an extended period of time (e.g., 12 months).
- The gaming behaviour is not better accounted for by another mental disorder (e.g., Manic Episode) and is not due to the effects of a substance or medication.
- The pattern of gaming behaviour results in significant distress or impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

These criteria are identical to those for gambling disorder: simply replace gaming with gambling.

For comparison, the DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder (American Psychiatric Association, (2013), "Gambling Disorder," *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5* (Fifth edition), Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing):

- A. Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:
 1. Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
 2. Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
 3. Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
 4. Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
 5. Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).
 6. After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even ("chasing" one's losses).
 7. Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
 8. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
 9. Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

his practice.⁴⁷ Overall, Philocleon's behavior corresponds to the criteria we have for behavioral addictions like gaming and gambling disorder.

Moreover, Philocleon's case shows the kind of behavior that we can translate back into our understanding of the other *phil-* compounds to which his illness is compared. They all point to some sort of addictive behavior towards a given object. Someone who is a *philo-potēs*, a lover of drink, is not just fond of drinking, as in, they gladly partake in drinking now and then as a pleasant activity. Rather, they exhibit some sort of excessive behavior towards it, pursuing it often, repeatedly, often to an extreme degree, without control, to the extent that it negatively affects relationships and other activities. The same applies to the gambler (lover of dice) and the others as well. The type of behavior that these *phil-* compounds are used to point out is addictive, norm-disrupting behavior.

2.3 Philocleon's Refusal

Fast forward to a scene in the middle of the play. Between the previous scene with the *phil-* addictions and this one, there is a full description from Xanthias about the types of behaviors that Philocleon performs to satisfy his addiction, and the treatments that his son has attempted to use to cure him. The stage has filled up with Bdelycleon (Philocleon's son) and the chorus (Philocleon's fellow jurors, the "wasps"), and they have engaged in a debate. Philocleon and the chorus are on one side, praising the jury and the political power that comes with it, and Bdelycleon is on the other side, trying to convince them that they are enslaved by Cleon's

⁴⁷ He also resists interventions or attempts to make him stop, including various forms of treatment that I discuss in chapter 4. His resistance includes further irritation, denial, lying, and creative evasions.

rhetoric to act against their own interests. At a certain point, Bdelycleon's arguments start to prevail and even the chorus begins to urge Philocleon to listen to Bdelycleon's words and be persuaded that what he says is true. They argue that he is looking out for Philocleon's interests more than Cleon is, and it would be better to give up the whole court habit that is keeping the self-interested Cleon in power.

Philocleon falls silent for some time. The chorus explains that he may just be coming to grips with the harsh reality that was revealed by his son. He may be feeling bad about himself and his choices, and struggling to figure out what to do. All of a sudden, Philocleon breaks in with a tragic cry, "Alas, alas!" (ὰὼ μοί μοι!), he says, (*Wasps* 750-759):

Don't tell me these things! **I love them**, I wish I were there, when the crier asks, "Who hasn't voted? Let him stand up." I would stand by the voting urn, as the last of the voters. Hurry, my soul. Where is my soul? Be off, shady thing. I swear, may I never in the future, as one of the jurors, catch Cleon in the act of stealing.⁴⁸

These tragicomic lines offer us further information about Philocleon's addiction.⁴⁹ Before, Xanthias described Philocleon's behaviour as based on a kind of obsessive love for the jury, its

⁴⁸ The lines in Greek are:

μή μοι τούτων μηδέν ὑπισχνοῦ.
κείνων **ἔραμαι**, κείθι γενοίμαν,
ἴν' ὁ κῆρύξ φησι, 'τίς ἀνήφιστος; ἀνιστάσθω.'
κάπισταίην ἐπὶ τοῖς κημοῖς
ψηφιζομένων ὁ τελευταῖος.
σπεῦδ' ὦ ψυχή. ποῦ μοι ψυχή;
πάρες ὧ σκιερά. μὰ τὸν Ἡρακλέα
μή νυν ἔτ' ἐγὼ 'ν τοῖσι δικασταῖς
κλέπτοντα Κλέωνα λάβομι.

⁴⁹ Aristophanes's use of tragic elements is a well-known feature of his comedies. See, for example, S. Nelson, (2016), *Aristophanes and his tragic muse: comedy, tragedy and the polis in 5th century Athens*, Leiden and Boston: Brill (esp. chapter 4 on the *Wasps*); M. C. Farmer, (2016), *Tragedy on the Comic Stage*, Oxford: University Press (esp. chapter 3 on the *Wasps*); Matthew Wright, (2013), "Comedy versus tragedy in *Wasps*," in E. Bakola, L. Prauscello, and M. Telo (eds.), *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres*, Cambridge: University Press, 205-225;

physical details, as well as the opportunities it affords. Here, Philocleon articulates that strong love himself. He also notably zeroes in on one of the details, that is, his practice of delaying his vote until the very end to extend the feeling he got from casting the pebble. Such details add richness to our understanding of just how obsessed he was.

This speech captures a turning point in Philocleon's relationship with the court. Previously, he whole-heartedly loved the jury duty, he had his friends who supported him and participated in the jury with him, and they shared the feeling that what they were doing was politically meaningful because politicians like Cleon told them so. When his son breaks it down for him, and his fellow jurors join in urging him to take Bdelycleon's arguments seriously, major aspects of his world and his understanding of his place in the world start to unravel. He is caught between his past identity built around his addiction to the court, and an uncertain future in which he has to somehow disentangle himself from that past. This is the moment represented by the lines quoted above.

Notably, his first reaction is denial: stop! don't tell me these things! (750) He moves quickly on to a rationalization for his denial: he loves and fantasizes about being in the courts again (751-755). He carries on with a tragic appeal to his soul, which he feels he's losing or has lost already, as he says, "Where are you, my soul? Fine, be gone!" (756-757). We might see the soul standing in here for a sense of self, identity, or even vitality which he feels he has lost with

Simone Beta, (1999), "Madness on the Comic Stage: Aristophanes' *Wasps* and Euripides' *Heracles*," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 40.2: 135-157.

the forced ending of his past life in the courts. The “Fine, be gone!” sounds like an attempt at a final resolution.

But then, in the final two lines of this short speech, Philocleon leaves us with ambiguity that various commentators have tried to resolve.⁵⁰ He says that he wishes that he may not, when in the courts in the future, catch Cleon stealing (758-759). While he seems to accept Cleon’s fault and the general need to distance himself from Cleon, he remains in denial about actually giving up serving on the jury, even though this practice is bound up with Cleon’s politics. He is trying to maintain and rationalize his love of the jury, even after he has been confronted with the need to give it up.

The persistence of Philocleon’s passion for the courts, even in light of his new realization about them and Cleon, comes out clearly a few lines later. Bdelycleon, perhaps reacting to Philocleon’s ambiguity, doubles down and begs him to obey him. He really does not want his father going back to the courts. At this point, Philocleon is open to it, and says that he will do whatever Bdelycleon wants, but with one exception: he must not ask him to stop judging (763: τοῦ μὴ δικάζειν). He says he would rather die than give it up (763-764: τοῦτο δὲ / Ἄιδης διακρινεῖ πρότερον ἢ γὼ πείσομαι). He may give up on Cleon, and he may give up on going to the Athenian courts, but he still wants to hang on to some small aspect of his passion, and so he marks off the act of judging as the one aspect of his life that he is not willing to change.

⁵⁰ Sommerstein argues that Philocleon’s condemnation of Cleon represents a subconscious slip, as he continues to articulate some pro-Cleon positions later in the play, whereas Biles and Olson claim that these lines are more revealing of Aristophanes’s poetics and politics than the depth of Philocleon as a character. See: A. H. Sommerstein, (1983), *Aristophanes: Wasps*, Warminster, Wilts, England: Aris & Phillips; Z. P. Biles, and S. D. Olson, (2015), *Aristophanes: Wasps*, Oxford: University Press.

Philocleon's insistence demonstrates his compulsion to repeat the past habit, despite his new acceptance that it is bad. This shows lack of control over cutting down or stopping his addictive behavior, despite the negative consequences. Indeed, it recalls a common refrain among people who suffer from addictions: often it is the case that they know that they should not keep doing the same thing and can clearly articulate this, but then, for one reason or another, they simply cannot stop. The explanation for this urge might range from physical compulsion ("I can't stop, my body needs it"), to psychological drive ("I don't want to stop, I need it"). But regardless of the explanation, this persistence in face of negative consequences is one of key behavioral indicators of addiction.

Philocleon's refusal also resonates with another case of someone who dealt with the Athenian courts and refused to give up a certain aspect of their life...

3. Socrates on Trial

3.1 Background to Plato's *Apology*

The case I have in mind comes from a few decades after *The Wasps* was performed. It is the case of a man who was put on trial for not believing in the gods and for corrupting the young men of the city. He was one of those sophist types who were hanging around Athens in the latter half of the fifth century, questioning things and coming up with new explanations for how the world worked, how society could be organized, how one should live one's life. This was the type of intellectual that got satirized in Aristophanes's earlier play, *The Clouds*, which I mentioned was performed the year before the *Wasps* in the dramatic festival in Athens. In that play, actually, the man who I am thinking of was one of the main characters. I am talking, of course, about the philosopher Socrates.

Socrates lived in Athens from approximately 469-399 BCE. Not so much is known about his background: his father may or may not have been a sculptor, and his mother may or may not have been a midwife. We know from authors roughly contemporaneous with him, such as Aristophanes, Plato, and Xenophon, that Socrates was a relatively prominent intellectual and provocateur in the Athenian public sphere—even as he tried to stay out of institutional politics as much as possible (Plato, *Apology* 17d, 23b, 31c-32a). He spent his time hanging around the market, gymnasia, craftsmen’s workshops, and in the houses of friends, talking with anyone and everyone about what it means to live a good life and be a good person. But eventually, all this talking got him in trouble. In 399 BCE—so roughly 25 years after Aristophanes produced *The Clouds* and *The Wasps*—Socrates was put on trial and, in the end, sentenced to death for his meddling.

In the years between Aristophanes’s plays and Socrates’s trial, the rest of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta had taken place, with Athens losing badly. At the end of the war, Athens was subjected to an oligarchic government installed by the Spartans, in 404 BCE. This government, known as the “Thirty Tyrants,” instituted a kind of regime of terror: people who were viewed as potential threats to the regime were systematically killed. But this regime did not last long: the oligarchy was overthrown after just eight months, and democracy was restored in the city.

After the fact, the Thirty were punished, and one of the solutions for re-establishing the trust necessary for the renewed political compact was to grant amnesty to everyone else who

may have been involved with the atrocities of the Thirty.⁵¹ The amnesty in Athens meant that anyone who was thought to have been involved with the Thirty could not be legally punished for any crime related to the events of 404-403. But it did not mean that any of the political animosities developed then or during the previous years of war went away. Just as we saw with Philocleon, deep passions are hard to change or let go of.

Socrates was thought to be involved with the Thirty. Some of the youths that he had been spending his time with, “corrupting” them, ended up in power in 404. Among these youths was Critias, one of the leaders of the Thirty. One theory as to why Socrates, a seemingly harmless (albeit annoying) old man, was brought to trial in 399 for impiety and corruption is that these charges were a cover up for politically motivated revenge. The idea is that some people resented Socrates for being critical of Athenian democracy and promoting policies that were more pro-Sparta and pro-oligarchy. Socrates himself, in Plato’s *Apology*, denied his connection to the Thirty, citing an example of refusing to follow an order they gave him because it seemed unjust to him (32c-e).⁵² Yet, there is evidence that even a generation or two later, Socrates’s name was still associated with pro-Spartan, oligarchic tendencies, as when an Athenian speaker asserts in court, “Did you put to death Socrates the sophist, fellow citizens, because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty who put down the democracy” (Aeschines, *Against*

⁵¹ For an in-depth analysis of the amnesty, see: E. Carawan, (2013), *The Athenian amnesty and reconstructing the law*, Oxford: University Press (esp. chapter 9 regarding the case of Socrates).

⁵² For comparison, see the descriptions of this event in Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 1.2 and Plato’s *Seventh Letter*, 324c-325a.

Timarchus, 173).⁵³ So, there was truly a connection, at least on the level of popular belief, between Socrates and the Thirty, regardless of whether or how much Socrates may have actually been involved in his lifetime with the Thirty. This is the political context for his trial in 399 BCE.

3.2 Socrates's Refusal

Socrates's trial is most famously recorded in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, to which I have already started to refer. This text is a version of the defense speech that Socrates gave in court on the day of his trial, written by Socrates's student, Plato. Though it is not a precise transcription or record of the actual speech Socrates gave, it offers a glimpse into the charges Socrates faced, the kind of interactions that he had with the court, and the arguments he made in his defense.

In the *Apology*, we learn that the official charges against Socrates were that he did not believe in the gods of the city and he corrupted the youth.⁵⁴ Socrates explains how animosity towards him first arose because of his practice of questioning his fellow citizens (*Apology*, 21b-23b). He used to go around asking people to justify their knowledge of things they claimed to have wisdom or expertise in, and this generally ended with him showing that they did not actually know what they were talking about. According to Socrates, what those around him may

⁵³ The Greek text reads: Ἐπειθ' ὑμεῖς, ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, Σωκράτην μὲν τὸν σοφιστὴν ἀπεκτείνετε, ὅτι Κριτίαν ἐφάνη πεπαιδευκῶς, ἕνα τῶν τριάκοντα τῶν τὸν δῆμον καταλυσάντων. Both text and translation are from the Adams Loeb edition.

⁵⁴ These are the official charges brought against him by his accusers, Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon. At the start of his speech, Socrates also says that he needs to defend himself against the “unofficial charges” represented by his reputation for “studying things in the sky and below the earth” and making “the worse into the stronger arguments,” and teaching others the same. This is the characterization of Socrates that appears in Aristophanes's play, *The Clouds*, which Socrates cites in his defense as one of the clearest sources for this bad reputation (*Apology*, 18c-19d), though it was also spread in less citable ways (e.g., private conversations). Socrates attempts to show that this portrayal of him is inaccurate, as are the official charges of atheism and of corrupting the youth.

not have realized was that he was performing this practice in service to the god Apollo of Delphi (20e-21a). This showed that he believed in Apollo, at least; he also asserts that he believed in other gods and spirits, and thus that he could not be the atheist he was accused of being (26c-28a). On top of that, he admits that his practice of questioning people was annoying—he famously compares himself to a pesky gadfly that bites the city to rouse it from its sluggishness (30e-31a). This made a lot of the older generation frustrated and angry at him, as they were the ones who were subjected to his questioning and exposed for their ignorance (21d-23a). Meanwhile, Socrates’s behavior attracted the young men of the city, who began following him around (23c-d, 33c). This is Socrates’s explanation regarding his alleged corruption of the youth: he was never intentionally directing his attention towards them or trying to teach them for a fee like the sophists did; they were simply around when he was questioning people. Over the course of his speech, Socrates goes through these arguments and several others, attempting to show that he is not guilty of any of the charges, but has led his life in such a way as to try to do what he thought was right, for himself, the god Apollo, and his fellow citizens.

In the middle of the speech, there is a certain moment when Socrates expresses an act of refusal. Socrates is talking about why he has lived his life the way he has and he offers a thought experiment to the jury who is hearing his case. He outlines the following hypothetical scenario: imagine that the Athenians were to acquit him of all the charges brought against him, but they gave him one condition: he had to stop pestering them with his philosophical questioning (29c). Given this ultimatum, do you know what Socrates says he would do? He says that he would simply refuse. He would say, “Men of Athens, I am grateful, and I am your friend, but I will

obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy” (29d2-5).⁵⁵

This is strikingly similar to Philocleon’s refusal that we saw above. Socrates here is refusing to give up the practice of philosophy to which he had dedicated his life. It is his passionate devotion, just as judging was to Philocleon. When Philocleon’s son was trying to change his habits and get him to turn away from the corruption of Cleon and the jury duty, Philocleon assented to everything but giving up judging: it was the one thing that he wanted to hold onto. We might almost hear him saying to his son: “My son, I am grateful for your concern, and I love you, but you must not ask this one thing of me: I shall not cease to judge cases!” Similarly, at this turning point for Socrates, when he is on trial for his life, he is happy to give the Athenians much of what they want, but refuses to stop his practice of philosophy, saying that he would rather accept the death penalty than give it up. But what exactly was it that Socrates was refusing to give up?

3.3 Socrates’s Addictive Behaviour

Socrates says that he refuses to give up philosophy. In the *Apology*, he explains his practice of philosophy in terms of questioning his fellow citizens and urging them to attend to their souls’ excellence more than money, power, and status (29d-30b). This purpose seems relatively benign if not laudable, and of course history has largely judged Socrates positively

⁵⁵ The Greek text reads: “ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὧ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀσπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φιλοῦ, πείσομαι δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν, καὶ ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐμπνέω καὶ οἴός τε ὦ, οὐ μὴ παύσωμαι φιλοσοφῶν.”

(though the Athenians who convicted him judge him negatively).⁵⁶ However, if we look across Plato's dialogues at how Socrates's relationship to wisdom and philosophy is depicted, we can see that, to an Athenian audience (jury), his behavior might have seemed just as addictive as Philocleon's did.⁵⁷ To lay the foundation for comparing Socrates to Philocleon, I draw on symptoms of addiction, based on the criteria for behavioral addictions like gambling or gaming disorder. Again, these include persistent preoccupation with the activity, even in moments of distress, prioritizing it to such an extent that it jeopardizes significant relationships and opportunities, and continuing with it despite negative consequences.

Socrates is famous for being completely preoccupied with philosophy. We get a sense of this, of how persistent thoughts about philosophy can take him over and divert him from his other pursuits. There is a well-known anecdote from the start of Plato's *Symposium* about Socrates's preoccupation with philosophy (174d-175b). Socrates and his friend had just run into each other, and Socrates has invited his friend to come along with him to a party. However, as they walk together, Socrates keeps getting lost in thought lagging behind. In fact, he carries so much that his friend arrives at the host's house without Socrates to introduce him. No matter—everyone is an aristocrat there, so the friend is welcomed in while an enslaved attendant is sent to

⁵⁶ Largely though not unanimously: for a well-known critical reading of Socrates, see: I. F. Stone, (1988), *The trial of Socrates*, Boston: Little, Brown.

⁵⁷ In surveying these different characterizations of Socrates across different dialogues, I do not mean to present a totally consistent interpretation of Socrates, or defend the notion that the dialogues are unified in their presentations of him. Different texts may characterize differently, and even within a single text there need not be a single characterization (though often there is). Indeed, the transformation of a historical person, in all their complexity, into a representative figure presented in textual form, involves highlighting some things while passing over others. So, I am not trying to give a full depiction of what Socrates was really liked based on the textual evidence that we have. Instead, in surveying the characterization of Socrates across different dialogues, I show how he was portrayed as addicted, like Philocleon.

find Socrates. He returns to announce that Socrates is standing on the neighbor's porch and is not responding to his calls. The host finds this very strange, but the friend of Socrates explains that this is a common habit of his, to go off and stand motionless, wherever he happens to be, lost in thought. He says that he will soon enough snap out of it, so it is best to just leave him be. For this friend, Socrates's behavior was not devious enough to warrant an intervention, but the host's surprise shows that his preoccupation was out of the ordinary to an average Athenian.⁵⁸

Socrates is also represented as philosophizing through moments of distress, such as when he is on trial for his life, as well as later, on his deathbed. In both instances, Socrates is generally cheerfully talking about philosophy and pursuing various inquiries with his interlocutors. This makes it seem like he is not in distress, even as those around him, including his wife and close friends, are. Yet, there are a few moments when we can glimpse Socrates's own distress, and how he uses philosophy to offer himself some sort of solace. For example, in the *Apology*, when describing his practice of going around questioning his fellow Athenians, he notes, “I realized, to my **sorrow** and **alarm**, that I was getting unpopular, but I thought that I must attach the greatest importance to the god's oracle, so I must go to all those who had any reputation for knowledge to

⁵⁸ There are other accounts of Socrates's preoccupation throughout Plato's dialogues (and in other contemporary sources). For one more vivid one from the *Symposium*, this is what Alcibiades, Socrates's lover, says about him getting lost in thought, preoccupied by some philosophical problem, completely ignoring others around him: “One day, at dawn, he started thinking about some problem or other; he just stood outside trying to figure it out. He couldn't resolve it, but he wouldn't give up. He simply stood there, glued to the same spot. By midday, many soldiers had seen him, and, quite mystified, they told everyone that Socrates had been standing there all day, thinking about something. He was still there when evening came, and after dinner some Ionians moved their bedding outside, where it was cooler and more comfortable (all this took place in the summer), but mainly in order to watch if Socrates was going to stay out there all night. And so he did; he stood on the very same spot until dawn! He only left the next morning, when the sun came out, and he made his prayers to the new day” (*Sym.* 220c3-d5: συννοήσας γὰρ αὐτόθι ἔωθέν τι εἰστήκει σκοπῶν, καὶ ἐπειδὴ οὐ προυχῶρει αὐτῷ, οὐκ ἀνίει ἀλλὰ εἰστήκει ζητῶν. καὶ ἤδη ἦν μεσημβρία, καὶ ἄνθρωποι ἠσθάνοντο, καὶ θαυμάζοντες ἄλλος ἄλλῳ ἔλεγεν ὅτι Σωκράτης ἐξ ἑωθινοῦ φροντίζων τι ἔστηκε. τελευτῶντες δὲ τινες τῶν Ἴόνων, ἐπειδὴ ἑσπέρα ἦν, δειπνήσαντες—καὶ γὰρ θέρος τότε γ' ἦν—χαμεύνια ἐξενεγκάμενοι ἅμα μὲν ἐν τῷ ψύχει καθηῦδον, ἅμα δ' ἐφύλαττον αὐτὸν εἰ καὶ τὴν νύκτα ἐστήξει. ὁ δὲ εἰστήκει μέχρι ἕως ἐγένετο καὶ ἥλιος ἀνέσχεν: ἔπειτα ὄχρετ' ἀπιὼν προσευξάμενος τῷ ἡλίῳ).

examine its meaning” (21e2-22a1, emphasis added).⁵⁹ A few lines later, he notes, “I acquired much unpopularity, of a kind that is **hard to deal with and is a heavy burden...**” (23a1-2, emphasis added).⁶⁰ Here, we have a rare representation of Socrates’s internal states or experiences in relation to doing philosophy: he reports feeling sorrow (λυπούμενος, from the verb λυπέω, cognate with the general word for pain, λύπη), and alarm (δεδιώς, from the verb δείδω, one of the Greek words for fear), as his behavior brought upon him difficult (χαλεπώταται) and heavy (βαρύταται) animosity from his community. Despite these negative feelings, Socrates remains devoted to his practice of philosophy, believing it to be more important than anything like his own personal suffering.

Socrates also risks his relationships because of his devotion to philosophy. From the previous quotations about the enmities that developed in response to his philosophical questioning, we know that he sacrificed his relationships to members of his community. He claims to do this out of his devotion to his fellow citizens, though he is clearly more committed to the idea of their relationships than the actual experience of them. Socrates also experienced conflict with his family and friends due to his commitment to philosophy. At one point while he is in prison awaiting his death, Socrates’s friend Crito tries to convince him to escape and go into exile. (This is the scenario in Plato’s dialogue, *Crito*.) Crito offers the help of various friends, and argues that this would result in Socrates’s friends and family not being deprived of his company. Socrates declines his offer: for him, his commitment to philosophy is greater than his

⁵⁹ The Greek text reads: αισθανόμενος μὲν καὶ λυπούμενος καὶ δεδιώς ὅτι ἀπηχθάνομην, ὅμως δὲ ἀναγκαῖον ἐδόκει εἶναι τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ πλείστου ποιῆσθαι—ἰτέον οὖν, σκοποῦντι τὸν χρησμὸν τί λέγει, ἐπὶ ἅπαντας τοὺς τι δοκοῦντας εἰδέναι.

⁶⁰ The Greek text reads: πολλὰ μὲν ἀπέχθειά μοι γέγονασι καὶ οἷα χαλεπώταται καὶ βαρύταται.

desire to make those relationships last a while longer. The same is true of Socrates's relationship with his wife: though we do not hear much about her, we know that he sent her away on the morning of his death because she was grieving too much. One of the traditional roles of women in Greek society was to perform ritual laments on the occasion of death, but Socrates preferred to have a philosophical discussion with his friends than to listen to his wife grieving. Because of his devotion to philosophy, Socrates sacrificed these friendships and relationships, and of course eventually his life (the ultimate "negative consequence" of addiction?).

We can see from these anecdotes how obsessed and addicted Socrates was to doing philosophy. He seems to meet some of the basic criteria of symptoms for behavioral addictions. But more than just showing patterns that correspond to contemporary notions of addiction, he is depicted in ways that are specifically similar to how Philocleon was depicted. Not only do both refuse to give up the behavior to which they are addicted, but there are formal similarities between them, and the descriptions of them emphasize love and (as) a kind of sickness or madness. By looking closely at these similarities between Socrates and Philocleon in the next section, we can see how both were plausibly conceived of as figures of addiction in ancient Athens.

4. Comparing Socrates and Philocleon

4.1 Formal similarities

The greatness of Socrates's devotion towards philosophy is similar to how Philocleon behaved towards Cleon and the courts. They are both driven by their passion into a repetitive pattern of behaviour that has them seeking to perform the same behaviour over and over again. This is similar to how people who develop addictive habits may start out pursuing some object of

pleasure or passion, but then get hooked onto it and unable to stop. Socrates and Philocleon also both insist on continuing to pursue their passions, even after being confronted with facts or situations that challenge the viability of their pursuit: Philocleon faces the facts about Cleon's corrupt politics; Socrates is put on trial for his philosophizing. Again, this is similar to a person who is addicted acknowledging the harm being done by their addiction, but also finding themselves unable to give it up. Indeed, both Socrates and Philocleon outright refuse to give up their passions, saying they would rather die than abandon this one thing to which they have dedicated their lives. These are extreme terms, but through the extreme we get a chance to see how similar were the passions of these two ancient addicts.

Many formal similarities exist between Socrates and Philocleon. For example, they were both older men in Athens. Though the average life expectancy was relatively low in the ancient world (due to infant mortality, population averages, etc.), it was quite common for elites to live into their sixties, seventies, eighties. Elder men were traditionally esteemed, though because of their idiosyncrasies, neither Philocleon nor Socrates quite matches the profile of a typical esteemed wise elder. Despite this, their advanced age perhaps adds to the understanding of how ingrained their addictive behaviors were: their lives and identities were built up around their behaviors for a long time.⁶¹

Both also exist within specific social dynamics that relate to addictions in various ways. They both have families that do not support their habits. Philocleon has his interventionist son,

⁶¹ On the meaning of age in Aristophanes's *Wasps*, see: T. K. Hubbard, (1989), "Old Men in the Youthful Plays of Aristophanes," in Thomas M. Falkner and Judith de Luce (eds.), *Old age in Greek and Latin literature*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 90-113; A. Crichton, (1991), "'The old are in a second childhood': Age Reversal and Jury Service in Aristophanes' 'Wasps'," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 38: 59-80.

who employs the rest of the household to help him change his father. This scenario comically subverts the traditional household patriarchy, and speaks to a clash between generations, with Philocleon representing a publicly-oriented identity, while his son wants to focus on private, aristocratic interests.⁶² Meanwhile, Socrates has his wife, Xanthippe, whom he sent away from his deathbed for excessive grieving, and who we know from other sources nagged Socrates a lot. Families aside, both Philocleon and Socrates have groups of friends who support them and their addictive behaviors—at least, to a certain extent. In Philocleon’s case, he has the chorus of wasps, who are his friends and fellow jurors. For Socrates, there are the “corrupted” youth who follow him around, as well as many friends who populate Plato’s dialogues and participate in Socrates’s philosophical inquiries to varying extents.

Both Socrates and Philocleon are also tangled up in the Athenian legal system, albeit in different ways. Socrates is a private defendant, charged with violation of certain laws, and brought to court by his enemies. In the ancient Athenian legal system, private citizens spoke in their own defence (there were no lawyers, *per se*), which is one of the reasons why rhetorical training offered by the sophists was strongly valued. Socrates describes it as his first time he has come before the court, and asks for understanding of the jury if he does not use the expected legal language or abide by all of the regular norms, due to his unfamiliarity with the place (*Apology*, 17d). Meanwhile, Philocleon, as a juror, is on the side of judgment (there were also no judges aside from the jurors in ancient Athens). Given that he was obsessed with serving on jury

⁶² See: David Konstan, (1985), “The Politics of Aristophanes’ *Wasps*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115: 27-46; *idem.*, (1994), “The Classics and Class Conflict,” *Arethusa* 27.1: 47-70; S. D. Olson, (1996), “Politics and Poetry in Aristophanes’ *Wasps*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-), 126, 129–150.

as often as possible, he was completely familiar with the court, its language, norms, etc. From his perspective, he enjoyed the feeling of power that he got from casting judgment on defendants like Socrates. Despite these differences, it is notable that both are involved in the legal system in one way or the other: ancient Athens was known as a particularly litigious society, and so having representations of addiction related to the courts in some way makes sense.

These examples show that there are many basic formal parallels between Socrates and Philocleon, to create conceptual associations between them.

4.2 Driven by Love

Both Socrates and Philocleon are also depicted as figures who have gone too far in their love. Their lives have been completely overtaken and changed to be oriented towards the object of their affection, which they value over other objects, relationships, and activities. The role that love plays in motivating or guiding their behavior is first indicated by the *phil-* compounds used to describe them. As we saw above, *phil-* compounds were typically used to call out some counter-normative, repetitive behavior: these compounds were not used to acknowledge the pleasure or affection towards the object/activity in a neutral or positive way, but rather to make fun of it as a strange kind of obsession. And, as we saw, Philocleon, aside from being a lover of Cleon (*philo-cleon*), is a *phil-heliastes*, a lover of the Heliaia (among other, less serious *phil-* compounds used to describe him). Meanwhile, Socrates is a *philo-sophos*, a lover of wisdom. These names are the first indication that their behaviors are motivated by a strange kind of love. There is further evidence of this in the way their behaviors and attitudes towards their behaviors are described, with love emerging as a major conceptual theme.

Philocleon’s love is very clear. As we noted above, both he himself and others explicitly say that he loves going to court and judging (Aristoph. *Wasps* 89, 751). He demonstrates his love for judging through his behavior, which, as we saw above, reveals his daily obsession with the courts. Notably, when Xanthias describes him, one of the behaviors that he mentions corresponds directly to love-courtship practices in ancient Athens. Xanthias says (again *Wasps*, 97-99—the same as was quoted above in section 2.2):

By god, if he sees the son of Pyrilampes’s name has been written on a door, “Dēmos is beautiful,” he goes and adds, “the voting urn is beautiful.”⁶³

It is common to find inscriptions on ancient Greek pottery and ancient graffiti that reads “So-and-so is beautiful.” These are known as “*kalos*-inscriptions,” since the form that they generally take is the person’s name, followed by the adjective *kalos* (καλός), which means beautiful, fine, even noble.⁶⁴ These inscriptions are thought to have been a kind of token, from lover to beloved, to publicize their love, though they can also be used aspirationally as a way of flirting with someone. In this passage, Xanthias describes Philocleon coming across one of these *kalos*-inscriptions on a door reading “Dēmos, son of Pyrilampes, is beautiful” (Δῆμον καλόν). This inscription contains a wordplay on the name of Dēmos, an Athenian aristocrat, and the word for

⁶³ The Greek text, again, reads: καὶ νῆ Δί’ ἦν ἴδη γέ που γεγραμμένον / υἱὸν Πυριλάμπους ἐν θύρᾳ Δῆμον καλόν, / ἰὸν παρέγραψε πλησίον ‘κημὸς καλός.’

⁶⁴ Scholarship on *kalos* inscriptions is broad; for a few discussions, see: N. W. Slater, (1999), “The Vase as Ventriloquist: *kalos*-inscriptions and the culture of fame,” in E. Anne Mackay (ed.), *Signs of Orality: the oral tradition and its influence in the Greek and Roman world*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 143-161; F. Lissarrague, (1999), “Publicity and performance: *kalos*,” in Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne (eds.), *Performance culture and Athenian democracy*, Cambridge: University Press, 359-373; *idem.*, (2013), “La place des mots dans l’imagerie attique,” *Pallas: Revue d’études antiques*, 93: 69-79.

people/populace, *dēmos* (δῆμος) (as in demo-cracy, people-power).⁶⁵ Philocleon writes over this inscription for Dēmos with his own proclamation of the beauty of the vessels used to collect voting pebbles, writing, “the voting urn is beautiful” (κημὸς καλός). Like a lover courting his beloved, Philocleon is publicizing his love for the court, the implements used in it, and all of its practices. It is funny not just because a voting urn is a rather mundane object of affection—much too mundane for one of these elite *kalos*-inscriptions—but also because of the pun on Dēmos’s name. The lines make it clear that, when Philocleon reads such an inscription, he takes it to be a reference to Pylilampes’s son and not the populace. But, because they are homonyms, Philocleon can also be seen to be (inadvertently) denigrating the people in whose name he is supposedly acting, in his role as a juror. In other words, it is a kind of ideological joke against the kind of populism that he and Cleon stand for: Philocleon’s love for the jury is meant to be about enacting the democratic power of the people, but it backfires since it has transformed into a blind, addictive love for the material of the court over the actual common good. This political aspect is key for understanding the joke. For our purposes, this example also serves to show clearly how Philocleon’s behavior was understood not just as an idiosyncratic, repetitive habit, but one that was driven by fanatic love: he literally acts like a lover, with the practices of jury service as his beloved.

⁶⁵ The clause about Demos can actually be construed in at least two ways. The interpretation I gave above is the most straightforward reading of the lines, but it is notable that the participle for the name “being written” (γεγραμμένον), here taken as passive, can also be interpreted as being in the middle voice. In the middle, it would mean something like “x is written for himself” (the subject is also somehow the object of verbs in the middle voice). The middle voice allows for the following translation: “when he [Philocleon] sees that the son of Pylilampes has written for himself on a door, ‘*Dēmos*/the people is *kalos*,’ he [Philocleon] goes and adds, ‘*Kēmos*/the voting urn is *kalos*.’” This would allow the *dēmos*/people meaning to stand somewhat independently of Pylilampes’s son’s name, Dēmos. It is less likely, but the grammar does leave this possibility open.

When it comes to thinking about Socrates and love, the most obvious place to go is Plato's *Symposium*, cited above for the anecdote about Socrates's tendency to get lost in thought. The dialogue as a whole is about the topic of love; the drinking party mentioned in the title revolves not around drinking wine but giving speeches in honor of love. In this dialogue, we learn that love is notably the one domain over which Socrates claims to have knowledge (*Sym.* 177e).⁶⁶ The focus of his speech is on a conception of love he learned from a teacher of his, Diotima. She taught him to conceive of love as a ladder that starts from physical attraction, and ascends through familial and community bonds, to love for all humanity and the world, and ultimately love for the abstract intellectual objects of thought (*Sym.*, 210a-212a). This conception makes love a key motivation for philosophy, as a practice that moves us towards greater and greater understanding. Immediately following this transcendent message, Socrates's lover, Alcibiades comes in, crashing the party, and ranting about how enchanting but completely inaccessible Socrates has been to him as a lover (*Sym.*, 212b-222c). An initial take on this transition (from Diotima to Alcibiades) might place Socrates outside of common love relations and in the more transcendental realm at the top of the ladder: his love of wisdom has transcended

⁶⁶ This is notable because it is one of the rare instances in which Socrates is said to have positive knowledge of something. He makes his claim about love here, as well as in the (potentially spurious) *Theages*. In both, Socrates tends to underscore love as the unique domain of his knowledge by saying that he considers himself to know nothing other than love: "How could I vote 'No,' when the only thing I say I understand is the art of love?" (Plat. *Sym.* 177d7-8: οὔτε γὰρ ἄν ποῦ ἐγὼ ἀποφίσειμι, ὃς οὐδὲν φημι ἄλλο ἐπίστασθαι ἢ τὰ ἐρωτικά); and: "I am always saying, indeed, that I know virtually nothing, except a certain small subject—love, although on this subject, I'm thought to be amazing, better than anyone else, past or present" (Plat. *Theag.* 128b2-4: ἀλλὰ καὶ λέγω δήπου ἀεὶ ὅτι ἐγὼ τυγχάνω ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν ἐπιστάμενος πλὴν γε μικροῦ τινος μαθήματος, τῶν ἐρωτικῶν. τοῦτο μέντοι τὸ μάθημα παρ' ὄντιν' οὐδὲν ποιῶμαι δεινὸς εἶναι καὶ τῶν προγεγονότων ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν νῦν).

more banal, common, physical love of Alcibiades. Yet, despite this potential difference, the transition also points to a parallel between the way Socrates feels towards other people and the way he feels towards philosophy, both as objects of his love. Love is a powerful motive in Socrates's life.

Socrates explicitly brings his two objects of love together in another of Plato's dialogues, the *Gorgias*, when he describes himself as a lover of both Alcibiades and philosophy. He says this as part of an argument towards his interlocutor, Callicles, who is another domineering populist figure like Cleon. Callicles is best known for arguing for the primacy of brute force over social norms (nature over nurture). Socrates frames his argument about lovers to him as offering a kind of common ground or basis of communication between the two of them: he says that since they both have two loves, Callicles should at least be able to understand Socrates. Here is the passage in full (*Gorgias*, 481c5-482b1):

Well, Callicles, if human beings didn't share common experiences, some sharing one, others sharing another, but one of us had some unique experience not shared by others, it wouldn't be easy for him to communicate what he experienced to the other. I say this because I realize that you and I are both now actually sharing a common experience: **each of the two of us is a lover of two objects, I of Alcibiades, Clinias's son, and of philosophy, and you of the *demos* [people] of Athens, and the *Demos* who's the son of Pylilampes.** I notice that in each case you're unable to contradict your beloved, clever though you are, no matter what he says or what he claims is so. You keep shifting back and forth. If you say anything in the Assembly and the Athenian *demos* denies it, you shift your ground and say what it wants to hear. Other things like this happen to you when you're with that good-looking young man, the son of Pylilampes. You're unable to oppose what your beloveds say or propose, so that if somebody heard you say what you do on their account and was amazed at how absurd that is, you'd probably say—if you were minded to tell him the truth—that unless somebody stops your beloveds from saying what they say, you'll never stop saying these things either. In that case you must believe that you're bound to hear me say things like that, too, and instead of being surprised at my saying them, you must stop my beloved, philosophy, from saying them. For she always says what you now hear me say, my dear friend, and she's by far less

fickle than my other beloved. As for that son of Clinias, what he says differs from one time to the next, but what philosophy says always stays the same.⁶⁷

Socrates says that he and Callicles share the common experience of being lovers to two things. For Socrates, these are Alcibiades and philosophy.⁶⁸ For Callicles, they are the Athenian people (*dēmos*) and Dēmos, the same son of Pyrilampes whose *kalos*-inscription Philocleon went around writing over. Plato's use is less explicitly comedic (though it does seem a bit playful and aggressive), but Aristophanes was evidently not alone in using Dēmos to make puns about democratic politics.

Socrates's use of the *dēmos* pun also has a personal resonance: Pyrilampes was Plato's stepfather and, incidentally, also his great uncle. Plato's mother, Perictone, had married Plato's father, Ariston, and bore him several children (including Socrates's interlocutors from the *Republic*, Glaucon and Adeimantus) between approximately 432 BCE and 427 BCE.⁶⁹ Upon Ariston's death (c. 427 BCE), Perictone married her mother's brother, Pyrilampes, who was also

⁶⁷ The Greek text reads: ὦ Καλλίκλεις, εἰ μή τι ἦν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάθος, τοῖς μὲν ἄλλο τι, τοῖς δὲ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὸ αὐτό, ἀλλὰ τις ἡμῶν ἰδίον τι ἔπασχεν πάθος ἢ οἱ ἄλλοι, οὐκ ἂν ἦν ῥάδιον ἐνδείξασθαι τῷ ἐτέρῳ τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πάθημα. λέγω δ' ἐνόησας ὅτι ἐγὼ τε καὶ σὺ νῦν τυγχάνομεν ταυτόν τι πεπονθότες, ἐρώντε δύο ὄντε δυοῖν ἐκάτερος, ἐγὼ μὲν Ἀλκιβιάδου τε τοῦ Κλεινίου καὶ φιλοσοφίας, σὺ δὲ δυοῖν, τοῦ τε Ἀθηναίων δήμου καὶ τοῦ Πυριλάμπους. αἰσθάνομαι οὖν σου ἐκάστοτε, καίπερ ὄντος δεινοῦ, ὅτι ἂν φῆ σου τὰ παιδικὰ καὶ ὅπως ἂν φῆ ἔχειν, οὐ δυναμένου ἀντιλέγειν, ἀλλ' ἄνω καὶ κάτω μεταβαλλομένου: ἐν τε τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἐάν τι σοῦ λέγοντος ὁ δῆμος ὁ Ἀθηναίων μὴ φῆ οὕτως ἔχειν, μεταβαλλόμενος λέγεις ἅ ἐκεῖνος βούλεται, καὶ πρὸς τὸν Πυριλάμπους νεανίαν τὸν καλὸν τοῦτον τοιαῦτα ἕτερα ἐπόνθας. τοῖς γὰρ τῶν παιδικῶν βουλευμάσιν τε καὶ λόγοις οὐχ οἷός τ' εἶ ἐναντιοῦσθαι, ὥστε, εἴ τις σου λέγοντος ἐκάστοτε ἅ διὰ τούτους λέγεις θαυμάζοι ὡς ἄτοπὰ ἐστίν, ἴσως εἴποις ἂν αὐτῷ, εἰ βούλοιο τάληθῆ λέγειν, ὅτι εἰ μή τις παύσει τὰ σὰ παιδικὰ τούτων τῶν λόγων, οὐδὲ σὺ παύση ποτὲ ταῦτα λέγων. νόμιζε τοίνυν καὶ παρ' ἐμοῦ χρῆναι ἕτερα τοιαῦτα ἀκούειν, καὶ μὴ θαύμαζε ὅτι ἐγὼ ταῦτα λέγω, ἀλλὰ τὴν φιλοσοφίαν, τὰ ἐμὰ παιδικὰ, παῦσον ταῦτα λέγουσαν. λέγει γάρ, ὦ φίλε ἐταῖρε, ἅ νῦν ἐμοῦ ἀκούεις, καὶ μοί ἐστιν τῶν ἐτέρων παιδικῶν πολὺ ἧττον ἔμπληκτος: ὁ μὲν γὰρ Κλεινίου οὔτος ἄλλοτε ἄλλων ἐστὶ λόγων, ἢ δὲ φιλοσοφία ἀεὶ τῶν αὐτῶν.

⁶⁸ Note that it is philosophy, not wisdom (as in, *philo-sophia*, love of wisdom), that Socrates claim to be a lover of. This adds an interesting layer: does he love wisdom or does he love the love or pursuit of wisdom? End goal vs. process? This hints at Clitophon's critique (see below, section 5.4) of Socratic philosophy as a process without end.

⁶⁹ For details on the family connections, see Debra Nails, (2002), *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and other Socratics*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

presumably widowed and brought with him to the new marriage an adolescent son, Dēmos. Marrying within one's extended family was not uncommon at the time, especially for elites concerned with keeping wealth within the family. And, indeed, we are dealing with a fairly small circle of the Athenian elite: Plato is having his teacher Socrates make fun of Callicles for his relation (whether real or just made up for the pun) with Plato's older stepbrother.

Aside from offering another neat point of connection between Socrates and Philocleon, both opposed to Dēmos-lovers, this passage from Socrates's exchange with Callicles again highlights the point that Socrates's activities are guided by love. Indeed, this is what Socrates says can be understood by his interlocutor: both have experienced love, indeed two loves, and so they have some common experience upon which to understand each other. This commonality makes Socrates's relation towards his love, philosophy, not totally distinct as a dynamic: he is just as passionate, devoted, even addicted as any other lover. For him, what distinguishes philosophy is its consistency: what it says is always the same. Perhaps that quality makes philosophy especially attractive to him, in relation to his quest for wisdom. But regardless of consistency, what is important for us is that Socrates frames his relation to philosophy as a kind of love that is not unique, but actually understandable through comparison. He gives grounds for interpreting his relationship to philosophy and wisdom as analogous to other lovers, like Callicles, but also like Philocleon.

4.3 Love as an Illness (Addiction)

Both Socrates and Philocleon were also described as sick. In fact, Plato and Aristophanes frame their love as a kind of sickness that is marked by an extreme abnormality that even tips into madness (μανία).

Again, starting with Philocleon, the pathological characterization of him and his behavior is very clear throughout the *Wasps*. At the start of the play, as we saw, audience members guess his illness (νόσος), which is how all of the *phil*-compounds are framed: they are all some sort of pathological behavior. Shortly after this, Xanthias also describes different medico-religious treatments that Bdelycleon has tried for his father, in attempt to rid him of his addiction to the courts (*Wasps*, 115-132).⁷⁰ The idea that he is suffering from an illness and that treatment is required conveys information about the conceptualization of addiction. It was viewed as pathological and abnormal in comparison to a norm of health; it was also thought of as temporary, with the possibility of eliminating it through the proper cure.

Over the course of the play, Philocleon also undergoes a number of transformations that, by the end, apparently render him in a state of madness. After the at-home trial that they set up to satisfy Philocleon's passion for judging, Bdelycleon tries to bring him even further away from his addiction towards the court, and more towards the aristocratic behaviour that he prefers. He dresses him up in new clothes and brings him to a dinner party and symposium at a fellow aristocrat's house (*Wasps*, 1122ff). While there, Philocleon gets drunk on wine, which had been mentioned earlier in the play as the source of that gentleman's disease, love of wine (*Wasps*, 78-80). At first, Philocleon had refused to drink at the party: in his newfound state of post-jury-addiction purity, he asserts that drinking is bad and leads to aggressiveness, sickness, and potential fines for misdemeanours (*Wasps* 1252-1255). And yet, wrapped up in the festivities and perhaps even overwhelmed at finding himself for the first time in the aristocratic social space of

⁷⁰ More about these in detail in Chapter 4; for now, it is simply worth noting that Bdelycleon attempts to treat him as one would treat any other illness in the ancient world, thus further reinforcing the notion that his condition is one of sickness.

the symposium, his initial judgment slips away and he drinks to become drunk and rowdy. It is possible to read Philocleon's transition as abandoning one addiction in favor of another: he even directly references his abandonment of his past addiction, saying, "Throw away the voting urns! Won't it go? Where is a juror (Heliast)? Out of the way now!" (*Wasps*, 1339-1341).⁷¹ Though of course a first experience does not in itself make an addiction, Philocleon's behavior in this scene does seem to present him as a prime candidate for developing that gentlemen's disease.

On top of drinking, the play culminates with Philocleon intoxicated by pipe music. Xanthias again is the guide here; he explains that, upon his arrival home, Philocleon consumed even more wine and heard the pipes, and, becoming filled with joy, he does not stop dancing all night long (*Wasps*, 1474-1481). When Philocleon proclaims that he is beginning the steps of a traditional dance (1484-1485), Xanthias interjects that his behaviour rather represents the beginning of *madness* (μανίας ἀρχή—line 1486), and that he should take some medicine (hellbore) as a cure for it (1489).⁷² With this, Xanthias is framing madness as a sickness: Philocleon has gone from his pathological addiction to the courts, now to madness as another kind of sickness.

Viewing Philocleon's final behavior as a kind of madness helps us to understand more of the cultural perceptions around addictive behaviors. On the one hand, Philocleon is characterized throughout the play as a figure of pathological excess: any of the ways in which he goes

⁷¹ The Greek text reads: βάλλε κημούς. / οὐκ ἄπεισι; ποῦ 'στιν ἡμῖν / ἡλιαστής; ἐκποδών.

⁷² Bdelycleon further reinforces Xanthias' observation that Philocleon is experiencing madness a few moments later, when Philocleon takes a brief pause from his dancing and asks, "Wasn't that nice?" to which his son responds: "Not at all; they were rather acts of madness!" (μανικὰ πράγματα—line 1496). (N.b. there is some debate over whether Bdelycleon or Xanthias speaks these lines.)

overboard are described in terms of one sickness or another, and going overboard or from one extreme to another is part of the comedic humor. On the other hand, his representation in this way also shows that it was possible, in terms of cultural discourse and imagination, to associate these different kinds of excess together. We might think that they form a range of behavioral sicknesses, from the abnormal repetition of a certain behavior (signified by the *phil-* compounds, addiction), to the abnormal adoption of some erratic behavior (described as an onset of madness).

* * *

Socrates, too, was represented as sick, and was characterized as experiencing or exhibiting madness. Often this characterization came from Socrates himself, not an external observer making a judgment.

The most well-known example of Socrates describing himself as sick comes from the *Phaedo*, the dialogue that represents Socrates final day of life in prison. It ends with Socrates drinking the hemlock, according to the sentence he received from his trial. In his final words to his close friend Crito, he says, “Crito, we owe a rooster to Asclepius; make this offering to him and do not forget” (118a7-8).⁷³ As many scholars have noted, sacrificing a rooster to Asclepius was one of the ritual practices involved in the overnight stays at the god of healing’s sanctuaries.⁷⁴ But what exactly does Socrates mean when he says that he owes one to Asclepius

⁷³ The Greek text reads: ‘ὦ Κρίτων, ἔφη, τῷ Ἀσκληπιῷ ὀφείλομεν ἀλεκτρούνα: ἀλλὰ ἀπόδοτε καὶ μὴ ἀμελήσητε.’

⁷⁴ More on this treatment practice in Chapter 4, in relation to the attempt to have Philocleon stay overnight at one such sanctuary on Aegina. There continues to be a lot of scholarly debate over these lines; for a few examples, see: G. W. Most, (1993), “A cock for Asclepius,” *Classical Quarterly*, 43.1: 96-111; J. Crooks, (1998), “Socrates’ last

now? What does he owe it for? One main interpretation is to say that Socrates means that embodied life itself is a sickness, and now, on the point of death, his soul will be released from the body and cured of this sickness. The rooster to Asclepius would thus represent Socrates' appreciation for being cured of the disease of living by finally dying. This interpretation reflects an earlier discussion of soul-body dualism in the dialogue, and the priority of the immortal soul over the physical body. Another way of interpreting Socrates's debt to Asclepius might be to take it as an acknowledgement that his particular way of living, that of doing philosophy, was a kind of sickness that he is now leaving behind. This is a kind of ironic or subversive reading, since on the surface, Socrates often promotes philosophy as a good way of living. But, if we read closely, we can see there are many instances in which Socrates associates philosophy with a kind of sickness and even, according to my framework, a kind of passionate, repetitive devotion like addiction.

There are other moments in Plato's dialogues when Socrates describes himself as sick. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, Socrates's sick passion for *logoi* (speeches, discourse, words, language, etc.) motivates the conversation between him and his interlocutor. Upon discovering that Phaedrus has a speech from the orator Lysias, Socrates begs him to recite the speech to him. He describes himself as being "sick [with a passion] for hearing speeches" (228b6-7) and as a "lover of

words: another look at an ancient riddle," *Classical Quarterly*, 48.1: 117-125; S. Peterson, (2003), "An authentically Socratic conclusion in Plato's *Phaedo*: Socrates' debt to Asclepius," in Naomi Reshotko (ed.), *Desire, Identity, and Existence: Essays in Honor of Terry Penner*, Kelowna, BC: Academic Print. & Pub., 33-52; C. B. Patterson, (2019), "Metaphors of Body and Soul in the *Phaedo*—and Socrates' Last Words," in Gabriele Cornelli, Thomas M. Robinson, and Francisco Bravo (eds.), *Plato's Phaedo: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Symposium Platonicum*, Baden-Baden: Academia-Verlag, 205-209.

speeches” (228c1-2).⁷⁵ With this, Socrates adds to the list of things that he loves: not just wisdom, Alcibiades, and philosophy, but also speeches. He also makes a direct connection between being sick and being in love: love itself is experienced as a kind of sickness.

Later in the same dialogue, Socrates more specifically describes love as a kind of madness. In a famous passage, Socrates explains that there are four different kinds of madness, which ought not to be characterized as bad; instead, he says that madness ought to be thought of as a gift from the gods (244a-245c).⁷⁶ The different kinds of “divine madness,” as he calls them, are 1) prophetic madness or inspiration, of the kind experienced by oracles in conveying prophecies about the future; 2) ritual madness of the kind celebrated by Dionysus (including wine and dancing); 3) poetic madness that inspires poets and rhapsodes; and 4) erotic madness, or the madness involved in being in love. This final madness closely associates Socrates with madness, since, as we saw above, he is a lover of several things, including Alcibiades, philosophy, and speeches. Based on this, we might conclude that Socrates has personal experience of madness through his experiences of being in love. This further suggests that there is, indeed, a lot more to his love of philosophy than a gentle appreciation of its ability to be consistent: his devotion also involves some kind of madness.

⁷⁵ The first phrase in Greek reads: τῷ νοσοῦντι περὶ λόγων ἀκοήν. Note that this might be literally translated as “sick concerning/about/in relation to hearing of speeches (*logoi*)”—there is no word for passion here in the Greek, though the next quotation makes it clear that passionate, erotic love is part of Socrates’s experience: τοῦ τῶν λόγων ἐραστοῦ (“[erotic] lover of speeches”).

⁷⁶ Characterizing madness as an illness to be cured by hellebore or otherwise (as in, Aristophanes’s *Wasps*) involves a certain negative value judgment, that madness is something to be endured and gotten rid of to restore health. Socrates/Plato here is laying the groundwork for looking at mental illness or mental alterity in a more positive light, as something to benefit from and embrace in life. It is also notable that some types of madness used to be thought of not as a gift but as a punishment of the gods, e.g., when heroic figures lose their minds, performing acts they would not otherwise do, it was often understood as divine possession.

On top of this, we can recall that erotic matters are Socrates's area of specialty, the one thing that he claims to have knowledge of. Through all his practice of doing philosophy and seeking knowledge from others, questioning the grounds for their expertise and annoying many people along the way, love is the one thing that he himself claims to know. With love conceived of as a type of madness, we might consider Socrates's self-proclaimed area of speciality as madness. This opens up a lot of questions: is this knowledge of madness the kind of knowledge that the practice of doing philosophy generates? In other words, is madness the content of knowledge arrived at through philosophical investigations (questioning others, examining beliefs, getting lost in thought, etc.)? Or, is it that Socrates's love of wisdom/*philosophia* gives him experiential knowledge of madness, insofar as he is practicing loving? Does Socrates's philosophy make him mad?

5. Philosophy and Madness—Or Even Addiction

5.1 Maddeningly Spurring on Pursuit of Wisdom

With these questions about Socratic philosophy and madness in mind, we can bring together other ways in which Socrates is associated (or associates himself and others) with madness. Socrates is an agent of madness for those around him. Two key metaphors that Plato has him use point to his role in causing madness, or a turn towards madness-inducing philosophy, in others.

Going back to the *Apology*, one of the most famous images that Socrates uses there is that of himself as a kind of gadfly for the city of Athens. He is describing the effect of his philosophizing on his fellow citizens, how he goes around questioning people about their

supposed wisdom, exposing ignorance when he finds it, annoying many people along the way.

He says, addressing his jury (30e1-31a2):

If you kill me you will not easily find another like me. I was attached to this city by the god—though it seems a ridiculous thing to say—as upon a great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up by a kind of gadfly. It is to fulfill some such function that I believe the god has placed me in the city. I never cease to rouse each and everyone one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company.⁷⁷

The gadfly, according to this characterization, is able to keep people alert and attentive to what they are doing. For Socrates, this means paying attention to the state of their souls towards virtue and wisdom, rather than getting distracted by things like wealth and power. But this call to attention is annoying to many people, just as getting bitten by a fly is annoying for the pain and the sense of itchiness it causes.

In the Athenian cultural context, the gadfly was metaphorically a cause of madness. The gadfly's stings not only rouses you from slumber, but makes you act like you are crazy, moving about and dancing all the time, like Philocleon at the end of the *Wasps*. A scene in Pseudo-Aeschylus' play, *Prometheus Bound*, gives a clear representation of this. In the play, the heroic figure Prometheus is bound to a rock at the edge of the earth because he stole fire from the gods. The play consists of him in dialogue with various figures who come to visit him. Io is one of these visitors, an unlucky beloved of Zeus, whom Zeus's wife Hera transformed into a cow and set to wander the earth. At first, Io was driven around by a herder; later, she was spurred on by a

⁷⁷ The Greek text reads: ἐὰν γὰρ με ἀποκτείνητε, οὐ ῥαδίως ἄλλον τοιοῦτον εὐρήσετε, ἀτεχνῶς—εἰ καὶ γελοιώτερον εἰπεῖν—προσκεῖμενον τῇ πόλει ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὥσπερ ἵππῳ μεγάλῳ μὲν καὶ γενναίῳ, ὑπὸ μεγέθους δὲ νωθεστέρω καὶ δεομένῳ ἐγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ μύωπός τινος, οἷον δὴ μοι δοκεῖ ὁ θεὸς ἐμὲ τῇ πόλει προστεθηκέναι τοιοῦτόν τινα, ὃς ὑμᾶς ἐγείρων καὶ πείθων καὶ ὀνειδίζων ἕνα ἕκαστον οὐδὲν παύομαι τὴν ἡμέραν ὅλην πανταχοῦ προσκαθίζων.

gadfly. In the play, she wanders onto the scene approximately halfway through, finding Prometheus bound to his rock and wondering where she has arrived (Aesch. *PB* 561ff). Straightaway (line 566), she is stung by the gadfly who constantly pursues her, sending her into a frenzy of shouts and erratic movement. This happens repeatedly throughout her exchange with Prometheus (over the course of some 300 lines), which ends with a vivid description of the madness brought upon her by the gadfly as she dances off the stage (Aesch. *PB* 877-886):

Eleleu, eleleu! My mind is struck again by hot spasms of madness, and I am pricked by the gadfly's fiery dart! In terror my heart is thumping my midriff, my eyes are rolling in circles, I am blown off course by the wild winds of insanity, I cannot control my tongue, and its turbid, random flow of words dashes against the hateful waves of ruin..⁷⁸

Io's suffering is represented physically, producing symptoms of pain in her head, eyes, chest. It also affects her words, as in the final lines where a throng of words randomly strikes against waves of awful insanity. The language is poetic, but the sense that we get from it is that the gadfly brings Io to the very limits of language, where words might start to lose their meaning. She is experiencing madness (μανία in line 879)

Io's experience of being stung by the gadfly shows us the cultural meaning of the image of the gadfly: it is associated with persistent physical distraction and loss of control; it can really

⁷⁸ The Greek text from the Sommerstien Loeb Edition (whence also the translation) reads:

ἐλελεῦ ἐλελεῦ,
ὑπό μ' αὖ σφάκελος καὶ φρενοπληγεῖς
μανίαὶ θάλπουσ', οἴστρου δ' ἄρδις
χρῖει ζάπυρος:
κραδία δὲ φόβῳ φρένα λακτίζει.
τροχοδινεῖται δ' ὄμμαθ' ἐλίγδην,
ἔξω δὲ δρόμου φέρομαι λύσσης
πνεύματι μάργῳ, γλώσσης ἀκρατής:
θολεροὶ δὲ λόγοι παίουσ' εἰκῆ
στυγνῆς πρὸς κύμασιν ἄτης.

drive you crazy, physically and mentally. When Socrates compares himself to the gadfly, these associations are in the background. Though his stated aim is to make Athenian people more awake and aware of how they are living, there is also an understanding that his questioning is, in fact, extremely bothersome and enough to drive some people out of their minds. And perhaps that is his point: with love as a kind of madness and philosophy as a kind of love, philosophy can be seen a kind of madness—an addiction—incited by the bite of a gadfly-figure like Socrates who can wildly inflame the mind.

5.2 Shocking into the Pursuit of Wisdom

There is another famous image of Socrates's effect on others: that of the sting ray or torpedo fish—the *narkē* (νάρκη), which is etymologically related to the English word, narcotic, used to describe pain-relieving or numbing drugs like opioids. In Plato's *Meno*, the image of the *narkē* is used to describe the effect that Socrates, with his pesky questioning, tends to have on his interlocutors (Pl. *Meno* 80a-d). After an initial frustrating exchange with Socrates regarding virtue, the young Meno complains that it feels like Socrates has stunned him, leaving him speechless and feeling defenceless, even though he is normally able to speak at length about virtue.⁷⁹ He says (79e7-80b2):

Socrates, before I even met you, I used to hear that you are always in a state of perplexity and that you bring others to the same state, and now I think you are bewitching and beguiling me, simply putting me under a spell, so that I am quite perplexed. Indeed, if a joke is in order, you seem, in appearance and in every other way, to be like the broad **torpedo fish**, for it too makes anyone who comes close and touches it **feel numb**, and

⁷⁹ Meno is another one of these beautiful young men whom Socrates likes to hang around with; he comes from Thessaly, a region in northern Greece, and is supposedly a student/follower of the sophist Gorgias.

you now seem to have had that kind of effect on me, for both my mind and my tongue are **numb**, and I have no answer to give you.⁸⁰

Meno feels perplexed, as though he has been magically or chemically altered (bewitched, drugged, enchanted), and he compares this feeling to the numbness caused by an torpedo fish. This fish is the *narkē*, and there is a word play between its name and the verb Meno is using for numbness, *narkaō* (ναρκάω). For Meno, conversation with Socrates is like taking such a numbing drug, leaving him in a state of helplessness, inaction, and perplexity. The word being used for perplexity in this passage is *aporia* (ἀπορία) and its cognates, one of the key words associated with Socrates in Plato's early dialogues: often these dialogues stir up questions and probe certain kinds of answers, but do not arrive at any final conclusions. Instead, they end in a state of *aporia*, which means lacking (*a-*) a means of passage (*-poros*), or a stalemate. This is what Meno is accusing Socrates of at this point: his questioning seems to have rendered him speechless and lacking any means to continue onward with the conversation.

Socrates responds that he may be this kind of torpedo fish, but only if that fish that numbs others is also numb itself, since he claims to be perplexed himself and in no way able to find answers on his own (80c3-d1):

Now if the torpedo fish is itself numb and so makes other numb, then I resemble it, but not otherwise, for I myself do not have the answer when I perplex others, but I am more perplexed than anyone when I cause perplexity in others.⁸¹

⁸⁰ The Greek text reads: ὦ Σώκρατες, ἤκουον μὲν ἔγωγε πρὶν καὶ συγγενέσθαι σοι ὅτι σὺ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἢ αὐτός τε ἀπορεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιεῖς ἀπορεῖν: καὶ νῦν, ὡς γέ μοι δοκεῖς, γοητεύεις με καὶ φαρμάτεις καὶ ἀτεχνῶς κατεπάδεις, ὥστε μεστὸν ἀπορίας γεγονέναι. καὶ δοκεῖς μοι παντελῶς, εἰ δεῖ τι καὶ σκῶσαι, ὁμοιότατος εἶναι τό τε εἶδος καὶ τᾶλλα ταύτη τῇ πλατειᾷ **νάρκη** τῇ θαλαττίᾳ: καὶ γὰρ αὕτη τὸν ἀεὶ πλησιάζοντα καὶ ἀπτόμενον **ναρκᾶν** ποιεῖ, καὶ σὺ δοκεῖς μοι νῦν ἐμὲ τοιοῦτόν τι πεποιηκέναι, ναρκᾶν: ἀληθῶς γὰρ ἔγωγε καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ τὸ στόμα **ναρκῶ**, καὶ οὐκ ἔχω ὅτι ἀποκρίνωμαί σοι.

⁸¹ The Greek text reads: ἐγὼ δέ, εἰ μὲν ἡ νάρκη αὐτὴ ναρκῶσα οὕτω καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιεῖ ναρκᾶν, ἔοικα αὐτῇ: εἰ δὲ μή, οὐ. οὐ γὰρ εὐπορῶν αὐτὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν, ἀλλὰ παντὸς μᾶλλον αὐτὸς ἀπορῶν οὕτως καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ποιῶ ἀπορεῖν.

So, Socrates responds to Meno's accusation by insisting on his own perplexity: it is not as though he is perplexing him intentionally or from some state of certainty/lack of perplexity (εὐπορῶν as opposed to ἀπορῶν). Rather, it really is that he himself is in a state of confusion and perplexity and is passing that perplexity on to others—almost like an infectious disease. Indeed, the mutuality emphasizes the point from the previous section that Socrates himself is affected in a way, and is affecting others, too.

Though Socrates claims to be perplexed, too, he also does not necessarily think this is a bad thing. In fact, similarly to how he argued in the *Phaedrus* for a rehabilitation of madness as not something bad but as a gift from god, in the *Meno*, he defends perplexity as not something harmful, but rather as potentially generative. He arrives at this point when he and Meno proceed in their investigation of virtue and bring one of the people enslaved to Meno into their discussion; he helps Socrates make a point about coming to understand things that one does not yet know (this is the most well-known part of the *Meno*). After some initial discussion, Socrates renders this enslaved person in a state of perplexity, too. At this point Socrates returns to the metaphor of the torpedo fish, asking if they seem to have done him harm in rendering him so. No, Meno concedes. Instead, as Socrates points out, the kind of numbing shock that is the experience of perplexity might actually be what is necessary in the process of learning. Rather than assuming to know something, he says that in learning it is helpful to gain an awareness of what one does and does not know—i.e., the limits of one's knowledge.⁸² This way, one can be

⁸² It is an interesting exchange, so here is the passage in English and in Greek (*Meno*, 84b6-c9):

SOCRATES : Have we done him any harm by making him perplexed and numb as the torpedo fish does?

aware of what needs to be worked on, and it is not necessary to assume or pretend to know what one does not know, like all of those experts Socrates describes questioning in the *Apology*. Becoming perplexed might actually allow one to grow and change and gain awareness—indeed, this kind of shock may be something that is necessary for changing your life. And, indeed, it

MENO : I do not think so.

SOCRATES : Indeed, we have probably achieved something relevant to finding out how matters stand, for now, as he does not know, he would be glad to find out, whereas before he thought he could easily make many fine speeches to large audiences about the square of double size and said that it must have a base twice as long.

MENO : So it seems.

SOCRATES : Do you think that before he would have tried to find out that which he thought he knew though he did not, before he fell into perplexity and realized he did not know and longed to know?

MENO : I do not think so, Socrates.

SOCRATES : Has he then benefitted from being numbed?

MENO : I think so.

Σωκράτης: ἀπορεῖν οὖν αὐτὸν ποιήσαντες καὶ ναρκᾶν ὥσπερ ἡ νάρκη, μῶν τι ἐβλάψαμεν;

Μένων: οὐκ ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ.

Σωκράτης: προὔργου γοῦν τι πεποιθήκαμεν, ὡς ἔοικε, πρὸς τὸ ἐξευρεῖν ὅπῃ ἔχει: νῦν μὲν γὰρ καὶ ζητήσειεν ἂν ἠδέως οὐκ εἰδώς, τότε δὲ ῥαδίως ἂν καὶ πρὸς πολλοὺς καὶ πολλάκις ᾤετ' ἂν εὖ λέγειν περὶ τοῦ διπλασίου χωρίου, ὡς δεῖ διπλασίαν τὴν γραμμὴν ἔχειν μήκει.

Μένων: ἔοικεν.

Σωκράτης: οἶε οὖν ἂν αὐτὸν πρότερον ἐπιχειρήσαι ζητεῖν ἢ μαθάνειν τοῦτο ὃ ᾤετο εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς, πρὶν εἰς ἀπορίαν κατέπεσεν ἠγησάμενος μὴ εἰδέναι, καὶ **ἐπόθησεν τὸ εἰδέναι**;

Μένων: οὐ μοι δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες.

Σωκράτης: ὦνητο ἄρα ναρκήσας;

Μένων: δοκεῖ μοι.

might even give one a desire or craving to know (ἐπόθησεν τὸ εἰδέναι), whereas before one thought they already knew.

The power of shock and perplexity for transformation and growth is actually something that we can witness in Philocleon's case, too. In the middle of the play, over the course of his debate with his son over Cleon's politics, we witness Bdelycleon bringing forth many points about Cleon's corruption and self-interest that Philocleon seems to have been previously unaware of. Upon gaining this knowledge, Philocleon is at first shocked and benumbed. He asks, "What is happening to me?" and says, "[it is] as if numbness (νάρκη) has come over my hand, and I am no longer able to draw my sword, but am already soft" (*Wasps*, 713-714).⁸³ He is shocked and confused (though the language of *aporia* is not used, his question about what is happening to him points in this direction), and feels numb from his new acquisition of knowledge about Cleon. This makes him unable to fight anymore: he uses the metaphor of his numb hand being soft and unable to grip his sword. In fact, he falls silent for some time after these lines, unable to defend himself or Cleon verbally anymore. When he rejoins, this is the moment of tragic refusal that we saw above (section 2.3), where he is grappling with his need to give up on Cleon, while not wanting to give up entirely on judging, even as, over the course of the play, he is eventually convinced to leave the house and go to the party where he gets drunk and ends up dancing the night away. This does not quite represent the ideal learning curve that Socrates had in mind, when he argued that perplexity was helpful in the learning process. Yet, it

⁸³ The Greek text reads: οἴμοι τί πέπονθ'; ὡς νάρκη μου κατὰ τῆς χειρὸς καταχεῖται, / καὶ τὸ ξίφος οὐ δύναμαι κατέχειν, ἀλλ' ἤδη μαλθακὸς εἰμι.

does neatly illustrate this process of beginning to learn some new information, becoming numb, and then effecting a big change.

This example also raises an important point about knowledge or wisdom as a distinct pursuit. Philocleon was in a state of ignorance about the true nature of Cleon's politics; this ignorance enabled the blissful continuation of his addictive pursuit of serving on the jury, without psychological dissonance, only with objections from his family. But upon gaining knowledge, Philocleon was first shocked and numbed, but then came to realize that he needed to change. Knowledge here acts like a drug—not an addictive drug, but a medicine that helps cure the past addiction. As such, does there not seem to be something special about knowledge as the object of one's pursuit or affection, something that makes it stand out as the second component of a *phil-* compound? Is it really fair to compare Socrates's relation to philosophy, with knowledge as one of the key priorities, to Philocleon's naïve addiction to serving on the jury? Is there not a unique value to wisdom or knowledge that prevents it from ever being an object of something harmful like addiction?

5.3 Unique Value of Wisdom?

This is, in fact, a line of thinking that we find in several of Plato's dialogues. Knowledge, Socrates often wants his interlocutors to see, is a unique kind of good. It is different in kind from other goods that one might pursue like wealth, power, good looks, pleasure, or health. It is special because it has the potential to give its possessor the power to use different objects well.

This way of thinking about knowledge actually comes up Socrates's exchange with Meno.⁸⁴ After their perplexing start, and after Socrates works through the geometry example with Meno's enslaved attendant (and after he makes the argument that our immortal souls have learned everything so our task in learning is a question of recollection), Socrates has Meno agree that virtue is beneficial. Other things that are potentially beneficial include health, strength, beauty, wealth (*Meno*, 87e), as well as characteristics of the soul: moderation, justice, courage (88a). But all of these things are potentially beneficial but also potentially harmful. The key, according to Socrates, is whether or not they are used with wisdom (88b3-89a1):

Courage, for example, when it is not wisdom but like a kind of recklessness: when a man is reckless without understanding, he is harmed; when with understanding, he is benefitted... The same is true of moderation and mental quickness; when they are learned and disciplined with understanding they are beneficial, but without understanding they are harmful... Furthermore, those other things we were mentioning just now, wealth and the like, are at times good and at times harmful. Just as for the rest of the soul **the direction of wisdom makes things beneficial, but harmful if directed by folly**, so in these cases, if the soul uses and directs them right it makes them beneficial, but bad use makes them harmful... So one may say this about everything; **all other human activities depend on the soul, and those of the soul itself depend on wisdom if they are to be good.**⁸⁵

⁸⁴ A similar line of thinking is found across several other dialogues, for example the *Euthydemus* (281d-282a) and the *Second Alcibiades* (147e-148a ff.). In both, wisdom is argued to be a kind of master key that unlocks the value of other things, insofar as it enables the wise person to use them effectively and towards good ends. Interestingly, there is a line of argument in the *Hippias Minor* that shows a different angle to this conception: knowledge not only enables one to act most effectively for the greatest good, but also for the greatest evil. The idea is that the person with knowledge would be able to accurately judge how to both use and misuse their knowledge, whereas an ignorant person would only be able to guess, and sometimes hit on a good result, but often miss. This points to a potential break between wisdom and goodness—a break that Plato otherwise keeps out of his dialogues.

⁸⁵ The Greek text reads: οἷον ἀνδρεία, εἰ μὴ ἔστι φρόνησις ἢ ἀνδρεία ἀλλ' οἷον θάρρος τι: οὐχ ὅταν μὲν ἄνευ νοῦ θαρρῆ ἄνθρωπος, βλάπτεται, ὅταν δὲ σὺν νοῦ, ὠφελεῖται; ... οὐκοῦν καὶ σωφροσύνη ὡσαύτως καὶ εὐμαθία: μετὰ μὲν νοῦ καὶ μαθητὰ καὶ καταρτιζόμενα ὠφέλιμα, ἄνευ δὲ νοῦ βλαβερά; ... καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ τᾶλλα ἃ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, πλοῦτόν τε καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, τότε μὲν ἀγαθὰ τότε δὲ βλαβερά εἶναι, ἄρα οὐχ ὡς περ τῆ ἄλλῃ ψυχῆ ἢ φρόνησις ἡγουμένη ὠφέλιμα τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐποίει, ἢ δὲ ἀφροσύνη βλαβερά, οὕτως αὖ καὶ τούτοις ἢ ψυχῆ ὀρθῶς μὲν χρωμένη καὶ ἡγουμένη ὠφέλιμα αὐτὰ ποιεῖ, μὴ ὀρθῶς δὲ βλαβερά; ... οὐκοῦν οὕτω δὴ κατὰ πάντων εἰπεῖν ἔστιν, τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνηρητῆσθαι, τὰ δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς εἰς φρόνησιν, εἰ μέλλει ἀγαθὰ εἶναι.

The idea that Socrates presents here, in a nutshell, is that most things—e.g., courage, moderation, wealth, health, jury duty or delivering harsh sentences: whatever one might think is good—are neither good nor bad themselves. Instead, they have the potential to become good when used properly by someone who has knowledge, or bad when used improperly by someone ignorant.

This is how Socrates might justify the pursuit of wisdom as a lifelong endeavor: if you dedicate your life to philosophy, to becoming wise, then you will be able to better function in all the different areas of life. According to this line of thinking, knowledge is a special kind of possession that gives value to other possessions. It alone has the capacity to enable its possessor to use things well and to do things well.

Thinking about pursuing knowledge or wisdom along these lines means that it is not just like any other random interest, hobby, or thing that one might develop an attachment to because it offers some pleasure. Instead, we might think of knowledge as precisely the thing that, if one successfully pursues it and is able to gain possession of it, can make sense of and give value to all other areas of one's life. It can help one understand one's relationship to money, power, pleasure, and in general give one the power to assess and apply different values in life. At least this is the great power that Socrates argues wisdom affords to its possessors. So, based on this, we might think that, rather than a harmful addiction, philosophy or pursuing wisdom is actually the one thing that can bring happiness and all things good for a successful life.

5.4 But is wisdom what Socrates's practice is all about?

But, of course, there is a difference between pursuing and possessing, between philosophy as loving wisdom and the wisdom itself. While the possession of wisdom might have

this unique power to transform things into goods through correct use, it does not necessarily mean that pursuing wisdom—i.e. before you get to the point of possession—is any good, especially if coming to possess it ends up being impossible. This is a line of argument that comes up in Plato’s shortest dialogue, the *Clitophon*, in which the titular character charges Socrates with not actually being able to show that wisdom is good, since all he seems to do is exhort people to pursue it, i.e., to do philosophy. He seems to be really good at that, Clitophon admits. But the problem is that there is not any follow-through: what happens after you become convinced to live a life of philosophy? You dedicate yourself, for seemingly good reasons, to pursuing wisdom as this superpower to transform your whole life, but what do you do other than go around proselytizing other people? Socrates does not really have an answer to this. He himself does not know, he might plead, like he did with Meno: he too is in a state of perplexity and only claims to have his small, human kind of wisdom that recognizes its own limits (*Meno*, 80c-d; cf. *Apology*, 23a-b). For Clitophon, this is not enough: without evidence that philosophy can actually lead to a good life, he is not convinced that he should spend any more time on it rather than on those things traditionally seen as good, such as wealth, health, power, and beauty.

For us, we can see Clitophon’s critique as a recognition of the general skepticism towards Socratic philosophy. Socrates certainly annoyed a lot of people in Athens, for potentially good reason (the value of wisdom), but also for potentially no good reason (the impossibility of wisdom). Socrates’s total dedication to philosophy is based on his belief and hope that it will turn out well, though not on any secure knowledge or evidence that it will. With this, Socrates comes back to seeming not so distinct from someone else who is addicted, believing that their object of choice makes their life better, even if there is no evidence for this, and indeed even evidence to the contrary.

And evidence to the contrary in Socrates's case is something we have looked at already: his preoccupation, his alienation from his family and community, his inability to support himself, and finally that he loses his life in order to not give up on the object of his addiction. Indeed, in the terms laid out regarding the unique value of wisdom, we could even say that Socrates prioritized philosophy over all sorts of things traditionally seen as good such as social bonds, life, health, and wealth. Socrates was doing this, he might argue, because of the unique value of wisdom to make all those other things good. But from the average Athenian's perspective, this was not so clear.

The final passage that I want to quote brings the choice of philosophy over other things traditionally seen as good to the fore. For this, we return to Calicles, from Plato's *Gorgias*, that lover of Dēmos and the *dēmos*. In response to Socrates's argument that philosophy is consistent as opposed to the capricious people to whom Calicles is devoted, Calicles accuses Socrates of joking around and grandstanding. He doubles down and asserts that Socrates's claims about virtue and in particular his claim that it is better to suffer than to do injustice make practically no sense according to conventional wisdom. Calicles then launches a personal attack against Socrates's lifestyle, saying that he may hold such positions because he has gone too far into philosophy, beyond what is socially accepted. He says (*Gorg.* 484c5-d2):

Philosophy is no doubt a delightful thing, Socrates, as long as one is exposed to it in moderation at the appropriate time of life. But if one spends more time with it than he should, it's a man's undoing. For even if one is naturally well favored but engaged in philosophy far beyond that appropriate time of life, he can't help but turn out to be inexperienced in everything a man who's to be admirable and good and well thought of is supposed to be experienced in.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The Greek text reads: φιλοσοφία γάρ τοί ἐστίν, ὃ Σώκρατες, χαρίεν, ἄν τις αὐτοῦ μετρίως ἄνηται ἐν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ: ἐὰν δὲ περαιτέρω τοῦ δέοντος ἐνδιατρίψῃ, διαφθορά τῶν ἀνθρώπων. ἐὰν γάρ καὶ πάνυ εὐφυῆς ἦ καὶ πόρρω τῆς

Philosophy may be pleasing (or a pleasure-based motivation), Callicles says, but it only ought to be practiced only in moderation, to make way for more serious, appropriate matters. These appropriate matters that one should be experienced in, according to Callicles, are politics, business, making speeches, taking part in socially accepted pleasures, etc. (484e-d). Socrates has not paid enough or any attention to these matters, according to Callicles, making him unfit for human company—perhaps (in a moment of retroactive foreshadowing) only fit to be thrown into prison or some other institution that might protect civilized life from his more savage modes of conduct (486a). In any case, from Callicles’s point of view, philosophy definitely does not have a special status of making everything it touches turn into something good. Instead, it is one pastime among many, and it is appropriate at certain times and places, for certain people, but going beyond that measure of propriety just means that one is in trouble, sick, shameful, and potentially in need of correction or curing. Socrates, in being too devoted to knowledge, has dedicated too much of his life to doing philosophy, rather than pursuing socially accepted activities.

Now, we may not think Callicles’s critique is fair: it may be that he just does not yet realize the value of philosophy and the superpower that wisdom bestows on its possessor. If he were to have a longer conversation with Socrates, or maybe several, over the course of an extended period of time, it may be that he comes to realize that wisdom is the only thing that will for sure help make his life good. He could become a true devotee like Socrates. Of course, he

ἡλικίας φιλοσοφῆ, ἀνάγκη πάντων ἄπειρον γεγονέναι ἐστὶν ὧν χρηὴ ἔμπειρον εἶναι τὸν μέλλοντα καλὸν κάγαθὸν καὶ εὐδόκιμον ἔσεσθαι ἄνδρα.

could also end up disenchanted, like Clitophon. In fact, in his case, it could happen even sooner, since Clitophon at least seems to have gone in with good intentions, and it might be hard to expect the same for Callicles: the burden of persuasion and conversion seems higher.

But, whether or not we think Callicles misses the point, one thing that his critique very helpfully highlights is the importance of social norms—those things that represent the appropriate behaviour and experiences that one ought to have at certain times. His comments highlight how Socrates's lifestyle deviated from the expectations of his times. Though he hangs out among aristocratic circles and partakes in some of their activities (serving in the military, conversing in the gymnasium and symposium, pursuing young boys), Socrates's way of living clashes with the generally accepted norms. From a Socratic point of view, this seems intentional: he was often trying to call into question socially accepted norms which were all too often blindly accepted. But from the point of view of social norms, which perhaps Callicles inadvertently represents (recall he was in favour of nature over nurture, force over norms), Socrates's behaviour is inappropriate, unacceptable, and problematic.

This, I think, is the key point for thinking about Socrates in terms of ancient addiction. It matters less whether philosophizing turns out to be a superpower to transform everything into something good, or a behavioural addiction that might stand up to universal measures. Instead, what matters is that, according to the norms of the time, it was plausible to classify Socrates and his behaviour as problematic, analogous to other love-sick, maniacal, addicted characters like Philocleon.

As we have seen, there are good grounds for making the analogy between these two, and making it in terms of addiction. Both were attached to a certain repetitive behavior that they were dedicated to and refused to give up, despite its interference with the rest of their lives. Their

behavior corresponds to some of the basic criteria used to judge gambling and gaming addictions. Though, as we have seen, there were also particular ways to understand their behavior within the context of ancient Athens. Especially pertinent is the way love was understood as a very strong motivator, as well as how love could transform into a kind of sickness or even madness—the realm that lies outside of rational control. The passionate devotions of both Philocleon and Socrates are described in terms of madness. There are some ways to rationally justify this in the case of philosophy (e.g., madness helps with the learning process). But this also leaves us with the idea that philosophy, despite its long history and development into a respectable academic discipline, had this element of madness and even addiction at its start.

6. Conclusion

The main topic of this chapter is diagnosis or identification of addiction in the ancient world. This is a topic that is fundamentally intertwined with the approach that I outlined in the first chapter, which presumes some grounds for identifying addictions in the ancient world based on modern biologically-based criteria. Based on that approach, in this chapter I used the references to commonly identified addictive substances such as alcohol and gambling, as well as common symptoms used to identify behavioral addictions, to justify my interpretation of Philocleon as an addict. Then, using some of those behavioral criteria, as well as conceptual connections between him and Philocleon, I analysed Socrates's relationship to philosophy and wisdom in terms of addiction. This comparison has allowed me to explore the ancient perspective on diagnosis or identification of addictive behaviors. By seeing how similarly Socrates and Philocleon are described, it is possible to understand how their obsessive, addictive

behavior was seen as abnormal, comical or contemptible, based on love, but also potentially as a kind of sickness in need of treatment or, if that fails, punishment. It is also possible to understand how Socrates may have been seen by his fellow citizens, perhaps less as a dangerous criminal, and more of an incurable addict for whom the solution for the community was punishment by death. Unfortunately, this is the sentence that many people experiencing addictions today are also inadvertently condemned to.

Thinking of Socrates as an addict is a very different way of framing the figure often viewed as the founder of philosophy. I wanted to frame Socrates in this way in order to highlight some features of philosophy: its potential to turn one's life around so that everything becomes oriented towards it, obsessional thoughts about it, prioritization of it over other things, even at the expense and harm towards other things, and perhaps the sincere conviction that it not only provides some useful tools but also ultimate answers and a way of living for those who practice it. A dedication to a field and its infiltration of many aspects of life is, of course, also something that happens with a vocation and (perhaps more under capitalism?) simply with careers that demand so much time that identification with your work is practically inevitable. In other words, this kind of addiction to work it is not necessarily something that is unique to philosophy and philosophers. But it is worth noting that philosophy does not escape this potential for behavioral addiction. In fact, in the spirit of philosophy, it is worth asking how much dedication or addiction to the work it takes to do philosophy and do it well, according to the judgment of one's peers.

Framing Socrates's relationship towards philosophy as addiction also allows us to highlight important features of addiction. In particular, it shows that the identification of addictions has to do, in part, with biological grounding, but also just as much relies on assumptions about what constitutes health and proper ways of living. In other words, classifying

behavior as addiction involves value judgments, not just seemingly-objective scientific judgments. As we will see more in the next chapter, contemporary addiction researchers have worked hard to demonstrate the physical groundings of addiction, promoting the understanding of addiction as a physical disease rather than a moral failing. This has been a major shift that has had many positive results, even if debates continue and there is more work to be done. But this shift does not mean that addiction no longer has to do with moral judgments. Rather, the kinds of moral questions related to addiction have (somewhat) changed, from being concerned with individual choice and responsibility, to being about larger social structures, institutions, and conceptions. What is health? Who is responsible for health—the state, corporations, communities? Who ought to pay for treatment and prevention, and what about the non-monetary costs of addiction in society? These questions and more surround the contemporary brain disease model of addiction, which finds a striking antecedent in another of Plato's dialogues, the *Timaeus*.

Chapter 3
Explanation:
Timaeus's Biopsychosocial Theory of Addiction

1. Modern Science, Ancient Antecedents

The current dominant explanation of addiction is that it is a chronic, relapsing brain disease, whose external symptoms, such as repetitive self-destructive behavior, cravings, tolerance (the type of indicators listed in the *DSM* or *ICD*) correspond to physical changes in the brain's structure.⁸⁷ The basic way to understand this is that certain substances and behaviors trigger chemical reactions in the brain and when these are repeated enough, it causes seemingly permanent changes to the brain's neurochemistry. This neurochemistry is understood to motivate or determine behavior. This understanding of behavior allows for the following, straightforward explanation of addiction: people who are experiencing addictions act the way that they do because they are driven by their chemicals in their brains. There are ongoing debates about the details of all of this: for example, how exactly different drugs work, what substances and behaviors cause addictions, what pharmacological treatments effectively counteract the brain's changes, and more. But the basic approach remains the same: addiction is a clinically-diagnosable disease that calls for scientific understanding of the brain and corresponding medical treatment.

⁸⁷ Evidence for the predominance of this paradigm is abundant: articulations of it by addiction associations, scientific scholarship, and popular representations in movies, television shows, and social media. Despite the predominance of this paradigm, there is also a great amount of debate and dissent about it. There is no common consensus on the nature of addiction (or even if it has a "nature"). See discussion and references in chapter 1, section 3 above.

In a recent popular science book, Judith Grisel offers an accessible approach to understanding some of the neuroscience that underlies this paradigm.⁸⁸ Chapter-by-chapter, she goes into detail about how different drugs affect the brain differently.⁸⁹ Throughout all of the differences, she explains how the body is always trying to return to its natural equilibrium or resting state, which is thrown off balance by certain stimuli, including drugs and basically anything that makes us feel something. This process of the nervous system working to restore equilibrium is known as homeostasis. Grisel uses this to explain what happens in addiction: drugs, in various ways, stimulate the brain and cause people to feel a lot of pleasure. This stimulation disturbs the natural balance, so the nervous system then reacts to restore it, producing neurochemicals that have the opposite effects of pleasurable drugs. This results in symptoms like headaches, cravings, depressed feelings, etc. These sorts of pain are thus part of the natural return to stability after experiencing great pleasure. There is also a natural desire for pleasure and aversion to pain, built into the brain as adaptive traits that help us survive as a species. So, finding oneself experiencing pain, one will naturally want to make it stop and experience pleasure again. The most obvious way to do this is simply to consume the pleasurable drugs again. Though the use of drugs and the experience of this pleasure and

⁸⁸ J. Grisel, (2019), *Never enough: The neuroscience and experience of addiction*, New York: Doubleday. Grisel's is one among many of this popular type of book.

⁸⁹ Grisel notably emphasizes addiction is not just a singular process that might be cured by a single miracle drug or solution, going against the grain of many who continue to work in this direction. To give just a few examples from recent headlines: might ketamine be the miracle drug? (Stephen Beech, (2022, January 11), "Alcoholics could be given ketamine to help break addiction, study claims," *Metro*, <https://metro.co.uk/2022/01/11/alcoholics-could-be-given-ketamine-to-break-addiction-study-claims-15895095/>); a CRISPR-modified skin graft? (Q. Kong *et al.*, (2021), "Reducing alcohol and/or cocaine-induced reward and toxicity via an epidermal stem cell-based gene delivery platform," *Molecular Psychiatry* 26.9: 5266-5276; M. Fassbender, (2022, January 10), "CRISPR-Modified Skin Grafts to Treat Addiction? 'The Opportunities Are Endless,' Says CEO," *Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, The University of Chicago, <https://polsky.uchicago.edu/2022/01/10/crispr-modified-skin-grafts-to-treat-addiction-the-opportunities-are-endless-says-ceo/>); a vaccine that counteracts the neurochemistry activated by different drugs? (Hannah Furfare, (2022, January 5), "To fight opioid crisis, UW researchers take new shot at developing vaccine against addictive drugs," *The Seattle Times*, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/to-fight-opioid-crisis-uw-researchers-take-new-shot-at-developing-vaccine-against-addictive-drugs/>).

pain cycle related to homeostasis does not always cause addiction, it often does, according to Grisel. Addiction, thus, is best understood as an unfortunate consequence of the body's natural reaction to stimuli and attempt to maintain its equilibrium through homeostasis.

Interestingly, at the start of her explanation of the science of homeostasis, Grisel offers a brief narrative history about the development of the concept. Though she largely focuses on the scientific developments that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she traces their roots back to Greek antiquity, to one of Plato's dialogues, in particular. She opens the second chapter of her book with the following anecdote:

On the last day of his life, shortly before being forced to drink poison for failing to believe in the state-endorsed gods and for corrupting youth, Socrates engaged in a final dialogue with his students. This teaching, reported by Plato in the *Phaedo*, is focused mostly on the nature of the soul but includes a comment about the relationship between pleasure and pain. After a prison guard has removed his chains, Socrates purportedly noted, 'How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it... he who pursues either of them is generally compelled to take the other. They are two, and yet they grow together out of one head or stem.'⁹⁰

Grisel goes on to claim that the conception of pleasure always interrelated with pain that is presented in the *Phaedo*, "astutely predicted the experimental insights of the nineteenth-century French physiologist Claude Bernard," who developed the modern theory of dynamic internal equilibrium. This in turn paved the way for the current understanding of addiction described above, as a dysfunction in the body's natural process of homeostasis.

⁹⁰ J. Grisel, (2019), *Never enough: The neuroscience and experience of addiction*, New York: Doubleday, 34. The quotation is from *Phaedo* 60b3-c1, for which the Greek text reads: ὡς ἄτοπον, ἔφη, ὃ ἄνδρες, εἰσὶν εἶναι τοῦτο ὃ καλοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἡδύ: ὡς θαυμασίως πέφυκε πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἐναντίον εἶναι, τὸ λυπηρόν, τὸ ἅμα μὲν αὐτῷ μὴ θέλειν παραγίγνεσθαι τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἐὰν δέ τις διώκη τὸ ἕτερον καὶ λαμβάνῃ, σχεδόν τι ἀναγκάζεσθαι αἰεὶ λαμβάνειν καὶ τὸ ἕτερον, ὡσπερ ἐκ μιᾶς κορυφῆς ἡμμένω δύο ὄντε.

Though perhaps simply meant as a rhetorically interesting way for her to introduce her main focus on the neuroscience,⁹¹ there is a substantial claim here. Grisel is claiming that the theory of pleasure and pain espoused in Socrates’s statement in the *Phaedo* has proven to be true according to modern scientific methods. By extension, the claim is that there are insights from the ancient world for scientists and addiction scholars to pay attention to because they turn out to be true.⁹²

In this chapter, I want to look more closely at these ancient ideas about pleasure and pain, and how they relate to ideas about—and especially explanations of—addiction in the ancient world. In the previous chapter, I discussed the difficulties of diagnosis or identification of addiction. I highlighted the complexities that arise in ancient attempts to describe (and condemn) a distinct category of experience as addiction, and I pointed out how such distinctions are generally always mixed in with ideas about ethics, morality, politics, different interests, and so on. In this chapter, I shift my focus from diagnosis to the theorization of addiction: what did people in the ancient world think **causes** addictive behavior? I want to look at this through a comparative lens, examining how ancient theories

⁹¹ Rhetorically interesting with perhaps paternalistic or whiggish connotations, i.e., finding it remarkable that they did not have modern science in the ancient world, yet still managed to discover some things that we have no progressively verified as true. Indeed, the appeal to Socrates is remarkable, especially since his “prediction” about the reciprocal nature of pleasure and pain is relatively unremarkable on its own. Enough people have probably experienced something similar to the rush of relief and pleasure upon being released from some pain. Grisel could have simply appealed to this common experience to introduce the science behind it. Yet she chose to ground her narrative in ancient insight.

⁹² Other scientists working on addiction have made similar appeals to ancient material as primary material or sources of inspiration for research and treatment methods. For example, both Judson Brewer and Gabor Maté make use of Buddhist ideas, which have their origins around the fifth century BCE. To be sure, Buddhism also continues to be a practiced religious tradition today, which makes appeals to it different from the appeals to ancient Greek material as material from the past that we have advanced away from, and thus can serve main as the source or origin point of discoveries. However, both Brewer and Maté also ground their appeals to Buddhism as an ancient tradition, so there is a certain similarity. See: J. Brewer, (2017), *The Craving Mind: From cigarettes to smartphones to love—why we get hooked and how we can break bad habits*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; *id.*, (2021), *Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind*, New York: Penguin Publishing Group; G. Maté, (2008), *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction*, Toronto: Knopf Canada.

compare (as “predictors” or simply alternatives) to contemporary accounts, essentially trying to answer the question: do ancient authors offer different explanations for addiction that we might be able to learn from today?

I am going to focus on the explanation of addiction that we can find in one of Plato’s dialogues, the *Timaeus*. There are several reasons for this. First, the *Timaeus* presents a theory of pleasure and pain that echoes what Grisel traced to Plato’s *Phaedo*, so there are already grounds for thinking that it is relevant to discussions of addiction. But where in the *Phaedo*, there is just a brief moment in which Socrates mentions the interrelated nature of pleasure and pain, in the *Timaeus*, it is spelled out in more detail, thus offering a fuller account of an ancient theory. Second, in the *Timaeus*, the ideas about pleasure and pain are brought to bear on a hypothetical case of sex addiction. In explaining the causes of the sex addict’s behavior, the *Timaeus* offers one of the clearest examples of a theory about addiction from the ancient world—a theory which no one has attempted to spell out as such.⁹³ Third, the dialogue offers a whole cosmology, in which the experience of addiction fits. This gives us the opportunity to see how many different aspects of the whole system relate to Timaeus’s ideas about addiction. Fourth, the *Timaeus*’s discussion of addictive behavior, weakness of will, and the role of habits serves as an antecedent to the ideas found in Aristotle a generation later. Aristotle has been one of the main sources that people have turned to from the ancient

⁹³ Some scholars have interpreted the character Timaeus presents as referring to addiction, but generally speaking no one has tried to analyze it using addiction as the focus or framework. See, for example, H. B. Hoffleit, (1937), “An un-Platonic theory of evil in Plato,” *American Journal of Philology*, 58.1: 45-58; Gabriela Roxana Carone, (2007), “Akrasia and the Structure of the Passions in Plato’s *Timaeus*,” in Christopher Bobonich and Pierre Destrée (eds.), *Akrasia in Greek Philosophy*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 101-118; M. Ahonen, (2014), “Plato on Madness and Mental Disorders,” in: *Mental Disorders in Ancient Philosophy*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 35-67.

Greek world for thinking about addiction.⁹⁴ Instead of going over this same material, I want to focus on the *Timaeus* as a way into similar ideas, and to give some background for Aristotle's ideas, too.

In order to present the *Timaeus*'s explanation of addiction, I have organized the chapter in the following way. I first sketch out Timaeus's theory of addiction. At first glance, it appears to be a physical theory—i.e., one that explains addiction by appealing to physical causes, changes in the physiology of the body, and so on. This explanation might be seen to complement the contemporary medical model of addiction as a brain disease. In other words, more than just offering relevant ideas about pleasure and pain, Plato might be seen to

⁹⁴ There are several examples of theories from the ancient world that are related to addiction. Not only are there Socrates's notion of pleasures and pains, but there are also relevant philosophical theories regarding excess, self-control, the processes of perception, decision-making, and action, etc. Some of these have already been brought into contemporary discussions of addiction. Aristotle's philosophy, in particular, has been used by scholars working in several different disciplines as a source of inspiration for ideas about habit, weakness of will, and behavioral motivation. From **Philosophy**, see: Nick Heather and Gabriel Segal, (2013), "Understanding addiction: Donald Davidson and the problem of akrasia," *Addiction Research & Theory* 21.6: 445-452; *id.*, (2015), "Is addiction a myth? Donald Davidson's solution to the problem of akrasia says not," *The International Journal of Alcohol and Drug Research* 4.1: 77-83; *id.* (eds.), (2017), *Addiction and Choice: Rethinking the Relationship*, Oxford: University Press; Donald Davidson (ed.), (1980), *Essays on actions and events*, Oxford: University Press; Alfred R. Mele, (1996), "Socratic Akratic Action," *Philosophical Papers* 25.3, 149-159; *id.*, (2002), "Akratics and Addicts," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39.2, 153-167; *id.*, (2009), "Weakness of Will and Akrasia," *Philosophical Studies* 150: 391-404; Lubomira Radoilska, (2013), *Addiction and Weakness of Will*, Oxford: University Press; R. J. Wallace, (1999), "Addiction as a defect of the will: Some philosophical reflections," *Law and Philosophy* 18.6: 621-654. From **Neuroscience**, see: X. Barandiaran and E. Di Paolo, (2014), "A genealogical map of the concept of habit," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8.522; J. Bernacer and J. Murillo, (2014), "The Aristotelian conception of habit and its contribution to human neuroscience," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8.883; Gideon Yaffe, (2013), "Are Addicts Akratic? Interpreting the Neuroscience of Reward," in Neil Levy (ed.), *Addiction and Self-Control: Perspectives from Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience*, Oxford: University Press, 190-213. From **Sociology and others**, see: Christopher Megone, (1998), "Aristotle's Function Argument and the Concept of Mental Illness," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology* 5.3: 187-201; M. Pérez-Álvarez, L. A. Sass, and J. M. García-Montes, (2008), "More Aristotle, less DSM: The ontology of mental disorders in constructivist perspective," *Philosophy, psychiatry, & psychology* 15.3, 211-225; Daniel D. De Haan, (2011), "Thomistic Hylomorphism, Self-Determination, Neuroplasticity, and Grace: The Case of Addiction," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 85, 99-120; Albert Yates, (2018), *A theory of addiction founded on classical Greek philosophy*, PhD Dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University (Department of Social Care and Social Work).

Others have found inspiration in Saint Augustine's account of his own "weakness of will" when it came to sex and love. See, for example, chapter 9, "Addiction and Society," (p. 207-239) in B. Alexander, (2010), *The globalization of addiction: A study in poverty of the spirit*, Oxford: University Press. Interestingly, Augustine's first-person account in his *Confessions* is rhetorically similar to those of neuroscientists who have experienced addiction themselves and, now sober, are motivated to understand and cure the thing they suffered from.

“predict” the brain disease model of addiction. In recent scholarship, one of the major critiques of the brain disease model has been that it overly emphasizes and pathologizes the individual, leaving out contextual factors. If the *Timaeus*’s theory is similar to this model, we might ask whether it suffers from the same shortcomings. My answer to this is that it does not, since, as I argue, the theory articulated in the *Timaeus* is actually better understood as a biopsychosocial theory of addiction. Recognizing this helps to see how Timaeus’s theory avoids the major shortcomings of the brain disease model, and how it may offer a helpful alternative to the predominant brain disease model.

2. Introducing Timaeus’s Theory of Addiction

The *Timaeus* stands out among Plato’s dialogues for its rich cosmological theory that is spoken by the character Timaeus, after whom the dialogue takes its name. In many of Plato’s dialogues, like those we saw excerpts from in the previous chapter, there is a back-and-forth exchange between Socrates and various figures from fifth century Athenian political and intellectual life; they discuss questions about virtue, rhetoric, politics, and philosophy. Socrates is sometimes thought to represent the positions that Plato holds as the author—and, indeed, this was the way the dialogues were generally read in antiquity—though contemporary interpretations vary.⁹⁵ The *Timaeus*, by contrast, consists mostly of one long speech, spoken not by Socrates but by Timaeus.

As a character, Timaeus is introduced as a learned figure from the southern Italian town of Locri, which was a Greek colony in southern Italy. In antiquity, he was generally thought to have been a real person, with whom Plato studied during his travels to Italy in the

⁹⁵ See, among other examples, many different perspectives offered on this question in the volume: Gerald A. Press (ed.), (2000), *Who speaks for Plato? Studies in Platonic Anonymity*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

mid-fourth century.⁹⁶ Now, however, Timaeus is generally believed to be a fictional character, constructed by Plato as a representative of southern Italian intellectuals.⁹⁷ The main intellectual trend with which these southern Italians were associated was Pythagoreanism. The early Greek philosopher Pythagoras, originally from the eastern Greek island of Samos, is said to have traveled to southern Italy and established a community there, in Croton. Pythagoras's ideas include the mathematical ordering of the universe, and its manifestation in phenomena as diverse as music (harmonies as mathematical ratios), astronomy (the music of the spheres), and the human body (internal equilibrium as key to health). Many of the ideas expressed in Timaeus's speech represent Pythagorean views, even though the character is never explicitly identified as a Pythagorean.

On to the setting and plot: at the start of the *Timaeus*, there is a brief exchange, through which we get a glimpse of Socrates and the other characters, Critias and Hermocrates, who are present for the day's discussion.⁹⁸ We find out that this group had also met on the previous day, when Socrates had expounded a theory of justice and his vision for political society. Scholars have sometimes taken this to refer to the conversation recounted by

⁹⁶ See, for example, Cicero's *De Republica* 1.16 and *De finibus bonorum et malorum* 5.87.

⁹⁷ Southern Italian intellectuals also feature in Plato's *Phaedo*, mentioned earlier. Socrates's two main interlocutors in that dialogue are Simmias and Cebes, who are said to be from Thebes, but moved to southern Italy and become associated with Pythagoreans, and particularly the medical tradition associated with Alcmaeon of Croton. Notably, Alcmaeon is said to be the first to theorize internal causes of disease as a disruption of a natural equilibrium, and that such a disruption is caused by problems in the environment, diet, and habits (for a discussion of Alcmaeon's contributions, see: S. Kouloumentas, (2014), "The body and the polis: Alcmaeon on Health and Disease," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 22.5: 867-887). It is also significant to bring the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, together because of the different accounts they give about the nature of the soul (*Phaedo*: unified soul and soul-body dualism; *Timaeus*: tripartite soul). More on this below.

⁹⁸ Note that Critias is the same Critias of the Thirty Tyrants, whose association with Socrates contributed to the latter's bad reputation in Athens. Critias gives a brief speech at the start of the *Timaeus* (20d-26d), previewing the story of Atlantis he tells in Plato's *Critias*. Also note that in the very first line of the *Timaeus*, Socrates comments that a fourth participant is absent. Curiously, Wright uses this missing reference as a way into discussing absence or lack of attachment as the cause of addiction: see, Jason Wright, (2018), "Addiction: treatment and its context," in Richard Gill (ed.), *Addictions from an Attachment Perspective*, London and New York: Routledge, 11-32.

Socrates in Plato's *Republic*, though the character lineup is different and some notable aspects are left out in the summary presented at the opening of the *Timaeus*.⁹⁹ In any case, this is the set up for Timaeus's speech, which takes up the rest of the dialogue, the contents of which is our main concern in this chapter.

2.1 Overview of Timaeus's Speech

In his speech, Timaeus gives an account of the design and creation of the universe by a god-like craftsman, who wished to make something intelligent and good like himself (30b-c). According to Timaeus, the craftsman first created the world as a living thing with a soul that extends throughout the physical material of the universe (26e-37a, esp. 34b). He then created gods and charged them with creating mortal humans as "ensouled" creatures, which were in turn modeled after the universe (41c-44c, cf. 69c-72d). The reason for this degree of separation between the master craftsman and humans is that he did not want to be responsible for anything evil, such as the undoing of something that has been put together well (41b, 42d-e). Timaeus quotes the master craftsmen explaining that only someone evil would consent to such an undoing, but he himself is an entirely good kind of god (*ibid.*). Yet, despite the craftsman's perfection, the completeness of the universe he creates requires that there are humans who are mortal—i.e., who come to be and who pass away (41b-d). In other words, the universe is complete only when there is an element of corruption or degeneracy within

⁹⁹ See, for example, J. Annas, (2010), "The Atlantis story: The *Republic* and the *Timaeus*," in *Plato's Republic: A Critical Guide*, Cambridge: University Press, 52-64. Notably missing from Socrates's summary in the *Timaeus* are the middle books of the *Republic*, which contain some of the key metaphysical and epistemological arguments (so leaving them out is rather important).

it.¹⁰⁰ So, while it is made in the image of the craftsman insofar as it is intelligent and good, the universe also contains this key difference from the craftsman himself, in that it is also susceptible to irrationality and badness.

These two conflicting tendencies of the universe—its goodness and intelligence, but also corruption and degeneracy—are expressed in the nature of human beings.¹⁰¹ According to Timaeus’s theory, human beings partake in divinity or are similar to the divine craftsman insofar as we are able to be good and intelligent. But we are also defined by our fallibility and ultimately mortality: we are susceptible to error, badness, death. This is an important point to underscore: Timaeus thinks that humans are by nature both somehow good and intelligent, as well as somehow bad and irrational—not just one or the other, but always both. The task of human life is to manage these two natures to the best of one’s ability. This means striving to be as good and rational as possible, limiting error and wrongness, but also perhaps coming to understand that error and wrongness are simply part of human nature and must be accepted as such.

The mortal and degenerate aspect of human nature explains the occurrence of disease in both the body and the soul. This topic occupies most of the final portion of Timaeus’s speech (82a-87c). In view of the above framework, disease is conceived of as a common occurrence in human life, and basically everyone is susceptible to it. In the body, disease occurs when different physical elements become unbalanced in one way or another (82a-86a). This arises either through an unnatural increase, a change of location, a reversal of a

¹⁰⁰ For a recent discussion of the necessary degeneration in Timaeus’s universe, see Sarah Broadie, (2012), *Nature and divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, Cambridge: University Press (especially chapter 4: “Immortal intellect under mortal conditions,” p. 84-114).

¹⁰¹ Note Timaeus identifies three kinds of mortal creature to whom this nature applies: things dwelling in the air (bird), in water (fish), and on land (animals including humans) (40a), but his focus throughout his speech is on humans; indeed, his cosmology is teleologically aimed towards explaining human life on earth.

certain process, etc. There is a natural order of the elements of the body and when this order is disturbed by one of these changes, it causes disease.¹⁰² This natural order is akin to the idea of the body's equilibrium and homeostasis mentioned above.

In the soul, disease occurs when the parts of the soul become misaligned with the rational order of the universe. Timaeus espouses a tripartite theory of the soul, similar to that which is well-known from Plato's *Republic* (Book 4). According to this theory, the soul is divided into rational, spirited, and appetitive parts (*Timaeus* 69c-72c). The rational part is the mind, the seat of intelligence and goodness, and the divine part within us. The other two parts are mortal: the spirited part is responsible for things like bravery and anger, while the appetitive part takes care of driving one's desire for food, drink, and sex, to ensure the nourishment of the body and the continuation of the species. The proper ordering of the soul, according to Timaeus, is to have the rational part in charge of the two mortal parts. Diseases of the soul arise when this does not happen, when rational ordering is lacking and the spirited or appetitive part of the soul has too much power that overrules the rational part. Timaeus thus describes diseases of the soul as "mindlessness" (*anoialăvoia*), which occurs when the rational mind is absent or lacks control over the other parts of the soul (86b).¹⁰³

The greatest diseases of the soul, Timaeus says, are those caused by excessive pleasures and pains (86c-d). Earlier in the dialogue (64a-d), he had explained his theory of

¹⁰² Note that this means disease is, in a certain sense, "unnatural": it moves the body away from its natural balance and order that corresponds to the natural order of the universe. But being "unnatural" does not mean that is irregular or uncommon or that it does not occur "in nature." Rather, it is an expression of the necessary corrupt/degenerate aspect of the universe.

¹⁰³ Note that Timaeus's conception of diseases of the soul, with its emphasis on rationality and its absence, does not quite correspond to what we mean when we say "mental illness." Timaeus's conception works within the broader cosmological system that he is describing (as does our own). Though there are some similarities between them, it is important to try to recognize the features that make these different systems distinct. For some helpful discussions of this, see the introduction to: William Harris (ed.), (2013), *Mental disorders in the classical world*, Leiden and Boston: Brill; as well as the introduction to: Chiara Thumiger, (2017), *A history of the mind and mental health in classical Greek medical thought*, Cambridge: University Press.

pleasure and pain. In very brief, the theory holds that pleasure and pain are sensations felt by the body and transmitted “in a chain reaction” to the soul (64b). These sensations are caused by things impacting the body where it is possible to be impacted, in parts that are “easily moved”: for example, on the skin or tongue, places with nerves, as opposed to hair, nails, the kinds of body parts that are “not easily moved” (64b3-64d2). With this understanding of sensation, this is what Timaeus says about pleasure and pain (64c7-d3, *cf.* 64e-65a):

This, then, is what we should understand about pleasure and pain: an unnatural disturbance that comes upon us with great force and intensity is painful, while its equally intense departure, leading back to the natural state, is pleasant. One that is mild and gradual is not perceived, whereas the opposite is the case with the opposite disturbance.¹⁰⁴

Pain is what is felt in the soul when there is a strong, forceful movement that displaces the body from its natural state or equilibrium. Pleasure is conceived of as the return from this displaced state, back towards the natural equilibrium (64d-65a). Strong impacts in the case of pain, and swift returns in the case of pleasure make these sensations acutely felt, whereas a gradual depletion or return is generally unnoticeable. This theory is remarkable because it binds the experience of pleasure to the experience of pain: to experience pleasure as the return to your normal state, you must have somehow (consciously or not) become disturbed or depleted. There is no experience of pleasure otherwise, for example as an addition to or augmentation of one’s natural resting state—even though, if one’s natural state has unnoticeably been depleted, it might feel like that. This is the theory, more fleshed out here than it was in the *Phaedo*, that “predicts” contemporary scientific understandings of how

¹⁰⁴ The Greek text reads: τὸ δὴ τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ λύπης ὧδε δεῖ διανοεῖσθαι: τὸ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν καὶ βίαιον γιγνόμενον ἄθροον παρ’ ἡμῖν πάθος ἀλγεινόν, τὸ δ’ εἰς φύσιν ἀπιὸν πάλιν ἄθροον ἡδύ, τὸ δὲ ἡρέμα καὶ κατὰ σμικρὸν ἀναίσθητον, τὸ δ’ ἐναντίον τούτοις ἐναντίως.

pleasure and pain impact the body's natural equilibrium, leading to addictive cycles of craving and release.¹⁰⁵

While all pleasures and pains are related to this idea of disturbing the natural equilibrium, extreme pleasures and pains have stronger, more noticeable effects. Timaeus claims that the strong sensations have the effect of skewing perceptions (especially the ability to see and hear correctly), causing madness (*mania/μανία*), and generally lead one away from acting rationally (86b-c).¹⁰⁶ The idea here might be that these sensations weaken the rational part of the soul, while stirring up emotions and feelings in other parts of the soul, giving them more than their natural amount of control over the soul. For example, the experience of pleasure upon eating may strengthen the appetites to want more. By contrast, pains such as a bad taste may turn off the appetite and alert the spirit to potential threats, causing it to become angrier and more defensive. Timaeus never actually spells this out explicitly, but this interpretation makes sense as to how the excessive sensations disturb the natural, rational organization of the soul. Under the influence of such sensations and emotions, with perceptions skewed so that rational judgments are hard to come by, the individual

¹⁰⁵ More fleshed out with details that perhaps move it farther away from the contemporary theory. For example, in the contemporary theory, it seems like one's natural equilibrium is like a scale that can be tripped either towards pleasure or pain, and then the body works to restore balance by producing the opposite. This is different from Timaeus's version in which only pain is movement away from the equilibrium, and pleasure is return to it. Part of the reason for Timaeus conceiving of it in this way is that he imbues the sensations with moral judgment: he wants pain to be "unnatural" (movement away from natural state), and pleasure to be "natural" (return to natural state) (cf. 81e).

¹⁰⁶ 86b5-c3: "We must lay it down that the diseases that pose the gravest dangers for the soul are excessive pleasures and pains. When a man enjoys himself too much or, in the opposite case, when he suffers great pain, and he exerts himself to seize the one and avoid the other in inopportune ways, he lacks the ability to see or hear anything right. He goes raving mad and is at that moment least capable of rational thought" / ἡδονὰς δὲ καὶ λύπας ὑπερβαλλούσας τῶν νόσων μεγίστας θετέον τῇ ψυχῇ: περιχαρῆς γὰρ ἄνθρωπος ὢν ἢ καὶ τάναντία ὑπὸ λύπης πάσχων, σπεύδων τὸ μὲν εἰλεῖν ἀκαίρως, τὸ δὲ φυγεῖν, οὐθ' ὄραν οὔτε ἀκούειν ὀρθὸν οὐδὲν δύναται, λυττᾶ δὲ καὶ λογισμοῦ μετασχεῖν ἥκιστα τότε δὴ δυνατός.

experiences the kind of mindlessness (*anoia/ἄνοια*) and madness (*mania/μανία*) that Timaeus calls a disease of the soul.

2.2 Sex Addiction as a Disease of the Soul

To illustrate what he is saying about diseases of the soul that are caused by excessive pleasure and pain, Timaeus offers an example that brings us specifically around to his theory of addiction. Here is what he says (86c3-d5):

If the seed of a man's marrow grows to overflowing abundance like a tree that bears an inordinately plentiful quantity of fruit, he is in for a long series of bursts of pain, or of pleasures, in the area of his desires and their fruition. These severe pleasures and pains drive him mad for the greater part of his life, and though his body has made his soul diseased and witless, people will think of him not as sick, but as willfully evil. But the truth about sexual overindulgence is that it is a disease of the soul caused primarily by the condition of a single stuff which, due to the porousness of the bones, flows within the body and renders it moist.¹⁰⁷

At first glance, it might not be obvious what experience Timaeus is referring to here. He is talking about fruit trees, fluid inside the body, behavior characterized by pleasure and pain, and madness or witlessness that characterize a disease of the soul. In the first line, the word for the seed, σπέρμα in Greek, gives us the first clue that he is talking about sexual behavior. Σπέρμα means what we think of by seed in English, i.e., the small unit of reproduction for plants that can generate another plant of the same kind. That alone might suggest

¹⁰⁷ The Greek text reads: τὸ δὲ σπέρμα ὄτω πολὺ καὶ ῥυῶδες περὶ τὸν μυελὸν γίγνεται καὶ καταπερεὶ δένδρον πολυκαρπότερον τοῦ συμμέτρου πεφυκὸς ἢ, πολλὰς μὲν καθ' ἕκαστον ὠδῖνας, πολλὰς δ' ἡδονὰς κτώμενος ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα τόκοις, ἐμμανὴς τὸ πλεῖστον γιγνόμενος τοῦ βίου διὰ τὰς μεγίστας ἡδονὰς καὶ λύπας, νοσοῦσαν καὶ ἄφρονα ἴσχων ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν, οὐχ ὡς νοσῶν ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκὼν κακὸς δοξάζεται: τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς ἢ περὶ τὰ ἀφροδίσια ἀκολασία κατὰ τὸ πολὺ μέρος διὰ τὴν ἐνὸς γένους ἕξις ὑπὸ μανότητος ὀστών ἐν σώματι ῥυώδη καὶ ὑγραίνουσας νόσος ψυχῆς γέγονεν.

Re: the asterisk: in addition to the mention of sperm in the first clause, masculine adjectives (ἐμμανὴς, κακὸς) and participles (κτώμενος, γιγνόμενος, ἴσχων, νοσῶν) are used throughout this passage. Thus, the case that Timaeus is describing seems to be of a male sex addict. He does not say anything that limits sex addiction to men, and later when he describes the normal process of reproduction, he does briefly mention the female experience. But, by and large, he is concerned with this as it happens in bodies with male/masculine anatomy.

reproduction. But also, as becomes obvious when we transliterate the word, *sperma* also means sperm, i.e., the material of biological reproduction for people with male anatomy. With this, we can see that the fruit tree imagery that Timaeus appeals to involves a conceptual metaphor in the Greek language that compares human reproduction to that of plants. In the second half of the passage, Timaeus finally offers a phrase for what he is describing. He says it is “sexual overindulgence” or literally “intemperance/lack of restraint concerning matters of Aphrodite—i.e., sexual pleasures” (ἡ περὶ τὰ ἀφροδίσια ἀκολασία). From this, we can see that the behavior that he is talking about seems to be sex addiction.

Sex addiction is a contested topic today. Though it is common enough in popular discourse, research about it remains debated, and it was not included in the most recent version of the *DSM* (though it was proposed).¹⁰⁸ By contrast, “compulsive sexual behavior disorder” is recognized in the most recent *ICD*.¹⁰⁹ It is described as follows:

Compulsive sexual behaviour disorder is characterised by a persistent pattern of failure to control intense, repetitive sexual impulses or urges resulting in repetitive sexual behaviour. Symptoms may include repetitive sexual activities becoming a central focus of the person’s life to the point of neglecting health and personal care or other interests, activities and responsibilities; numerous unsuccessful efforts to significantly reduce repetitive sexual behaviour; and continued repetitive sexual behaviour despite adverse consequences or deriving little or no satisfaction from it. The pattern of failure to control intense, sexual impulses or urges and resulting repetitive sexual behaviour is manifested over an extended period of time (e.g., 6 months or more), and causes marked distress or significant impairment in personal, family, social, educational, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

¹⁰⁸ For a range of views on sex addiction as a diagnostic category, see: Martin P. Kafka, (2010), "Hypersexual Disorder: A Proposed Diagnosis for DSM-V," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39.2: 377–400; P. Hall, (2011), “A biopsychosocial view of sex addiction,” *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 26.3: 217-228; D. J. Ley, (2012), *The myth of sex addiction*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; B. Reay, N. Attwood, and C. Gooder, (2013), “Inventing sex: The short history of sex addiction,” *Sexuality & Culture*, 17.1: 1-19; K. P. Rosenberg, P. Carnes, and S. O’Connor, (2014), “Evaluation and treatment of sex addiction,” *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 40.2: 77-91; P. J. Carnes and K. M. Adams (eds.), (2019), *Clinical management of sex addiction*, New York: Routledge.

¹⁰⁹ World Health Organization. (2022). “Compulsive sexual behaviour disorder.” *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD)* (11th edition). Zurich: World Health Organization. <https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http://id.who.int/icd/entity/1630268048>.

Distress that is entirely related to moral judgments and disapproval about sexual impulses, urges, or behaviours is not sufficient to meet this requirement.

This description sketches out the main criteria for behavioral addiction, which we have seen before: a repetitive behavior that one engages at the expense of other activities and priorities, which is difficult to cease, despite various adverse consequences. This description corresponds to what Timaeus describes about the sex addict: the man whom Timaeus describes in the quotation above suffers from some kind of unrestrained behavior concerning sexual appetites and urges. This behavior combines both pleasure and pain, takes up a lot of his time, and drives him out of his mind. From this, we can assume a prioritization or preoccupation with sex over other activities, for an extended period of time, despite adverse consequences such as pain and madness. This correspondence, between Timaeus's description and the *ICD* description of compulsive sexual behavior disorder, gives us grounds for considering Timaeus's example as a case of sex addiction.

Timaeus also notes that the behavior of such a sex addict is normally condemned as wrong, as voluntary or intentional immoral action. However, according to him, this judgment is not correct because such a person has a sickness that is caused by certain physical irregularities in their body. In particular, he claims that it is largely due to the flowing of one substance in the body, related to the porousness of the bones. From this, we can begin to see how Timaeus's theory of addiction seems to emphasize physical causes.

2.3 Timaeus's Theory of Sex

To understand more clearly what is going on in Timaeus's theory of sex addiction, it is helpful to look at how he describes the "normal process" of human reproduction, sexual desire, and pleasure and pain. Timaeus describes this normal process at the very end of his speech (91a-d). There, to summarize quickly, he explains how each person contains an

“ensouled” creature inside of them. In men, this creature exists in a kind of marrow that is connected through the spine to the brain, and that gets ejected through the penis—i.e., in what he previously described as the sperm or seed. In women, it exists as the uterus. The ensouled creature is what generates sexual desire and leads men and women to want to procreate. If successful, the man “plants his seed” in the woman’s womb, where it grows to a certain point. If unsuccessful, however, various problems arise in the body and soul, for both men and women. In this account, desire is a normal part of reproduction.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Here is the passage in full (91a1-d6), in English and Greek:

“And this explains why at that time, the gods fashioned the desire for sexual union, by constructing one ensouled living thing in us as well as another one in woman. This is how they made them in each case: There is [in a man] a passage by which fluids exit from the body, where it receives the liquid that has passed through the lungs down into the kidneys and on into the bladder and expels it under pressure of air. From this passage they bored a connecting one into the compacted marrow that runs from the head along the neck through the spine. This is in fact the marrow that we have previously called “seed.” Now because it has soul in it and had now found a vent [to the outside], this marrow instilled a life-giving desire for emission right at the place of venting, and so produced the love of procreation. This is why, of course, the male genitals are unruly and self-willed, like an animal that will not be subject to reason and, driven crazy by its desires, seeks to overpower everything else. The very same causes operate in women. A woman’s womb or uterus, as it is called, is a living thing within her with a desire for childbearing. Now when this remains unfruitful for an unseasonably long period of time, it is extremely frustrated and travels everywhere up and down her body. It blocks up her respiratory passages, and by not allowing her to breathe it throws her into extreme emergencies, and visits all sorts of other illnesses upon her until finally the woman’s desire and the man’s love bring them together, and, like plucking the fruit from a tree, they sow the seed into the ploughed field of her womb, living things too small to be visible and still without form. And when they have again given them distinct form, they nourish these living things so that they can mature inside the womb. Afterwards, they bring them to birth, introducing them into the light of day. That is how woman and females in general came to be.”

καὶ κατ’ ἐκεῖνον δὴ τὸν χρόνον διὰ ταῦτα θεοὶ τὸν τῆς συνουσίας ἔρωτα ἐτεκτῆναντο, ζῶον τὸ μὲν ἐν ἡμῖν, τὸ δ’ ἐν ταῖς γυναῖξιν συστήσαντες ἔμψυχον, τοιῶδε τρόπον ποιήσαντες ἐκάτερον. τὴν τοῦ ποτοῦ διέξοδον, ἣ διὰ τοῦ πλεύμονος τὸ πῶμα ὑπὸ τοὺς νεφροὺς εἰς τὴν κύστιν ἔλθὼν καὶ τῷ πνεύματι θλιφθὲν συνεκπέμπει δεχομένη, συνέτριψαν εἰς τὸν ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς κατὰ τὸν ἀρχένα καὶ διὰ τῆς ῥάχεως μυελὸν συμπεπηγῶτα, ὃν δὴ σπέρμα ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν λόγοις εἶπομεν: ὁ δὲ, ἅτ’ ἔμψυχος ὢν καὶ λαβὼν ἀναπνοήν, τοῦθ’ ἤπερ ἀνέπνευσεν, τῆς ἐκροῆς ζωτικῆν ἐπιθυμίαν ἐμποίησας αὐτῷ, τοῦ γεννᾶν ἔρωτα ἀπετέλεσεν. διὸ δὴ τῶν μὲν ἀνδρῶν τὸ περὶ τὴν τῶν αἰδοίων φύσιν ἀπειθές τε καὶ αὐτοκρατές γεγονός, οἷον ζῶον ἀνυπήκοον τοῦ λόγου, πάντων δι’ ἐπιθυμίας οἰστρώδεις ἐπιχειρεῖ κρατεῖν: αἱ δ’ ἐν ταῖς γυναῖξιν αὖ μήτραι τε καὶ ὑστέραι λεγόμεναι διὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ταῦτα, ζῶον ἐπιθυμητικὸν ἐνὸν τῆς παιδοποιίας, ὅταν ἄκαρπον παρὰ τὴν ὥραν χρόνον πολὺν γίγνηται, χαλεπῶς ἀγανακτοῦν φέρει, καὶ πλανώμενον πάντη κατὰ τὸ σῶμα, τὰς τοῦ πνεύματος διεξόδους ἀποφράττον, ἀναπνεῖν οὐκ ἔδωκεν εἰς ἀπορίας τὰς ἐσχάτας ἐμβάλλει καὶ νόσους παντοδαπὰς ἄλλας παρέχει, μέχριτερον ἂν ἐκατέρων ἢ ἐπιθυμία καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ συναγαγόντες, οἷον ἀπὸ δένδρων καρπὸν καταδρέψαντες, ὡς εἰς ἄρουραν τὴν μήτραν ἄορατα ὑπὸ σμικρότητος καὶ ἀδιάπλαστα ζῶα κατασπείραντες καὶ πάλιν διακρίναντες μεγάλα ἐντὸς ἐκθρέψονται καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο εἰς φῶς ἀγαγόντες ζῶων ἀποτελέσωσι γένεσιν. γυναῖκες μὲν οὖν καὶ τὸ θῆλυ πᾶν οὕτω γέγονεν.

It might seem strange to describe the sperm as a kind of marrow that is also connected to the spinal cord and the material of the brain. While we now understand the spinal cord and brain to be connected as part of the central nervous system, playing important roles for sensation, the sperm is not normally included as part of this internal system (rather, it is thought of as part of a separate reproductive system). Timaeus's connection of the three, however, is grounded in part in Greek usage of the word for marrow: *μυελός* is used for a variety of internal fluids in Greek, including bone marrow, the spinal cord, the matter of the brain, and fat.¹¹¹ As different kinds of internal fluids, it makes a certain kind of sense for Timaeus to have connected these together conceptually. It also makes sense in light of certain medical understandings of his day: recall the connection that the author of *Airs, Waters, Places* makes between the swelling of the groin due to horseback riding and cutting behind the ear. Though not the exact same as Timaeus's point, this example also connected different parts of the body that we might tend to think of separately.

Timaeus's conception of the sperm-as-marrow also makes sense according to his more general anatomy of the soul. The marrow is the physical matter that he identified earlier in his speech as containing or anchoring the soul in the body (73b2-5):

The starting point for all these [the flesh, bones, physical components of the body] was the formation of **marrow**. For life's chains, as long as the soul remains bound to the body, are bound within the marrow, giving roots for the mortal race.¹¹²

The marrow serves as the primary location of the soul in the body: the soul is anchored or bound in the marrow during a person's lifetime.¹¹³ Precise kinds of marrow are assigned

¹¹¹ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, (1940), "μυελός," *A Greek-English Lexicon*, revised by Sir Henry Stuart Jones, Oxford: Clarendon Press, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dmuelo%2Fs>.

¹¹² The Greek text reads: τούτοις σύμπασιν ἀρχὴ μὲν ἢ τοῦ **μυελοῦ** γένεσις: οἱ γὰρ τοῦ βίου δεσμοί, τῆς ψυχῆς τῷ σώματι συνδουμένης, ἐν τούτῳ διαδοῦμενοι κατερρίζουν τὸ θνητὸν γένος.

more specific soul-related functions: the brain-marrow contains the rational part of the soul, and the other, mortal parts of the soul are contained in shapes extended throughout the rest of the body (73d).¹¹⁴ When the marrow is destroyed by some disease—for example, Timaeus says that a certain kind of bile is able to penetrate to the marrow and burn it up—this has the effect of “loosening the cables that hold the soul there, like a ship, and setting the soul free” (85e). This separation of soul from its anchors in the body is death. The marrow, thus, serves as the location or grounds for the soul in the body when the person is alive, holding onto it

¹¹³ There is a bit of a problem in understanding the relationship between this localization of the soul, and Timaeus’s other division of the three parts of the soul into three different areas of the body (69c5-71a3). In that passage, he identifies the three parts of the soul, as the rational, spirited, and appetitive. He then locates the rational part in the brain; the spirited part in the chest (with its “guardhouse” in the heart); and the appetitive part in the midriff region, associated with the stomach and genitals and the liver, the latter of which Timaeus assigns an important role in communicating with the rational part via images and dreams. When he later introduces the marrow as the material site of the soul in the body, he does note that the brain is made of marrow. It is unclear, however, if he thinks the heart and other lower organs are made of marrow, thus forming a psychic network. All he says is, “That, however, which was to hold fast the remaining, mortal part of the soul, he divided into shapes that were at once round and elongated, all of which he named ‘marrow’” / ὁ δ’ αὖ τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ θνητὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἔμελλε καθέξειν, ἅμα στρογγύλα καὶ προμήκη διηρεῖτο σχήματα, μυελὸν δὲ πάντα ἐπεφήμισεν (73d3-6). For discussion of interpretative difficulties regarding this passage, see: L. Brisson, (2021), “How to Make a Soul in the Timaeus,” in C. Jorgenson, F. Karfik, S. Špinka (eds.), *Plato’s Timaeus: Proceedings of the Tenth Symposium Platonicum Pragense*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 70-91.

¹¹⁴ Here is the entire passage, in English and Greek (73c3-e1): “He implanted in the marrow the various types of soul and bound them fast in it. And in making his initial distribution, he proceeded immediately to divide the marrow into the number and kinds of shapes that matched the number and kinds of shapes that the types of soul were to possess, type by type. He then proceeded to mold the ‘field,’ as it were, that was to receive the divine seed, making it round, and called this portion of the marrow, ‘brain.’ Each living thing was at its completion to have a head to function as a container for this marrow. That, however, which was to hold fast the remaining, mortal part of the soul, he divided into shapes that were at once round and elongated, all of which he named marrow. And from these as from anchors he put out bonds to secure the whole soul and so he proceeded to construct our bodies all around this marrow, beginning with the formation of solid bone as a covering for the whole of it.”

καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα δὴ φυτεύων ἐν αὐτῷ κατέδει ταῦ τῶν ψυχῶν γένη, σχημάτων τε ὅσα ἔμελλεν αὐτῷ σχῆσαι οἷά τε καθ’ ἕκαστα εἶδη, τὸν μυελὸν αὐτὸν τοσαῦτα καὶ τοιαῦτα διηρεῖτο σχήματα εὐθὺς ἐν τῇ διανομῇ τῇ κατ’ ἀρχάς. καὶ τὴν μὲν τὸ θεῖον σπέρμα οἷον ἄρουραν μέλλουσαν ἔξειν ἐν αὐτῇ περιφερῆ πανταχῇ πλάσας ἐπωνόμασεν τοῦ μυελοῦ ταύτην τὴν μοῖραν ἐγκέφαλον, ὡς ἀποτελεσθέντος ἐκάστου ζώου τὸ περὶ τοῦτ’ ἀγγεῖον κεφαλὴν γενησόμενον: ὁ δ’ αὖ τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ θνητὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ἔμελλε καθέξειν, ἅμα στρογγύλα καὶ προμήκη διηρεῖτο σχήματα, μυελὸν δὲ πάντα ἐπεφήμισεν, καὶ καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν βαλλόμενος ἐκ τούτων πάσης ψυχῆς δεσμοῦς περὶ τοῦτο σύμπαν ἤδη τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν ἀπηργάζετο, στέγασμα μὲν αὐτῷ πρῶτον συμπηγνὺς περὶ ὄλον ὀστέινον.

through a kind of bond.¹¹⁵ When Timaeus describes sperm as ensouled marrow that is connected to the brain through the spine (91a-b), he is appealing to this conception of the anatomy, in which these different parts of the body are all connected as a kind of psycho-anatomical system.

Timaeus also explains that the ensouled marrow of the sperm causes a “love of generation” (τοῦ γεννᾶν ἔρωτα) and a “desire for emission” (τῆς ἐκροῆς ζωτικὴν ἐπιθυμίαν) in the penis (“the part where its outlet lies”) (91b). This love or desire motivates certain behavior, driving a man to try to find satisfaction for his desire by having sex. For Timaeus, the strength of this desire explains why, for men, their penis may seem disobedient (ἀπειθές) and tyrannical (αὐτοκρατές). In English, we might say that it has a “mind of its own,” but for Timaeus, it is precisely that the penis and its appetites disregard the “mind” or the rational part of the soul: they are not subject to reason, ἀνυπήκοον τοῦ λόγου. Instead, the penis tries to control the man’s behavior based on the desires of the appetitive part of the soul. So, in a healthy male individual, there is a certain amount of natural sexual desire. This is associated with the appetitive part of the soul and body, and it opposes the voice of reason in the head. The conflict between these different parts of the soul is a normal dynamic in the process of sexual reproduction. In fact, we might see this as part of the degenerative (and regenerative) necessity built into the universe: the rational part of the soul cannot have complete control in suppressing the desires of the appetitive part of the soul, since then there would be no reproduction. The appetitive part of the soul needs to drive behavior at some moments in order for the human race to carry on.

¹¹⁵ Note that Timaeus uses the metaphors of chains, anchors, roots to describe this bond. Again, it is not quite clear how the immaterial substance of the soul can be held by immaterial bonds.

One final note on what Timaeus says about the normal process of reproduction, and the pleasure and pain involved. During the conflict between the different parts of the soul and body, the penis tries to rule over and control everything through its stinging appetites (91b: πάντων δι' ἐπιθυμίας οἰστροῦδεις ἐπιχειρεῖ κρατεῖν). The adjective used to mean stinging, οἰστροῦδεις, is from the Greek word for gadfly (οἴστρος), the pesky creature that bites and irritates its prey. As we saw in the last chapter, this was how Socrates used to describe his relation to the Athenian people, as he bothered and encouraged them to attend to their souls. It is also an image commonly associated with madness and being driven by painful spurs to do what you would otherwise avoid doing, as in the case of Io wandering in madness all over the world in pseudo-Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. In Timaeus's description, οἰστροῦδεις is used to describe the painful, stinging feelings associated with sexual desire. This might strike us as odd: normally sex and desire is associated with the pursuit of pleasure.¹¹⁶ But for Timaeus, sexual appetite is not just about being driven by pleasure into hedonistic debauchery. Rather, the painful spurs of gadfly-like desire are what seems to drive action. If we think back to Timaeus's theory of pleasure and pain, we can recall that he thinks that pain comes first, as the sensation-based disturbance away from the natural resting state. As

¹¹⁶ Indeed, the stereotypes about lust in the ancient world were about people who indulge too much in pleasure (*hedone*/ἡδονή)—whence the notion of “hedonists” as pleasure-seekers.¹¹⁶ Many different examples can be given for this. There are the pleasure-seeking Lotus Eaters in Homer's *Odyssey* (Book 9), as well as the representations of Persians in Greek literature: most dramatically in Aeschylus's *Persians*, but examples of this are scattered throughout ancient literature and art. Even in ancient philosophy, Epicureans, who made elevated a particular conception of pleasure as the key to a good life, were often slandered as “mere hedonists,” and were said to prioritize the pleasures of the body over virtue. (An inaccurate representation of Epicureans, as slander tends to be, but one that stuck with them in representations of Epicureanism throughout the ages.)

This is a stereotype that persists regarding addictive behavior. There is a common conception of addictive behavior, especially the use of certain drugs, as primarily pleasure-seeking. This conception contributes to stigma about those experiencing addictions as lazy, self-centered, even narcissistic hedonists rather than, for example, hard workers, virtuous self-sacrificers, etc. The brain disease model attempts to combat this in a certain way by positing that people, though perhaps initially driven by pleasure, get stuck in the patterns of addiction even when they stop being pleasurable because of the circuits in their brains. More on these implications of a disease model of addiction below.

something unnatural, this pain is something to be avoided to eliminated as quickly as possible—it spurs on action to find relief. In this case, it drives one to pursue sex. Having sex, then, brings the pleasurable relief of returning to the natural state of balance. Again, pain and pleasure are always interconnected in Timaeus’s account, so his explanation of sex addiction involves both the gadfly-like stings of pain and their relief through the experience of pleasure.

From this quick background about Timaeus’s theory of sex, appetites, pleasure, and pain, we can see more clearly what is going on in his description of sex addiction (86c-d). He identifies key physical changes: the bones become more porous; the marrow becomes more fluid. Because we know that the sperm, as ensouled marrow, has its own agenda in generating desire for sex, the person with extra fluid marrow may experience an increase in appetite for sex, beyond what is normal. This appetite is marked not by pleasure, but by pain. The extra fluid may translate into extra pressure on the body that disrupts its natural equilibrium even more than normal. In the sex addict, this state is compared to a fruit tree with its branches heavily weighed down by too many fruits. The person experiences a lot of pain from this condition, driving their behavior in pursuit of sex. With sex comes the pleasurable release and the return to the natural equilibrium. This experience of pleasure and pain is common to any sexual experience—it is part of the nature of appetites in the body. But in the sex addict, because of the physical make-up of their body, with their bones being more porous and their sperm being excessively fluid, they are driven by more extreme experiences of pleasure and pain more often. Indeed, the whole process ends up taking a lot of their time, drives them out of their minds, and makes them seem like they are acting intentionally viciously in violating norms regarding sexual behavior. However, for Timaeus, they are actually simply experiencing a physical sickness.

3. Timaeus's Theory of Addiction Is Like the Medical Model

I now want to turn to analyzing Timaeus's approach to addiction through a comparative lens. As we have begun to see, Timaeus's approach to addiction seems to emphasize that it is a physical illness with physical causes, centered around the quality of the marrow in the body. This physical focus is similar to the contemporary medical model of addiction.

3.1 Timaeus's Physical Theory

Timaeus explicitly points to physical causes of addiction. For example, he emphasizes the physical properties of the marrow that, in the case of the sex addict, become excessive. He says, at first, that the marrow has become *πολὸν καὶ ῥυῶδες*—very runny (literally “a lot and running or flowing”) (86c). He then repeats that the runny and moist (*ῥυώδη καὶ ὑγραίνουσαν*) quality or state (*ἕξις*) of one part in the body causes the sickness of soul (86d). He adds that this is due to the porosity of the bones (*ὑπὸ μανότητος ὀστέων*)—another physical factor that contributes to the sex addict's behavior.¹¹⁷

This physically-focused approach is the way that Timaeus's theory of “diseases of the soul” has been interpreted in the past. A. E. Taylor, in his important commentary on the *Timaeus*, argues that Timaeus's theory “finds an ultimate source of moral evil in a physical

¹¹⁷ Note that it is unclear to which part of his explanation this qualification about the bone porosity applies: does greater porosity (i.e., bones fuller of holes than normal) cause the marrow to be considered more fluid? This would essentially reduce the fluidity explanation to the bone porosity, with the latter causing the former. Or are the two physical changes coincidental and complementary, i.e., building off of each other? With this, as the marrow becomes more fluid, it could cause the bones to become more porous, and as the bones become more porous, the marrow could become more fluid in turn. It is unclear what precisely Timaeus is trying to express. Given that his anatomy does not quite correspond to what we know now about how the body works, it is probably best not to push this too far. But note that with either element, whether the fluidity of the marrow or the porosity of the bones, we are dealing with a physical cause for sex addiction.

cause,”¹¹⁸ and that the behavior of the sex addict who is unable “to retain a secretion until the normal time for its expulsion... is put on a level with the child who ‘wets the bed.’”¹¹⁹ In general, he complains that Timaeus’s commitment to a kind of physical determinism leads to an incoherent theory of moral responsibility—one that he thinks Plato tries to distance himself from by putting it in the mouth of this Southern Italian Pythagorean. Responsibility and Plato’s intentions aside, Taylor clearly thinks that the problem of sex addiction for Timaeus is one of physical control—or lack thereof—of the body and its natural functions.

Similarly, Michel Foucault highlights this passage as an important insight into views surrounding ancient sexuality. He writes,

when, in the *Timaeus*, Plato declares that lust should be considered as the effect, not of a bad volition of the soul, but of a sickness of the body, this disorder is described in terms of a grand pathology of excess: the sperm, instead of remaining enclosed in the marrow and its bony casing, overflows and starts to stream through the whole body, so that the latter becomes like a tree whose vegetative power exceeds all limits; the individual is thus driven to distraction for a large part of his existence by ‘pleasures and pains in excess.’¹²⁰

Here, Foucault mixes up some of the details: for example, the sperm does not necessarily overflow “the marrow and its bony casing” and stream through the body like the unfertilized womb that wanders through the woman’s body and causes her illness and madness (*hysteria*) (91c). Instead, as we have seen, the sperm is a kind of marrow and it seeks to escape from its natural outlet in the penis. The tree metaphor is meant to express not the entire body being weighed down by the sperm-marrow, but rather the virility and fruitfulness that having overflowing sperm-marrow causes. Despite these details, we can see in Foucault’s

¹¹⁸ A. E. Taylor, (1928), *A commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 613.

¹¹⁹ *Idem*, 616.

¹²⁰ Michel Foucault, (1985), *The use of pleasure (Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 2), translated by Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 45.

description that the emphasis is, again, on the body, its sickness, and the physical excess of its components as the cause of the problematic behavior.¹²¹

The emphasis on physical causality of sickness in Timaeus's explanation fits within the context of the development of medical knowledge in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE in ancient Greece. As noted in Chapter 1, earlier in Greek thought, sickness, and especially madness (*mania*) was often connected to the idea of divine causation and punishment.¹²² The gods were thought to afflict humans with illnesses for various reasons, ranging from the personal preference of the god, punishment for some harm, retribution for proximal wrongdoing (e.g., intergenerational guilt), and so on. A classic early example of this from Greek mythology is the plague that was brought upon the Greek army at Troy because its leader, Agamemnon, angered the god Apollo. The opening of Homer's *Iliad* focuses on precisely this illness as a cause of everything that happens in the rest of the poem (*Iliad* 1.1-12).¹²³ In the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, there was a shift away from divine or spiritual explanations, towards more physical or naturalistic explanations of things in the world.¹²⁴ In

¹²¹ Foucault focuses on the concept of excess as key to understanding the problem. This notion ends up being the main point of his discussion, since he claims that excess is one of the key aspects for understanding the ancient moral and ethical views towards sexuality. As such, his argument seems to be less concerned with physicality as such, more about the quantitative difference described by excess as opposed to moderation. But still, in favor of the physical argument, we can note that he is pointing to a kind of *physical* excess and the sickness of the *body* rather than a volition of the soul, as the key to understanding Timaeus's theory.

¹²² From broad discussions of this shift, see: Bruno Snell, (1953), *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought*, translated by T. G. Rosenmeyer, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Brooke Holmes, (2010), *The symptom and the subject: the emergence of the physical body in ancient Greece*, Princeton: University Press.

¹²³ N.b. The word for plague that is used in the opening of the *Iliad* is νοῦσον, which comes from the same root as νοσῶν that Timaeus uses.

¹²⁴ Plato himself, via Socrates in the *Phaedrus* (229c-e), mentions this trend as something that mythologizers or myth-explainers were attempting to do, in offering naturalistic accounts (e.g., the wind, different plants, etc.) of myths, their characters, locations, and so on. Interestingly, Socrates suggests that his own work in philosophy leaves this kind of work to the side: he has other more important things to attend to, so he will leave figuring out the origins or rationalization of myth to other people. This is a point that interpreters (like Taylor) who want to

the case of disease, this shift meant trying to understand how the body physically works, what substances it is made of, how it functions, and what makes its functioning “go wrong” and result in illness. A clear example of this shift towards more physically-based explanations can be seen through the ancient understanding of epilepsy.¹²⁵ In the ancient world, epilepsy was known as the “sacred disease”—a name that points to how it was first explained as a kind of possession by a god. In contrast to this traditional explanation, one of the earliest writings in the Hippocratic tradition, *On the Sacred Disease*, which probably dates to the late fifth century, provides a physical rather than supernatural explanation for epilepsy. It argues that the symptoms of epilepsy, such as shaking uncontrollably, loss of speech, trouble breathing, and frothing at the mouth, are caused by an excess of one of the humors (phlegm) in the brain. Understanding Timaeus’s explanation of sex addiction as a physical disease makes sense in the context of this trend towards naturalistic explanations.¹²⁶

Lastly regarding Timaeus’s physical explanation, it is important to note that he presents the physical causes as grounds for understanding sex addiction as a *disease* rather than as a willful evil. He sets up a contrast between these two, disease and willful evil, that might otherwise not be so obvious. On the one side, willful evil covers bad things done with

make a distinction between Plato’s beliefs and the positions articulated by Timaeus might point to as evidence that Timaeus’s rationalizing project does not fit in with other parts of Plato’s philosophical project.

Also note that, arguably, this rationalizing shift could be dated even earlier than the 5th century, to the early Greek philosophers’ attempts to investigate the universe on rationalistic grounds. For example, Thales of Miletus, commonly identified as the earliest Greek philosopher, is dated to the late 7th-early 6th centuries BCE. However, it is only in the 5th century that we begin to have a proliferation of writing—including medical writings in the Hippocratic corpus—that offer most of the evidence for this shift towards naturalism.

¹²⁵ For a broader historical discussion, see, Owsei Temkin, (1994), *The falling sickness: a history of epilepsy from the Greeks to the beginnings of modern neurology*, Second Edition, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

¹²⁶ Cf. *Tim.* 85a-b, on phlegm causing the sacred disease.

something like conscious intention or decision. (That lack of restraint when it comes to sex—or any other pleasure—is considered a bad thing is taken for granted.) On the other side, sicknesses due to physical causes can lead to behavior that falls outside of rational control or choice. For Timaeus, these two are distinct, and behavior that results from sickness rather than willful intention should not be blamed on the individual.¹²⁷ Timaeus is very clear about trying to remove the responsibility and blame from individuals who are experiencing things like sex addiction.

All of this, from Timaeus’s emphasis on the marrow and bone density, to how previous scholars have interpreted his theory, the common trends in his intellectual context, and his distinction of the disease from willful evil points to an interpretation of Timaeus’s theory of addiction as grounded in physical causes.

3.2 Contemporary Brain Disease Model

This physical grounding of Timaeus’s theory is comparable to the contemporary medical approach to addiction as a brain disease. According to this model, again in very broad strokes, addictions are understood to be primarily due to physical processes and

¹²⁷ As Timaeus says, “And indeed, just about every type of succumbing to pleasure is talked about as something reproachable, as though the evils are willfully done. But it is not right to reproach people for them, for no one is willfully evil. A man becomes evil, rather, as a result of one or another corrupt condition of his body and an uneducated upbringing. No one who incurs these pernicious conditions would will to have them” (86d5-e3: και σχεδὸν δὴ πάντα ὅποσα ἡδονῶν ἀκράτεια καὶ ὄνειδος ὡς ἐκόντων λέγεται τῶν κακῶν, οὐκ ὀρθῶς ὀνειδίζεται: κακὸς μὲν γὰρ ἐκὼν οὐδεὶς, διὰ δὲ πονηρὰν ἔξιν τινὰ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἀπαιδευτον τροφήν ὁ κακὸς γίγνεται κακός, παντὶ δὲ ταῦτα ἐχθρὰ καὶ ἄκοντι προσγίγνεται). Timaeus claims that his theory applies to practically everything that is normally considered to demonstrate lack of control over pleasure: not just sex addiction, but lack of control over what one consumes (food/drink), how one spends their time or money (e.g., sex, entertainment), and so on—anything to do with pleasures that people can apparently not restrain themselves towards. Blaming the individual as willfully doing wrong in these cases makes no sense because, Timaeus claims, no one does wrong willingly (a notion most closely associated with Socrates, cf. Plato’s *Protagoras*, thanks in part to Aristotle’s discussion of Socrates’s position in these terms in the *Nicomachean Ethics*). Instead, according to Timaeus, people end up doing things that are bad/seem bad because they are suffering from a disease in their body. Thus, it is not right to blame them or hold them as responsible.

changes that take place in the brain. They may be more likely to develop due to certain genetic predispositions and environmental factors, but the key thing about them is that they effect certain changes to the physical matter of the brain. These changes represent a seemingly permanent deterioration away from the normal, healthy material structures in the brain. Their occurrence is thought to explain why addictive behaviors become so strongly ingrained, why they are so difficult to change, and why people who seem to have moved away from their addictions often fall back into the same old patterns: their brains have changed in seemingly permanent ways. Thus, the physical changes in the brain are behind the notion of addiction as something “chronic”—i.e., lasting for the duration of one’s life, as well as “relapsing”—i.e., the common recurrence of addictive behavior, even after recovery. Hence the notion that addiction is a “chronic relapsing brain disease.”

This model for addiction developed out of modern European scientific trends.¹²⁸ These include the idea that scientists have access to the truth about the world and can demonstrate it—through empirical experiments. Appealing to empirical results offers people the idea of examining something with their own eyes to verify the validity of it, which complements the post-Reformation value of individual judgment as opposed to accepting the judgment of authorities. Another modern scientific idea is objectivity: the idea that scientific research strives to not be influenced by human bias, but instead captures an objective view of reality. Though there is much more to be said about these developments, I simply want to note these as some of the foundational ideas upon which the medical model of addiction is based.

¹²⁸ This is a very broad topic. For some discussions of modern scientific trends, see: G. Pomata and N. G. Siraisi (eds.), (2005), *Historia: Empiricism and erudition in early modern Europe*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; L. Daston and P. Galison, (2007), *Objectivity*, Princeton: University Press; C. T. Wolfe and O. Gal (eds.), (2010), *The body as object and instrument of knowledge: Embodied empiricism in early modern science*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

The medical model of addiction developed gradually over the course of the last two centuries, during which addiction has been variously conceptualized as a physical disease, mental illness, or moral sin, especially in relation to alcohol consumption.¹²⁹ The term addiction was first used in early modern English in reference to a strong religious attachment.¹³⁰ Despite the positive connotation to the word, excessive drinking and use of other substances was generally regarded as a moral failing at that time. This evaluation shifted with the development of modern psychology and the work of figures like Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), who reframed alcohol addiction as a medical disease requiring treatment rather than a moral sin calling for punishment.¹³¹ Rush's work inspired early temperance movements in the US, which sought to promote the risks of alcohol consumption, in relation to a number of other social issues (especially domestic violence and women's rights). Prohibition (the ban on the legal sale of alcohol) in the US in the early twentieth century (1920-1933) grew out of the temperance movement.¹³² One of the key ideas behind

¹²⁹ There is a lot of research on the modern history of addiction that tracks the shifts that I am outlining in detail. See, for example, H. G. Levine, (1978), "The discovery of addiction. Changing conceptions of habitual drunkenness in America," *Journal of studies on alcohol*, 39.1: 143-174; W. L. White, (1998), *Slaying the dragon: The history of addiction treatment and recovery in America*, Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute; David Courtwright, (2001), *Forces of habit: Drugs and the making of the modern world*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; *idem*, (2010), "The NIDA brain disease paradigm: history, resistance and spinoffs," *BioSocieties* 5.1: 137-47; C. Reinarman, (2005), "Addiction as accomplishment: The discursive construction of disease," *Addiction Research & Theory*, 13.4: 307-320; R. Granfield and C. Reinarman (eds.), (2014), *Expanding Addiction: Critical Essays*, New York: Routledge; W. Garriott and E. Raikhel, (2015), "Addiction in the Making," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 44.1: 477-491; P. E. Nathan, M. Conrad, and A. H. Skinstad, (2016), "History of the Concept of Addiction," *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 12, 29-51; Richard J. Rosenthal, and Suzanne B. Faris, (2019), "The etymology and early history of 'addiction,'" *Addiction Research & Theory*, 27.5: 437-449.

¹³⁰ See: R. Lemon, (2018), *Addiction and devotion in early modern England*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

¹³¹ B. Rush, (1823), *An Inquiry Into the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Human Body and Mind: With an Account of the Means of Preventing, and of the Remedies for Curing Them*, Boston: James Loring; as well as discussions in most of the works cited in the previous two footnotes.

¹³² See, for example: H. G. Levine, (1984), "The alcohol problem in America: From temperance to alcoholism," *British journal of addiction*, 79.4: 109-119; W. L. White, (1998), *Slaying the dragon: The history of addiction treatment and recovery in America*, Bloomington, IL: Chestnut Health Systems/Lighthouse Institute; P. E.

prohibition was Rush's idea that substance itself was addictive—i.e., alcohol itself contained properties that made people become addicted to it, and so limiting access ought to solve the problems of addiction (a notion that continues to motivate policy today, e.g., the entire class of illegal drugs). Following prohibition, another major highlight in the history of addiction is the development of Alcoholics Anonymous, which was founded in 1935 as a spiritual, community-oriented treatment for alcoholism as a problem that an individual cannot overcome on their own.

The status of addiction in the different editions of the *DSM*, produced over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, tracks some of the more recent conceptualizations of addiction.¹³³ The first two editions (1952, 1968) stigmatized addiction as a socially-disapproved personality disorder, reflecting the continued negative moral judgment of addiction at that time. In the third edition in 1980, the description of addiction shifted to “substance use disorder,” as more neutral and biological criteria (tolerance and withdrawal) were seen as requirements for diagnosis, while the revision of this edition (1987) recognized both physiological and behavioral symptoms. The fourth edition (1994) shifted to “substance-related disorders” in attempt to cover more than just addictive disorders, but with a continued emphasis on biological causality. The fifth and most recent edition (2013) recognizes substance-related and addictive disorders, and specifies drugs impact on the brain's reward system as the central feature of addiction. Since the third edition, there has been an emphasis

Nathan, M. Conrad, and A. H. Skinstad, (2016), “History of the Concept of Addiction,” *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 12, 29-51

¹³³ For an in-depth discussion of the changes surrounding addiction over the course of the *DSM* publication history (upon which the information in this paragraph is based), see: P. E. Nathan, M. Conrad, and A. H. Skinstad, (2016), “History of the Concept of Addiction,” *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 12, 29-51.

on addiction as a biological disease, with the *DSM-5* explicitly focusing on the changes in the brain as essential to understanding addiction.

This emphasis on the brain's role in addiction developed especially since the 1990s, the decade that was declared by US President George H. W. Bush as the "Decade of the Brain."¹³⁴ The aim of Bush's policy slogan, developed in conjunction with certain mental health organizations in the United States, was to try to shift public opinion about various illnesses, especially mental illnesses, more towards a medical model, i.e., as illnesses in the brain that needed to be approached with a medical understanding based on neuroscientific research. This public policy prioritization brought with it a greater focus on funding neuroscientific research into addiction.¹³⁵ So, the shift towards conceiving of addiction as a brain disease corresponded to this more general shift regarding mental illnesses.

What were the scientific, empirical methods used by researchers when it came to studying addiction, in the 1990s and beyond? In other words, what was the research done by these scientists that enhanced the neuroscientific understanding of addiction? Though research has certainly taken various forms and debates continue, there is one method that has been key for establishing addiction as a brain disease. Starting in the early 1990s, there was the development of certain technologies like fMRI scanning, which captures images of the brain and specifically brain activity that is correlated with blood-flow.¹³⁶ Using these scans,

¹³⁴ See: R. A. Wise, (2000), "Addiction becomes a brain disease," *Neuron*, 26.1: 27-33; F. M. Filbey, (2019), *The neuroscience of addiction*, Cambridge: University Press; Carl Erik Fisher, (2022), *The Urge: Our History of Addiction*, New York: Penguin Press.

¹³⁵ See: R. Hammer, *et al.*, (2013), "Addiction: Current criticism of the brain disease paradigm," *AJOB neuroscience*, 4.3: 27-32; S. Vrecko, (2010), "Birth of a brain disease: Science, the state and addiction neuropolitics," *History of the Human Sciences*, 23.4: 52-67.

¹³⁶ On the use of fMRI in relation to addiction, see: E. Racine, O. Bar-Ilan, and J. Illes, (2005), "fMRI in the public eye," *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 6.2: 159-164; C. A. Hanlon, and M. Canterbury, (2012), "The use of brain imaging to elucidate neural circuit changes in cocaine addiction," *Substance abuse and rehabilitation*, 3.1: 115-128; R. Granfield and C. Reinarman (eds.), (2014), *Expanding Addiction: Critical Essays*, New York:

scientists have been able to produce captivating, multicolored images of the brain in which different areas are highlighted or seem to “light up” in scans of different people reacting to stimuli. Through different experiments, scientists were able to correlate certain patterns in the images produced by the scans with certain stimuli and reactions. They claimed to demonstrate what happens in the brain when, for example, it experiences something fearful, or what the brain looks like for someone who is in love, looking at an image of their beloved, and so on. And not just things like isolated emotions: scientists have been able to identify different areas of the brain that make up different systems of responses. For example, they have produced an understanding of the brain’s reward system, which is activated in response to pleasurable stimuli; or the system in charge of keeping the body’s baseline metabolism functioning. This technology created a visually powerful tool for neuroscientific research.

In experiments done with people who were experiencing addictions, researchers found that there were certain common differences in the patterns of the fMRI images. These different patterns were thought to represent physical changes in the structures involved in the brain’s reward system. Addictive behavior was thus thought to create certain neural pathways or common reward-response reactions in the brain. These were seen to be very persistent in experiments done over time, leading to the idea that these neural pathways represent a seemingly permanent physical change in the brain’s physical structure. This conclusion, based on the manifest evidence in the form of the images based on scans, has helped solidify the scientific notion that addiction is a physical disease in the brain.

Routledge; H. Ekhtiari, A. Faghiri, M. A. Oghabian, and M. P. Paulus, (2016), “Functional neuroimaging for addiction medicine: From mechanisms to practical considerations,” *Progress in brain research*, 224, 129-153.

This medical way of understanding addiction was hoped to reduce shame and decrease stigma around addiction.¹³⁷ Addictions have widely been viewed as the result of personal choices, and those who suffer from addictions have thus been stigmatized for having made bad choices, gotten themselves into the problem, and deserving of moral blame. With the medicalized approach that developed in the latter half of the twentieth century, the idea was to shift away from this moral blame towards a more compassionate approach. The goal was that people who experience addictive behaviors, as well as their family, friends, and communities, might better come to understand their experiences as a medical problem like any other, and seek medical help for their condition rather than suffering in silence and causing harm.

But, although the medical model has gained traction and is now generally accepted as the most dominant approach to addiction among researchers, public policy makers, and the general population, stigma around addiction persists. There has been a disconnect or perhaps a delay between the intended effect and the actual results thus far. How it will go in the future remains to be seen. Perhaps, as we will see in the next section, the medical model's hope at destigmatizing addiction has not seen the success it hoped for in part because its great emphasis on the individual as the site of a pathology misses the mark about addiction in some important respects.

¹³⁷ For (mostly critical) discussions, see: D. J. Luchins, (2004), "At issue: will the term brain disease reduce stigma and promote parity for mental illnesses?" *Schizophrenia Bulletin*, 30.4: 1043-1048; D. Z. Buchman, J. Illes, and P. B. Reiner, (2011), "The paradox of addiction neuroscience," *Neuroethics*, 4.2: 65-77; S. Satel and S. O. Lilienfeld, (2014), "Addiction and the brain-disease fallacy," *Frontiers in psychiatry*, 4.141: 1-11; T. K. Wiens, and L. J. Walker, (2015), "The chronic disease concept of addiction: Helpful or harmful?" *Addiction research & theory*, 23.4: 309-321.

3.3 Comparing Ancient and Modern Models of Addiction

There are obviously major differences between Timaeus's ancient model and the modern medical model. The biggest difference is perhaps the scientific understanding presented by each in the conception of anatomy and the physiology of the human body. The ancients developed many scientific insights, but modern science and research methods have realized a much more detailed understanding of the body, in light of which many of the ancient ideas may seem naive. There is also a major difference in the scope or sample size between the two approaches. In Timaeus's ancient theory, we have a snapshot of the ideas about addiction of one person. Of course, these ideas fit in a certain historical context and owe much of their content to the intellectual traditions to which Timaeus (or Plato) belonged. Their reception is also important, as Plato's thought in general, and the *Timaeus* in particular, influenced many pre-Modern thinkers. But still, the theory as presented in this text remains just one representation. By contrast, the contemporary model is backed by thousands of researchers who have been studying addiction for many years now. So, the scale and the complexity are two notable differences between the models.

Despite such differences, there are also remarkable similarities between the two approaches. I want to highlight four: the disease framing, the physical causality, the attempt to alleviate blame, and the rationalistic context.

Both ancient and modern theories present addiction as a disease. This framing implies that there is something related to health that is not right, though there are different ways to conceptualize this experience—and, indeed, different cultures often have different conceptions of disease.¹³⁸ Disease can be thought of through the lens of functionality: as what

¹³⁸ On the intersection of disease framing and questions of morality and culture, see: C. Rosenberg, (1989), "Disease in History: Frames and Framers," *Milbank Quarterly* 67: 1-15; as well as the essays (including

happens when something stops working. Alternatively, it might be thought of in terms of propriety: disease is when something does not match up with expectations of how it ought to look or work or behave. Or, it might be thought of in phenomenological terms: disease is when something subjectively feels bad.

Some of these different ways of framing appear in both models. Timaeus's theory of addiction is as a disease of the soul, in which the rational mind has lost control over the body and other parts of the soul. Here, disease signifies that there is not the proper rational control—control which is conceived of as “natural,” and disease or the lack of control as something unnatural or going against nature. This presumably disrupts daily life and functioning in some ways; it also causes a great amount of subjective pleasure and pain. But the key way to understand this as a disease is the loss of rational control, the onset of a kind of madness or mindlessness, as something that deviates from a complex norm that connects health, nature, and rationality. Meanwhile, the contemporary model is presented as a brain disease in which certain stimuli have created patterns in the physical matter of the brain. Disease signifies an alteration from normal, healthy brain patterns into irregular ones. The addictive behaviors to which these irregular brain patterns correspond are seen as dysfunctional: they disrupt other routines, capacities, relationships, work, etc. In this conception, there are clear ideas about what normal vs. abnormal looks like in the brain, as well as expectations about functional behavior. In both theories, the disease framing marks out something that deviates from a healthy norm.

introductions) in: C. Rosenberg and J. L. Golden (eds.), (1992), *Framing disease: studies in cultural history*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; and Allan M. Brandt and Paul Rozin (eds.), (1997), *Morality and health*, New York: Routledge.

Both the ancient and the modern models also highlight the physical nature of this disease, that it is a condition that can be traced back to physical causes. In the *Timaeus*, as we noted above, this is how most commentators have interpreted Timaeus's remarks about the sex addict's condition. The lack of rational control that defines the disease of the soul of addiction is due to certain physical features in the body: the fluidity of the marrow, the porosity of the bones, etc. In modern accounts, addiction corresponds to certain physical changes in the brain. These physical changes are used to explain why a person repeats whatever addictive behavior they are dealing with, despite attempts to stop or wishes to stop: the changes in their brain correspond to a strong pattern of behavior and make it practically impossible to alter. In both models, there is the idea that the physical changes lead to addictive behavior: the marrow or the brain causes it, rather than it being the result of a conscious choice.

Related to this last point, in both models, there is the attempt to use the physical disease framing as a way to remove blame from individuals experiencing addictive behaviors. In Timaeus's account, he makes the very clear distinction between behavior or a condition that is due to a disease versus that which is due to willful choice. He claims that addictions—sex addiction as well as any behavior typically associated with lack of control when it comes to pleasure—fall in the category of disease. Those who are experiencing addicted behaviors ought not to be blamed, though they typically are. In contemporary approaches, there is the hope that medicalizing addiction—understanding it as a brain disease rather than a moral failing—will help reduce stigma and encourage people to seek medical help. Though this hope has not totally been realized, the idea remains that the medical model of addiction is aiming at this goal.

Lastly, the move towards a scientifically determined understanding and away from ideas of personal responsibility maps onto or corresponds to a broader trend toward

rationalistic, naturalistic explanations in both contexts. As we saw, Timaeus's ideas fit into the trend away from supernatural beliefs and towards a more physically-grounded and naturalistic understanding of the world, working according to physical principles, in which things had physical causes and effects. Similarly, we noted the brain disease model has developed in the modern context in which technological and scientific knowledge has gained greater and greater authority.

Thus, though vastly different in many of their details, there are these broad similarities between Timaeus's theory of addiction and the contemporary brain disease model. As noted with the material from the neuroscientist Judith Grisel, with whom we started this chapter, Plato's ideas have already been thought to "predict" the contemporary understanding of how pleasure and pain go together in the body's dynamic process of homeostasis. The account given in the *Timaeus* might also be seen to "predict" aspects of the contemporary medical understanding of addiction. In fact, it seems plausible to describe Timaeus's physical disease model as an early antecedent to the contemporary brain disease model. Both share physical explanations for behaviors that are described as diseases in attempt to reduce blame on individuals and put addictions more in the context of the natural world governed by physical causes, even as norms of nature and health are held in the background.

3.4 Critiques of Physical Disease Models of Addiction

Timaeus's theory, insofar as it relates to the brain disease model, offers a surprisingly relevant or modern perspective on addiction from the ancient world. This discovery on its own is worth noting. But the disease model, though it predominates, is not the only contemporary model of addiction, and in fact it has been subjected to many critiques in recent years, especially for its emphasis on individual pathology over contextual factors.

As noted in the previous sections, the contemporary medical model has focused research on addiction as an individual experience that corresponds to changes in the brain. This focus has been useful in many ways: it offers a specific unit of study and with data collected across a population of individuals, various trends can be detected. Moreover, focusing on changes in the brain gives an empirical grounding to neuroscientific addiction research: it is not trying to study something theoretical or abstract, but something that can be measured in the physical material of the brain. This individualized, empirical data has enabled people experiencing addictions to be treated as patients, with access to medical care and insurance coverage. As such, the medical model of addiction has, in many ways, helped many people who have experienced addictions and has saved lives.

Yet, the medical model has also come with limitations. As noted above, it has not yet been able to reduce stigma surrounding addiction, despite expectations that medicalizing addiction would. It has also struggled with presenting a full and coherent understanding of addiction: the notion of addiction as a chronic, relapsing brain disease suggests that it is a lifelong struggle requiring intermittent medical treatment, which is true for some people, but not true for others. In fact, there is evidence that many people recover from addiction completely without treatment—though studies of this are difficult to measure in the same empirical way as studying people with permanent changes in their brain physiology, so this evidence is often not prioritized in scientific/medical literature.¹³⁹

But perhaps most importantly the focus on the individual as the site of a physical pathology fails to account for the role that cultural context plays in determining addictive

¹³⁹ See, for example: R. Granfield and W. Cloud, (1996), “The elephant that no one sees: Natural recovery among middle-class addicts,” *Journal of Drug Issues*, 26.1: 45-61; *idem*, (1999), *Coming clean: Overcoming addiction without treatment*, New York: NYU Press; T. Toneatto, (2013), “Natural recovery,” in P. M. Miller (ed.), *Principles of Addiction: Comprehensive Addictive Behaviors and Disorders*, Volume 1, San Diego: Elsevier Science & Technology, 133-139.

behaviors.¹⁴⁰ There are many factors that “push” people into addictive behaviors and keep them there. For example, addictions are more common and more severe in people who suffer from poverty, homelessness, racial discrimination, early childhood trauma, and other forms of oppression.¹⁴¹ Addictive behaviors might be used as a coping mechanism to deal with such stressors—though this does not necessarily mean that it is a freely willed choice. There is also an important role for cultural learning: seeing other people perform certain addictive behaviors to deal with certain problems offers the idea that, for example, substance use is a viable solution for dealing with present misery. Not only does cultural learning play a role in generating such possibilities, it is also important for passing on specific practices and attitudes—for learning how to “act like an addict.”¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ This is a driving idea behind the critical essays collected in: R. Granfield and C. Reinarman (eds.), (2014), *Expanding Addiction: Critical Essays*, New York: Routledge; and J. Netherland (ed.), (2012), *Critical Perspectives on Addiction*, Bingley, UK: Emerald; as well as the well-known work of Bruce Alexander, e.g.: B. Alexander, (2010), *The globalization of addiction: A study in poverty of the spirit*, Oxford: University Press. See also: O.-J. Skog, (2005), “Choice, Social Interaction and Addiction: The Social Roots of Addictive Preferences,” *Substance Use: Individual Behaviour, Social Interactions, Markets and Politics*, 16, 145–171; M. D. Griffiths, (2010), “The role of context in online gaming excess and addiction: Some case study evidence,” *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 8.1: 119-125; A. Bennett and A. Golub, (2012), “Sociological factors and addiction,” in H. J. Shaffer, D. A. LaPlante, and S. E. Nelson (eds.), *APA addiction syndrome handbook, Vol. 1. Foundations, influences, and expressions of addiction*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 195–210; M. Singer and J. B. Page, (2016), *The social value of drug addicts: uses of the useless*, New York: Routledge.

¹⁴¹ Research on this topic is vast and growing. In addition to the works cited in the previous footnote, see: R. E. Davis, J. E. Mill, and J. M. Roper, (1997), “Trauma and addiction experiences of African American women,” *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 19.4: 442-465; C. L. Currie, T. C. Wild, D. P. Schopflocher, L. Laing, P. Veugelers, and B. Parlee, (2013), “Racial discrimination, post-traumatic stress, and gambling problems among urban Aboriginal adults in Canada,” *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 29.3: 393-415; A. Hassanbeigi, J. Askari, D. Hassanbeigi, and Z. Pourmovahed, (2013), “The relationship between stress and addiction,” *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, 1333-1340; C. G. Schütz, (2016), “Homelessness and addiction: Causes, consequences and interventions,” *Current Treatment Options in Psychiatry*, 3.3: 306-313; H. E. Fitzgerald and R. A. Zucker, (2021), “Socioeconomic status and alcoholism: The contextual structure of developmental pathways to addiction,” in H. E. Fitzgerald, B. M. Lester, and B. Zuckerman (eds.), *Children of poverty: research, health, and policy issues*, New York: Garland, 125-148.

¹⁴² Even J. Grisel, with whom we started this chapter, acknowledges the role of social learning in her own experience of addiction, even as she focuses on the neuroscience as the best way to address addiction. J. Grisel, (2019), *Never enough: The neuroscience and experience of addiction*, New York: Doubleday.

Such contextual factors are crucial for both understanding and treating addiction. Taking these into account has broad implications: for example, that addiction treatment is not just about fixing a person's brain or modifying their dysfunctional behavior that caused them to, for example, lose their minimum wage job. Instead, it is a question of recognizing the family, community, and general sociopolitical backgrounds that have contributed to a culture around addiction and doing things to address these contextual factors. This means, for example, changing oppressive economic, racist, or patriarchal structures that push people into addictive behaviors in the first place.¹⁴³

In addition to taking sociocultural context into account in understanding an individual experience of addiction, there is also the wider context of the medical model itself. In describing the medical model of addiction, I noted how it developed in the context of modern intellectual, scientific ideas, and more acutely with the growth in neuroscientific research from the "Decade of the Brain." This growth in research occurred, in part, because of the availability of funding for it; various addiction scientists have pointed to the difficulty of securing funding for projects that go against the medical model of addiction that is promoted by the NIDA (National Institute of Drug Abuse), a major source of funding for addiction research.¹⁴⁴ As a result, the research that is conducted tends to support rather than critique the

¹⁴³ Not to mention modern existential crises and the difficulty of developing meaningful identities and ways of living under late-capitalism. For a discussion of the role of addiction in value and identity formation, see: Hanna Pickard, (2021), "Addiction and the self," *Noûs* 55.4: 737-761. This is also a general line of thought in Bruce Alexander's work, e.g., B. Alexander, (2010), *The globalization of addiction: A study in poverty of the spirit*, Oxford: University Press.

¹⁴⁴ See: S. Vrecko, (2010), "Birth of a brain disease: Science, the state and addiction neuropolitics," *History of the Human Sciences*, 23.4: 52-67; N. D. Campbell, (2010), "Toward a critical neuroscience of 'addiction.'" *BioSocieties*, 5.1: 89-104; D. Courtwright, (2010), "The NIDA brain disease paradigm: history, resistance and spinoffs," *BioSocieties* 5.1: 137-47; R. Hammer, Dingel, M., Ostergren, J., Partridge, B., McCormick, J., & Koenig, B. A. (2013). "Addiction: Current criticism of the brain disease paradigm." *AJOB neuroscience*, 4.3: 27-32; M. Grifell and C. L. Hart, (2018), "Is drug addiction a brain disease?" *American Scientist*, 106.3: 160-167; P. N. Bushana and E. N. Cook, (2021), "NIDA's Funding Policies Contribute to Racial Biases in the Treatment of Drug Use," *Journal of Science Policy & Governance* 19.1:1-7.

NIDA paradigm. Aside from research funding, there is also the very lucrative medical and rehabilitation industry that has developed since the mid-twentieth century, which has vested interests in remaining the main way to treat addiction.¹⁴⁵ Reconsidering addiction in a broader context, rather than as an individual patient's problem, might mean depriving this industry of its legitimacy and resources. Finally (though there are many other contextual factors to consider with addiction, to be sure), the conception of addiction as a brain disease has developed alongside the global war on drugs, which has led to the stigmatization and criminalization of many people suffering from addictions, especially those who are not white.¹⁴⁶ While the brain disease model might seem to offer an alternative to criminal responsibility, its pathologizing of the individual can also be seen to substitute one paternalistic institutional context (prison) with another (hospital/rehab center), without actually addressing the core problems surrounding addiction. With an overly narrow focus on the individual as a sufferer of a brain disease, contextual factors like these risk not being taken into account in understanding and treating addiction.

Raising these critiques of the brain disease model does not necessarily discount the physiological aspects of addiction. Rather, what such critiques tend to argue for is a fuller, more nuanced and complex understanding of addiction. Many scholars working in this

¹⁴⁵ See: P. G. Miller, F. de Groot, S. McKenzie, and N. Droste, (2011), "Vested interests in addiction research and policy. Alcohol industry use of social aspect public relations organizations against preventative health measures," *Addiction*, 106.9: 1560-1567; M. Torrington, (2018), "Overview of the Addiction Recovery Industry," in S. Modir and G. Munoz (eds.), *Integrative Addiction and Recovery*, Oxford: University Press, 16-26; K. B. Copeland, (2019), "Liquid Gold," *Washington University Law Review* 97.5: 1451-1515.

¹⁴⁶ See, for example: D. E. Roberts, (1990), "Punishing drug addicts who have babies: Women of color, equality, and the right of privacy," *Harvard Law Review*, 104.7: 1419-1482; S. Loue, (2003), "The criminalization of the addictions," *Journal of Legal Medicine*, 24.3: 281-330; V. Toscano, (2005), "Misguided retribution: Criminalization of pregnant women who take drugs," *Social & Legal Studies*, 14.3: 359-386; L. Covin Jr, (2012), "Homelessness, poverty, and incarceration: The criminalization of despair," *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 12.5: 439-456; S. Mendoza, A. E. Hatcher, and H. Hansen, (2019), "Race, Stigma, and Addiction," in J. D. Avery and J. J. Avery (eds.), *The Stigma of Addiction: An Essential Guide*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 131-152.

direction attempt to contextualize the physiological understanding of addiction, and understand the body in relation to its environment. All of this moves towards complicating the understanding of causality for addiction, taking more things into account and in doing so, coming to a fuller understanding.

With these critiques about the contemporary brain disease approach to addiction in mind, we might look back at our ancient model and ask: Is Timaeus's model susceptible to the same critiques and limitations, especially for focusing on the individual and not attending to cultural context? If we read Plato's *Timaeus* as other scholars do, promoting a physical theory of addiction, then we might be led to thinking that his theory ought to be similarly critiqued. However, I want to propose an alternative reading of Timaeus's theory. In particular, I think that Timaeus offers ways to take important psychological and contextual factors into account when it comes to addiction. This allows him to avoid some of the major critiques that confront the contemporary medical model.

4. Towards Timaeus's Biopsychosocial Theory of Addiction

In addition to the physical causes of addiction that we saw above, there is also a role for psychological and social/environmental factors to contribute to addiction in Timaeus's account. These become clearer by reading the passage about sex addiction, quoted above (section 2.2), in relation to Timaeus's description of the creation of humans. In the latter section of his speech, it becomes clear that, though the physical body and its properties are important in Timaeus's explanation of addiction, they are not the only factor that contributes to the development of addictions. The nature of the soul, its development, how it is cared for and supported in early childhood and beyond, by caregivers and the community—these are all components of Timaeus's explanation for how people develop addictions, too.

In order to analyze this material, I have divided this section into two main parts: the first deals with the psychological aspects involved in the development of the individual, whether healthy or otherwise, and the second deals with the social or contextual aspects that Timaeus highlights. By adding these two additional factors into Timaeus's account of addiction, we can see that his theory is more akin to a biopsychosocial theory of addiction, and may complement more recent approaches to addiction that aim in this direction.

4.1 Psychological Components of Timaeus's Explanation

Before digging into the other main passages that I have in mind, I want to point out the ways in which psychology has already been at play in the background of Timaeus's explanation of addiction. We can recall that he introduces the example of sex addiction as a way to illustrate his theory about how pleasures and pains cause great distress and generate a condition of disease *of the soul* (86b-d, quoted above). This type of disease was contrasted with diseases of the body, which Timaeus had described just before this section in his speech (82a-86a). Diseases of the body have to do with the physical problems (symptoms) that arise due to certain imbalances or disruptions of the physical materials in the body. The diseases of the soul, by contrast, are concerned with what happens when the soul becomes imbalanced or disturbed. By focusing just on the physical aspects of the disease, there is a risk of missing this psychological component—particularly, the disruption of the soul's natural order—that characterizes, perhaps even defines, the disease.

The psychological disruption that happens is specifically that the rational part of the soul loses its control over the other two parts of the soul and the body. Recall that Timaeus divides the soul into three parts, the rational, spirited and appetitive. He locates these three parts in the brain, chest, and belly. In addition to this tripartite division, he also specifically identifies the marrow throughout the body as the type of matter that contains the soul. This

ensouled matter is what is at work in the process of reproduction, in both people who experience addictive behavior with sex and those who do not. The disturbance of balance in this ensouled matter—i.e., it becoming more fluid than usual—is what leads to the disease of the soul that is sex addiction.¹⁴⁷ This translates into behavior in pursuit of sex that is characterized by madness and mindlessness. These characterizations point us to how the soul's equilibrium is disturbed: the rational part loses its control over the other two parts (appetitive and spirited), which then take the lead in guiding action. So, while there is a physical disturbance of balance in the marrow, this translates into a psychological disturbance in the soul. Addictive behavior can thus be thought of as this disturbance in the soul.

Now, I want to look at two passages from earlier in Timaeus's speech, in which he describes the creation of souls and their embodiment on earth. The first is the description of the master craftsman's instructions to the gods about the nature of the universe to souls *before* they are implanted in bodies. Recall from section 2.1 that the master craftsman did not create human beings himself because he needed to stay one step removed and thus not

¹⁴⁷ There is a certain question here about the exact relationship of the body and soul. In particular, one might say that, even if the soul's natural order is disturbed, it seems plausible to argue that this is not the main cause of addiction, since it itself is caused by a physical change in, e.g., the matter. The real cause of addiction might still be thought to be physical, not psychological. In other words, it seems plausible to reduce the psychological disturbances to physical disturbances, and thus claim that addiction is best understood as a disease with physical causes. This seems particularly plausible due to the way Timaeus frames the diseases of the soul: he never describes them as diseases of the soul without qualification. They are always diseases of the soul due to its position or condition in the body (cf. 86b2: διὰ σώματος ἕξιν, 86d1-2: νοσοῦσαν καὶ ἄφρονα ἰσχυῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν, 86d4-5: διὰ τὴν ἐνὸς γένους ἕξιν ὑπὸ μανότητος ὀσῶν ἐν σώματι ῥυῶδη καὶ ὑγραίνουσιν νόσος ψυχῆς γέγονεν). He never says anything about the soul being diseased or disordered on its own; it is always in relation to the body.

There are several things that might be said in response to this potential object. The most important is that one need not be reductionist, trying to find the single cause of addiction in Timaeus's account. If we did want to give such an account, the ultimate cause would be the master craftsman and his desire to create a universe—i.e., not a physical cause but a cosmological, metaphysical one. Moreover, there can be multiple layers of causality or different types of causes, or even a certain amount of ambiguity regarding causality built into Timaeus's account. To me, what seems important is to note that Timaeus is offering an account of addiction that is not just physical, but also has this important psychological component (the disruption of the soul's natural order, the displacement of reason from its ruling position). Only focusing on the physical risks missing this important psychological dimension.

responsible for any evil in the universe. He assigns the task of creating humans to the gods he creates, instead. The master craftsman does, however, create the immortal part of human souls (i.e., the rational part).¹⁴⁸ Before they are put into bodies, he gives these immortal souls instructions about the predetermined laws (νόμους τε τοὺς εἰμαρμένους) of the universe. This includes the following description of what will happen to them when they are implanted into bodies (42a3-d2):

So, once the souls were of necessity implanted in bodies, and these bodies had things coming to them and leaving them, the first innate capacity they would of necessity come to have would be sense perception, which arises out of forceful disturbances. This they all would have. The second would be **love mingled with pleasure and pain**. And they would come to have **fear** and **spiritedness** as well, plus whatever goes with having these emotions, as well as all their natural opposites. **And if they could master these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them, they would be unjust.** [*A description of the worse reincarnations that would result from living unjustly.*] And he would have no rest from these toilsome transformations until **he had dragged** that massive accretion of fire-water-air-earth into conformity with the revolution of the Same and uniform within him, and so **subdued** that turbulent, irrational mass by means of reason. This would return him to his original condition of excellence.¹⁴⁹

The second passage I want to quote complements this one, so I want to present it as well, before analyzing them both. It consists of part of Timaeus's description of what this process of creation was like once the gods actually set to work and accomplished it, and it comes just a few lines after the first. In between, Timaeus explains how the gods created

¹⁴⁸ This is the well-known passage in the *Timaeus*, in which Timaeus describes the craftsman mixing the substance of human souls together in a mixing bowl (imagery also used to describe the craftsman's creation of the "world soul"). In the human version, he uses all of the same material that he used for the creation of the world soul (being, same, different), though for this mixture they are somehow no longer perfectly pure but only "of a second and third grade of purity" (41d).

¹⁴⁹ The Greek text reads: ὁπότε δὴ σώμασιν ἐμφυτευθεῖεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης, καὶ τὸ μὲν προσίοι, τὸ δ' ἀπίοι τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν, πρῶτον μὲν αἰσθησιν ἀναγκαῖον εἶη μίαν πᾶσιν ἐκ βιαίων παθημάτων σύμφυτον γίνεσθαι, δεύτερον δὲ ἡδονῇ καὶ λύπῃ μεμειγμένον ἔρωτα, πρὸς δὲ τοῦτοις φόβον καὶ θυμὸν ὅσα τε ἐπόμενα αὐτοῖς καὶ ὅποσα ἐναντίως πέφυκε διεστηκότα: ὧν εἰ μὲν κρατήσοιεν, δίκη βιώσοιντο, κρατηθέντες δὲ ἀδικία. [...] ἀλλάττων τε οὐ πρότερον πόνων λήξοι, πρὶν τῇ ταύτου καὶ ὁμοίου περιόδῳ τῇ ἐν αὐτῷ συνεπισπώμενος τὸν πολὺν ὄχλον καὶ ὕστερον προσφύντα ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος καὶ ἀέρος καὶ γῆς, θορυβῶδη καὶ ἄλογον ὄντα, λόγῳ κρατήσας εἰς τὸ τῆς πρώτης καὶ ἀρίστης ἀφίκοιτο εἶδος ἕξεως.

mortal bodies and then implanted the souls into them. He describes how the primary feature of this was a violent interaction between soul and body: the act of being set in the body profoundly shakes what he calls the “orbits of the soul.” This turbulence happens not only in the first creation of humans, but it also describes the experience that everyone has at birth. He explains the results of this experience as follows (44a7-44c4):

All these disturbances are no doubt the reason why even today and not only at the beginning, whenever a soul is bound within a mortal body, it at first **lacks intelligence. But as the stream that brings growth and nourishment diminishes and the soul’s orbits regain their composure, resume their proper courses and establish themselves more and more with the passage of time**, their revolutions are set straight, to conform to the configuration each of the circles takes in its natural course. They then correctly identify what is the same and what is different, and render intelligent the person who possess them. And to be sure, if such a person also gets **proper nurture to supplement his education**, he’ll turn out perfectly whole and healthy, and will have escaped the most grievous of illnesses. But if he neglects this, he’ll limp his way through life and return to Hades uninitiated and unintelligent.¹⁵⁰

From these two passages, we can begin to formulate an account of how diseases of the soul arise from the soul’s interaction with the body. Every soul that is born into a body suffers a kind of violence. This violence arises primarily through sensation (αἴσθησις), which Timaeus defines as impacts on or disturbances of the body that get conveyed to the soul. The experience of the violent impact of sensation renders the soul unintelligent (ἄνους). Prior to birth, back when it was able to understand, for example, the master craftsman’s explanation of what happens to souls in mortal bodies, the soul possessed rationality and intelligence. Upon being born into the body, however, the soul loses this original intelligence, at least at first, and is unintelligent. Lack of intelligence or mindlessness (ἄνοια) was agreed to be

¹⁵⁰ The Greek text reads: καὶ διὰ δὴ ταῦτα πάντα τὰ παθήματα νῦν κατ’ ἀρχὰς τε ἄνους ψυχὴ γίγνεται τὸ πρῶτον, ὅταν εἰς σῶμα ἐνδεθῆ θνητόν. ὅταν δὲ τὸ τῆς αὔξης καὶ τροφῆς ἔλαττον ἐπιή ρεῦμα, πάλιν δὲ αἱ περίοδοι λαμβανόμεναι γαλήνης τὴν ἑαυτῶν ὁδὸν ἴωσι καὶ καθιστῶνται μᾶλλον ἐπιόντος τοῦ χρόνου, τότε ἤδη πρὸς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἰόντων σχῆμα ἐκάστων τῶν κύκλων αἱ περιφοραὶ κατευθυνόμεναι, τὸ τε θάτερον καὶ τὸ ταῦτόν προσαγορεύουσαι κατ’ ὀρθόν, ἐμφρονα τὸν ἔχοντα αὐτὰς γινόμενον ἀποτελοῦσιν. ἂν μὲν οὖν δὴ καὶ συνεπιλαμβάνηται τις ὀρθὴ τροφή παιδεύσεως, ὀλόκληρος ὑγιής τε παντελῶς, τὴν μεγίστην ἀποφυγῶν νόσον, γίγνεται: καταμελήσας δέ, χωλὴν τοῦ βίου διαπορευθεὶς ζωὴν, ἀτελής καὶ ἀνόητος εἰς Ἄϊδου πάλιν ἔρχεται.

synonymous with disease of the soul, according to Timaeus's later argument (86b2-4).¹⁵¹ From this, we might conclude that simply being born into a body that has a capacity for sensation disturbs the soul's natural equilibrium and generates a kind of diseased state in the soul.

This earliest experience (birth) is important to note because it places the cause of diseases of the soul not just in changes to the physical body later in life, but in the fact of the soul existing in a body at all. In Timaeus's account, this makes it so that everyone has the experience of a disease of the soul: it is not just something that only a select group of people experience. Everyone experiences it through the psychological disruption they encounter at birth. It is then a question of recovering from this and regaining one's natural health over the course of growing up.

This brings us to the next topic that is touched on in the two passages quoted above, which is what happens over the course of one's lifetime, as a person grows up and is nurtured and has other experiences. Since the very fact of birth into a body introduces mindlessness and a kind of unnatural "diseased" state into the soul, it is crucial that certain things happen to counteract this and restore the soul to its natural balance. And, because of a newborn's initial mindlessness and inexperience of the world, they need to rely on those around them to nurture and raise them. This is where the social and environmental causes of addiction come into play in Timaeus's account.

¹⁵¹ He states: "We must agree that folly is a disease of the soul; and of folly there are two kinds, the one of which is madness, the other ignorance" / νόσον μὲν δὴ ψυχῆς ἄνοιαν συγχωρητέον, δύο δ' ἀνοίας γένη, τὸ μὲν μανίαν, τὸ δὲ ἄμαθίαν.

4.2 Social/Contextual Components of Timaeus's Explanation

Following birth, Timaeus indicates what the soul must do in order to regain health and return to its natural equilibrium after the disturbance to its orbits that was brought about through birth. This involves the action of not just the individual, but things in their environment and community. From this, we can begin to see how contextual features also play a role in the development of addictions.

In the first passage quoted above, Timaeus suggests that returning the soul to equilibrium is a question of gaining **mastery** over the body (the “massive accretion of fire-water-air-earth” or the “turbulent, irrational mass,” as he puts it) and its emotions. Again, he says (repeating the quotation from above for the sake of reference),

And if they could master these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them, they would be unjust. [...] And he would have no rest from these toilsome transformations until he had dragged that massive accretion of fire-water-air-earth into conformity with the revolution of the Same and uniform within him, and so subdued that turbulent, irrational mass by means of reason. This would return him to his original condition of excellence.

By emotions, he means things suffered or experienced (*πάθη/πάθημα*), including love (connected with pleasure and pain), fear, courage, and all other such states and their opposites. Gaining mastery over these things is contrasted with being mastered by them: it can be conceived as a kind of power struggle; one or the other is ruling, but there is not any kind of compromise. And gaining this mastery is equivalent to bringing the body and the emotions “into conformity with the revolution of the Same and uniform within him.” Timaeus does not fully spell this out for us here, but it seems plausible to think that the same and uniform refers to the rational part of the soul. Thus, the mastery of reason over the emotions/body is a way of saying the mastery of the rational part of the soul, and the subordination of the other parts of the soul and the body to reason. This rationality is what is

essential for regaining health and the balance of the soul in the body, and for living a good and healthy life, according to Timaeus.

In the second passage, we gain a better understanding of how exactly this mastery is accomplished. Again, Timaeus says (repeating from above):

as the stream that brings growth and nourishment diminishes and the soul's orbits regain their composure, resume their proper courses and establish themselves more and more with the passage of time, their revolutions are set straight, to conform to the configuration each of the circles takes in its natural course.

Here, it seems like it is simply a question of time: the soul cannot and/or perhaps should not be immediately jolted back into equilibrium—indeed, the jolting experiences of arriving in the body is what threw it out of balance in the first place. Instead, after birth, the body needs to grow gradually to reach its full capacity. This growth takes time. But when it is complete, i.e., when the child has reached maturity (which Timaeus suggests, saying “the stream that brings growth and nourishment diminishes”), then rationality is able to be restored to its rightful place. Timaeus again frames this in the language of the soul's orbits returning to their natural courses. I take this to mean, again, that the rational part of the soul regains its natural leading position in the hierarchy within the soul. The idea seems to be that, as a child grows up, their soul will gradually develop in such a way that their reason will come to be established in its rightful place, as the leader of their soul. While this might seem to be simply a passive, internal process that takes place within the body or mind, the next part of the passage points us to the activity involved.

In the second half of the passage, Timaeus mentions the importance of nurture and education in this process. Again, he says, “if such a person also gets proper nurture to supplement his education, he'll turn out perfectly whole and healthy, and will have escaped the most grievous of illnesses.” With this, he is suggesting that it is not only a question of passively waiting for the time to pass until reaching maturity, but that there is an active role

for both education (παίδευσις) and nurture (τροφή). Both of these terms can be used in Greek to describe general things about children's upbringing (παίδευσις even derives from the Greek word for child), but here the inflection seems to be the following. Education represents the intellectual work one does in order to strengthen reason, to enable the rational part of the soul to gain control and do things like “correctly identify what is the same and what is different.” It is primarily directed towards the soul and its condition. Nurture, on the other hand, represents doing things that take care of the body (e.g., diet, exercise, sleep, etc.), to ensure that it develops correctly in complement to the soul (“to supplement his [psychic] education”). Both of these aspects, care for the soul and body, are key to good development.¹⁵²

Moreover, they work together and complement each other rather than being separate aspects of one's life. For example, education of the rational part can help someone learn about the composition of their body and soul, and how to properly nurture their body and take care of it. Meanwhile, the good condition of the body can further enable or facilitate the process of education and the strengthening of the rational part of the soul: e.g., things like getting a good sleep, eating healthy as important for performing reason-based work. The care of the body and soul work together in a loop, and are clearly essential, according to Timaeus, for developing into a healthy adult. Indeed, without these things, he comments that one will end up suffering from the gravest of illnesses (i.e., disease of the soul, lack of intelligence, lack of natural equilibrium in the soul) and will “limp his way through life and return to Hades uninitiated and unintelligent.”¹⁵³

¹⁵² This relates to Timaeus's notions about treatment, as well, which I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

¹⁵³ The ritual/mythological content aside (Hades, initiation), it seems important to note how Timaeus contrasts the life of someone who is whole and healthy with the life of someone who goes through life with a limp (χωλὴν τοῦ βίου διαπορευθεὶς ζῶν). The Greek adjective χωλός, ἡ, ὄν is typically used to describe someone who

While nurture and education may seem to pertain just to individuals and what they do in the course of their lives, these are also the aspects through which the context, environment, and community influence development. This can be seen clearly if we return once more to the passage that we started with regarding the diseases of the soul. There, a few lines after explaining the sex addiction example, Timaeus again brings up the importance of nurture and education.¹⁵⁴ These are not just things that one attends to for themselves, but things that are shaped by the people around them and the general environment in which one grows up. This is what he says (87a7-b6):

When men whose constitutions are bad in this way have bad forms of government where bad civic speeches are given, both in public and in private and where, besides, no studies that could remedy this situation are at all pursued by people from their youth on up, that is how all of us who are bad come to be that way—the products of two causes both entirely beyond our control. It is the begetters far more than the begotten, and the nurturers far more than the nurtured, that bear the blame for all this.¹⁵⁵

experiences some sort of imbalance/asymmetry regarding their feet and capacity to walk. The most famous example of this from antiquity is the god Hephaestus, whose limp was said to be either the cause or result of his fall from the realm of the gods (Mount Olympus). Χωλός also carries a metaphorical connotation that generally means defective, maimed, or imperfect. With this, we can see some of the assumptions that Timaeus is making and/or drawing on: there is a particular sort of mobility taken for granted and assumed to be healthy and normal; functional alternatives to that norm are not given equal esteem but are rather seen as deviance, defect, error. In light of research and debate in contemporary disability studies, I think this might seem problematic. Such assumptions seem important to highlight because, despite all the good things about Timaeus's theory, in terms of how it offers a more expansive view on the causes of addiction, it does come with its own limitations, related to individual prejudices, cultural context, etc. Attempts to draw inspiration from it ought to be aware of this and draw with caution.

¹⁵⁴ In between the sex addiction passage (quoted above) and the following passage, Timaeus discusses how his theory also applies to experiences of pain (86e5-87a7). He explains how there are varieties of pain-related diseases of the soul: discontent, dispiritedness, rashness, cowardice, forgetfulness, and difficulty learning. These are all due to the body and its different internal liquids (humors, etc.) mixing inappropriately with the motions of the soul in the three different regions of the soul. This leads into what he says next about constitutions, education, nurturers, etc.

¹⁵⁵ The Greek text reads: ὅταν οὕτως κακῶς παγέντων πολιτεῖται κακαὶ καὶ λόγοι κατὰ πόλεις ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ λεχθῶσιν, ἔτι δὲ μαθήματα μηδαμῆ τούτων ἰατικὰ ἐκ νέων μανθάνηται, ταύτη κακοὶ πάντες οἱ κακοὶ διὰ δύο ἀκουσιώτατα γιγνόμεθα: ὧν αἰτιατέον μὲν τοὺς φυτεύοντας ἀεὶ τῶν φυτευομένων μᾶλλον καὶ τοὺς τρέφοντας τῶν τρεφομένων. Note the use of the first-person plural, γιγνόμεθα: Timaeus is including himself and his interlocutors (even Socrates) among all those who become bad due to these two factors that are outside of their control. This goes back to the point about how a kind of corruption or degeneracy is built into human life

Here, Timaeus highlights the role that context plays in individual development. He identifies both bad political contexts and bad forms of discourse (both public and private) as things that contribute to individual badness. These contextual factors harm people if they are not counteracted with good education (literally, “lessons that heal/are healing,” μαθήματα... ἰατικὰ). From this, Timaeus concludes that everyone who becomes bad does so from two causes that are completely outside of their control (“most/very willingly,” ἀκουσιώτατα). He says that it thus makes more sense to blame begetters and nurturers rather than the individuals who are suffering from diseases of the soul.

What exactly are the two causes outside of the individual’s control? It is not exactly transparent from the text. They could be the two things mentioned just before: on the one hand, bad political environment and discourse, and on the other, lack of corrective education. They could also be the two things that Timaeus raises next: the begetters and nurturers, or, parents who pass on a certain nature and caretakers, teachers, etc. who shape character during upbringing. Thirdly, the two causes could also be the physical cause that Timaeus previously discussed (marrow, bone density), and the socio-political environment in which one is raised that he is now pointing to. Taylor, in his commentary, opts for this third interpretation. He says, “One is clearly congenital lowness of bodily constitution” (i.e., the physical causes), and the second is an idea of nurture that includes a bad bodily regime and educational system, including bad political systems, speeches, and the neglect of lessons.¹⁵⁶ Taylor’s

as part of the completeness of the universe: all humans seem to have a share of this kind of “evil,” despite their best efforts.

¹⁵⁶ A. E. Taylor, (1928), *A commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 618.

interpretation seems right to me, that the two are not just two different kinds of “social” factors, but that Timaeus is pointing to the social in addition to the physical.¹⁵⁷ This interpretation goes directly against a strictly physically-focused reading.¹⁵⁸ While the physical aspects of diseases of the soul are an important part of understanding addiction, for Timaeus there is also always the contextual aspects, too. These include political context, discourse, education, diet, exercise, lifestyle in general, and so on. For Timaeus, these are just as important for understanding diseases of the soul like addiction.

With these two causes that lie outside of the control of the individual sufferer, Timaeus says the responsibility for addictions and other diseases of the soul ought to be put on the begetters and nurturers. As noted above, this means the people who are around and involved in raising a child—not just the actual parents, but everyone in the community. Insofar as all these people contribute (or fail to contribute) to the restoration of the natural equilibrium in children’s souls, Timaeus argues that the blame or responsibility for diseases of the soul should be attributed to (blamed on) them rather than the individual sufferer.

Despite this broad attribution of responsibility, Timaeus ends his discussion of diseases of the soul with the appeal to the individual to do the best they can to improve their condition, of both body and soul. “Even so,” he says, “one should make every possible effort to flee from badness, whether with the help of one’s upbringing, or the pursuits or studies one

¹⁵⁷ This interpretation also makes sense with what Timaeus had said in wrapping up his exculpation of those lacking control towards all sorts of pleasures. He said that their behavior was caused by a bad condition of their bodies and their uneducated upbringing (86d-e). Cf. footnote 126 above.

¹⁵⁸ Of the kind that Taylor attributes to Timaeus, but note that Taylor also thinks Timaeus’s theory is incoherent/internally inconsistent, and so he is able to claim both that he only believes in physical causes and that he also believes in social causes.

undertakes, and to seize its opposite” (87b6-8).¹⁵⁹ Even though Timaeus is at pains to stress that the cause and blame of diseases of the soul lie in external factors over which one does not necessarily have much control (especially in childhood), he still thinks that there is an active role that an individual can take in their life to try to avoid being bad and instead become good. This activity should involve both their own nurture (τροφῆς) and studies (ἐπιτηδευμάτων μαθημάτων). At first glance, this final turn might be taken to contradict his earlier arguments against the individual’s blame for their condition. But it need not be contradictory: Timaeus removes blame for the diseased state of the soul, but still charges the individual with responsibility for its improvement. In other words, addiction is a kind of bad condition that one ought not to be blamed for, but trying to avoid addiction and become rational and healthy is something that one has agency over, to a certain extent. In this way, we can see Timaeus’s theory as an optimistic take on human agency and the possibility of improvement in the face of mental health struggles like addiction.

With that, we finally have a more or less complete view of Timaeus’s theory of addiction. It has been the work of this section to show that his theory includes both psychological and social/contextual aspects, on top of physical causes. The psychological aspects are important to understand the root causes of addiction, since according to Timaeus’s account of the creation of humans we are all born in such a way as to be susceptible to diseases of the soul. As all humans start out from a “diseased” state of mindlessness, it is a question of tempering this mindlessness by developing one’s rational capacity. This is done over the course of one’s upbringing, through nurture and education. These are, at first, not at all in one’s control (e.g., the helplessness and dependence of a newborn), so it is necessary to

¹⁵⁹ The Greek text for this is: προθυμητέον μὴν, ὅπη τις δύναται, καὶ διὰ τροφῆς καὶ δι’ ἐπιτηδευμάτων μαθημάτων τε φυγεῖν μὲν κακίαν, τοῦναντίον δὲ ἐλεῖν.

rely on other people around to receive care, good nurture, and education. If this is done in the context of a good social and political environment, the person has a good chance at regaining rational control over their souls and developing healthily. If not, they will suffer diseases of the soul like addiction in adulthood.

Because of this quite broad understanding of the development of diseases of the soul like addiction, *Timaeus* seems to promote a proto-version of a biopsychosocial model of addiction. Biopsychosocial models are dynamic, non-reductionist attempts to get at a more complex understanding of addiction and its causes.¹⁶⁰ They highlight three main causal factors, each of which is complex and dynamic in its own right: “bio-” indicates the physical changes; “-psycho-” indicates the psychological dimension, and “-social” indicates the contextual aspects, all of which shape the development of addictive behaviors. Such approaches have begun to gain more prominence in addiction research, in response to critiques of the medical disease model of addiction. In light of *Timaeus*’s attention to the physical, psychological, and social aspects of addiction, it seems to me that we can accurately describe *Timaeus*’s approach, with its attention to these three different elements, as a “biopsychosocial” theory of addiction.

5. Conclusion

Plato’s *Timaeus* offers a rich, holistic theory of addiction. This theory not only anticipates modern scientific theories about pleasure and pain and homeostasis, as neuroscientists like Judith Grisel have taken notice of in Plato’s work, but also contemporary

¹⁶⁰ See: M. Griffiths, (2005), “A ‘components’ model of addiction within a biopsychosocial framework,” *Journal of Substance use*, 10.4: 191-197; M. C. Skewes and V. M. Gonzalez, (2013), “The biopsychosocial model of addiction,” in P. M. Miller (ed.), *Principles of Addiction: Comprehensive Addictive Behaviors and Disorders*, Volume 1, San Diego: Elsevier Science & Technology, 61-70; C. Chandler and A. Andrews, (2018), *Addiction: A biopsychosocial perspective*, London: Sage.

biopsychosocial approaches to addiction. The latter take into account not only the physical bases of addiction, but also the psychological and social or contextual factors. These are factors that have risked being left out of contemporary research and accounts of addiction that focus on it as a physical disease that occurs within an individual's brain. Yet, they are just as important for understanding the development and experience of addictions. Timaeus's theory of addiction takes these into account: not only does he explain addiction in terms of a physical change, but he also explains it as a psychological change that results from the rational mind losing control, and he notes that it is shaped by and can be treated through both nurture and education—that is, things related to one's physical environment as well as one's intellectual environment and community. In the next chapter, I will turn to discussing addiction treatments in depth, including more on Timaeus's prescriptions for both physical and non-physical practices. For now, we can see that his attention to context and individual development within certain contexts gives him more than just a physical theory; it is rather a biopsychosocial theory of addiction.

Timaeus's theory is, of course, just one theory of addiction from the ancient world. There are many other philosophical theories worth investigating through the lens of addiction as I have done here. As I briefly noted at the start of this chapter, many scholars have already turned to Aristotle's conceptions of weakness of will in attempt to explain addiction using an ancient perspective. This work adds to knowing about individual experiences of addiction, even if it sometimes misses broader contextual and social factors.¹⁶¹ Though I do not want to address this scholarship in detail, one thing that I think is important to note is that this focus on the individual at the expense of context is not necessarily something properly attributable

¹⁶¹ Amelie Rorty's work in philosophy has attempted to address this omission regarding akrasia/weakness of will: A. O. Rorty, (1997), "The Social and Political Sources of Akrasia," *Ethics*, 107.4: 644-657.

to Aristotle's theory. Like Timaeus, he emphasizes the importance of one's upbringing and general political and social context for shaping behavior and capacity for virtue, as well as its opposite, susceptibility for things like addiction. Indeed, in many ways, Aristotle is picking up on and developing ideas planted here in the *Timaeus*—though, to be sure, there are a lot of differences in his conception of the soul, virtue, and other aspects of his moral psychology. In focusing on Plato's *Timaeus*, I hope to have given some background to the ideas that Aristotle develops in his own theory that has already proven to be fruitful for contemporary research. And I hope to have further shown how ancient texts like the *Timaeus* contain even more rich materials about addiction for us to draw on—even if there are many aspects of Timaeus's scientific understanding and moral judgments that we might rather wish to leave in the past.

Chapter 4: Treatment: How to Treat Addiction in the Ancient World

1. Varieties of Treatment

One of the most common ways—at least in popular imagination—to treat addiction is institutional rehabilitation (rehab).¹⁶² Rehabilitation may come in various forms: different types of outpatient treatment, hospitalization, or residential programs. The latter represents the most common form: a residential stay at a specialized center, during which the patient has the chance to detoxify under medical supervision and build up new habits in an isolated, clean environment. Programs typically last at least a month, sometimes more—for those who can afford it. The average cost for an inpatient rehabilitation program in the US is \$42,700—a high sum for those without insurance.¹⁶³

Aside from rehab, there are also various forms of psychotherapy used for treatment. These include cognitive behavioral therapy, talk therapy, and peer support groups. In cognitive behavioral therapies, one of the main focuses is on helping patients become mindful of their triggers and develop alternative thought patterns and responses to those.¹⁶⁴ Other talk-

¹⁶² Many books, movies, TV shows, songs, etc. (headlines about celebrities) represent stays in rehab as a common treatment for problems with addiction. Iconic among these is UK singer Amy Winehouse's 2006 song, "Rehab," in which the singer describes the struggle of refusing to go to rehab, despite being aware of the problems of addiction in her own life. The song had widespread popularity in the US and UK, and won several Grammy awards, including Song of the Year. Winehouse suffered from various addictions and died tragically at age 27 due to alcohol poisoning.

¹⁶³ W. King, (2021), "Recovering from Substance Abuse in Arkansas: The Accessibility and Affordability of Drug Treatment Programs," University of Arkansas, Fayetteville MA thesis, retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/4103>.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example: K. M. Carroll and L. S. Onken, (2005), "Behavioral therapies for drug abuse," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 168.8: 1452–1460, and the therapeutic methods described in: J. Brewer, (2017), *The Craving Mind: From cigarettes to smartphones to love—why we get hooked and how we can break bad*

based psychotherapies might attempt to help patients develop alternative narratives for their experiences and/or uncover and heal patients' responses to personal traumas, family relationships, unconscious desires, etc.¹⁶⁵ In peer-support groups, like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), people share their experiences with drinking, its impact on their lives, and the steps they are taking to recovery.¹⁶⁶ The idea with such groups is to foster a welcoming, inclusive space among those who have experienced addiction and can relate to each other's struggles more intimately based on personal experience. (In AA, there are also spiritual factors and a heavy emphasis on the need to surrender to a higher power, among other things.)

On top of these therapies, one of the methods of treatment that is gaining more and more prominence is the use of different pharmacological cures (drugs, medicines, vaccines) to counteract the effects of various drugs. Some such substances help ease users off of another substance by taking effect more slowly, blocking the chemical release (and associated high feeling), and lessening the impact of withdrawal symptoms that might otherwise make stopping use particularly unappealing. Examples of these include methadone, buprenorphine, naltrexone to treat opioid use, or acamprosate, disulfiram, and topiramate for alcohol (for which naltrexone is also used).¹⁶⁷ In other instances, researchers are exploring

habits, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, and *id.*, (2021), *Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind*, New York: Penguin Publishing Group.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Marc Lewis, (2015), *The biology of desire: why addiction is not a disease*, Melbourne: Scribe Publications; E. J. Khantzian, (2021), "Psychodynamic psychotherapy for the treatment of substance use disorders," in *Textbook of Addiction Treatment*, Springer, Cham: 383-389; R. Loose, (2002), *The subject of addiction: Psychoanalysis and the administration of enjoyment*, New York: Routledge.

¹⁶⁶ "What to Expect at an A.A. Meeting." (n.d.). Alcoholics Anonymous. <https://www.aa.org/information-about-meetings>.

¹⁶⁷ NIDA. (2020) "Pharmacotherapies." *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide* (Third Edition). <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/evidence-based-approaches-to-drug-addiction-treatment/pharmacotherapies>

the possibilities of altering long-standing habits using psychedelic drugs to “rewire the brain” and alter the neural pathways that represent the entrenched habits of addiction by forming new neural connections and possible pathways.¹⁶⁸ Still other researchers are developing preventative vaccines and genetically-based treatments.¹⁶⁹

From this quick survey, we get the sense that, for as many addictions and explanations of addictions as there are, there are just as many kinds of treatments. The same is true about the past. In the ancient world, there were a number of different ways of treating addictions. Some of them, as we shall see, were quite similar to those used today, while others are rather different.

In this chapter, my focus is on addiction treatments in the ancient world, and especially in the psychological writings of Galen. This is meant to complement the previous chapters on diagnosis and explanation: with addictions identified and explained, the next step is to investigate how to treat them. I want to focus on Galen in particular for several reasons:

¹⁶⁸ Michael Pollan wrote a popular account about psychedelics, including the struggle to begin using them in research again: M. Pollan, (2018), *How To Change Your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us About Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence*, New York: Penguin Press. There have also been more and more studies coming out in this direction, e.g., D. E. Nichols, M. W. Johnson, and C. D. Nichols, (2017), “Psychedelics as medicines: an emerging new paradigm,” *Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics*, 101.2: 209-219; J. Peters and D. E. Olson, (2021), “Engineering Safer Psychedelics for Treating Addiction,” *Neuroscience Insights* 16: 1-4; B. Romeo, M. Hermand, A. Pétilion, L. Karila, and A. Benyamina, (2021). “Clinical and biological predictors of psychedelic response in the treatment of psychiatric and addictive disorders: A systematic review,” *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 137: 273-282.

¹⁶⁹ A new center (“Center for Medication Development for Substance Use Disorders) at the University of Washington is hoping to develop a vaccine against addiction by, for example, targeting and limiting the effects of drugs on different parts of the brain: Hannah Furfare, (2022, January 5), “To fight opioid crisis, UW researchers take new shot at developing vaccine against addictive drugs,” *The Seattle Times*, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/to-fight-opioid-crisis-uw-researchers-take-new-shot-at-developing-vaccine-against-addictive-drugs/>.

On CRISPR-modified skin grafts, see, for example: Q. Kong, Y. Li, J. Yue, X. Wu, and M. Xu, (2021), “Reducing alcohol and/or cocaine-induced reward and toxicity via an epidermal stem cell-based gene delivery platform.” *Molecular Psychiatry* 26.9: 5266-5276; M. Fassbender, (2022, January 10), “CRISPR-Modified Skin Grafts to Treat Addiction? ‘The Opportunities Are Endless,’ Says CEO,” *Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, The University of Chicago, <https://polsky.uchicago.edu/2022/01/10/crispr-modified-skin-grafts-to-treat-addiction-the-opportunities-are-endless-says-ceo/>.

not only was he a practicing doctor and prolific writer, but he also offers a holistic approach to treating addiction. His specific recommendations for treatment involve daily practices towards self-improvement, but he also does much to recognize the important role that one's community and environment play in shaping those practices. Galen's treatments can thus be seen as an extension of the biopsychosocial approach to addiction that we explored in relation to Plato's *Timaeus* in the previous chapter.

In order to cover the material on treatment, I have organized the chapter in the following way. First, I offer a quick overview of the range of treatments that were on offer in antiquity (Section 2). Then, I turn my focus to Galen's methods of treatments (Section 3). After a brief introduction to him as a historical figure, I analyze four of his writings that deal broadly with psychology and touch on topics related to mental health and illness. From these, we can gather Galen's approach to treating conditions like addiction through daily practices of self-improvement.

2. Overview of Treatments in the Ancient World

Before turning to Galen's discussions of treatments for addiction, I first want to offer a quick overview of the range of treatments that were on offer in antiquity. To do this, I want to look at the comments about treatment in the texts that we have already seen—i.e., specifically in Aristophanes's *Wasps* and Plato's *Timaeus*. Though in previous chapters, I argued that these texts contain evidence for diagnosis and explaining addiction, that does not mean they had nothing to say on the topic of treatment. In some sense, all three topics of diagnosis, explanation, and treatment are always intertwined in these texts and isolating them out is somewhat artificial (though useful: separating them allows us to focus on one theme at a time in coming to understand how addiction was thought of in the past). In any case, what I want to do now is quickly revisit what these two previous texts have to say about treatment as

a way of surveying the types of treatments that were generally available in antiquity. This will be effective as a survey because, as it turns out, the texts actually cover quite a range, including treatments that sometimes get left out of strictly medical texts. The latter often focused on the trio of diet, drugs, and surgery as the key forms of treatment available for a doctor to prescribe to a patient. The treatments discussed in Aristophanes and Plato cover these (except surgery—there was no ancient version of, for example, lobotomy to treat addiction, to my knowledge), and a few others that are less strictly medical. The discussions in Aristophanes and Plato also set up, in various ways, the discussion of Galen and his treatment methods that this chapter will turn its focus to in the second half.

2.1 Therapy of the Word

The first treatment that we find described in Aristophanes's *Wasps* is a kind of talk therapy: using words to persuade the patient who is exhibiting addictive behavior to modify their ways. This is what Aristophanes has the character Xanthias (one of the enslaved guards who was charged with watching over Philocleon) say about using this method of treatment on Philocleon for his jury addiction (*Wasps*, 115-117):

At first, he [Bdelycleon] tried assuaging him [Philocleon] with words, / to persuade him not to wear his cloak, / nor to leave the house, but he was not convinced.¹⁷⁰

In the ancient world, speech was thought to have great powers. It could motivate someone to see things differently, change thoughts and minds, and modify behavior, in both medical contexts and beyond. We find evidence of this power of the word, starting from some of the earliest Greek literature. The opening of Hesiod's *Theogony* describes the power

¹⁷⁰ The text in Greek reads as follows: καὶ πρῶτα μὲν λόγοισι παραμυθούμενος / ἀνέπειθεν αὐτὸν μὴ φορεῖν τριβώνιον / μηδ' ἐξιέναι θύραζ', ὃ δ' οὐκ ἐπέιθετο.

of the word to establish justice in the community, as well as to relieve individual sorrows (Hes. *Th.* 75-103). Additionally, the Homeric epics have been interpreted on the whole as expressions of the power of the word.¹⁷¹ These poems, which were originally transmitted orally, i.e., through the spoken word alone, stand at the beginning of a tradition of great interest in the power of words, language, and speech in human life.¹⁷²

In Classical Athens, the context in which Aristophanes and Plato wrote, there was a continued interest in the power of speech to elicit great emotion and determine political outcomes. Regarding the emotions, we can think of Aristotle's famous description of the power of tragedy to evoke the emotions of pity and fear, in order to offer a kind of cleansing to the soul (more on this below). Regarding politics, rhetoric developed as a useful political tool in the democratic assembly, the law courts, even in the market. The so-called sophists gained reputations in the ancient Greek world for their skills in rhetoric, and they traveled around training others in their skills, claiming that they could help them develop the greatest power. A prime example of the power of rhetoric from this period in Athens can be found in the sophist Gorgias's *Encomium of Helen*. In this speech, apparently meant to praise and exculpate the mythical figure of Helen for her role in starting the Trojan War, Gorgias

¹⁷¹ Pedro Laín Entralgo, (1970), *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, edited and translated by L. J. Rather and John M. Sharp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 29: "The whole epic is in a way an enthusiastic homage to superiority in the use of words and their power to touch men's hearts."

¹⁷² The bibliography on rhetoric in ancient Greece is long. Aside from Laín Entralgo's excellent book covering the use of talk therapy and the power of speech from Homer to Aristotle (see: previous footnote), here is just a sampling of scholarship that touches on the topics I have mentioned, from Homeric poetry, to tragedies, to political rhetoric: R. A. Knudsen, (2014), *Homeric speech and the origins of rhetoric*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press; D. Sansone, (2012), *Greek Drama and the Invention of Rhetoric*, Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell; J. De Romilly, (1975), *Magic and rhetoric in ancient Greece*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; J. Ober, (1989), *Mass and elite in democratic Athens*, Princeton: University Press (and note there have been many responses to this book in scholarship since then); J. J. Murphy, R. A. Katula, and M. Hoppmann, (2013), *A synoptic history of classical rhetoric*, New York: Routledge; J. Fredal, (2006), *Rhetorical Action in Ancient Athens: Persuasive Artistry from Solon to Demosthenes*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

describes how effectively speech can penetrate the mind, generate beliefs and judgment, as well as action. He asserts (8.3-6, 14.1-8),

Speech is a great potentate that by means of an extremely tiny and entirely invisible body performs the most divine deeds. For it is able to stop fear, to remove grief, to instill joy, and to increase pity... The power of speech (logos) has the same relation (logos) with the arrangement (taxis) of the soul as the arrangement (taxis) of drugs has with the nature of bodies. For just as some drugs draw some fluids out of the body, and others other ones, and some stop an illness and others stop life, in the same way some speeches (logoi) cause pain, others pleasure, others fear, others dispose listeners to courage, others drug and bewitch the soul by some evil persuasion.¹⁷³

Words, the medium through which Gorgias expresses all this, were held to be very powerful tools for impacting the soul, its emotions, as well as its beliefs. This is example serves to show how obsessed classical Athenians were with the potential of rhetoric to exert great power. One scholar has even described this fascination as ancient Greek culture's "addiction to the word, and particularly to the spoken word."¹⁷⁴

In the development of medicine as a professional craft, speech also played an important role. It was thought to be an essential tool for the physician to work with his patient both in terms of learning a patient's symptoms, gaining their trust, persuading them of the correctness of their treatment plan, and keeping them in good cheer.¹⁷⁵ This shows that speech was valued

¹⁷³ The translation is from the Laks and Most Loeb edition; the Greek text reads: λόγος δυνάστης μέγας ἐστίν, ὃς μικροτάτῳ σώματι καὶ ἀφανεστάτῳ θεϊότατα ἔργα ἀποτελεῖ· δύναται γὰρ καὶ φόβον παῦσαι καὶ λύπην ἀφελεῖν καὶ χαρὰν ἐνεργάσασθαι καὶ ἔλεον ἐπαυξῆσαι... τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχει ἢ τε τοῦ λόγου δύναμις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς τάξιν ἢ τε τῶν φαρμάκων τάξις πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν. ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν φαρμάκων ἄλλους ἄλλα χυμοὺς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐξάγει, καὶ τὰ μὲν νόσου, τὰ δὲ βίου παύει, οὕτω καὶ τῶν λόγων οἱ μὲν ἐλύπησαν, οἱ δὲ ἔτερψαν, οἱ δὲ ἐφόβησαν, οἱ δὲ εἰς θάρσος κατέστησαν τοὺς ἀκούοντας, οἱ δὲ πειθοῖ τινα κακῇ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν καὶ ἐξεγοήτευσαν.

¹⁷⁴ Walter Ong in his Foreword to Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*: "The present work plunges the reader into ancient Greek culture at a point where it appears to us quite strange in its addiction to the word, and particularly to the spoken word" (ix).

¹⁷⁵ In addition to the excellent discussion in chapter 4 in Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, see also: J. Jouanna, (2012a), "Rhetoric and Medicine in the Hippocratic Corpus: A Contribution to the History of Rhetoric in the Fifth Century," translated by Niel Allies, in P. van der Eijk (Ed.), *Greek Medicine*

and used to a certain extent by professional physicians, even if they did not quite go so far as to include the use of speech itself as a kind of treatment (as in the enchantment of the word described above, or as in talk therapy as currently practiced). The latter only became somewhat accepted later in the medical tradition.¹⁷⁶ As we shall see with Galen, a kind of talk therapy with a supervisor or counselor was one of his key recommendations for taking care of the soul and treating things ranging from character flaws to diseases of the soul. But still, from the use of speech in working with patients, we can see that language was an essential part of medical practice from the beginnings of its professionalization in ancient Greece.

In the lines from the *Wasps*, Aristophanes is thus appealing to ideas that were current in his cultural context, namely that words are able to effect changes on individuals and their behavior. In the first instance represented by these lines (115-117), persuasion ended up not being such an effective cure for Philocleon's jury addiction: he was not convinced by his

from *Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 39–54; J. Leach, (1996), "Healing and the word: Hippocratic medicine and Sophistical rhetoric in classical antiquity," PhD Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh; C. Thumiger, (2020) "Therapy of the word and other psychotherapeutic approaches in Ancient Greek medicine," *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 57.6: 741-752.

In several of Plato's dialogues, the connection between rhetoric and medicine comes up, as Plato likes to use medicine as an example of an ambiguous skill, in which the doctor's powers might seem to have more to do with persuasion than strictly knowledge of the body's health and disease (e.g., in the *Gorgias*, 464b, 465a, 501a; cf. *Phaedrus*, 270a-d). There are also the intriguing comments that Socrates makes near the opening of the *Charmides* about the need to offer therapy for both the body and the soul if one is to cure either of them (Plato, *Charm.*, 155e). For scholarly discussion, see, for example, chapter 3 of Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*; S. Bredlau, (2018), "Illness as a phenomenon of being-in-the-world with others: Plato's Charmides, Kleinman and Merleau-Ponty," *Medical Humanities* 47.1: 20-26; A. Roth, (2017), "Embodied Discourse: Revisiting Plato's Stance on the Connection(s) between Rhetoric and Medicine," *Akropolis: Journal of Hellenic Studies* 1.1: 55–71.

¹⁷⁶ This is essentially Laín Entralgo's claim with respect to what can be discerned from the Hippocratic Corpus: "As I have said repeatedly, the Hippocratic texts of psychotherapeutic character aim at excessively general, unspecified goals: winning the confidence of the patient and keeping the tone of his spirit at a good level. The physician of ancient Greece did not go beyond this" (163). Laín Entralgo also attributes this lack in the Hippocratic Corpus to the general absence, or "incapacity of Western medicine for verbal therapy until a few decades ago" (170). Note that this absence of speech-related therapy in the medical tradition stands in contrast to the medico-religious tradition: see discussion of the music of Asclepius in section 2.3 below. Thumiger provides a helpful recent summary: C. Thumiger, (2020), "Therapy of the word and other psychotherapeutic approaches in Ancient Greek medicine," *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 57.6: 741-752.

son's words to give up his behavior. Later, after a long talk with his son, Philocleon did eventually come to change his mind and believe his son's arguments about Cleon's corruption (*Wasps* 696ff). So, logotherapy does end up being the treatment that "works," in a certain sense, for Philocleon. Through talking with his son, he was motivated to change his life and to give up his jury obsession.¹⁷⁷ Through this, we can see that speech therapy was considered a kind of treatment for addictive behavior in the ancient world.

2.2 Bathing and Purification

When talk therapy initially did not work on Philocleon, his household turned to another kind of therapy that was very common in ancient Greece: the use of bathing as a kind of physical and spiritual cleansing for an individual's ailment. Aristophanes describes this briefly as follows (*Wasps*, 118):

Then he bathed and purified him, but with no more success.¹⁷⁸

Bathing was a common treatment in the ancient world.¹⁷⁹ Its prevalence is attested in the material record: there are archaeological finds of bathing rooms (commonly referred to as "lustral basins") in palaces dating as far back as the Minoan period in Crete, though baths are common throughout the ages. Textual evidence also attests to bathing as a common medico-

¹⁷⁷ Whether it is just the words that spark his change is another question: other factors might be involved too (e.g. what would his psychological state have been after being kept in quarantine/lockdown after so long?). I note this to underscore the point that it is important to keep the context in mind when talking about different treatments for addiction and their efficacy in different cases.

¹⁷⁸ The Greek text reads: εἶτ' αὐτὸν ἀπέλου κάκῃθαιρ', ὁ δ' οὐ μάλα.

¹⁷⁹ For general information on bathing in ancient Greece, see (among others): M. A. G. Panayotatou, (1919), "Baths and bathing in Ancient Greece," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 12 (Suppl): 107-121; R. Ginouvès, (1962), *Balaneutikè. Recherches sur le bain dans l'antiquité grecque*, Paris: de Boccard; F. Yegül, (1992), *Baths and bathing in classical antiquity*, New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press; Kosso, C. and A. Scott, (2009), *The Nature and Function of Water, Baths, Bathing and Hygiene from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*, Leiden and Boston: Brill; S. K. Lucore and M. Trümper (eds.), (2013), *Greek baths and bathing culture: New discoveries and approaches*, Leuven: Peeters.

ritual practice. As early as book 1 of the *Iliad*, we read of the Greek army bathing in the sea in attempt to remove the plague (νοῦσος, disease/sickness) that Apollo had inflicted on the army (*Iliad*, 1.313-314). Jumping forward in time, one of the most detailed texts that we have of an ancient individual's experience of medical treatment, including baths, is Aelius Aristides's *Sacred Tales*. In this text, written in the second century CE, Aristides describes a whole regimen that he undertook at the Sanctuary of Asclepius in Pergamum to treat a series of illnesses he suffered from.¹⁸⁰ Throughout the text, he describes how he was prescribed to take baths, refrain from taking baths, use now hot water, now cold water, now mixtures of both, and so on. Such bathing was a common practice for treating ailments that could not otherwise be cured by drugs or surgery.

What is the meaning of the practice of bathing? On the one hand, it can be understood as a simple way of achieving basic hygiene. In antiquity, practices like a daily shower were not common except in cases of illness. But there is also good evidence that bathing was not only practiced for physical hygiene: Hygeia (Ἥγεία) was the goddess of health, and many ritual or religious practices seemed to have been involved in bathing. Indeed, like many practices in the ancient world, the ritual element of bathing was quite essential and is thus important not to overlook. Indeed, even Aristides's treatment at Pergamon took place in the sanctuary of Asclepius, the god of healing.

The ritual notion of bathing is related to the important concept of catharsis (κάθαρσις), or purification.¹⁸¹ This term was often used to describe a specific kind of ritual

¹⁸⁰ Notably, Pergamum is also Galen's hometown. He and Aelius Aristides were actually roughly contemporaries, though Galen was in Rome during the time Aristides writes of his Pergamum experiences. For a brief comparison of the two, see: C. Brockmann, (2013), "Galen und Asklepios," *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity*, 17.1.: 51-67.

¹⁸¹ Again, the bibliography on catharsis is huge, so here are just a few references: R. Parker, (1996), *Miasma: pollution and purification in early Greek religion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; L. Moulinier, (1975), *Le pur et*

cleansing. A person who is physically or otherwise “unclean” (“polluted”) might bathe in a specific location, such as a temple or a sanctuary, and perform certain practices (prayers, bringing offerings, etc.). They would do this in order to wash away impurities and restore their health. Catharsis is, of course, most famously known in association with the previous category of treatment, talk therapy, because of Aristotle’s description of the cleansing power of tragedy in his *Poetics*.¹⁸² Important to note, however, is that the power of words in ancient tragedy was enacted in ritual contexts of festivals for the gods, especially Dionysus, god of wine and tragedy. The content of tragedies was also often related to gods and mythical figures that populated the ancient Greek religious imagination and discourse. So, Aristotle’s theory of catharsis need not be restricted to the impact of words alone; rather, it fits into the larger cultural notion of ritual purification.

We catch a glimpse the use of such ritual bathing and cleansing as a form of treatment in the line from Aristophanes quoted above, with the verbs ἀπέλου (from ἀπολούω, to wash off or wash clean) and κἀκάθαιρ’ (from καθαίρω, the verbal form of catharsis). No further detail is given about this, and, like the previous one, this treatment was ineffective at getting Philocleon to give up his addiction to going to court. And so, his household needed to try another course of treatment.

l'impur dans la pensée des Grecs: d'Homère à Aristote, New York: Arno Press; H. von Staden, (2008), “Purity, Purification, and Katharsis in Hippocratic Medicine,” in Martin Vöhler and Bernd Seidensticker (eds.), *Katharsiskonzeptionen vor Aristoteles: Zum kulturellen Hintergrund des Tragödiensatzes*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2008, 21-52.

¹⁸² Even more extensive than the basic ritual notion, Aristotelian catharsis has had a long afterlife as a concept in literature and poetic theory. For a recent reading that emphasizes the physical, ritual aspect of dance music in Aristotelian catharsis, see: G. L. Scott, (2018), *Aristotle on dramatic musical composition: the real role of literature, catharsis, music and dance in the Poetics* (Second edition), New York: ExistencePS Press.

2.3 Musical Ritual Therapy

If bathing was an introduction to the use of ritual practices as a kind of treatment, the next attempt that Philocleon's caretakers make is even more ritually grounded. Here is how it is described (Aristophanes, *Wasps*, 119-120):

Then they handed him over to the Corybants, but he escaped, carrying off the kettledrum, and rushed right back into court.¹⁸³

The Corybants were a cult group for the goddess Cybele, who was a maternal earth goddess in Phrygia (modern day western Turkey).¹⁸⁴ The Corybants were also associated with Dionysus, god of tragedy and wine (among other things), whose mythological origins were similarly thought to be east of Greece. The cult consisted of men who wore armor and whose ritual practices involved music, especially drumming, and dancing. It is thought that the rhythmic music and movement was used to induce a kind of trance-like, mystical state, and that this offered a kind of spiritual cleansing for the participants—a different kind of cleansing from the water purification experienced through baths. In fact, this ritual musical cleansing is perhaps more similar to the Aristotelian notion of tragic catharsis, though even more immediate: it affects the participants in the rites, rather than just observers.¹⁸⁵ In literature, we also often see metaphorical references to Corybants, when an author wants to evoke a sense of being out of their mind or carried away by some experience: someone will

¹⁸³ The lines in Greek read: μετὰ τοῦτ' ἐκορυβάντιζ', ὁ δ' αὐτῷ τυμπάνῳ / ἄξιας ἐδίκασεν ἐς τὸ καινὸν ἐμπροσθόν.

¹⁸⁴ For information about the Corybants, see: Jan N. Bremmer, (2014), "Mysteries at the Interface of Greece and Anatolia: Samothracian Gods, Kabeiroi and Korybantes," in *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 21-54; M. Griffith, (2017), "Towards a Sociology of Classical Greek Music," *Istanbul University Journal of Sociology*, 37.2: 211-258.

¹⁸⁵ There is a lot to be said about the transfer of affect between performers and spectators, and a lot of scholarship has been done on the embodied, active participation of spectators in especially ritual/religious performances. See, among others, A. E. Peponi, (2004), "Initiating the Viewer: Deixis and Visual Perception in Alcman's Lyric Drama," *Arethusa*, 37.3: 295-316; S. Olsen, (2017), "Kinesthetic Choreia: Empathy, Memory, and Dance in Ancient Greece," *Classical Philology*, 112.2: 153-174.

claim that they are “corybantizing” to describe their kind of mystical feeling, loss of control, ecstasy, catharsis, and so on.¹⁸⁶

The Corybantic ritual was also not the only kind of music that was used as a kind of therapeutic treatment. There is a long tradition in ancient Greek philosophy about the effects of different kinds of music on the soul, and which kinds were conducive to health and inner psychic harmony and which not.¹⁸⁷ Aside from this philosophical tradition, there is also evidence that music was used in medical-religious sanctuaries, Asclepeias (dedicated to the god of healing, Asclepius). Galen describes music as a treatment used by Asclepius: he is said to have “ordered many odes and humorous mimes to be written, and to create certain melodies, by which the movements of the spirited part [of the soul], becoming more violent, could make the mixture of the body hotter than it should be” (*HygienalDe sanitate tuenda* 1.8, 41K).¹⁸⁸ In addition to this textual evidence, there is archaeological evidence of theaters and musical performance spaces within medical sanctuaries throughout the Mediterranean.¹⁸⁹ Music, theater, and ritual healing were deeply interconnected in the ancient Greek world.

¹⁸⁶ There are similar metaphorical references to other Dionysian cult groups like the Bacchantes or Maenads. For the use of such language in Plato in particular, see: Ivan M. Linforth, (1946), *The Corybantic rites in Plato*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; P. Murray, (1992), “Inspiration and Mimēsis in Plato,” *Apeiron*, 25.4: 27-46; M. Gellrich, (1994), “Socratic magic: enchantment, irony, and persuasion in Plato’s dialogues,” *Classical World*, 87.4: 275-307.

¹⁸⁷ See, for example, T. J. Mathiesen, (1984), “Harmonia and ethos in ancient Greek music,” *The Journal of Musicology*, 3.3: 264-279; F. Woerther, (2008), “Music and the Education of the Soul in Plato and Aristotle: Homoeopathy and the Formation of Character,” *Classical Quarterly*, 58.1: 89-103, among many others.

¹⁸⁸ In Greek, this is: οὐκ ὀλίγας μὲν ᾠδὰς τε γράφεισθαι καὶ μίμους γελοίων καὶ μέλη τινα ποιεῖν ἐπιτάξας, οἷς αἱ τοῦ θυμοειδοῦς κινήσεις σφοδρότεραι γινόμεναι θερμότεραν τοῦ δέοντος ἀπειργάζοντο τὴν κρᾶσιν τοῦ σώματος. N.b. the text and translation are from the Johnston Loeb edition, with minor changes. Cf. A. Provenza, (2020), “Music and Medicine,” in T.A. Lynch and E. Rocconi (eds.), *A Companion to Ancient Greek and Roman Music*, Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.

¹⁸⁹ On the intentional connection between theatre and Asclepeias, see especially chapter 7: Robin Mitchell-Boyask, (2007), *Plague and the Athenian Imagination: Drama, History, and the Cult of Asclepius*, Cambridge: University Press.

The ritual aspects of such musical treatment are evoked in the lines quoted from Aristophanes above. He refers to the drum (τυμπάνω) and the swift/agile motion (ἄξιας) of Philocleon, even as he departs from the ritual context on his way back to the courts. Evidently, this treatment also did not work on Philocleon (though he does have a quasi-musical turn towards dancing and revelry at the end of the play (*Wasps*, 1474ff)). Yet again, another kind of treatment was needed.

2.4 In-patient Treatment

The fourth treatment that they try on Philocleon is one of the most well-known from antiquity: an overnight stay, or “incubation,” at an Asclepeion (sanctuary of Asclepius). This is how it is described in Aristophanes (*Wasps*, 121-124):

When he couldn't help him with these rites, his son took him to Aegina and forcible made him lie one night in the temple of Asclepius, but before daylight there he was to be seen at the court gates.¹⁹⁰

The practice of staying overnight in a temple or sanctuary was also common in the ancient world.¹⁹¹ There were sanctuaries not just in Aegina, an island very close to Athens, but all over the Mediterranean world, including in Athens, on the island of Kos (where Hippocrates was from), and in Pergamum (where Galen was from). These sanctuaries were dedicated to the god Asclepius, whose cult grew in popularity from the fifth century BCE

¹⁹⁰ Here is the Greek: ὅτε δῆτα ταύταις ταῖς τελεταῖς οὐκ ὠφέλει, / διέπλευσεν εἰς Αἴγινα, εἶτα ξυλλαβὼν / νόκτωρ κατέκλινεν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἀσκληπιοῦ, / ὁ δ' ἀνεφάνη κνεφαῖος ἐπὶ τῇ κίγκλιδι.

¹⁹¹ See Juliette Harrison, (2014), “The Development of the Practice of Incubation in the Ancient World,” in Demetrios Michaelides (ed.), *Medicine and Healing in the Ancient Mediterranean*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 284-290, as well as the extensive study of incubation by Gil Renberg: G. H. Renberg, (2017), *Where dreams may come: incubation sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman world*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.

onwards, partially in relation to the practices of visiting the sanctuaries for healing.¹⁹² Practices at the sanctuary involved ritual cleansing and purification (as above, section 2.2), offering sacrifices to the god, and spending the night sleeping in a certain part of the sanctuary. The patient would then report any dreams back to the priests-cum-doctors for them interpret and develop a treatment strategy—unless, of course, the cure had been miraculously performed by the god of healing himself overnight while the patient was sleeping. Indeed, the ideal occurrence was that the god Asclepius would visit a patient in a dream and perform or prescribe his treatment. Those who were cured would often dedicate statues or figurines in the shape of body parts—representing whichever part had been healed—to the god.

In Athens, there was a sanctuary of Asclepius on the western slopes of the Acropolis that was active from the late fifth century onwards. This perhaps raises a question of why Philocleon had to be taken all the way to Aegina, an island off the coast of Attica. A plausible answer when thinking about addiction treatment might be that the greater distance would increase the friction between Philocleon and the environment of his addiction, i.e., the courts in and around the Athenian agora. Being in Aegina would make it harder for Philocleon to access his addiction and thus hopefully might finally be effective as a treatment. Plausible though this seems, the historical answer is actually simpler: the Athenian Asclepieion was not founded until 419-418 BCE, approximately four years after Aristophanes's *Wasps* was first produced in 422 BCE.¹⁹³ So, at the time of the play, the sanctuary at Aegina was the closest place for Athenians like Philocleon to go for healing.

¹⁹² For this and other information about Asclepius's cult and sanctuaries, c.f. B. Wickkiser, (2008), *Asklepios, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-century Greece: Between Craft and Cult*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, and Robin Mitchell-Boyask, (2007), *Plague and the Athenian Imagination: Drama, History, and the Cult of Asclepius*, Cambridge: University Press.

¹⁹³ See B. Wickkiser, (2008), *Asklepios, Medicine, and the Politics of Healing in Fifth-century Greece: Between Craft and Cult*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

The attempt to cure Philocleon by having him stay at the temple on Aegina is almost the last resort for the family desperate to eliminate Philocleon's jury obsession. But, regardless of the friction and the healing potential of the ritual retreat, Philocleon's jury addiction still prevailed and brought him back to the courts early the next morning. Sick of his persistence and running out of options, there was only one more treatment that his family tried to combat his addiction: quarantining him at home.

2.5 Quarantine

The final treatment that Philocleon underwent was one familiar to many of us from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic: home isolation. Philocleon's quarantine was strict: his guardians kept him under lock and key (and net!) in attempt to prevent him from ever leaving the house and heading to court. This is how it is described (*Wasps*, 125-132):

Since then we let him go out no more, but he escaped us by the drains or by the skylight, so we stuffed up every opening with old rags and made all secure; then he drove short sticks into the wall and sprang from rung to rung like a magpie. Now we have stretched nets all around the court and we keep watch and ward.¹⁹⁴

This final treatment of enforced isolation seems relatively novel in terms of treatments that were commonly used in the ancient world. Though there are some examples of confinement as a strategy in antiquity, it is more often associated with exile or geographic confinement, rather than at-home quarantine.¹⁹⁵ For example, recall the story of Prometheus's

¹⁹⁴ The Greek text reads: ἐντεῦθεν οὐκέτ' αὐτὸν ἐξεφρίμεν, / ὁ δ' ἐξεδίδρασκε διὰ τε τῶν ὑδροροῶν / καὶ τῶν ὀπῶν: ἡμεῖς δ' ὅσ' ἦν τετρημένα / ἐνεβύσαμεν ῥακίοισι κάπακτώσαμεν, / ὁ δ' ὡσπερὶ κολοῖος αὐτῷ παττάλους / ἐνέκρουεν ἐς τὸν τοῖχον, εἴτ' ἐξήλλετο. / ἡμεῖς δὲ τὴν αὐλήν ἅπασαν δικτύοις / καταπετάσαντες ἐν κύκλῳ φυλάττομεν.

¹⁹⁵ See: M. S. Silk, (2000), "Space and Solitude in Aristophanes," *Pallas*, 54, 303–312; R. Gorman, (1994), "Poets, Playwrights, and the Politics of Exile and Asylum in Ancient Greece and Rome," *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 6.3: 402–424, and sources on ostracism in the next note.

punishment for stealing fire from the gods: he was bound to a rock at the edge of the world, to have his liver pecked out (only to regrow overnight and be pecked out again the next day) for eternity. A similar kind of exile is part of the Trojan mythology: the Greek hero, Philoctetes, was abandoned on the island of Lemnos after his foot was bitten by a snake, a bad omen for the Greek army. Historically, exile was a common political practice in Athens and other Greek city-states: it was used ideologically to prevent any individual from gaining too much power in the newly democratic city (that had been ruled by kings and tyrants in the past).¹⁹⁶

In terms of isolation at home (rather than expulsion from the city or group), a comparable example might be how women of a certain class were also typically kept at home, not necessarily under lock and key, but as a social convention.¹⁹⁷ The home in ancient Greece was thought to be the women's space, while the public sphere was for men. Leaving the home unaccompanied was generally viewed as inappropriate, and even when in public, women often wore veils to cover their faces.

In light of this, Philocleon's forced at-home confinement stands out as a particularly drastic (comedic hyperbole) form of treatment. His power as the oldest male member of the household is displaced, and he is instead placed under even greater restrictions than women (who were of lower status than men in ancient Greece).¹⁹⁸ The power dynamics and comic

¹⁹⁶ See: S. Forsdyke, (2000), "Exile, ostracism and the Athenian democracy," *Classical Antiquity*, 19.2: 232-263; id., (2005), *Exile, ostracism, and democracy: the politics of expulsion in ancient Greece*, Princeton: University Press; P. J. Kosmin, (2015), "A phenomenology of democracy: Ostracism as political ritual," *Classical Antiquity*, 34.1: 121-162.

¹⁹⁷ See: D. Cohen, (1989), "Seclusion, separation, and the status of women in classical Athens," *Greece & Rome*, 36.1: 3-15; L. Llewellyn-Jones, (2007), "House and veil in ancient Greece," *British School at Athens Studies*, 15: 251-258.

¹⁹⁸ On the socio-political dimensions of power in the play, see (among others): D. Konstan, (1985), "The Politics of Aristophanes' *Wasps*," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115: 27-46; Alex Purves, (1997), "Empowerment for the Athenian Citizen: Philocleon as Actor and Spectator in Aristophanes' *Wasps*," in

dimensions are brought out even further by the details of the description: he is kept indoors, despite his best efforts to escape through the drains, windows, roof. This manages to limit his movement, prevent him from going to court, and restrict him from seeing his fellow-juror friends. However, in itself, it does not actually cure his jury addiction. Later in the play, Philocleon's household further appeases him addiction by setting up a work-from-home situation: he gets to judge cases in his courtyard, relieving him of the need to ever leave the house and go to court. So, the isolation treatment led to a kind of replacement or substitution of Philocleon's jury addiction, rather than curing it as such. In the end of the play, despite the many attempts at treatment, Philocleon's eventual persuasion that Cleon is corrupt, and his son's attempt to integrate him back into aristocratic society in Athens, it is unclear whether Philocleon is ever "cured" of his addiction. Perhaps this is due to the ineffectiveness of the treatments, or perhaps even the ambiguity of addiction itself: as we saw with the case of Socrates, it is unclear if a cure was a desirable outcome in ancient instances of addiction.

That concludes the main treatments that were attempted to cure Philocleon of his jury addiction in Aristophanes's *Wasps*. We can now look quickly at the idea of treatment in Plato's *Timaeus*.

2.6 Daily Habits

At the end of his speech in Plato's *Timaeus*, the titular character turns to a discussion of treatment (87c-90d). This comes after he has described diseases of the soul due to the

B. Zimmermann (ed.), *Griechisch-römische Komödie und Tragödie II*, Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 5-22; N. Papathanasopoulou, (2019), "Tragic and Epic Visions of the Oikos in Aristophanes' *Wasps*," *Classical World*, 112.4: 253-278.

condition of the body, including, as we saw in the previous chapter, the example of sex addiction (86b-87b). In fact, in the carefully designed structure of the speech, Timaeus's discussion of treatment serves as the counterpart to his earlier discussion of disease (τὸ δὲ τούτων ἀντίστροφον, "the antistrophe/harmonic counterpoint of the preceding," 87c). The key aspect of Timaeus's views on treatment of both body and soul is the connection or proportion (harmony) *between* the two. There are also specific treatments for both on their own, but for Timaeus these separate treatments must always be viewed in relation to the overall goal of psycho-somatic harmony that he thinks constitutes good health.

Timaeus starts off his discussion of treatment by emphasizing how important it is to maintain a balance between body and soul (87c-e). He argues that all good things are beautiful, and all beautiful things well-proportioned. By extension, he takes this to mean that, when it comes to humans, having a well-proportioned balance of body and soul is key to living a healthy and good life. One important implication of this, according to Timaeus, is that neither body nor soul should take precedence: he thinks that just as one should not spend all of their time in the gym exercising their bodies and focusing on the food they consume, neither should one spend all of their time at the library puzzling over math problems or arcane topics of scholarship (88b-c). The key is to find a balance between the two: mental activity should counter-balance the daily routine of someone who likes to exercise a lot, while physical exercise should be performed by the studious scholar.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ Timaeus's position regarding balance is notably different from the one that often gets associated with Plato based on dialogues such as the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* (not the divided soul passage, but a passage at the end of the dialogue, in which Socrates mentions what might be needed for them to grasp the true nature of the soul as separate from the body, using the image of the sea god Glaucus: 10.611b-612a). In those dialogues, the soul's health and separation from the body is of utmost importance, even at the expense of the body. This idea is encapsulated by Socrates's statement in the *Phaedo* that, "Those who care for their own soul and do not live for the service of their body dismiss all these things [i.e. bodily passions, money, honor, etc.]" (82d). Philosophers in antiquity who read Plato's dialogues in this "ascetic" way gained a reputation for starving their bodies in their attempts to totally concentrate on the soul (see, e.g., M. Camps-Gaset and S. Grau, (2011), "Philosophy for the

With this general principle established, Timaeus then turns to particular treatments that should be used to keep both body and soul in harmony with each other and the universe. Regarding the **body**, the key is to keep it in motion in such a way that corresponds to the motions of the universe. The idea, going back to the beginning of Timaeus's speech, is that the universe is a living thing that is growing (older though not necessarily larger) and changing, and as such it involves some kind of motion. This cosmic motion is what Timaeus thinks the body needs to imitate. He offers three ways to do this (89a-d). First, there is self-generated motion in the form of physical exercise. This motion is best, according to Timaeus, because it most closely imitates the autonomous motion of the universe.²⁰⁰ Second, there is motion induced by travel in some kind of vehicle, on land or by sea. This kind of motion has

Body, Food for the Mind," *Coolabah* 5: 83-101). Based on this, there are grounds for thinking that Plato was an enemy of the body, and that, again, Timaeus's position does not represent Plato's own.

Yet, not just in the *Timaeus*, but in other dialogues, too, health and a good life requires care for both the body and soul. In Plato's *Charmides*, Socrates's cure for the eponymous main character, the youth Charmides, involves both physical and psychological elements. He says he has learned of a cure from a Thracian (northern Greek) doctor, and it involves combining the consumption of an herb with a charm of incantation—which takes the form of a Socratic dialogue about temperance (*sophrosune*) (155e-157c). Socrates specifically notes that trying to cure the body physically, without attention to the mental aspect, will not provide a sufficient treatment. In addition to this, even in statements in other dialogues that seem to disparage the body, Socrates's stance might be read as more diadactic than completely opposed to the body. For example, in the *Apology*, when he explains his behavior in the following terms, it is still a proper relation between body and soul, not the total attention to one at the expense of the other, that he is arguing for: "I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth **in preference to or as strongly as** for the best possible state of your soul" (30a-b, emphasis added). So, though Timaeus's position may be read as somewhat unique in the Platonic corpus, it is not necessarily the case that it is un-Platonic and should not be taken as a serious suggestion.

On recent interpretations that try to incorporate the importance of the body, even in the most seemingly anti-body dialogues like the *Phaedo*: see, for example, C. Zoller, (2018), *Plato and the body: Reconsidering Socratic Asceticism*, Albany: State University of New York Press; R. Jones and P. Marechal, (2019), "Plato's guide to living with your body," in J. E. Sisko (ed.), *Philosophy of Mind in Antiquity*, New York: Routledge, 84–100.

²⁰⁰ An idea, more commonly associated with Aristotle's metaphysics, that the universe and/or its creator is an unmoved first mover (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 12/Lambda, 1072a). On some lingering Platonic notions in Aristotle's metaphysics, see S. Menn, (1992), "Aristotle and Plato on God as Nous and as the Good," *The Review of Metaphysics* 45.3: 543-573.

the advantage of not tiring one out the way that individual exercise does, but is worse in the sense that it is not self-generated. We might imagine that trips to sanctuaries and other healing environments, like the sanctuary of Asclepius in Aegina, might lie behind this recommendation. Lastly, and only as a last resort, Timaeus recommends the use of medical drugs. This, he says, is a way to introduce a kind of internal motion to cure disease. However, it is the worst kind of treatment, not just because it introduces a foreign element into the body, but because that foreign element is used to alter the natural course of the disease in ways that are risky, somewhat unknown, and thus potentially damaging to the body. Timaeus explains that, just as in other realms of nature, there are natural stages and cycles, so too do diseases have something like a “lifespan” or natural course that ought to be recognized. Using drugs to interfere with the natural course of the disease is liable to make the disease worse, last longer, cause symptoms to occur more frequently, and in general reduce the success of other potential forms of treatment.²⁰¹

These motions—exercise, travel, and drugs—were the treatments that could be used to keep the body in harmony with the motions of the universe. After this, Timaeus discusses

²⁰¹ Regarding this last point, we might initially hear echoes of the lack of modern scientific understanding around how drugs work on the body. But we might also notice that Timaeus is articulating an alternative conception of disease that prevailed in antiquity, in which disease is not unnatural but rather part of a natural process of creation and destruction. The French philosopher of science, Georges Canguilhem, aptly described this ancient approach to pathology (as distinct from modern approaches) in the following terms (also quoted above in Chapter 1): “By contrast, Greek medicine, in the Hippocratic writings and practices, offers a conception of disease which is no longer ontological, but dynamic, no longer localizationist, but totalizing. Nature (*physis*), within man as well as without, is harmony and equilibrium. The disturbances of this harmony, of this equilibrium, is called disease. In this case, disease is not somewhere in man, it is everywhere in him; it is the whole man. External circumstances are the occasion but not the causes. Man’s equilibrium consists of four humors, whose fluidity is perfectly suited to sustain variations and oscillations and whose qualities are paired by opposites (hot/cold, wet/dry); the disturbances of these humors cause disease. But disease is not simply disequilibrium or discordance; it is, and perhaps most important, an effort on the part of nature to effect a new equilibrium in man. Disease is a generalized reaction designed to bring about a cure; the organism develops a disease in order to get well” (*The Normal and the Pathological*, 40-41). This conception of disease is quite different from the negative, dysfunctional, disruptive view of disease we hold now. While it is in a certain sense a disruption, it is also part of a natural process to recover from a disruption and head towards a new kind of balance. These comments ought to be read in light of the conceptions about disease and equilibrium, in the Timaeus and in modern science, presented in the previous chapter.

the treatment of the soul. Again, his idea is also to keep the soul in harmony with the motions of the universe, but this is accomplished in a different way, due to the different nature and components of the soul. Recalling Timaeus's earlier division of the soul into three types or parts, the rational, spirited, and appetitive, he says that each of these has its own motion (orbits of the soul akin to the orbits of the planets, cf. 47b-c). The important thing for psychic treatment is to bring these three, with respect to their motions, in the proper proportion to each other.

What is the proper proportion? For this, Timaeus goes back to the notion of having the rational part ruling, and the other two psychic components abiding by reason's rule. The rational part "deserves" to rule, according to Timaeus, because it is like a god's gift to human kind, the part of the human soul most similar to the divine; this is the part which Timaeus located in the head (44d, 69d-e, 73c-d, 90a-b), a spherical form that imitates the shape of the universe (36e, 44d) and that is closest to the heavens (90a-b). The other two parts, located in the chest (the spirited) and the belly region (the appetitive) (69e-71d), are meant to follow the rational part. These two parts were created, not by the master craftsman, but by the lower gods, and they are associated with the body and mortality. The proper proportion is to have the divine, rational part of the soul ruling and the other two mortal parts following.

How to accomplish the proper proportion? Timaeus notes that, like with the body, exercising and keeping in motion generates health and strength in whichever part is being exercised; the opposite, rest and inactivity, produces weakness (89e). In practice, this means that one ought to provide nourishment and exercise for the motions proper to the rational part, by devoting oneself daily to the love of learning and to true wisdom, and studying subjects like music, astronomy, and math in order to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the universe—that is, its rational organization that is reflected at all levels (cf. 46d-47e, 90b-d). Importantly, such studies will allow one to reverse the psychic trauma that Timaeus thinks all

souls undergo at birth, when they are born into human bodies and their revolutions become disorganized (cf. 43a-44c)). As he states towards the end of his speech (90d1-5),

We should redirect the revolutions in our heads that were thrown off course at our birth, by coming to learn the harmonies and revolutions of the universe, and so bring into conformity with its object our faculty of understanding, as it was in its original condition.²⁰²

Through constant care for the divine part of the soul by means of studying and understanding the motions of the universe, one's rational faculty will be strong and will be able to rule over the other parts of the soul. This will provide psychic health and happiness to the individual, as their life becomes aligned with the natural order of the universe.

And what of the other parts of the soul? What to do with them in order to achieve proper proportion? Timaeus is not so explicit about this, but we can deduce the following from what he has said. The important thing is to keep them weaker in relation to the rational part, and the appetitive part weakest of all. In order to keep them weak, one should do the opposite of what it takes to strengthen them, which means not providing them with nourishment or exercising them. This might mean resisting appetitive desires, such as the desire to eat delicious food, unless it is otherwise approved of by the rational part of the soul. It might also mean resisting ambitions and emotions associated with the spirited part of the soul. This resistance to both appetites and spirited motivations can be contrasted with the devotion one ought to show to the rational part of the soul. Timaeus notes that if someone should devote themselves to the lower two parts of the soul, and allow themselves to become absorbed in appetites or ambitions, this will result in their souls becoming thoroughly mortal rather than divine (90b).

²⁰² The Greek text reads: ταύταις δὴ συνεπόμενον ἕκαστον δεῖ, τὰς περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ διεφθαρμένας ἡμῶν περιόδους ἐξορθοῦντα διὰ τὸ καταμανθάνειν τὰς τοῦ παντὸς ἁρμονίας τε καὶ περιφοράς, τῷ κατανοουμένῳ τὸ κατανοοῦν ἐξομοιωῶσαι κατὰ τὴν ἀρχαίαν φύσιν.

So, for the health of the soul, Timaeus thinks that it is essential for one to be devoted to philosophy and not to things like appetites or ambitions. This will keep the rational part in charge of the other two parts of the soul and allow an individual to imitate the ordering of the universe in their own soul and life. And this ordering will also allow the soul to stay in the proper relation to the body. We recall that that the proportion of body and soul is key to overall health. Here, we might understand that the kind of devotion to philosophy that Timaeus is recommending includes in it a notion of proportionality and balance. This might be contrasted with the kind of all-encompassing devotion to philosophy in an addictive sense that I suggested in chapter 2. For Timaeus, the person devoted to philosophy or any kind of studies that prioritizes the life of the mind must not neglect the care of their body as well, just as the person devoted to bodily health must not neglect their soul. Health is accomplished through both physical and psychological treatments that ensure balance for an individual.

* * *

The preceding remarks are concerned with general lifestyle care and they apply, generally speaking, to everyone. But what is the specific connection to addiction treatment? We know that Timaeus has a conception of a sex addict. How exactly is he to be treated, according to Timaeus? Timaeus does not specifically spell this out, but the outlines of what his recommended treatment might look like can be inferred from the rest of his advice.

First of all, as we saw in the previous chapter, sex addiction is both a physical and psychological experience that also depends on aspects of the community and environment. This means that its treatment will require attention to both body and soul in their broader context. On the body side of things, we know that sex addiction is characterized by an excessive moisture, which translates into extra motion in the appetitive part of the soul. The

various forms of physical motion that Timaeus mentioned (exercise, travel, drugs) could impact the body's moisture. For example, exercise generating sweat could influence the level of other types of moisture in the body. Alternatively, one could travel to a drier climate to change the body both through the motion introduced in it from the travel itself and through the change in atmosphere.²⁰³ Perhaps even “drying” drugs like opium could affect the body's moisture levels. None of this is explicitly suggested in Timaeus's account, yet they seem like logical possibilities based on the type of bodily treatments he recommends.

Concerning the soul's treatment for addiction, Timaeus is a bit more explicit. The kind of psychic health he is after requires daily practice, from birth when one's soul is initially disturbed, all the way through life. This offers a clear idea about how addiction is to be avoided: proper nourishment and early childhood education are required to set up for the successful pursuit of philosophy later on. Attending to this proper nourishment and education throughout life will enable one to restore one's soul to health, and be free of diseases of the soul like addiction.

But what about the sex addict, who did not receive such an upbringing and finds himself stuck in repetitive patterns later on? Here, I think Timaeus can be read as optimistic: even if this person is not to blame for their condition, he still suggests that they ought to try to become better to the best of their ability. As he notes at the end of his discussion of diseases of the soul, though one's begetters and nurturers are to blame (87b6-8):

Even so, one should make every possible effort to flee from badness, whether with the help of one's upbringing, or the pursuits or studies one undertakes, and to seize its opposite.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ This would be similar to the climate-body associations in the Hippocratic *AWP*. Timaeus does not specifically talk about the impact of climate in these terms, but it seems within the realm of possibility.

²⁰⁴ The Greek text reads: προθυμητέον μήν, ὅπη τις δύναται, καὶ διὰ τροφῆς καὶ δι' ἐπιτηδευμάτων μαθημάτων τε φυγεῖν μὲν κακίαν, τοῦναντίον δὲ ἐλεῖν.

The “even so” (μήν) points back to the responsibility/blame lying not with the individual but their parents, teachers, and members of their communities. As discussed above in Chapter 3, Timaeus is saying that, despite this understanding of responsibility, it is still necessary for everyone, regardless of where they are at now, to try to become better along the lines that he set out for the treatment of the soul in general. Again, this means ensuring the strength of the rational part of the soul through daily practices of, for example, studying math and the motions of the universe, and not letting the other parts of the soul take too much control. This might be facilitated by a good upbringing, but it does also seem to be the case that Timaeus thinks it is possible for everyone, wherever they are at.

* * *

With this, I conclude the general overview of the forms of treatment available in antiquity for someone experiencing addictive patterns of thought and behavior. Traditionally, as I mentioned at the start of this section, ancient medical treatment was divided into three categories: diet, drugs, and surgery. The six types of treatment outlined above do not include surgery, but do cover different aspects of diet, and we have at least one mention of the use of drugs (Timaeus’s mention of it as a last resort treatment for the body). The treatments surveyed also highlight several treatments associated with ritual, underscoring the important point that medical treatment in the ancient world was often not far disconnected from ritual practices, sanctuaries and other religious spaces, and associated appeals to mystical and superstitious forces.

There were also other methods of dealing with addiction in antiquity that are not covered by the treatments outlined above. These include things like doing nothing, waiting

for someone to grow out of their seemingly immature behavior, and even shaming and stigmatizing people into changing their behavior. For example, there is the story in Herodotus about King Amasis (II) of Egypt, who used to drink and generally cause a ruckus, and even resorted to stealing to support his habit when he needed to (Hdt. 2.174). He was sometimes charged with theft, but often got away with it, and these youthful misadventures certainly did not hinder him from becoming king. To give another example, there is a moral tale from the second sophistic author, Lucian, about a young man at Athens who used to get drunk and party all the time, day and night, until he encountered philosophy, which led to him sobering up and abandoning Drunkenness (personified in this telling) (Luc., *Bis. Acc.* 13-17). Here, intemperance or addiction is presented as something that one might grow out of. These “less technical” methods were present in the ancient world and, though they are not my focus here, I do not want to gloss over them. They shed light on the negative moral judgment that was generally associated with addictive behavior. Even in the texts we have looked at so far, we can notice moments of moral judgment, for example, when alcoholism is described as a “gentleman’s disease” in the *Wasps* (a.k.a. acceptable behavior from a certain class of men, but not for others), or in Timaeus’s insistence that people with sex addictions not be blamed: they were otherwise being blamed and criticized. These negative moral judgments of course are also present in the more medical approach to addiction as a kind of psychic disease. As noted in previous chapters, categorizing something as disease puts it in contrast with health, with the latter being “normal” and what one ought to pursue, and the former being “pathological” and what one ought to try and avoid as best as possible. In other words, framing addiction as a disease involves moral judgments, and in a world full of competing values, it is certainly not obvious that valuing health is a universal or absolute and that deviation from health is to be avoided. But those are some of the values at play in these examples from the ancient world.

Underlying assumptions about addiction as an abnormal and to-be-avoided kind of pathology will continue to appear as we now turn to the main focus of the chapter, namely Galen's ideas about treatment. As we shall see, there are some aspects of his approach to treatment that seem remarkably modern, though there are also prejudices and limits built into what he says. As such, Galen is a good case study for exposing alternative viewpoints and their assumptions. These can offer a kind of mirror for us to consider our own assumptions about addiction. But before we get too far into that, let us look at who Galen was and then turn to what he actually recommended as far as treatment is concerned.

3. Galen's Treatments

Galen was born in Pergamum, a Roman city in what is now Western Turkey (the city there now is called Bergama), in 129 CE.²⁰⁵ Pergamum was a flourishing city at that time, renown for, among other things, its library and its sanctuary of Asclepius. Galen's father was an architect and made sure that his son received a good education and upbringing—we hear about this from Galen, who thinks his father set a great example for him. (This will be important later in relation to Galen's views on upbringing and exemplarity.) At first, Galen's father had him pursue philosophical studies—something akin to a liberal arts education—as he had plans for his son to become a politician. Then, following a dream in which Asclepius appeared to him and instructed him to send his son to study medicine, Galen's life course was set. After a few years of medical studies in Pergamum, and following the death of his father, Galen traveled around the eastern Mediterranean world in pursuit of further education and

²⁰⁵ The most recent synthesis of research on Galen's life comes from long-time Galen scholar, Vivian Nutton's 2020 biography, *Galen: A Thinking Doctor in Imperial Rome*, from which I have learned most of the biographical information that appears in the next two paragraphs.

training in medicine. He spent time in Alexandria, Egypt, one of the intellectual centers of the Roman world at that time. After some further travels and a brief period (4 years) as a gladiatorial doctor in Pergamum, Galen made his way to Rome in 162 CE, at the age of approximately 33.

In Rome, Galen advanced his reputation by promoting his “Hippocratic” approach to medicine. This approach was characterized by individualized treatment and attention to balance in the body, following the notion that imbalances were the cause of diseases. On top of this, Galen believed it was important to treat the underlying causes of illness, not just symptoms. Galen’s Hippocratic approach was in contrast to (and in professional competition with) the two other main medical traditions at the time, the Methodists and the Empiricists. The Methodists’ treatments proceeded on the basis of generality—i.e., treating types, rather than the individual. Meanwhile the Empiricists rejected the investigation into causes of illnesses and instead focused on treating apparent symptoms. Galen, with his focus on individuals rather than generalities, and underlying causes rather than just symptoms, claimed to offer a distinct approach to medicine in Rome at that time. And it seemed to work: his reputation grew and the Imperial household took notice. In 169, Galen was brought on as a doctor in the imperial court, a position he would hold for some 40 years. This meant treating the Emperor’s household, as well as the Emperor himself. Galen oversaw the treatment of several successive Emperors, starting with Marcus Aurelius, then his son, Commodus, through Septimius Severus (193-211 CE). Though evidence is scarce, Galen is believed to have died in 216 CE in Sicily.

As to why look at Galen when it comes to investigating addiction treatment in the ancient world, there are several reasons. First and perhaps most superficially, Galen is a huge figure in the history of medicine. He had a great influence on medicine, in both theory and practice, in the Roman Empire, in the Middle East (via the Arabic medical tradition), and in

modern, post-Renaissance Western Europe. This influence alone might be enough to warrant attention to him in any study of the history of treatment. And, indeed, there has been a lot of recent scholarship on Galen, especially in relation to questions of mental health.²⁰⁶

Second, as we saw in the anecdote regarding Marcus Aurelius's alleged opium addiction in chapter 1, Galen had some experience of working with patients who experienced addictive behaviors. This experience makes Galen directly relevant to the topic of this study on addiction, and specifically this chapter on addiction treatment.

Third, in various writings, Galen directly responds to some of the ideas mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus*.²⁰⁷ There is a big stretch of time between Plato writing in the fourth century BCE and Galen writing in the second century CE, and space, with Plato in Athens and Galen

²⁰⁶ See, for example, Stanley W. Jackson, (1969), "Galen: On Mental Disorders," *Journal of the history of the behavioral sciences* 5.4: 365-284; Luis García Ballester, (1974), "Diseases of the soul (*Nosemata tes psyches*) in Galen: The Impossibility of a Galenic Psychotherapy," *Clio Medica*, 9.1: 35-43; L. G. Ballester, (1988), "Soul and body: Disease of the soul and disease of the body in Galen's medical thought," in Paola Manuli and Mario Vegetti (eds.), *Le Opere psicologiche di Galeno*, Naples: Bibliopolis, 117-152; H. Von Staden, (2012), "The physiology and therapy of anger: Galen on medicine, the soul, and nature," in Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 63-87; V. Nutton, (2013), "Galenic madness," in W. Harris (ed.), *Mental Disorders in the Classical World*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 119-127; V. Boudon-Millot, (2013), "What is a mental illness, and how can it be treated? Galen's reply as a doctor and philosopher," in W. Harris (ed.), *Mental disorders in the classical world*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 129-145; B. Holmes, (2013), "Disturbing connections: Sympathetic affections, mental disorder, and the elusive soul in Galen," in William Harris (ed.), *Mental disorders in the classical world*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 147-176; Marke Ahonen, (2014), *Mental disorders in ancient philosophy*, Cham, Switzerland: Springer (esp. chapter 6, "Galen on the Diseases of the Mind and Soul," p. 139-178); J. Devinant, (2018), "Mental Disorders and Psychological Suffering in Galen's Cases," in C. Thumiger and P. Singer (eds.), *Mental Illness in Ancient Medicine*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 198-221; P. N. Singer, (2018), "Galen's Pathological Soul: Diagnosis and Therapy in Ethical and Medical Texts and Contexts," in C. Thumiger and P. N. Singer (eds.), *Mental Illness in Ancient Medicine*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 381-420.

²⁰⁷ Aristophanes, too, receives a few mentions, not necessarily the addiction aspect of the *Wasps* and not in the form of the serious engagement Galen gives to authors like Plato and Hippocrates. Galen does, interestingly, discuss one aspect of Aristophanes's (use of) language that I think is worth mentioning. In his work on medical terminology, he explains the utility of studying words in comedy to understand the common meaning of words that writers like Hippocrates were using. The reason for this, as Nutton explains, is that "the growth of a technical terminology [for medicine] was a slow process, and [...] many words were taken over metaphorically from local and daily usage. Comedy was key to comprehension. The language of philosophers was too technical and too refined, but that of comedy had to be comprehensible to everyone, for a writer whose jokes could not be understood by his audience was bound to fail" (Nutton 2020: 13). This is significant because it grounds one of the arguments that I was making about the cases of addiction that Aristophanes presents as parallels to Philocleon's jury addiction: the cases, and the kind of repetitive, compulsive behavior that Aristophanes described, must have been somehow familiar, or at least comprehensible to his audience.

in Rome. Yet, Galen's responses to and engagement with Plato give us a direct, intellectual link to the material that we covered in the last chapter.²⁰⁸

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, Galen had interesting things to say about treatment. A major component of Hellenistic philosophy is concerned with managing emotions and treating experiences like grief, distress, and anger.²⁰⁹ Galen is working within and responding to this tradition. He also builds on, expands, and changes the biopsychosocial approach to addiction that we saw was nascent in Timaeus's speech. The individual, for Galen, is also necessary to understand in relation to others, their community, and environment. Like Timaeus's approach to treatment sketched out above, Galen's treatment also involves both body and soul, and he has some similar ideas about the use of daily practices. As we will see, one of the practices that Galen recommends is an early or proto-version of psychotherapy—a more methodical treatment than the use of speech and

²⁰⁸ There is also a tradition of teachers and students that can be traced from Plato down to Galen, which could be used to demonstrate not just Galen's response to Plato, but his place in a continuous philosophical tradition. This kind of inter-generational continuity seems less important to me than Galen's engagement with Plato as an authority or interlocutor for his own views, especially since Galen was skeptical of strict adherence to particular philosophical schools, as they existed in his day. Thus, though he trained with Platonists, he does not describe himself as one, preferring to go back to engage with Plato (among others) directly. Galen's anti-dogmatism is well known—cf., for example, V. Nutton, (2020), *Galen: A Thinking Doctor in Imperial Rome*, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge; and the introduction to R. J. Hankinson, (1991), *Galen: On the therapeutic method, Books I and II*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (esp, pp. xxii-xxiv).

²⁰⁹ The bibliography on this topic is, again, very long. Some notable scholarship includes: J. Brunschwig and M. C. Nussbaum (eds.), (1993), *Passions & Perceptions: Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind: Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Hellenisticum*, Cambridge: University Press; M. Nussbaum, (1994), *The therapy of desire: Theory and practice in Hellenistic ethics*, Princeton: University Press; the essays collected in J. Sihvola and T. Engberg-Pedersen (eds.), (1998), *The emotions in Hellenistic philosophy*, Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers; Peter Adamson, (2015), *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds*, Oxford: University Press. And on anger in ancient culture in general and Hellenistic philosophy in particular, see: S. Braund and G. W. Most (eds.), (2004), *Ancient anger: perspectives from Homer to Galen*, Cambridge: University Press; William. V. Harris, (2009), *Restraining rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; H. Von Staden, (2012), "The physiology and therapy of anger: Galen on medicine, the soul, and nature," in Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman (eds.), *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 63-87; K. Kalimtzis, (2014), *Taming Anger: The Hellenic Approach to the Limitations of Reason*, London: Bloomsbury; P. N. Singer, (2017), "The essence of rage: Galen on emotional disturbances and their physical correlates," in *Selfhood and the Soul: essays on ancient thought and literature in honour of Christopher Gill*, Oxford: University Press, 1-28 (with a relatively up-to-date bibliography with further references).

persuasion mentioned above. This stems from his notion that individuals necessarily exist in specific contexts, in relation to others, and can thus be helped by others in various ways. And overall, Galen is practical and pragmatic: as a doctor, he wants to help his patients get better, to the best of his ability. This results in a balanced, holistic vision of treatment that we find across Galen's psychological writings, even as he advances different ideas and perspectives in different texts.

With this as a brief introduction, we will now look at the specific treatments we can find in Galen's writings. Galen, it should be noted, wrote a lot, and though it is becoming more accessible, it is still not the easiest set of source material to work with. For the sake of simplicity and focus, I highlight treatments found in four of Galen's main psychological writings: *Avoiding Distress*, *Character Traits*, *The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Affections and Errors Particular to Each Person's Soul*, and *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the Mixtures of the Body*.

3.1 *Avoiding Distress*

In the treatise, "Avoiding Distress" (Περὶ ἀλυπίας), Galen offers advice for precisely what the title of the treatise announces, i.e., avoiding distress or suffering.²¹⁰ The rhetorical stance of the text is that of Galen writing to a friend who has observed that Galen himself is

²¹⁰ ἀλυπίας = ἀ-, lack, λύπη, of pain, the latter of which can be either physical or mental, but due to what he says in the treatise, it is here considered to be mental pain, hence "distress." For scholarship on this (relatively) recently discovered treatise, see V. Boudon-Millot, (2008), "Un traite perdu de Galien, miraculeusement retrouve, le "Sur l'inutilité de se chagriner": texte grec et traduction française," in V. Boudon-Millot, A. Guardasole, and C. Magdelaine (eds.), *La science médicale antique: nouveaux regards: études réunies en l'honneur de Jacques Jouanna*, Paris: Beauchesne, 73-124; D. H. Kaufman, (2014), "Galen on the Therapy of Distress and the Limits of Emotional Therapy," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 47: 275-296; S. Xenophontos, (2014), "Psychotherapy and moralising rhetoric in Galen's newly discovered *Avoiding Distress* (*Peri Alypias*)," *Medical history*, 58.4: 585-603, as well as the essays collected in: Clare K. Rothschild and T. W. Thompson (eds.), (2014), *Galen's De indolentia: Essays on a Newly Discovered Letter*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; and C. Petit, (ed.), (2018), *Galen's Treatise Περὶ Ἀλυπίας (De indolentia) in Context: A Tale of Resilience*, Leiden and Boston: Brill.

able to endure distressing events such as the loss of property remarkably well. Galen is trying to explain to his friend, as well as his broader audience of readers, how it is that he does this. He recommends two main ideas for treatment, both of which involve shaping thought processes and the behaviors that follow from them.

The first advice that Galen offers is to find satisfaction in sufficient means for survival, and not to worry about losing a bit or gaining more, so long as those sufficient means are preserved. He gives the following example to illustrate what he means (13 BJP 22 - 14 BJP 9):

[The philosopher Aristippus] had back home four fields, but because of some bad turn in his affairs, he lost one, so that he then had three. One of his fellow-citizens was eager to commiserate with him when they met, but Aristippus said with a laugh: ‘Why should you commiserate with me for having three fields when you haven’t even one? Or should I commiserate with you?’, showing very neatly what you have often heard me say, that one should not focus on what has been lost.²¹¹

The idea that Galen wants to convey with this anecdote is that it is better to focus on appreciating what one already has, as long as it is sufficient. In Aristippus’s case, three fields are more than sufficient for supplying his basic needs, so he laughs when his colleague thinks he deserves pity—especially when that colleague apparently has not even one field for himself. He goes on to warn against wanting more than is sufficient, since this can easily lead to endless desire for more and more, such is the nature of desire as something that can never be satisfied (14 BJP 11-17, more on this below).

²¹¹ The Greek text reads: τέσσαρας ἔχων ἀγροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς πατρίδος, ἕνα κατὰ τινα περίστασιν τῶν πραγμάτων ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπώλεσεν ὡς λοιπὸν ἔχειν τρεῖς. ἀπαντήσας οὖν τις τῶν πολιτῶν οἷος ἦν ἐπὶ τῇ ζημίᾳ συλλυπεῖσθαι <...>, γελάσας οὖν ὁ Ἀριστιππος ἔφη· τί μᾶλλον ἐμοὶ συλλυπήσῃ τρεῖς ἀγροὺς ἔχοντι τοιοῦτους οἷον μόνον αὐτὸς < οὐκ > ἔχεις; ἢ ἐγὼ σοὶ συλλυπήσομαι; πάνυ καλῶς ἐνδεικνύμενος ὁ πολλακίς ἤκουσας [*n.b. Boudon-Millot printed this with a rough breathing mark at the start, ἤκουσας, but it is a second-person singular aorist form of the verb ἀκούω and should have a soft breathing mark*] παρ’ ἐμοῦ λεγόμενον ὡς οὐ χρὴ πρὸς τι τῶν ἀπολλυμένων ἐμβλέπειν.

Regarding what counts as sufficient, Galen identifies three basic material needs: food, water, and shelter (24 BJP 1-2). Along with these he mentions in at least one passage the importance of bodily health: he comments that he would rather avoid breaking his skull (22 BJP 11-12), and writes “I am keenly aware that I depend on the quality of the condition of my body and my soul” (22 BJP 16-17).²¹² Regarding the soul, he indicates that people have mental and emotional needs, such as friendship and intellectual stimulation that are part of the sufficient conditions of a life free from distress (24 BJP 5-10). And the last thing that he specifically mentions is homeland, the loss of which (for example, when one is sent into exile) he would surely find distressing (22 BJP 2-3). This final point signifies the importance of community, or place where one lives and belongs, as part of living a good life. This list is not exhaustive; the specific examples Galen gives are meant to be types of things that are important, but they are not meant to be the only such things that could possibly have value.²¹³ But still, for Galen, self-sufficiency can be met with relatively few goods: nourishment, shelter, bodily health, friendship, mental stimulation, and community.²¹⁴

In practice—i.e., what this kind of treatment entails—to appreciate what one already has means going through the kinds of reflections that Galen demonstrates in the text:

²¹² The Greek text reads: *Ἀισθάνομαι γὰρ ἀκριβῶς ἐγὼ παρακολουθῶν τῇ ποιότητι τῆς ἐμῆς ἕξεως ἢν ἔχω κατὰ τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν.*

²¹³ N.b. Galen even refers to “other similar things” (22 BJP 4), making explicit the idea that the things he points to are meant to be examples rather than universal requirements.

²¹⁴ We ought also to keep in mind that Galen is writing for a rather elite audience who possessed a good deal more than they needed for basic survival. Galen notably does not exhort them to give their possessions up or redistribute them in any way. I mention this because there is a certain rhetorical trope or kind of performative self-sufficiency in ancient philosophy, of which Galen’s advice seems exemplary, as a kind of intellectual exercise for the extremely privileged rather than an actual call to living with the bare minimum. Notably, even in the case of retaining the ability to read, it is not a question of eye-sight: Galen says, “I do not complain about painful troubles provided that they still allow me... to follow what is being read by someone reading to me” (24 BJP 2-9), where that ‘someone reading’ is almost certainly an enslaved person. Though he praises Diogenes the Cynic, the famous example of an actually impoverished philosopher, he does not actually recommend that people give up their possessions and live like him.

acknowledging that what you have is sufficient for meeting your needs, recalling that people who start wanting more often cannot stop, and that it is the nature of desire that it will always grow and lead to dissatisfaction, and thus reaffirming that one's own sufficient possessions are the right thing to take satisfaction in. Galen does not specifically say that this is what one ought to do in order to develop an appreciation of one's own sufficient means. But through reading the text, we follow Galen's own reasoning processes and the idea is to be persuaded by his arguments and internalize them in one's own thought processes.²¹⁵ So, that is Galen's first piece of advice: appreciate what you have, so long as it is sufficient.

The second piece of advice that he offers is more concrete: one ought to spend time imagining the worst possible things that could happen. To convey this, Galen quotes the following lines, which he attributes to Theseus in a (now lost) play of Euripides (17 BJP 4-9 and 23 BJP 6-11):

As I once learned from a wise man,
I fell to considering disasters constantly,
Adding for myself exile from my native land,
Untimely deaths and other ways of misfortune,
So that, should I ever suffer any of what I was imagining,
It might not gnaw at my soul because it was a novel arrival.²¹⁶

Galen thinks that a meditation practice, as represented in these lines, will enable one to face any suffering without distress, since it will not come as a surprise. Galen also argues

²¹⁵ There is also something important about writing and reading the thought processes in a text. The end of the treatise breaks off with an anecdote about how Galen, when confronted with someone offering advice that contradicted his own, rushes off to write a new text on money-lovers (25 BJP 15 – 26 BJP 2). It seems that his writing practice is both important for sharing what he thinks is the truth of his own ideas and disproving others who contradict him, but also as a way of refreshing and reaffirming his stance for himself. In other words, writing is a way to practice philosophy by being in dialogue with oneself through a reasoning process, and thus repeat and strengthen those processes. We might also compare Galen's advice to modern practices of mindfulness and CBT, in which the idea is to become aware of one's triggers and behaviors, and the thought processes associated with them, in order to intervene and develop new patterns of thought and behavior.

²¹⁶ The Greek text reads: ἐγὼ δὲ παρὰ σοφοῦ τινος μαθὼν / εἰς φροντίδας καὶ συμφορὰς ἐβαλλόμεν, / φυγὰς τ' ἐμαντῶ προστιθεὶς πάτρας ἐμῆς / θανάτους τε ἀώρους καὶ κακῶν ἄλλας ὁδοῦς, / ἴν' εἴ τι πάσχοιμι ὧν ἐδόξαζόν ποτε, / μή μοι νεῶρες προσπεσὼν ψυχὴν δάκοι.

that such a person will be able to withstand bad things that are less than the worst possible scenario: in spending so much time imagining the worst, anything less than that will appear not so bad. On this point, he comments, “When someone expected to be sent to a desert island with the total loss of everything he had, he prepared himself to bear it, and, if he lost only a part, he was not going to be distressed since he was not deprived of the rest” (18 BJP 9-13).²¹⁷ The specifics mentioned here—the idea of exile to a desert island and loss of everything—were very real possibilities at a certain moment in Galen’s life. Despite his relative affluence and stability, during the reign of Commodus (Marcus Aurelius’s son), there was a lot of insecurity among elites because of the emperor’s total power and caprice. Many feared that the emperor might decide he disliked them, or simply want to do away with them on a whim. To withstand such potential turns of fate, Galen claims that Theseus’s speech offers the greatest, most helpful training (23 BJP 12-13).

One last important thing to note about Galen’s position is that, while he wants to offer advice about avoiding distress, he does not think that all distress can be avoided or that one ought to pretend to be able to avoid it entirely (21 BJP 6-11). Here, Galen is distinguishing his position from that of other prominent ancient philosophical schools, such as Stoicism and Epicureanism, which promoted a state of non-disturbance (*ataraxia*) as the ideal. For Stoics, this might be in terms of self-control against being moved by anything in the world; for Epicureans, this might involve a withdrawal from society. All of their work towards achieving a state of non-disturbance and complete lack of distress is unrealistic and even undesirable according to Galen. As he says, “Some people consider that remaining

²¹⁷ The Greek text reads: ὅπου δ’ εἰς νῆσον τοιαύτην τις πεμφθῆναι προσδοκῆσας αὐτῇ πάντων ἀπωλεία τούτων ὧν εἶχε, παρεσκεύασεν ἑαυτὸν ἀνασχέσθαι, εἴ που κατὰ μέρος ἀπολέσας, (μη)δενὸς τῶν ἄλλων κτημάτων ἀφαιρεθείς, < οὐκ > ἐμελλε λυπηθῆσεσθαι.

undisturbed is something good, although I know that neither I nor any other human being nor any animal supports this, for I see all of them wishing to be actively engaged in both mind and body” (21 BJP 7-10).²¹⁸ To promote being totally undisturbed and deny this natural desire for engagement—this, for Galen, would mean not living a fully human life. Galen’s position implies that there are certain events which, if they were to occur, would naturally cause distress. Examples of this are included in the things outlined above regarding what is necessary to count as sufficient: food, water, shelter, bodily health, friendship, mental stimulation, homeland. One should try to the best of their ability to preserve these, but in the end, if they happen, one must perhaps endure, but without pretending not to be distressed. Indeed, for Galen, it is only appropriate to feel distressed, since, these are the things that Galen thinks are necessary for a meaningful life. So, despite Galen’s praise of self-sufficiency that might appear to render life somewhat bleak, he actually can be interpreted as presenting a vision that takes seriously the active engagement of body, mind, and community in creating a meaningful life.

* * *

How does this all, and particularly the recommendations regarding treatment, pertain to addiction? The key take-away in this regard is the notion of daily practices that build habits that allow someone to have control over their inner life. Both of Galen’s recommendations—appreciating what one has, and imagining the worst that could happen—involve thoughts that

²¹⁸ The Greek text reads: Τὴν γὰρ ἀσχλ<ης>ίαν τινὲς ἀγαθὸν νομίζουσιν ὃ οὔτε ἐμαυτὸν οὔτε ἄλλον ἄνθρωπον οὔτε ζῷον [n.b. Boudon-Millot prints this with an acute accent on the omega rather than a circumflex, but it ought to be the latter given the short vowel that follows] τι φέρον οἶδα. Πάντα γὰρ ἐνεργεῖν ὁρῶ βουλόμενα [n.b. Boudon-Millot incorrectly prints this with the accent on the penultimate epsilon rather than the antepenultimate omicron] καὶ κατὰ σῶμα καὶ κατὰ ψυχὴν.

one should return to every day in attempt to build up mental resilience. Insofar as they involve thought processes that one practices every day, this is a form of cognitive therapy.²¹⁹

One important assumption in Galen's recommendation of this type of treatment is the priority of the rational part of the soul over the other parts, the spirited and the appetitive. Galen adopts the Platonic tripartite division of the soul and its associated hierarchy. Though he does not specifically spell out the divisions in this treatise, his assumption of them is evident. This can be seen towards the end of the text, when Galen synthesizes what he has previously said about the importance of avoiding pleasures beyond what is sufficient and not allowing one's desire for more take control. He writes (24 BJP 14-25 BJP 10),

Those who are thereby enslaved [by concern for food, dress, and sex] are compelled to require even more money. If they are not rich, they first feed and groan day and night, and then are forced to remain awake at night, looking for means whereby to fulfill their desires; if they do not find them, they howl, and if they do, they are not satisfied, and thus descend to this extremely wretched existence because of their insatiable desires. Who then are not distressed like most people? Those who have only a moderate attachment to esteem, wealth, reputation and political power; but where someone is found with an immoderate attachment to them, he is condemned to the most unfortunate existence, knowing nothing about the virtue of the soul or its dominance.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Indeed, compare Galen's recommendation for envisioning the worst to exercises used in contemporary cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) such as writing out one's fears/expectations or managing catastrophic thought patterns and emotional reactions by thinking through the best-case scenario, worst case scenario, and the most realistic scenario. These practices are not quite the same as what Galen advises, but they both involve a similar process of going through a series of thoughts in order to manage one's reactions. There is, of course, some connection between the two: both Galen and the modern developer of CBT have read and were variously influenced by Stoicism, which is where this kind of thought training often gets traced back to.

²²⁰ The Greek text reads: οἷς οἱ δουλεύοντες ἀναγκάζονται δεῖσθαι χρημάτων πλείονων. Εἰ [τε] δὲ μὴ πλουτοῦσι, πρῶτον οἰμώζουσι καὶ στένουσι μεθ' ἡμέραν καὶ νύκτα, εἴτ' ἐξ ὧν ἀπορήσουσιν ὡς ἐμπλίπαι τὰς ἐπιθυμίας σκοπούμενοι, δι' ὅλων τῶν νυκτῶν ἀγρυπνεῖν ἀναγκάζονται, καὶ μὴ τυχόντες μὲν αὐτῶν ὀλοφύρονται, τυχόντες δὲ οὐκ ἐμπίπαι, τοῦτο δὲ τῷ μοχθηροτέρῳ βίῳ περιπίπτουσι ταῖς ἀπλήστοις ἐπιθυμίαις. Προσγίγνονταί τινες οὖν, οὐχ ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ λυποῦνται, οἱ μετρίως ἄπτονται τιμῆς καὶ πλούτου καὶ δόξης καὶ δυνάμεως πολιτικῆς · ὧ<ν> γὰρ <ἐ>άν τούτων εὐρεθῆ τις ἀμέτρως, κακοδαιμονέστατα βιοῦν ἀναγκάζεται, ψυχῆς μὲν ἀρετὴν μηδὲ τὴν ἀρχὴν [n.b. Boudon-Millot incorrectly prints this with the accent on the first syllable rather than the second/last] ὅλως τίς ἐστὶν ἐπιστάμενος.

This passage most clearly articulates the different parts of the soul, and how the two lower parts interact and feed off of each other, and the need for reason to be in control. The appetitive part of the soul is what is concerned with appetites for food and sex. Here, we also hear of clothes and money. Money is at first added as a requirement for satisfying more basic desires, but then Galen claims that wealth, along with esteem, reputation, and political power, also have the potential to generate insatiable desires themselves. These second types of attachment are generally identified with the spirited part of the soul—that which is concerned with ambition, pride, reputation, gets angry at perceived slights, has courage to hold face, and so on. Both appetites for food, clothes, sex, money, and spirited desires for wealth, reputation, and power—both of these motivations from the two lower parts of the soul can be insatiable, lead to dissatisfaction, and thus need to be kept in check by reason. This is suggested in the final clause of the passage quoted above, when Galen mentions “the virtue of the soul and its dominance.”²²¹ The person who lives a life of pleasure or who allows their ambitions or desires to grow strong in their soul does not know rational control. Instead, they are stuck in an endless cycle of desire. Galen repeatedly stresses the insatiability of such desires: they can never be fulfilled and trying to do so will always leave one dissatisfied and potentially distressed. It is only by keeping these in check by enabling reason to rule, convincing oneself that simple means are sufficient and so on, that one can actually be satisfied and not distressed.

How useful is this advice for someone experiencing addictive behavior—i.e., someone whose cravings do, indeed, feel insatiable, who is stuck in that seemingly endless

²²¹ Here, there is something a bit confusing because Galen just refers to the soul, not its different parts, and so we might assume he is simply talking about the dominance of the soul over the body. However, given the close association between the body and the two lower parts of the soul, as well as the standard line in Platonic thought about the dominance of the rational part of the soul over the other two, his mention of the soul here is a kind of synecdoche. It stands for the rational part of the soul and its control over the lower parts.

cycle of desire? Is it really useful to hear that they simply should not be in this cycle?²²² To such a person, Galen's advice may simply sound impossible. This raises a major objection that Galen's advice is in fact not meant for anyone who is actually suffering, but only for the already wealthy and relatively healthy, not for those presently experiencing addictions. Galen himself mentions something along these lines in the middle of the treatise: he writes, regarding the Euripides advice (the practice of constantly imagining the worst possible scenario): "This prescription cannot be given to those with no natural aptitude for courage or without an excellent education, which a generous fate vouchsafed to me" (18 BJP 16-19).²²³ He is explicitly saying that his advice is not meant for someone without certain natural attitudes or education. This presumably limits Galen's intended audience to a select few—maybe even just himself.²²⁴

While these statement that his advice is not meant for those without natural courage and a good education cannot be ignored, I do not think that this necessarily means that he has nothing to say regarding the treatment of those caught in addictive cycles. Instead, his

²²² This is not necessarily a critique about addiction treatment exclusive to Galen. A similar disconnect between the condition being experienced (being addicted) and the treatment recommended (not to become addicted in the first place) can be seen in contemporary discourse about addiction as well. For example, this news article's headline announces a new way to treat behavioral gaming addiction (which ends up being a new CBT method), while the article concludes on the note that the treatment was not found to reduce incidence rate so the best thing to do is to try to avoid the addiction from the start: David Nield, (2022, February 22), "Good News: There's an Effective Way to Treat Gaming And Internet Addiction in Teens," *Science Alert*, <https://www.sciencealert.com/good-news-there-s-an-effective-way-to-treat-gaming-and-internet-addiction-in-teens>.

²²³ The Greek text reads: Τοῦτο δ' οὐ δύναται προσγενέσθαι τοῖς μὴ πεφυκόσιν [*n.b. Boudon-Millot incorrectly prints this with the accent on the upsilon rather than the omicron*] εὖ πρὸς ἀνδρείαν, μήτ' ἀρίστη παιδεία διαχρησαμένοις ἢν ἐμοὶ προξένησε τύχη τις ἀγαθὴ ὅσπερ καὶ σὺ παιδευθεὶς σὺν ἡμῖν οἶσθα ὁποῖον.

²²⁴ In fact, I think it is plausible to interpret the entire treatise as a treatment he is giving to himself in order to stay healthy, rational, satisfied. He is more than happy to describe how his own disposition, inherited from his father and grandfather, has set him up well. That, alongside the excellent training that he received from his father as an ideal, virtuous role model, set Galen up for success in life. Then, according to his own program, it is simply a question of him continuing the success through his daily practices, such as writing and reminding himself of rational thoughts, that he, and anyone so lucky as to be like him, will continue to lead a successful life, free from distress.

suggestions for daily practices seem broadly applicable: through attending to something every day, one can make an improvement over what has gone before. Moreover, unlike some of the other Hellenistic philosophical schools that involved a long philosophical training and/or withdrawal from society, Galen's treatments can be accessed by basically everyone. It is just a question of beginning patterns and habits, and putting the effort into practicing this every day. And this, according to Galen's own experience, works.

Thus, for the person suffering from an addiction, Galen's treatment might sound similar to advice given today for addiction management and harm reduction: Start small. Make realistic goals. Know that there will be set backs. Press on to develop daily practices that will help strengthen reason, weaken cravings, and enable you to realize that you already have everything you need.

We might continue to press further with this analysis of "Avoiding Distress": what about cases of addiction as a coping mechanism for those who do not, in fact, have everything they need? Would these addictions be examples of finding a way to endure a justifiably distressing scenario? Or would their inability to display endurance (24 BJP 10) be condemned by Galen? And so on. For now, I think that we have drawn what we can from this text, and there are three more to look at. So, let's keep these questions in mind as we move to the next, "Character Traits."

3.2 Character Traits

In his treatise on "Character Traits," Galen offers further advice on how to avoid bad habits and instead develop healthy ones.²²⁵ This is relevant to addiction, given recent trends

²²⁵ For some discussion of this text in scholarship: D. Kaufman, (2017), "Galen on Reason and Appetite: A Study of the *De Moribus*," *Apeiron*, 50.3: 367-392; and L. Lin, (2018), "Galen on *to kalon* and *to agathon* in *De*

to conceive of addictive behaviors as a certain type of habit, as actions that develop over time into rigidly fixed patterns of action (whether those are inscribed in biology or not).²²⁶ Though Galen does not specifically address addiction or raise specific examples of addictive behaviors in this text, he again offers practical advice that is relevant to treating addictions.

At the outset of this text, Galen makes an important conceptual distinction that underlies much of what he says throughout the rest of the text (25 Kr. 1 – 26 Kr. 5). He distinguishes between intended actions and behaviors on the one hand, and those done without consideration or choice, on the other. The former are actions that follow from deliberate decisions. For example, I am thinking about what I ought to say in this sentence, and once I decide on the right wording, then I type it into my keyboard—writing can be seen as an intentional action. By contrast, there are also those actions that arise from one’s character traits, without specific thought beforehand. For example, when writing a first draft, I have a tendency to describe how things “seem,” rather than asserting how they are: e.g., a first version of that sentence would read: “I seem to have a tendency,” “Galen seems to make

moribus.” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 58.1: 77-101. Also note that this text is thought to be a summary (“epitome”) of Galen’s original text and is only transmitted to us in Arabic, which I do not know, so I am relying on the English translation throughout this section.

²²⁶ As in, D. Walton, (1960), “Drug Addiction and Habit Formation—An Attempted Integration,” *Journal of Mental Science*, 106.445: 1195-1229; G. Messinis, (1999), “Habit formation and the theory of addiction,” *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 13.4: 417-442; David Courtwright, (2001), *Forces of habit: Drugs and the making of the modern world*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press and id., (2019), *The Age of Addiction: How Bad Habits Became Big Business*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.; Marc Lewis, (2015), *The biology of desire: why addiction is not a disease*, Melbourne: Scribe Publications; X. Barandiaran and E. Di Paolo, (2014), “A genealogical map of the concept of habit,” *Frontiers In Human Neuroscience* 8.522: 1-7; J. Bernacer and J. Murillo, (2014), “The Aristotelian conception of habit and its contribution to human neuroscience,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 8.883: 1-10.; S. Ramírez-Vizcaya and T. Froese, (2019), “The Enactive Approach to Habits: New Concepts for the Cognitive Science of Bad Habits and Addiction,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 10.301: 1-1; Wendy Wood, (2019), *Good Habits, Bad Habits: The Science of Making Positive Changes That Stick*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; J. Brewer, (2017), *The Craving Mind: From cigarettes to smartphones to love—why we get hooked and how we can break bad habits*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press; and id., (2021), *Unwinding Anxiety: New Science Shows How to Break the Cycles of Worry and Fear to Heal Your Mind*, New York: Penguin Publishing Group.

xyz distinction,” “Plato seems to suggest,” etc. This periphrastic hesitance *seems* to be due to some characteristic uncertainty and/or skepticism on my part. In any case, Galen defines such character traits as those states of soul that lead one to perform actions without consideration or choice (25 Kr. 4-5). These come either “naturally”—they are something someone is born with—or through the development of habits (31 Kr. 1-6). Habits themselves may start out as intended behaviors based on deliberate decisions, but over time, they become reflexive, automatic behaviors, that come to reflect character traits—i.e., the states of one’s soul in relation to that action. So, we have intentional actions and characteristic actions, and the latter arise either through one’s natural disposition or through habits that become like a “second nature.”²²⁷

The first thing to note regarding Galen’s advice about habits and character traits is that, like in the previous text (“Avoiding Distress”), Galen aims to cultivate rational control over the appetites, with the help of the spirit (esp. 39 Kr. 11-12 but see all of book II-III). (Throughout the text, Galen uses the same tripartite division of the soul into the rational, spirited, and appetitive parts.) In order to live a good and healthy life, Galen thinks that

²²⁷ With this conception of habit, Galen is picking up on and responding to the long tradition in ancient philosophy of discussing habits, which goes back to Plato in some ways, but is most commonly traced back to Aristotle’s discussions in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Rhetoric*. From the latter comes the canonical idea of habit as a second nature (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.11 1370a4-8: καὶ γὰρ τὸ εἰθισμένον ὥσπερ πεφυκὸς ἤδη γίγνεται: ὁμοιον γὰρ τι τὸ ἔθος τῆ φύσει / “as soon as a thing becomes habitual, it is just as if it were natural; for habit is similar to nature”). On Aristotle’s concept of habit as second nature, see: T. C. Lockwood, (2013), “Habituation, habit, and character in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*,” in T. Sparrow and A. Hutchinson (eds.), *A history of habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 19-36; R. Chiaradonna and F. Farina, (2022), “Aristotle on (Second) Nature, Habit and Character,” in Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Liberal Naturalism*, New York: Routledge.

Note also that Galen also wrote a separate, short treatise, *On Habit*. In it, he argued for the material basis of habits, in terms of how the body assimilates itself to the food that one ingests and the environment that one inhabits. (A notion shared in “Character Traits, as in: “Everything that takes in nourishment attracts the thing resembling it in its constitution, then assimilates it and unites it with itself” (35 Kr. 6-7).) This notion is interesting to compare to the idea of tolerance in addiction, that is, how the body becomes used to certain substances and requires a greater quantity in order to have the same kind of novel, pleasurable effect as first experienced.

reason must rule and direct one's actions. Reason's control allows one to pursue knowledge and understanding of oneself and the world, and employ this knowledge to bring oneself into harmony with the world. For him, what is harmonious also corresponds to or leads to what is beautiful, healthy, and good, which are the proper aims of a human life. Appetites, however, distract us from these pursuits, leading us instead towards pleasures. Galen thinks that reason cannot control appetites using its own strength; it also needs the help of the spirit to overpower the appetites. The task of someone who wants to live a healthy and virtuous life is, thus, to develop the strength of reason, the obedience of the spirit to reason, and to weaken the appetites.

Galen has a few ideas about how to strengthen reason and weaken the appetites.²²⁸ In general, the movement of a given part will increase its strength, while inactivity will decrease its strength (recall Timaeus's ideas in this direction) (39-42 Kr.). Galen thinks that one needs to exercise reason and spirit in order to cultivate them. For the rational part of the soul, this exercise should come in the form of studying different branches of math (geometry, arithmetic, calculus), astronomy, and music (just as in Plato's *Timaeus*) (42 Kr. 20 – 44 Kr. 16). Again, these are all subjects that are rationally organized: the harmonies in music correspond to specific ratios, which can also be found in the movement of the planets and other celestial objects, and so on. Studying them will thus allow one to practice rational understanding.

In complement to the strength of reason, a person striving towards goodness also needs to weaken their appetites. This can be accomplished through a few different methods.

²²⁸ N.b. the training of the spirited part of the soul is not fully addressed in this treatise. Galen does comment that Music can also be used to train the spirit to either be stronger or weaker, depending on what amount of strength it started out from, though he does not specify how exactly this works. He just notes that the rational soul ought to study this and come to understand it (55 Kr. 10-13). More on the training of the spirit appears in his text on the "Affections and Errors of the Soul"—see below, section 3.3.

One way is to deprive the appetites from gaining satisfaction by changing aspects of the environment. Galen describes this using an image of a hunter, dog, and a beast that they are trying to control (42 Kr. 10-19):

I shall give you an example to illustrate how the soul is controlled; imagine a hunter and a dog bound to a strong beast that is greedy to devour that which it sees and can reach. It is so strong that it sometimes drags the hunter and the dog [with it]. The hunter wishes to climb up to a very fine elevated place, but the beast drags him towards what it covets, thereby preventing him from what he wants [to do]. The hunter thinks that he must contrive to increase his own and his dog's strength and to weaken the beast, and he devises the [following] stratagem; he watches [the beast] until it goes to sleep, and then drives away from its vicinity all that excites its desire when it sees it, so that when it wakes up it finds nothing but a little grass that stems its hunger but no more. Then he trains himself and his dog in everything that increases their combined strength. When [the beast] becomes weak and its greed is broken he accustoms it to lessen its pursuit of what it wants, until it is so weak that it follows him and his dog when they pull it, by means of this training, wherever he wishes. When he has dragged it as far as that fine high place, he has attained the virtue of controlling his soul.

The beast is very strong and domineering; it wants to eat everything all the time. The hunter develops a strategy to wait until it has fallen asleep and then clears the space of everything the beast might want to eat. When it wakes up, the beast cannot satisfy its cravings and, over time, it becomes weaker and weaker. This image is meant to be a representation of using the power of reason (the hunter) to develop tricks and strategies to weaken and control unruly appetites (the beast).²²⁹ A comparable, modern example might be the following: if someone constantly craves chocolate, Galen would recommend not keeping chocolate in an easily accessible location. Instead, it should be removed from one's desk/office/kitchen/etc. so that there is no obvious temptation and it will not be possible to satisfy the appetites when they arise. Overall, the idea is that changing the environment to prevent the satisfaction of the

²²⁹ Note, again, Galen does not really specify what the dog/spirit does in this example.

appetites will lead, over time, to appetite becoming weak through inactivity, and thus able to be controlled by reason.

In addition to generally depriving the appetites of satisfaction, Galen also thinks that it is important for reason to control the timing of the appetites' satisfaction. For example, he writes (41 Kr. 15-17):

The intelligent person does not eat only when he is hungry, like an unthinking animal, but will take in food if his body needs nourishment, although he is not hungry; if he is hungry, but it is not the proper time [to eat], he will postpone it. He behaves in the same way with regard to drinking and sexual intercourse.

We might imagine that the rational part ought to develop a rule: only eat at X o'clock, and then practice acting in accordance of that rule by using spirit to resist hunger when it occurs, or eat at that time even if you are not hungry, simply because it is appropriate. Galen also underscores the importance of proportion in satisfying the appetites. He writes (27 Kr. 7-9),

When pleasure passes [the bounds] of moderation it becomes harmful and it is the activity of the rational soul to reform it by regulating it and determining the times that may be devoted to it.

Notice the importance of timing, once again. Here, though Galen does not give a specific measure, he clearly thinks that moderation represents a healthy proportion, and excess or passing the bounds of moderation is harmful. We might recall his concern with the insatiability of appetites in "Avoiding Distress": pursuing appetites gives you a false goal, since they can never be satisfied, and if you want to be satisfied in life, it is better to restrict desire to something moderate and achievable (recall "self-sufficiency").²³⁰

²³⁰ Galen returns to the importance of proportion at the end of the treatise, when he comments that "Whoever loves everything in proportion to its deserts deserves praise, and whoever exceeds or falls short [of this proportion] deserves blame" (48 Kr. 22-49 Kr. 2). He gives a linguistic example to justify his point. He says there are different kinds of words used for someone who loves in proportion versus in excess. Someone who loves horses in proportion is called a *philhippos* (φίλιππος) whereas someone who loves them in excess is said to be *hippomanes* (ἵππομανές) (49 Kr.). Galen is making almost the exact opposite point I made in chapter 2 regarding *phil-* compounds signifying excessive love. Galen's comment reveals that, at least by his time, a

A final piece of tangible advice that Galen offers for developing good habits is to avoid keeping company with people that have bad habits, since it is easy to adopt their behaviors as one's own. He writes, "a person should not only be content with not accustoming his soul to bad habits, but should also not associate with those who are accustomed to them. When he sees those who do something he [too] acquires the habit" (49 Kr. 22-50 Kr. 2). A similar logic seems to be at work here as in the point above about removing temptations from one's environment. There, the idea was to clear the environment of tempting things that would encourage appetites. Here, it seems to be to keep the environment clear of other people whose "bad behavior" (e.g., in satisfying their own excessive appetites) might lead to you adopting the same behavior. This piece of advice again points to Galen's belief in the power of the appetites to dominate, if given the chance. Even the slightest trigger, like seeing someone else behave a certain way, can lead the appetites to take control. Overall, for Galen, it is very important to set up one's environment in such a way that it is free of temptations, both in terms of materials and other people. This underscores the importance of context in the development of habits—according to this way of thinking, habits are not simply a question of individual willpower and dedication, isolated from context, but one's environment and community matter a lot for how habits develop.

One last thing to note regarding Galen's "Character Traits": though he seems relatively optimistic about using habits to develop good character traits, he does again think there are limits. For him, some people are simply born with bad characters, as can be witnessed from their behavior in early childhood (28 Kr. 5). It is also the case that, for older

distinction had emerged, according to which *phil-* compounds were used to describe a moderate passion, whereas compounds ending in or related to *mania* were used for the more excessive passions.

people who have practiced certain habits for a long time, it is extremely hard to change those habits; they are much easier to change in a young person (31 Kr. 5-9). Despite these natural and developed limitations, there does still seem to be room in Galen's account for everyone to make improvements. Even if one cannot go the full way, even a small improvement towards these goods is worth it, in Galen's eyes.²³¹

3.3 Diagnosis & Treatment of the Affections & Errors Peculiar to Each Person's Soul

The next text to consider is "The Diagnosis and Treatment of the Affections and Errors Particular to Each Person's Soul" (commonly abbreviated to "Affections and Errors" or "Passions and Errors").²³² In this text, Galen highlights the distinction between actions (things that one does) and affections or passions (things that are done to one). The word for the latter, πάθος, is also the term that was used to cover most of the feelings that we describe as emotions, though the two categories do not perfectly overlap. It is the latter topic (affections) that occupies the first half of this treatise; in this, Galen synthesizes and builds on

²³¹ On natural limitations, for example, Galen writes, "someone who is, by nature, extremely cowardly and greedy will not, by means of education, become extremely brave and abstemious"—but (we can deduce) they can still become less cowardly and less greedy (28 Kr. 12-14). Note also that these are just some of the interesting points of advice Galen offers in "Character Traits." He also has advice about how to start by developing one's own virtue, and then turning to others close-by, before expanding one's impact as widely as possible (39 Kr. 12-14). And he believes in teaching through precepts/doctrines as well as through personal exemplarity (39 Kr. 14-15). Lastly, it might be worth noting that Galen does consider that some virtues arise only from the relationship with the body (such as overcoming desire to become temperate and self-controlled, cf. 41 Kr.). This supports the view that Galen thinks the body (as well as the soul) is important to take into account in living a good life.

²³² For some recent scholarship on this text, see: P. Van der Eijk, (2013), "Cure and (In) curability of mental disorders in ancient medical and philosophical thought," in W. Harris (ed.), *Mental disorders in the classical world*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 307-338; D. H. Kaufman, (2014), "Galen on the Therapy of Distress and the Limits of Emotional Therapy," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 47: 275-296; P. N. Singer, (2018), "Galen's Pathological Soul: Diagnosis and Therapy in Ethical and Medical Texts and Contexts," in C. Thumiger and P. N. Singer (eds.), *Mental Illness in Ancient Medicine*, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 381-420; C. Thumiger, (2020), "Therapy of the word and other psychotherapeutic approaches in Ancient Greek medicine," *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 57.6: 741-752.

the ideas he expresses in “Avoiding Distress” and “Character Traits.”²³³ Not only does he reiterate the point that the rational faculty in the soul needs to train the spirit to obey it and help restraint appetites, he also talks again about the insatiability of the appetites and the importance of developing habits to reinforce self-sufficiency. In addition to these points of connection, Galen also introduces the new idea of using a supervisor as part of one’s treatment program to improve and develop good habits.

As we saw in the previous texts, Galen holds that rationality is of utmost importance for one who wishes to live a good and virtuous life. The priority of rationality means putting time into studying and coming to understand the nature of the world and the universe, as well as the nature of the human soul. But knowledge of the soul, especially one’s own, is one of the most difficult tasks, according to Galen. He had actually mentioned this idea in his “Character Traits” that we looked at in the previous section. In that text, he noted how it is hard to recognize our own flaws because of our ideas (delusions?) of our own grandeur (47 Kr. 1-14). Such delusions are easy to come by, since Galen thinks that everyone generally loves themselves, and a lover is general blind to his lover’s faults. On the latter point, he quotes an aphorism from Aesop about how people carry two bags around their necks, one in front and one behind: the one in front carries other people’s flaws, which seem very obvious to an observer, while the one behind carries one’s own flaws, keeping them out of one’s own sight. Galen repeats both of these points in “Affections and Errors” (6 K. = 6 DB 5-15), and also repeatedly states that self-knowledge, especially regarding one’s flaws, is one of the

²³³ Not to suggest that the one is written later than the other two—we do not have sufficient evidence to make the chronology clear—but simply to make an organizational connection: much that is found in the two texts covered in the previous sections is repeated here.

most important but most difficult things to achieve (4 K. = 5 DB 1-20; 34 K. = 23 DB 17-24 DB 2).

Not only is it difficult to know one's own flaws, but no one is exempt from being flawed, according to Galen. As many times as he states the difficulty of knowing one's flaws, he stresses that it is important not to repeat the error of self-love and self-delusion, and think that you yourself do not have any flaws. As he puts it at one point, "all human beings commit countless errors every day, and act under the influence of countless affections, but are not themselves aware of it. So you should not imagine that you are anything other than human, either" (10 K. = 8 DB 18-21).²³⁴ Everyone, according to Galen, is susceptible to make mistakes and act irrationally, and indeed does many times every day.

Part of the reason for this is the nature of the tripartite soul: one part of it is rational, but the other two irrational. These irrational parts are necessary for survival: the appetites ensure we obtain nourishment and grow, while the spirit defends us against wrongs. But the nature of these two parts of soul is to pursue these things without limit. Recall the insatiability of desire in "Avoiding Distress:" the irrational parts of the soul want to obtain whatever they are after (food, money, power), and then even more on top of that. Because they are irrational, they cannot realize that there are no limits to these wants. It is only the rational part of the soul that can realize that these are ultimately unsatisfying as pursuits for a human being and set limits on the other two parts.

Indeed, Galen thinks that it is particularly dangerous—maybe even the most dangerous thing (because of the negative results it leads to)—to leave the irrational parts of the soul unchecked. Regarding appetites in particular, he writes (29 K. = 20 DB 13-17):

²³⁴ The Greek for this reads: ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν μυρία μὲν ἀμαρτάνοντας καὶ κατὰ πάθος πρᾶττοντας, οὐ μὴν αὐτοὺς γε παρακολουθοῦντας, ὥστε μηδὲ σὺ νόμιζε σαυτὸν ἄλλο τι καὶ μὴ ἄνθρωπον εἶναι.

Try to resist the vehemence of this latter capacity [the appetitive], before it gains such strength that it is impossible to remove. At that point **you will be unable to control it even if you want to**, and then you will say—as I have heard someone say who was in love—that **you want to stop but cannot**; you will call on us in vain, as did that person, begging for help and for the excision of his affection.²³⁵

The state of wanting to stop but being unable (which seems like addiction) is one of the worst states to be in, and one of the most difficult to treat, according to Galen. He says that such people are compelled to pursue their appetite and unable to stop or even figure out how to stop, calling for assistance “in vain.” The person who was “begging for help and for the excision of his affection” is a man from Gortyn, Crete, whom Galen describes earlier in the text as someone who was utterly unable to control his anger, despite his shame at the actions he performed in the grip of anger—namely, nearly killing two people he had enslaved, just over a minor issue regarding some luggage (18-20 K. = 13 DB 20 – 15 DB 5). This man felt that he could not control his anger, and he did not know what to do but to ask Galen after the fact to strike him in turn, as a kind of retributive punishment for his bad actions. But to Galen, this misses the point, since it will not eliminate the cause of the behavior in the first place.

The treatment that Galen recommends to this man, and to anyone caught in the grip of an affection and wishing to bring it under control, is to work with a supervisor and to develop good habits (8 K. = 7 DB 10 – 14K. = 11 DB 14). This treatment develops out of the premises outlined above, that everyone has flaws, but they are hard to detect on your own. Galen recommends asking someone else for help in noticing them, someone whose position as an external observer will enable them to notice flaws or errors that you make. This

²³⁵ The Greek text reads: ταύτης οὖν ἐπέχειν πειρῶ τὴν σφοδρότητα, πρὶν αὐξηθεῖσαν ἰσχὺν δυσνίκητον κτήσασθαι. τῆνικαῦτα γὰρ οὐδ’ ἂν θελήσης ἐτι κατασχεῖν αὐτὴν δυνήση, κάπειτα φήσεις, ὅπερ ἤκουσά τινος ἐρῶντος, ἐθέλειν μὲν παύσασθαι, μὴ δύνασθαι δέ, παρακαλέσεις τε μάτην ἡμᾶς ὡσαύτως ἐκείνῳ τῷ δεομένῳ βοηθήσαι τε καὶ τὸ πάθος ἐκκόψαι (emphasis added).

observer role is the primary purpose of the “supervisor,” different from what we might now think of with therapy, as a space to talk through problems and issues. The ideal candidate for the supervisory role is an older man who seems to have lived a good life himself, and who will be willing to help and likely to tell the truth (unlike a flatterer or someone cowardly who might hesitate and thus not be of real help). Galen advises that you should be grateful to this supervisor for their criticisms, even if they seem wrong. Indeed, he makes the point that, even if the supervisor is incorrect, their comments will be helpful because they will cause you to reflect on your actions and in considering whether they have been criticized rightly or wrongly, you will use and strengthen the rational capacity. And ultimately, that is the goal: to strengthen one’s rational capacities and use them to diminish the impact of irrational affections on your life.

Working with a supervisor and coming to know and understand your affections is part one of Galen’s treatment process in “Affections and Errors.” Part two is developing rational habits that will help ensure the control of reason over the irrational parts of the soul. As we saw with the previous two treatises, Galen thinks that strength is developed in different parts of the soul through movement, and weakness can be cultivated through the lack of motion. To strengthen the rational part, one should practice using it every day—constantly, Galen often urges—but at the very least through reminding oneself at the start and end of each day of one’s commitment to reason (24 K. = 17 DB 11-15; 30 K. = 21 DB 5-8). In this respect, Galen mentions his own practice of reading the Pythagorean “Precepts” every morning and evening as his own way of cultivating his rationality (30 K. = 21 DB 8-10). Morning and evening, or whatever other timing works; the important thing for Galen is that one’s commitment to rationality and disdain for irrationality is something that is recalled to the mind as often as possible.

In addition to this daily kind of meditation or thought practices, there are also some practical habits that Galen recommends. For example, anger should be restrained in all of its expressions (cursing, kicking, biting, etc.), but Galen thinks that one should especially never, ever, hit a slave with bare hands (16K. = 12 DB 11ff). This seems like a horrendous example to modern ears (shouldn't the rule rather be: don't ever enslave other human beings?), but with it, Galen is trying to make the following point: striking with bare hands means that you are reacting immediately, rather than, for example, waiting and giving yourself time to find an appropriate tool for striking like a whip or a rod (yikes!). The delay that comes from waiting to find the proper tool gives you time to get out of the immediate heat of the emotion (affection), and give some rational reflection to how you want to act. Thus, rather than acting based on emotion, you will be able to act based on rationality. So never striking a slave is an example of one good habit to adopt, according to Galen. Another example is to keep your door always open at home, so that anyone might be able to walk in at any time and witness what you are doing (26 K. = 18 DB 15-25). Galen thinks this openness will make it so that you will be motivated to act prudently in private, just as your sense of shame would drive you to do while in public. This seems to be a way of mobilizing an affect of the spirit (shame) against other affects (anger, lust, etc.)—an example of how one might train the spirit to obey the rational part of the soul and assist it in controlling the appetitive part. One final example: like in “Character Traits,” Galen suggests paying attention to what kind of company one keeps: “for [an affect] may grow back, nourished by the wickedness of those around us. So we should consider, whenever we observe an affection in our neighbor, whether there is something similar in our own soul too” (36 K. = 25 DB 8-10).²³⁶ Again, Galen is attentive to

²³⁶ The Greek text reads: ἔτι γὰρ ἀναφύεται τῇ τῶν συζώντων ἀρδόμενον πονηρία. διὰ τοῦτο προσεκτέον ἡμῖν αὐτοῖς ἐστὶν ἐφ' ἑκάστῳ τῶν παθῶν, ὅσα περὶ τοὺς πέλας ἐπισκοποῦμεν, εἴ τι κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν ἐστὶ ψυχὴν

the influence that context has on individual behavior through imitation, and advises to surround yourself with similar people in order to develop rational habits.

For Galen, if you devote time and effort into learning from your supervisor and cultivating such habits, self-improvement is bound to follow. This improvement may not come quickly, and it almost certainly will not come easily: it takes hard work, over a long period of time, to bring about good habits. Correlatively, he thinks that, if you have spent a long time practicing bad habits, it will be like “a stain of affection so deep that it is hard to wash out” (25 K. = 18 DB 8), and certainly will not come out easily.²³⁷ Like the man from Gortyn who wanted his bad behavior somehow beaten out of him, Galen thinks that looking for a quick fix or a temporary solution when it comes to habits is the wrong way of thinking about it. Instead, just as it is important to understand the nature of the soul and its different parts, it is important to recognize that it takes time to develop good habits that allow your life and actions be guided by reason. On the whole, Galen is optimistic that if you are committed to making a change and putting in the time and energy that it takes to develop good habits—working at it constantly, every day, throughout your entire life—then you will improve.

τοιοῦτον.

²³⁷ Galen does also talk about certain habits being incurable, either because of someone’s innate tendencies (cf. “Character Traits”), or because the habit has become too deeply entrenched. In “Affections and Errors,” he offers 50 as the age past which he thinks it may be impossible to change one habits, simply due to the fact that habits take such a long time to take hold that, by the age of 40 or 50, old habits will be very strong and new habits may not have enough time to take their place (54 K. = 25 DB 25-27). But Galen is also optimistic: even the 50-year-old can (and ought to, if they care about being a good person) try to change (14 K. = 11 DB 15-20), using the same method as everyone else: gradual development of good habits and diminishment of the power of affections and bad habits.

3.4 *The Capacities of the Soul Depend on the Mixtures of the Body (QAM)*²³⁸

In this fourth and final text from Galen, the focus is on the nature of the relationship between the body and soul.²³⁹ In explaining this, Galen reiterates and expands on his previous advice about treating problems of the soul, such as distress and anger, by developing good habits. As we have seen, Galen thinks that self-improvement is a question not of a quick fix or immediate cure; rather it is a question of developing the right habits and attitudes over time. In some of the previous texts, he focuses on the development of correct cognitive habits: reflecting on and visualizing certain things; coming to the correct understanding of errors; developing correct beliefs.²⁴⁰ By contrast, in this text (“QAM”), Galen devotes his attention to justifying why one also needs to attend to the body in bringing about healthy daily practices. As stated in the title, the main argument of the text is that the soul’s capacities depend on the physical mixtures of the body. Because of this dependence, it is important to have a good mixture in the body in order to bring about a good condition in the soul. Galen states as much at the outset of the text: “we bring about good mixture in the body through

²³⁸ This text is commonly abbreviated as QAM based on the first three words of the Latin title, “**Quod animi mores** corporis temperamenta sequantur.” I will be using that abbreviation throughout this section.

²³⁹ For some scholarship on this text, see: P. De Lacy, (1972), “Galen's Platonism,” *The American Journal of Philology*, 93.1: 27-39; R. J. Hankinson, (1991), “Galen’s Anatomy of the Soul,” *Phronesis*, 36.2: 197-233; P. van der Eijk, (2014), “Galen on the nature of human beings,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, Supplement, 114: 89-134; M. Havrda, (2017), “Body and Cosmos in Galen’s Account of the Soul,” *Phronesis*, 62.1: 69-89; P. Marechal, (2019), “Galen’s Constitutive Materialism,” *Ancient Philosophy*, 39.1: 191-209; R. Vinkesteijn, (2019), “Mixing body and soul: Galen on the substance of soul in *QAM* and *De Propriis Placitis*,” *Phronesis*, 65.2: 224-246; and J. Novoa Lara, (2020), “Embodied Soul and Ensouled Body: Moral Self in Galen’s Account of Soul and Body,” PhD Dissertation, Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

²⁴⁰ Though one could argue for an embodied element to all of these practices (e.g., the reliance on sight in visualizing practices; the importance of interpersonal communication in working with a supervisor; etc.), they are generally understood to be cognitive treatments for problems of the soul, without reference to bodily counterparts, and in this way echoes approaches to treatment found among Stoic philosophers (and modern forms of cognitive therapy). For a brief discussion of Galen’s cognitive vs. bodily treatments, see the Singer’s introduction to Galen’s “Character Traits,” in P. N. Singer (ed.), (2013), *Galen: Psychological Writings*, Cambridge: University Press, 109-134.

what we eat and drink, and also through our daily practices, and from this good mixture will achieve virtue for the soul” (768 K. = 32 M. 9-11).²⁴¹

What does this mean in practice? Galen does not quite spell this out. In fact, there is more specific advice in the other texts we have looked at, like his advice to eat in moderation in “Character Traits.” In “QAM,” we only get the idea that treatment must involve attention to food, drink, and daily practices. The absence of more specifics is in part due to the fact that most of the text is devoted to justifying his thesis that the capacities of the soul depend on the body and its mixtures.²⁴² Galen spends some time articulating what this means—e.g., what a capacity is, how this relates to traditional Platonic positions on the nature of the soul as immortal, and what are some of the ethical implications of his position regarding praise and blame. But most of the text is devoted to presenting evidence—examples from literature, other philosophical authors, as well as Galen’s own life and his medical practice—that support his position. The examples he gives offer some insights into ancient understandings of various substances, including addictive substances like wine, as well as Galen’s theory of mixtures, so I want to examine a few.

Galen offers several instances of things that are generally taken to be strictly psychological, but that are in fact dependent on the body. For example, he points out that different physical conditions in the body such as the buildup of different fluids results in different mental conditions (777K. = 39 M. 13-18):

²⁴¹ The Greek text: διὰ τῶν ἐδεσμάτων τε καὶ πομάτων ἔτι τε τῶν ὁσημέραι πραττομένων εὐκρασίαν ἐργαζόμεθα κακὰ ταύτης εἰς ἀρετὴν τῆ ψυχῆ συντελέσομεν.

²⁴² A note about terminology and some of the distinctions: Galen generally speaks in terms of the capacities of the soul depending on the mixtures of the body, but he sometimes refers to this in different ways. These distinctions have raised some interesting scholarly questions, but they do not necessarily make a huge difference to my topic right now, so I generally just refer to the soul and/or its capacities as the thing(s) which depend on the body/its mixtures.

I have not yet discovered why when there is a build-up of yellow bile in the brain we are brought into a state of derangement; or when there is a build-up of black bile, into melancholy; or why phlegm, and cooling things as a whole, are causative of lethargy—which then result in our suffering damage to the memory and understanding.²⁴³

Derangement, melancholy, lethargy—these are all mental states or types of conscious experience caused by physical changes. They also have damaging effects on mental capacities such as memory and understanding. For Galen, this shows that the physical materials of the body have a clear impact on the soul.

Where the different kinds of bile come from depends, in part, on what we consume. Galen notes that consuming certain substances has the ability to change one's mood and mental capacities. For example, he cites drinking a substance called *mōrion* (μώριον) as bringing about stupefaction, saying “its name, even, is related to the affection that we observe that the body undergoes” (μωρία, folly) (777 K. = 39 M. 17-20).²⁴⁴ He also notes several common uses of wine. It can alter emotional state by, for example, relieving distress and sorrow, as many examples from poetry show (777 K. = 39 M. 21 – 778 K. 40 M. 22). It also has beneficial effects on some of the body's physical processes, such as digestion, distribution, blood-production, and nutrition, which seems to correlate somehow with psychological changes: “it also makes our souls gentler, and braver, too—which is, of course, by means of the mixture in the body, which is itself brought about by means of the humors”

²⁴³ The Greek text reads: οὐχ εὔρον ὡσπερ γ' οὐδὲ διὰ τί χολῆς μὲν ξανθῆς ἐν ἐγκεφάλῳ πλεοναζούσης εἰς παραφροσύνην ἐλκόμεθα, διὰ τί δὲ τῆς μελαίνης εἰς μελαγχολίαν, διὰ τί δὲ τὸ φλέγμα καὶ ὄλωσ τὰ ψυκτικὰ παρα[ιτί]α [n.b. the Mueller edition reads παραίτια, but the accent should in fact be on the penultimate syllable] ληθάργων, ἐξ ὧν καὶ μνήμης καὶ συνέσεως βλάβαις ἀλισκόμεθα.

²⁴⁴ The Greek text reads: καὶ μέντοι καὶ διὰ τί μωρίαν [αὐτὴν] ἐργάζεται κώνειον ποθέν, ᾧ καὶ τοῦνομα [ἔνθεν παρώνυμον] < ἀπὸ τοῦ πάθους, ὃ > πάσχον ὀρώμεν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ σῶμα.

(779 K. = 41 M. 4-6).²⁴⁵ These healthy effects come from drinking wine in moderation; by contrast, when consumed in excess, Galen is quick to point out that wine is harmful and causes problems like rendering one's judgements inaccurate and causing temporary madness (778 K. = 40 M. 10-22; cf. 808 K. = 67 M. 17 – 812 K. = 72 M. 15).²⁴⁶ Importantly, both such excessive consumption as well as the more moderate consumption show that wine affects the soul.

The most crucial example of the body's impact on the soul is how changes in certain mixtures—in Galen's terms, extreme heating or cooling caused by certain drugs or poisons—have the ability to separate the soul from the body in the moment of death. Galen basically asks, why, if the soul were not dependent on the body, would it be impacted in such a way by these materials as to separate from the body?²⁴⁷ In a certain way, he leaves this kind of question rhetorically open, as a provocation to certain Platonists with whom he is arguing, who insist on the immortality and immateriality of the rational part of the soul. For Galen, the examples that he gives seem sufficient to him to show that the soul, even if it turns out that it is not fully material, at least depends on and is controlled by the body.

In addition to giving these examples, Galen also spends a large portion of the text appealing to evidence from Plato, Aristotle, and Hippocrates. From Plato, he cites evidence

²⁴⁵ The Greek text reads: μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν ἡμερωτέραν <θ> ἅμα καὶ θαρσαλεωτέραν ἐργάζεσθαι διὰ μέσης δηλονότι τῆς κατὰ τὸ σῶμα κράσεως, ἥντινα πάλιν [αὐτὴν] ἐργάζεται διὰ μέσων τῶν χυμῶν.

²⁴⁶ Galen's explanation for this in the later passage is interesting: he says that consuming wine causes the body, and especially the head, to be filled with hot vapors (812 K. = 71 M. 6-11). In the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul, these hot vapors cause unbalanced motion. In the rational part of the soul, they cause one to make decisions too rashly. Overall, wine causes one to lose accuracy, both in intellectual activities and in executing actions with the body.

²⁴⁷ He does not ask in exactly these terms, but in other ways at different points in the text, for example: "why does the soul definitively leave the body when the latter is severely cooled or excessively heated?" (776 K. = 39 M. 11-12) or "What else could one say, when one observes that cooling and excessively heating drugs immediately cause the death of the taker?" (779 K. = 41 M. 10-11).

from the *Timaeus*. As we saw in the previous chapter, Timaeus's theory of addiction and diseases of the soul makes space for the interaction between body and soul, as well as the influence of one's community and environment on mental health. Galen specifically cites the passages related to the creation of souls in the body (*Timaeus*, 43-44), and the diseases of the soul (*Timaeus*, 86-87) to demonstrate the impact that the body has on the soul in terms of wetness (birth, flows), nurture (food), and practices and studies (780 K. = 42 M. 4 – 782 K. = 44 M. 6; 806 K. = 65 M. 1 – 813 K. = 72 M. 2). From Aristotle, he appeals to the conception of the soul as a form in relation to the material of the body: the form that the soul takes in Aristotle's conception, according to Galen, is that of a mixture (772 K. = 36 M. 10-774 K. = 37 M. 24). On top of this, he adds evidence from Aristotle's *Parts of Animals* and *History of Animals* to show how capacities in the soul depend on blood, and how physical traits can be used as indications of character traits because of the close connection between body and soul (791 K. = 51 M. 13 – 798 K. = 57 M. 9). Lastly, in Hippocrates, Galen draws on evidence from *Airs Waters Places* (as well as from *Epidemics*) to show how physical mixtures of various sorts—including the mixtures of the seasons and different climates and environmentals—impact the soul in various ways (798 K. = 57 M. 15 – 807 K. = 64 M. 18). From all three of these philosophical and medical authorities, then, Galen finds evidence for his claim that the capacities of the soul depend on the mixtures of the body.²⁴⁸

With all of this, Galen tries to convince his reader of the truth of his claim, that the soul depends on the body. From this claim, for Galen it follows that if you want to change something about your soul—for example, your capacity to restrain yourself when faced with

²⁴⁸ Galen also comments that he does not try to appeal to these intellectual figures merely because of the legitimacy of their authority, but because what they claim is borne out in “manifestly apparent” examples.

temptation—then you need to attend to physical factors as well as “strictly mental” ones. This means eating a healthy diet, drinking in moderation, and so on.

Like in the previous texts, there are certain limits to this approach, according to Galen. He does not think that everyone can achieve virtue or goodness, in part because one’s capacity for virtue depends on one’s physical make up. He again appeals to the evidence of children’s behavior to show that some children are born bad, and very few are born good—evidence that shows people are both with different physical mixtures (768 K. = 32 M. 15 – 769 K. = 33 M. 17). Towards the end of the text, he even takes up the idea that all humans are born with a “seed of evil,” or a capacity for doing wrong, and it is everyone’s task to try to cleanse and improve their souls as much as possible (820 K. = 78 M. 12-15). Earlier in the text, Galen had also commented that, because of our nature as mortal animals, we all partake in a kind of wetness, which correlates to/causes mindlessness (780 K. = 42 M. 5 – 782 K. = 44 M. 2). Taken together, these claims once again suggest that all humans are susceptible to the pathologies and other bad things that Galen describes: mental illness, addiction, or otherwise.

For Galen, the physical roots of psychological capacities also come with certain consequences on moral action. Not only does he think that not everyone can achieve virtue, he also thinks that some people are simply incurably bad. Where in the previous texts, there seemed to be space for trying to improve notwithstanding one’s natural limits, in “QAM” Galen is explicit that some people simply cannot be changed by habituation, no matter how much they (or others around them) try. And—here is the disturbing consequence that he points to—society would be better off with something like the death penalty for such incurably bad people (815 K. = 74 M. 15 – 816 K. = 74 M. 22). He justifies this for three reasons: 1) it prevents these bad people from harming others; 2) it sets an example to inspire fear of punishment in other potential wrongdoers; and 3) they get not only what they deserve

but what would in fact be better for them (i.e., death is preferable to living badly). Galen advocates for this position because he thinks that physical nature determines the capacities of the soul, and that there is only so much change that this nature allows, so if people are born with incurably bad natures, both they themselves and society is better off if they are put to death.

In Galen's focus on physical nature and changes in "QAM," and even this notion of incurability, we might detect a similarity to the medical model of addiction as a chronic, relapsing brain disease that we looked at in the last chapter. Both theories emphasize the physical structures of the body as determining the possibilities of how one can act. But whereas the medical model focuses on the individual as a pathological patient, Galen, like Timaeus, manages to avoid this shortcoming by including the importance of community and environment on one's habits and thus one's physical body. Indeed, for Galen part of understanding the physical, material basis of psychic conditions is knowing how climate and community impact individuals. Without recognizing and understanding these, the picture would be incomplete. So, in that sense, Galen's "QAM" also offers an example of a kind of holistic model for addiction.

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have gone through different types of treatment related to addiction in the ancient world. I first looked at how the addictions covered in the first two chapters were treated, and then went through a number of Galen's recommendations for treatment of various mental and psychological conditions. Galen suggests some surprisingly modern forms of treatment, including the use of a supervisor as a kind of mentor or therapist when it comes to trying to improve oneself—a task that Galen thinks applies to all, not just those suffering from addictions. Galen is also at times pessimistic about treating people with

addictions to their appetites: he warns often about how dangerous pursuing appetites can be precisely because of their addictive potential: one will quickly develop tolerance and crave more and more, and becoming trapped in a cycle of harming themselves through immoderation. Such habits, he warns, are very difficult to change after a lifetime spent on them. The best path, for Galen, is to be guided by reason towards a life of moderation and self-sufficiency, responding to appetite and spirit when necessary, but ultimately having the rational part of one's soul in control. Of course, this kind of controlled self-sufficiency and moderation meant something particular in Galen's life and in the context of the Roman Empire, whose leaders he served. But still, much of Galen's advice continues to resonate today.

Concluding Thoughts

With that, I bring this entire project to a conclusion. Over the course of these four chapters, I hope to have shown how addiction can be studied in the ancient world using a kind of hybrid approach akin to that used in the history of medicine and medical anthropology. Such an approach allows us to understand addiction as a real, biological phenomenon, and draw comparisons between contemporary and ancient addictions on this basis. However, it is not limited to using contemporary criteria to judge ancient addiction, but instead calls for contextualizing cases and ideas about addiction within their social, cultural, and historical context. This is what I have tried to do in my readings of Aristophanes, Plato, and Galen: on the one hand, analyze cases that are understandable in relation to modern addictions and relevant to modern discussions and debates about addiction, while also adding details about the context of each to show how they are connected, fit within their contexts, and even break with their contexts in certain ways.

In discussing diagnosis in chapter 2, I used the unexpected comparison of Philocleon and Socrates to highlight how value judgments inform decisions about which behavior is an addiction and which is not. These judgments may be rationalized and broadly agreed upon, but they are always there, lying behind identifications of addictions in both ancient and modern contexts, even as the values in those different contexts may change. This point about values is important especially in light of the medical model of addiction as a brain disease, which has dominated in recent decades. Coming at addiction from a scientific and medical approach may seem to avoid thorny questions about value judgments—something which is desirable in light of the harsh moral judgment to which people experiencing addictions used to be condemned. However, it is important to keep in mind that the medical approach still assumes and enacts certain values about what constitutes health vs. disease, and where/to whom and how those both happen.

Comparing the contemporary medical model to Timaeus's theory of addiction in chapter 3 allowed me to highlight some of these issues of value—especially as some of Timaeus's ideas about the rational organization of the universe might strike us as naïve or dangerously authoritarian. Seeing his theory as both similar to, but distinct from the contemporary medical model, allows us to notice some things about that model that we might otherwise not. I also argued that we ought to read Timaeus's theory as more akin to a biopsychosocial model, for the more holistic conception of addiction, its causes and development that he presents.

A holistic approach is also what I highlighted in Galen's ideas about treatment in chapter 4: for him, while reason should rule, there is also space for recognizing and valuing various aspects one's soul and one's life. In the soul, this means recognizing and giving space for certain appetites and passions, rather than trying to stamp them out or deny their existence. And in one's life, this means valuing not just one's life, but the things that make it meaningful, such as friends, community, a place of identity and belonging, and activities such as learning. Again, though not all of Galen's ideas translate into the contemporary context (and, indeed, some seem best left in the past), many of his ideas continue to be relevant, and give us different ideas for thinking about addiction and its treatment today.

There is a lot more to be said about addiction in the ancient world. With this project, I have only begun to scratch the surface of the ancient materials that can be brought to bear on contemporary discussions of addiction. But I hope that I have done so in a way that somehow balances concern for addiction a real, contemporary problem, and attention to historical material as a potential source for new insights. And as addiction continues to be a problem, and as researchers continue to search for alternative insights and look to past materials for inspiration, I hope to have given a more nuanced look at some of the ancient perspectives on addiction.

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