Commentary and performance narrative: Some stance acts in Galen

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Abstract

While the self-presentation of authorship in ancient Greek medical texts has been explored through various lenses and terminologies, Galen's dynamic interplay of literary form and medical content presents serious challenges across his extensive body of work. This paper proposes 'stancetaking' as a more adaptable framework and focuses on two types of texts—or sections of texts—that are less firmly established in the medical tradition: the commentary and the performance narrative. Both forms are abundantly present in Galen's writings. Specifically, I will examine his commentaries on the *Hippocratic Aphorisms* and *Epidemics III*, as well as some of his performance narratives in *Anatomical Procedures* and *On Prognosis*. Through this analysis, I aim to demonstrate that Galen is, in fact, always taking stances—thereby pushing us to adopt particular perspectives—even in contexts where we might not expect him to do so.

Stance is undeniably complex. (Du Bois (2007), 113)

Introduction

Let me begin with a problem that could hardly be more distant from any linguistic approach to Galen: Up until the 1970s, the few Galenic scholars who were interested in assessing Galen's writings beyond the horizons of medical history or ancient philosophy, usually took issue with his character. They professed they did not like him. But how did they know that Galen was not up to their standards in terms of character? They simply read him—what else could they have done?—and based their moral judgments upon his aggressive and elbowing style of self-presentation. He was, according to them, writing too much about himself, too often proudly displaying his ego, and attacking colleagues too severely. This earned him, in a famous verdict by Wilamowitz, the predicate "unerträglicher Seichbeutel",[1] which was a slang term in that time, transferring the notion of a man who is unable to control certain fluids, to a writer's alleged inability to control his stream of writing. To Johannes Ilberg we owe the remarkable designation of Galen as "a quarrelsome, stubborn, treacherous exhibition fighter who attacks his opponent with foam at the mouth".[2]

[1] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1886), 122n12. DeepL offers "unbearable pain in the ass" and "intolerable bag of crap", cf., e.g., Marx to Engels (letter of 25.1.1865), Marx & Engels (1986), 42; similarly, still Ullmann (1974), 112 or Lesky (1971), 998 f. "selbstgefällig und ruhmredig bis zum Überdruß". See Asper (2007), 327 and n66.

[2] Ilberg (1974), 118 "zänkischer, eigensinniger, tückischer Klopffechter, der mit schäumendem Munde den Gegner anfällt". ('Klopffechter' means someone who fights for the show.) To be fair, Ilberg talks about *Adv. Lyc.*; cf. Asper (2007), 352 and n197.

The emerging interest in Galen's forms of expression, however, did not accept this kind of stereotyping. Instead, scholars searched for a functional interpretation of Galen's authorial practices. Especially Galen's frequent use of the first person singular, conspicuously displayed already by certain Hippocratic authors,[3] has led scholars like Armielle Debru and Heinrich von Staden to a more differentiated and non-judgmental concept that had long been accepted in literary studies, namely the 'authorial persona'.[4] This is a kind of alter ego, carefully constructed by authors, meant to enhance performance and, perhaps, persuasion. Still today, scholars reacting against potential moral criticism directed against Galen use the persona concept in order to remind us of the divide between the real person and the author as exhibited in his writings.[5] There are, however, certain problems with the persona approach:[6] essentially being a metaphor taken from the tradition of Greco-Roman theater [an author is an actor on-stage wearing a mask], it downplays the role of the addressee who, as we conceive of contemporary theatrical audiences, is largely passive.

At this point, the fairly recent socio-linguistic concept of positioning and stancetaking comes in. I leave alone the ramifications and concentrate upon what might help us coming to terms with Galen. Most importantly, the advocates of 'stance' as a sociolinguistic concept emphasize that taking a stance does not only mean "taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance", but at the same time defining the position of the addressee. Simply put, stances/positions "are in relation to other people" and are thus, at the same time linguistic and social acts.[7] Stances are positions taken up by a speaker who presents himself to his addressees and at the same time orients them towards himself;[8] quite obviously, evaluation is often a part of stancetaking.[9] I have to admit that the few publications on the concept, authored by (socio)linguists, illustrate the concept with painfully simple acts of oral communication among two speakers.[10] This is an example (**#1**):[11]

1. SAM; I don't like those.
2. (0.2)
3. ANGELA; I don't either.

However, it might perhaps be useful to briefly think about what the concept could hold for Galen and his readers, ancient or modern. Taken as basic structure, the example quoted from

[3] Treatises such as *De morbo sacro* or *De flatibus*, usually described as 'epideictic', show a clear awareness of the persuasive force of saying 'I'. See my forthcoming article in the *Cambridge History of Rhetoric*, 26 ff.

[4] Debru (1992), 85–87; Staden (1994) 1994, 110–114 (he writes on Celsus, but it is understood that his systematic model of personae could be transferred to Galen, too). In Asper (2007), 333 f. I follow their cues.

[5] See, for example, now Singer (2024), 10: "Galen undoubtedly does display [...] an extremely intellectually self-confident, opinionated, and [...] dogmatic authorial persona."

[6] I skip such problems that the persona approach implicitly maintains certain ideas about literature that are, at least, disputable: choice of means (by the theatrical author and the actor) and, most problematically, illusion, fictionality or even 'falseness' (the man on stage 'is not really' Thyestes).

[7] Definition in Jaffe (2009), 3–4; Du Bois (2007), 162 ("stance triangle"). For the second part, see Hollway (1984), 236; Harré & Langenhove (1991), 395; Du Bois (2007), 141.

[8] Interestingly, protagonists of the concept of stancetaking had already conceived of it as a replacing the concept of 'role', that is, of metaphors taken from theater (Harré & Langenhove (1991), 393: "The concept of positioning can be used as a dynamic alternative to the more static concept of role.").

[9] Du Bois (2007) 2007, 142: "Perhaps the most salient and widely recognized form of stancetaking is *evaluation*." (italics Du Bois).

[10] Hollway (1984), Harré & Langenhove (1991), Du Bois (2007), and Jaffe (2009). Thanks to Theresa Roth for pointing these out to me.

[11] Du Bois (2007), 165, ex. (51) *This Retirement Bit* SBC011: 444.12-446.30.

Du Bois (2007) comes close to many passages in Galen, with two important modifications: "Like" stays in the background, but there is an epistemic, not a merely evaluative register in the foreground. And since this is writing and thus the dialogue is necessarily incomplete, both author and recipient have to imagine the other subject's position of the stance triangle. Nonetheless, we can say that Galen writes for alignment and the reader is oriented towards reading for alignment (with Galen's authority). Perhaps, understanding the text even means to move into alignment. For example, the harsh reactions of Wilamowitz and his peers to Galen's stance acts are clearly provoked by a normative concept of how stance acts in scholarly, let alone scientific, writing should look like. That concept obviously clashes with Galen's authorial practices. (It is only fair to remark, however, that in some exemplary epistemic texts of the ancient scientific canon, stancetaking is apparently strictly regulated, for example in Aristotle and Euclid who never say 'I' nor even 'we' spontaneously).[12] However, back to the naked linguistic concept. Although developed with a view to interpersonal oral and casual communication, soon the discussion focused on two areas that are relevant to Galen: first epistemic stancetaking, and second strategic targeting of readers with a view of bringing them into alignment with the stancetaker's authority. [13]

Stance acts are limitless in number. Thus, it is fruitless to give a list of them or even come up with classifications. On the other hand, it is perhaps a promising way to approach Galen with the premise that his vast œuvre is, as a corpus of scientific writing, unusual because of its high frequency and carefully elaborate variation of stance acts. In what follows I would like to illustrate that carefulness with two groups of stance acts taken from, as it were, opposite ends of the literary spectrum: succinct commentary, supposedly acknowledging a classic text, and profuse narration with a focus on the author's actions in competitive surroundings. Unfortunately, I have to proceed in a very selective manner.

The stances of commentators

Quite early in his career (as of 162 CE), as a newcomer to Rome, Galen produced commentaries on medical classics, for example *On Aphorisms* I, ascribed to the great Hippocrates. At the end of his life he claimed that he had undertaken to write these as a personal exercise and that he had been working merely from memory.[14]

Commentators are in a difficult position, sandwiched between an authority, often ancient, that they claim needs elucidation, and their addressees in relation to whom the commentators themselves claim authority. Often, and certainly in Galen's case, in addition there is lively competition among commentators for the right way of exegesis or for the correct meaning of certain dark passages in the classic text. This situation is typical for Galen, and thus it is here that I would like to look at only two typical stances he takes. Both combine epistemic and evaluative aspects, and both are obviously interested in alignment on several levels.[15]

[12] See Asper (2007), Index s.v. 'Ich'; that practice has caused ripples well reaching modern times, cf. Robert Jauss as quoted 132 n271.

[13] Jaffe (2009), 5 on texts about obesity. Ibid. 7: "Epistemic stance is likewise culturally grounded, because claims to know are embedded in and index particular regimes of knowledge and authority. Epistemic stancetaking thus serves to establish the relative authority of interactants [...]. In some cases, individuals may project a stance of privileged personal knowledge [...]."

[14] *Lib. prop.* 9.6 (Kühn (1830), 35). See Boudon-Millot (2024), 35; Mattern (2013), 167 (more independently).

[15] Mattern (2013), 58 f. with useful remarks on physicians writing commentaries in Galen's time.

In the initial parts of that commentary, Galen deals with what is a great puzzle until today: Why did the great Hippocrates choose such an odd format, namely aphorisms, for his complex teachings? Galen seeks to convince us that in the famous initial statement 'life is short, but the (medical) art is long' Hippocrates intended to argue for aphoristic writing. While discussing the issue, Galen operates with an interesting concept which is what I would like to focus on here: the community of exegetes.

In his first own sentence, Galen establishes that community as an anonymous group. He says that the above-quoted sentence was meant to serve as proem, 'it is agreed upon among almost all those who have commented upon him' (i.e. Hippocrates; ὡμολόγηται σχεδὸν ἅπασι τοῖς ἐξηγησαμένοις αὐτόν). We do not hear anything further of this group at this point, but have to assume that Galen wants us to see him as a member of it, which means that he presents himself as part of a diachronically operative and competitive field.

Twelve Kühn pages later, Galen is still at it, this time glossing the paradoxical connection of the shortness of life with the hugeness of medical knowledge (**#2**).

> οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἱκανός ἐστι συστήσασθαί τε ἅμα καὶ τελειῶσαι τὴν τέχνην, ἀλλ' ἀγαπητὸν εἰ πολλοῖς ἔτεσι τὰ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν οἱ μετέπειτα παραλαμβάνοντες καί τι προστιθέντες αὐτοὶ συντελέσαιμέν ποτε αὐτήν.[16]
>
> No one of us is able to at the same time put together and complete the (medical) discipline. Rather, one has to be content, if in many years we, the late-coming practitioners, transmit the knowledge of our predecessors, add ourselves something to it, and make it complete at some point.

Here, Galen frames his own exegetical activity with a whole concept of incremental progress[17] brought about by a diachronically operating community. Perfection is within reach, surprisingly, but not without predecessors. The 'we' in this sentence means a real group which is defined by its inability, but also grants medical progress. We wonder whether this is a group of physicians of medical commentators. Perhaps one of the stance acts implicit in this sentence is that the two groups overlap or are even co-extensive (Galen's later work impressively demonstrates that such an overlap is successful, but I am not sure whether at this early stage his stance is, rather, programmatic). We can rephrase this stance act as a combination of three communications (**#2a**):

(1) Experts guard the relevant knowledge.
(2) I am an expert.
(3) Experts have to follow the rules.

Stance act one and two justify Galen's authority; stance act three sketches out the conditions of the game. It clearly is about reader alignment. Galen stresses the epistemic aspects of the stances implied. Reader alignment, however, becomes more interesting when there is disagreement within the group. Galen uses such points of discussion in order to stand out from the group of exegetes. The second aphorism mentions the notion of *katharsis* ('purge') which is close to the term *kenōsis* ('evacuation') and *keneaggeia* (lit. 'evacuation of vessels'). Not all exegetes have paid sufficient attention to the differentiation of these terms, Galen claims (**#3**):

[16] *Hipp. Aph.* I 1 (Kühn (1829), 352.5–9).
[17] See my paper on notions of progress in Greek science writing, esp. as a "story of growth", Asper (2013), 413–418.

> κάθαρσις δέ ἐστιν ἡ τῶν λυπούντων κατὰ ποιότητα κένωσις. ἔν γε δὴ τούτοις ἁμαρτάνουσιν οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν ἐξηγητῶν, οὐ συνιέντες οὔτε τῶν φωνῶν οὔτε τῆς γνώμης τἀνδρός. ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἐπειδὰν τὸ τῆς κενεαγγείας ὄνομα τινὲς μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς ἀσιτίας, τινὲς δὲ ἐπὶ τῆς φλεβοτομίας ἀκούωσιν. ὁ γὰρ Ἱπποκράτης ἅπασαν κένωσιν ὀνομάζει κενεαγγείαν ἀπὸ τοῦ συμβεβηκότος, ἐπειδὴ κενὰ τὰ ἀγγεῖα συμβαίνει γίνεσθαι κατὰ πάσας τὰς κενώσεις. ὁ μὲν δὴ λόγος αὐτῷ νῦν ἐστι περὶ ποιότητος τῶν κενουμένων.[18]
>
> Purge is the evacuation of something harmful in a qualitative sense. In such topics, most of the commentators go astray, because they do not comprehend the terms nor the meanings the man (i.e. Hippocrates) uses – when, even more, some of them understand the term 'evacuation of vessels' as fasting, but others as blood-letting. For Hippocrates calls each evacuation an evacuation of the vessels in a non-specific way, because it happens that the vessels become empty in all evacuations. In this passage, however, he talks about the quality of what is evacuated.

We can leave aside questions of Hippocratic philology here. I am exclusively interested in how our picture of the privileged group of commentators changes with this remark. Galen employs a discussion among commentators to add to his preceding stance acts in the following way: most of them are wrong, when it comes to certain terminological questions, that is, philology/philosophy proper or: the core of exegesis. The ensuing stance act(s) do exactly the opposite of the ones I described above: now Galen highlights himself at the cost of the group he is a member of; he argues for his singular position through philological-philosophical tools (**#3a**).

(4) I am right among/against the exegetes.

The interplay of anonymity of the refuted group, the name of the classic, and the implied presence of Galen himself, which is most palpable in the structure of the argument itself (and, thus, the particles) makes for a strong appeal to the reader to align oneself with Galen's stance. We can perhaps think of such stances as 'polarization': the 'stance triangle' actually becomes a quadrangle: besides subject 1 (Galen), subject 2 (the reader) and the object (the medical knowledge at stake), there is a 'subject 1.1' (the other, the bad ones, the majority who's wrong', etc.) which serves to increase the pressure on subject 2 to align with subject 1. We find such stance acts almost everywhere in Galen; here, for example, when he talks about the 'most absurd of all the commentators'.[19] Occasionally, however, some among the commentators are right.[20] Dispensing judgment itself becomes a stance act, then, that helps to align future readerships with the author (**#3b**).

(5) I decide who is right among the exegetes.

More than twenty aphorisms and almost ninety Kühn pages later, at the end of the book, Galen makes it fast with one more statement that reminds us of his special position vis-à-vis Hippocrates and that is carefully bringing together the two parts of the medical profession in Galen's field, the commenting and the practising physician. Hippocrates had just recommended to use purging drugs only rarely in acute diseases (that is, the physician has to make sure that purging will be possible and will have the desired effect; **#4**):

[18] *Hipp. Aph.* I 2 (Kühn (1829), 358.1–9).
[19] *Hipp. Aph.* I 2 (Kühn (1829), 360.15): πάντων ... ἀτοπώτατοι τῶν ἐξηγητῶν.
[20] *Hipp. Aph.* I 2 (Kühn (1829), 366.8).

> ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς προπαρασκευάζομεν, ἐπειδὰν μέλλωμεν καθαίρειν τινὰ καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν αὐτὸ τὸ ὑφ' Ἱπποκράτους εἰρημένον ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ ἀφορισμῷ· τὰ σώματα χρὴ ὅκου τις βούλεται καθαίρειν, εὔροα ποιέειν.[21]
>
> This is what I (we) do beforehand, whenever I (we) am going to purge someone, and this is exactly what is stated by Hippocrates in that aphorism (II 9): 'Where one intends to purge the bodies, one has to make sure there is easy flowing.'

Again, the stance act is complex: Galen maintains to be in accordance with Hippocrates' rules in his own medical practice, and this, he indicates, affirms in turn that he is right as a commentator, too. For the reader who probably does not have access to Galen as a practicing physician, his medical practices lend authority to his exegetical judgments. Again, the stance act is at the same time evaluative and epistemic, and it is more complex than simply stating 'I like x' (**#4a**):

(6) As a physician, I follow Hippocrates.
(7) As a commentator, I understand Hippocrates.

I have dwelled with some persistence on stancetaking in Hipp. Aph. I, because I think that in many texts of Galen the practice of stancetaking revolves around the same points: past textual authorities, present competitors, future readers, added by an epistemically and historically complex field of knowledge which is curiously divided between theoretical and practical approaches, social and scientific issues. Accordingly, the stance acts described above provide only the smallest selection from a vast host of material: we may observe similar stance acts in many writings of Galen (unlike in Aristotle, for example).[22] Again and again, Galen tries to convince us that he is right. Obviously, these are instances of stancetaking; yet, they definitely transcend the golden simplicity of Du Bois's stance triangle. Nonetheless, I find that the concept of 'alignment' is apt to describe what Galen is aiming at, because we often come across this curious mixture of evaluative and epistemic stances (while 'persuasion' would presume dominantly epistemic stancetaking, I think, as we can perhaps observe in Aristotle).

The functional structures of the few stance acts I have discussed so far, were considerably more complex than the basic ones the pioneers of stancetaking have written about. Yet, we haven't even turned to narrative. Galen is a great narrator of epistemic stories, each containing stance acts. We begin with a narrative that is also part of a commentary, albeit in a special context. When Galen returned to Rome in 168 CE, he put himself to commentary writing again, this time with a greater apparatus of sources and greater ambition.[23] Thus, in his commentary on Epidemics III we suddenly stumble across a 17-page essay 'on the bad commentators', in which Galen criticizes many anonymous and some named writers of commentaries on Hippocratic texts for their false methods, inept methodologies, and many other faults. The question that acerbates Galen and that has triggered this whole essay, is whether the initial phrase in Hippocratic cases that, together with a name, regularly identifies the patient (e.g. 'Pythion who lived next to the sanctuary of Ge'),[24] bears any medical, that is, etiological meaning; in

[21] *Hipp. Aph.* I 2 (Kühn (1829), 449.1-5).
[22] When it comes to stancetaking in epistemic contexts, Aristotle and Galen may serve as corpora to compare each other with.
[23] Boudon-Millot (2024), 35 f.
[24] Corp. Hipp., *Epid.* III 1 (Littré (1841), 24 = Kühlewein (1904), 215.2).

other words, would explain or even identify the malady the patient suffers from. Galen tries to corroborate his opinion that these phrases have solely identificatory function, and I, at least, am in full alignment with his stance on that.

As you can imagine, all these arguments aim at bringing readers into alignment against those bad commentators, siding with the only good one. But things are not as easy as one would expect. This essay exhibits a couple of interesting features (even besides the fact that I do not know of any parallel), to me, the most remarkable is Galen's being so implicit. Often, we don't exactly know whom he criticizes, and often we don't know for what reason. To show that, I can quote only one example, an anecdote that recounts an incident in his years as a student at Alexandria (c. 152–157 CE, **#5**):[25]

> ἀλλ' ἔνιοί γε τῶν ἐξηγουμένων τὰ βιβλία κατεγνώκασιν εἰς τοσοῦτον τῶν ἀκροατῶν, ὥστ' ἐγώ ποτε ἐν καὶ τοιαύτης ἐξηγή|σεως ἤκουσα περί τινος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Ἐπιδημιῶν ἀρρώστου γεγραμμένου κατὰ τὴν ῥῆσιν, ἧς ἡ ἀρχή· " ᾤκει ἐπὶ τοῦ πλαταμῶνος". ἐν γὰρ τῷ διηγεῖσθαι τὰ συμβάντα τούτῳ καὶ τοιαύτην τινὰ ῥῆσιν ἔγραψεν ὁ · "νυκτὸς οὐδὲν ἐκοιμήθη, λόγοι πολλοί, γέλως, ᾠδή". τούτοις οὖν ἐπεφώνησεν "ἰού" ὁ ἐξηγούμενος τὸ σύγγραμμα, " γὰρ ἦν." οἱ μαθηταὶ δ' ἀναπηδήσαντες ἐκεκράγεσαν ὑπερθαυμάζοντες.
>
> Some of those who comment on these books have had such contempt for their audience that (tr. P. Singer) I myself once in Alexandria have listened to such an exegesis about one of the patients in the first book of the Epidemics, of that passage which begins with 'Silenos lived on the rock'. While he reports what happened to him, Hippocrates wrote down the following sentence: 'At night he did not sleep, much talk, laughter, singing.' Which words the exegete of the text glossed with: "Look, for he was (a) silen!" And the students jumped up and shouted out of deep admiration.

Galen presents his anecdote without much of an introduction, and after he proceeds to another false act of commentators. In the Silenus anecdote, the exegete apparently uses the patient's name, jokingly, as the reason for some of the symptoms. After all, this is exactly what you expect of Silens, that they laugh and sing all through the night. The students applaud this remark of the anonymous teacher with roaring admiration. Galen tells the anecdote in order to show misjudgment on the side of the exegete (he doesn't take Hippocrates seriously enough which means, to Galen, to disregard the audience (καταγιγνώσκω 1B Mont.), and at the same time on the side of the students who prefer entertainment to serious exegesis. The stance act pits Galen as a student against his fellow students and Galen as an exegete against fellow exegetes,[26] both groups remaining anonymous. There is not much reasoning going on, as if Galen believes that the practice exhibited judges itself. The next sentence proceeds to criticize the 'pedantry' (περιεργία) of certain commentators, but it remains unclear whether Galen means our story to be an instance of it. Obviously, however, the story demands alignment from students and professors alike, and thus regulates the relations of the whole industry of philological medicine in Galen's time to the writings of Hippocrates. The stances conveyed are really clear, even if Galen never says so (**#5a**):

[25] Galen, Hipp. Epid. III, Wenkebach (1936) 12.15-23 (CMG V 10.2.1). On Alexandria and medical studies when Galen arrived, see Mattern (2013), 68 ff.

[26] Cf. Jaffe (2009), 9: "[…] personal stance is always achieved through comparison and contrast with other relevant persons and categories."

(8) This commentator was (methodically) wrong.
(9) These students were (epistemically) wrong.

Perhaps, we can think of such maneuvers as 'negative alignment'. In more formal terms, we observe that Galen tells a story[27] of a past performance he has witnessed in order to express his stances in places where he could also have resorted to argument. The act of doing commentary reported is actually performative which moves Galen's stance act close to the following group of stance acts. "Performative positioning"[28] and, accordingly, "virtual witnessing" are important features of a class of Galen's stance acts to which we turn now.

Storied (performative) stance acts in Galen

My last example has illustrated that stance acts in Galen can become fairly complex and, still, remain implicit (for reasons essentially unclear to me). That applies even more to the full-blown stories of spectacular successes that Galen is fond of telling about himself. These stories are told so skillfully that their actual stancetaking has been acknowledged only recently.[29]

In his handbook of anatomy, the *Anatomicae administrationes*, Galen describes how he and competing physicians publicly dissected an elephant, probably killed in circus games.[30] The medical topic which has led to the story, is the heart's anatomy. This leads Galen to the much-discussed question of whether the elephant has a heart bone[31] and if so, how to find it (**#6**):[32]

> Μεγίστου γοῦν ἐλέφαντος ἔναγχος ἐν Ῥώμῃ σφαγέντος, ἠθροίσθησαν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν ἀνατομὴν αὐτοῦ πολλοὶ τῶν ἰατρῶν ἕνεκα τοῦ γνῶναι, πότερον ἔχει δύο κορυφὰς ἢ μίαν ἡ καρδία, καὶ δύο κοιλίας ἢ τρεῖς. εὗρον δὲ ῥᾳδίως καὶ τὸ κατ' αὐτὴν ὀστοῦν, ἅμα τοῖς ἑταίροις ἐπιβαλὼν τοὺς δακτύλους. οἱ δ' ἀγύμναστοι μὲν, ἐλπίζοντες δὲ εὑρίσκειν, ὡς ἐν μεγάλῳ ζώῳ, τὸ μὴ φαινόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ὑπέλαβον οὐδὲ τὴν ἐλέφαντος καρδίαν ἔχειν ὀστοῦν. [...] ἀρθείσης μέντοι τῆς καρδίας ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ Καίσαρος μαγείρων, ἔπεμψά τινα τῶν γεγυμνασμένων ἑταίρων περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα παρακαλέσοντα τοὺς μαγείρους ἐπιτρέψαι τὸ κατ' αὐτὴν ὀστοῦν ἐξελεῖν· καὶ οὕτως ἐγένετο. καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν ἐστι νῦν, οὐ σμικρὸν μὲν ὑπάρχον τῷ μεγέθει, θαυμαστὴν δὲ παρέχον ἀπιστίαν τοῖς ὁρῶσιν, εἰ τηλικοῦτον ὀστοῦν ἐλάνθανε τοὺς ἰατρούς.
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> Now when a particularly large elephant had recently been killed in Rome, many doctors gathered for its dissection to see whether the heart had two tips or one and two chambers or three. I also easily found the bone in the heart by pressing

[27] See Asper (2023), 3 for a definition of 'story'.
[28] See Jaffe (2009), 6.
[29] That's the point of Salas (2022a). As Du Bois (2007), 249 states, often we need to know "what stance is the stancetaker responding to". Galen's stories respond to some discussion we often can reconstruct only with difficulties. – I am not sure about Harré & Langenhove (1991), 406 "[...] whenever there are story-lines, there are positionings".
[30] For the setting, see the instructive account of Salas (2022a), 56 ff. For an excellent account of Galen's anatomical performances, see Gleason (2009).
[31] Aristotle had discussed the bone in the heart of cattle and horses (*Hist. Anim.* II 15, 506a 9 ff.; *Part. Anim.* III 4, 666b 18–21).
[32] AA VII 10 (Kühn (1821), 619–621 = Garofalo (1986), 443.25–445.19). I have skipped a passage, in which Galen's *hetairoi* implore him not to instantly demonstrate that he is right, but to let his opponents first make a complete disgrace of themselves.

> my fingers on it together with my disciples. But the untrained, expecting to find it (i.e. the bone), especially in such a large creature, even if it does not show itself in other (i.e. smaller) creatures, (could not find it and) assumed that the heart of an elephant did not even have a bone. […] Now since the heart had been taken away by the emperor's cooks, I sent one of my disciples who was well trained in this matter to ask the cooks to allow him to take out the bone of this (heart). And it was done that way. And even today I have (the bone) with me; it is of considerable size and causes astonished disbelief among onlookers as to how such a large bone could have escaped the notice of the physicians.

Apart from telling a wonderful story, Galen here manages to bring across several stance acts: at first sight, the story aims at illustrating an argument that holds central position in the *Anatomicae administrationes*: he who is without practice (*agumnastos*) in anatomy, that is in dissecting mammals, will not even find the anatomical phenomena discussed. As a physician, he will thus not be able to treat human beings *lege artis*, let alone operate on them. Only Galen and his 'comrades' can find the bone in the heart of the elephant, because only they have the anatomical knowledge necessary for this endeavor. His competitors in the public discussion risk and then lose their reputation by failing to succeed in that performance. The story aligns us with Galenic medicine with respect to the tenet that anatomical training is of utmost importance. On another level, the story contributes to a lively and long-standing discussion on the heart's anatomy. How many chambers, tips, and whether boneless or not, the story tells of clear epistemic stances (even if they are false from a modern perspective).[33] But there are more implied: Most interestingly, the story tells of Galen's relations to his *hetairoi* and to Caesar's palace (kitchen, **#6a**):

(10) Anatomical knowledge is important.
(11) The elephant's heart has a bone.
(12) I have connections to Caesar's palace.
(13) My *hetairos* brings the bone.
(14) I surpass Aristotle and Marinus in terms of anatomy.

While the story presents, essentially, only anonymous characters, names occur only later, when Aristotle and Marinus appear, that is, the textual rivals of the past whom Galen surpasses, too. In such a way, the text becomes part of a story of progress, in which the anatomy of the heart functions only as an example. Galen's 'I' is both the instance that tells the story, but also the point with which the story ends in the reader's present.

Stance acts (12) and (13) are especially relevant, if Galen writes for Roman upper-class readers who thus have a position themselves to Caesar's palace, to being a *hetairos* of an acclaimed physician or philosopher, and over-all, to the multi-level status games taking place in Roman aristocracy. This is most obvious in the stories told by Galen in On prognosis, a short quasi-autobiographical treatise in which Galen retrospectively describes and explains his spectacular success with the Roman upper class during his first stay (again, most characters remain anonymous). It may suffice to briefly mention only the most well-known of these stories, the one of Justus's wife. Galen describes how he, by means of pre-arranged messages

[33] For a detailed discussion, see Salas (2022a), 167-168 who is, however, reticent about the fact that elephants actually do not have such a bone. As Salas (quoted above) convincingly argues, Galen must have expected the elephant to have a bone.

and pulse lore, forced a married upper-class woman to reveal, unwillingly, that she was in love with a certain dancer.[34] As it has often been pointed out, medical issues do not play an important role in this story. We may attribute medical importance to two implied stance acts, namely

(15) Empirical testing of hypotheses is important.
(16) Pulse lore is my new methodology.

However, readers will conceive of more complex topics of positioning, here: Rather, Galen positions himself towards an anecdotic tradition with similar plots, featuring his great predecessors Erasistratus and, possibly, even Hippocrates, and presents himself as controlling a Roman upper-class household.[35] This and similar stories contain many stance acts, ultimately forcing the reader to positioning himself vis-à-vis the standing of Greek intellectuals in Rome. Thus, 'alignment' here means actual group-building, the reader is supposed to become part of the supporting crowd of the prominent physician.[36] The stories describe and transport acts of positioning in such a way that they induce the same positioning through reading in recipients far away in space and time.

Conclusion

I don't know about you, but I conclude with mixed feelings. Linguistic approaches to informal, conversational stance acts, such as "That's horrible" or "I'm so glad" (Du Bois (2007), 142) do not seem to fully capture what we find in Galen. Admittedly, I have not looked at basic forms of stancetaking in Galen's works, e.g., lists of words for evidentiality he uses in his usual discourse or, perhaps, typical phrases he might use. My hunch is that we would find a rhetorically sophisticated use of such stance-act language that aims at utmost variety. Rather, I have concentrated on two forms of communication that are particular, the genre of commentary and the sub-genre of stories that describe successful performances, both frequent in Galen, but perhaps too complicated for the basic structures of stancetaking and positioning. Usually, the basic structures are more complex than just a 'stance triangle', if only for the reason, that there is often a double 'subject 2' whom Galen wishes to align, namely an audience in the text and the group of readers. Apparently, he conceives the latter somehow as an extension of the former, and the former perhaps of his circle of *hetairoi*, however we ought to imagine them.

(For the following simple conclusions, it would probably be helpful to bear Aristotle's way of argument in mind as a foil.) With respect to these two fields of Galenic discourse, we can clearly state that

[34] Mattern (2013) nr. 276; Nutton (1979), 95–103. Unfortunately, we do not know the identity of this Iustus (see Nutton (1979), 186 f.). If he is the one to whom Galen dedicates another text (*Part. art. med.*, CMG Suppl. Or. II, ar), he belonged to the Roman social elite. We can gather the same from Galen's description of his house. Another level of meaning is the stress the story puts on empirical testing (see Hankinson (2008), 10).

[35] According to Salas (2022b), the whole story's point is actually moral decline, combined with criticism of Erasistratus' method, about whom a similar anecdote about Antiochos and the mistress of his father, Stratonike, circulated: Plutarch, *Vita Demetr.* 38.2–7; see Zecher (2022), 31 n. 3. It is interesting, however, that even for Hippocrates, a similar narrative existed, about Perdikkas and Phila, the concubine of his father, who was thus diagnosed as φθισικός (*Vita Hippocratis secundum Soranum*, §5, Jouanna (2020) 34.5-14). Galen knew the anecdote (*Opt. med.* 3), cf. Lukian, *Hist. conscr.* 35. For Galen and diachronic competition, see Asper (2007), 352–356.

[36] As readers, Galen positions us as a continuation of the original crowd of spectators. Cf., again, Jaffe (2009), 8 on "self- and Other-Positioning": "An utterance framed as a performance [...] positions receivers as an audience; a speaker who takes up an expert stance to give advice positions receivers as novices [...]."

(a) Galen is fond of stancetaking.

Whether he comments upon Hippocrates or reports how he publicly led competing scholars towards disgracing themselves, he constantly positions himself. He simply loves taking position. Further, the whole apparatus of his argument, whether philological, logical, appealing to common experiences, narrative, or whatever else, is aptly described as aiming at bringing the reader into alignment.

(b) Galen's aim is bringing the reader into alignment.

I prefer this term to the traditional one of 'persuasion', because often, e.g. in the case of storied performances, persuasion is less important than position. Helpful, however, at least to me, is the stance theorists' insistence that there is an "affective scale" in stancetaking, but also an "epistemic" one (Du Bois (2007), 143). My impression is that

(c) Galen constantly blends epistemic with affective scales.

The atmosphere of rough competition with other players in the field and emotional overengagement that pervades his writings and leads him to overtly polemical exposition, always or, at least, regularly, attaches affections to epistemic positions. These affections are usually distributed in a parallel structure to epistemic values, which makes moving into alignment even more compelling for us. The subjectivity, however, that necessarily comes with positioning, does not seem a problem for Galen (as it is usually perceived in epistemic, let alone, scientific argument). He argues forcefully, conducting all registers that he can possibly assemble. In his view, subjectivity is not an epistemic problem, as long as the subject is authoritative. We can thus say that

(d) Galen's authority allows for epistemic subjectivity.

Perhaps this is Galen's rhetorical art, to make his positioning seem authoritative despite his subjective stances, for example, by stressing epistemic points (logic, demonstration) or by seemingly presenting 'objective scenes' (virtual witnessing) with great skill. These are mere impressions, collected by quickly skimming just a small fraction of Galen's huge œuvre. If we were to go over larger stretches of Galenic text and if we were to pay attention to more inconspicuous stance acts, we would probably have to marvel at the frequency and the sheer linguistic variability of his stancetaking. Galen has been nicknamed 'the prince of medicine'. While this is certainly true for the longest time of European and, perhaps, Near Eastern medical history, for us as readers of ancient literature, he might be more aptly described as the 'king of stances'.

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