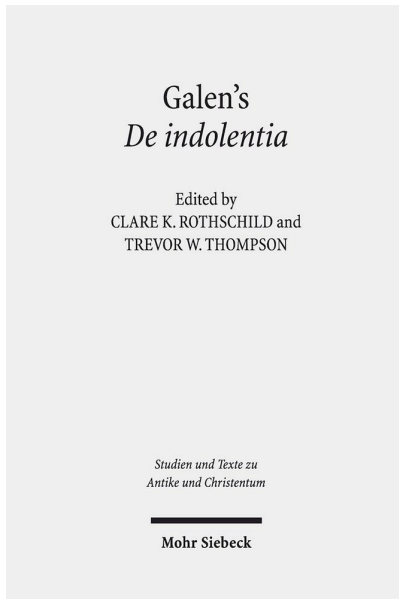


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Clare K. Rothschild and Trevor W. Thompson, eds.

Galen's De indolentia

Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 88

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David Wheeler-Reed
Albertus Magnus College

Clare K. Rothschild and Trevor W. Thompson's edited volume, *Galen's De indolentia* (Περὶ ἀλυπησίας/ἀλυπίας), is an excellent contribution to the field of ancient medical studies. Rothschild (Lewis University) and Thompson (Abilene Christian) provide the reader with a fresh translation and commentary of *De indolentia*, or *On the Avoidance of Grief*, a letter from Galen to an unspecified addressee in which he describes his response to the fire that destroyed much of his library and medicines in 192 CE. As Rothschild and Thompson observe, "The manuscript, catalogued in the Vlatadon monastery as codex 14, is of unspeakable value to scholars of antiquity" (3). After a brief introduction and English translation of *De indolentia*, this volume consists of several interpretive essays covering the manuscript itself, realia, philosophy, irony, Christian trajectories, and ancillary material.

The introduction, written by Rothschild and Thompson (3–18), begins with a brief overview of the history of the Vlatadon/Vlataion monastery in Thessaloniki and the discovery of codex 14. A helpful picture of Vlatadon 14, f. 10v. is provided (4). Rothschild and Thompson discuss the title, arguing that no one English word captures the important nuances of the λυπ- word group in Greek (10). As they relate, "The alpha privative only multiplies the possibilities" (10). They note further, "The English title, *On the Avoidance of Grief*, was established by the first English translations of Galen's *On my Own Books* (*Lib.*

Prop. 19.45) in which Galen lists *Ind.* among his written works” (10). After discussing the authenticity of *De indolentia*, they establish a date for its composition in the first half of 193 CE. Finally, they classify *De indolentia* as a “letter-treatise,” though they leave the door open for further research and reflection on this topic (13).

Pages 21–36 contain Rothschild and Thompson’s English translation of *De indolentia*. Their translation is based on their first published translation of the letter, “Galen: ‘On the Avoidance of Grief,’” *Early Christianity* 2 (2011): 110–29, which offers a close reading in English of the Greek text in Véronique Boudon-Millot and Jacques Jouanna (with Antonine Pietrobelli), *Galien: Ne pas se chagriner* (Budé; Paris: Belles Lettres, 2010). At every turn Rothschild and Thompson provide readers with ample footnotes explaining why they chose one reading of the Greek text over another.

The next section contains two interpretive essays, beginning with two entries devoted to analysis of the manuscript. The first essay, written by Véronique Boudon-Millot, “*Vlatadon* 14 and *Amrosaisnus* Q 3 Sup: Two Twin Manuscripts” (41–55), gives a more precise indication of the origin and history of *Vlatadon* 14. Additionally, this essay provides details on the intellectual environment in which *Vlatadon* evolved. The second essay, “Some Quotations from Galen’s *De indolentia*” (57–61), by Daniel Davies, examines the important influence Galen’s philosophical works exerted on medieval Arabic philosophy. Davies compares various quotations from *De indolentia* with quotes from Judah ibn Aqnīn’s (1150–1220) *Hygiene of the Suffering Souls and Remedy of the Sound Hearts* and Šem Tov ben Joseph ibn Falaquera’s (1225–1295) *Balm of Sorrow*.

The next section, “*Realia*,” contains Matthew C. Nichols’s “A Library at Antium?” (65–78) and Alain Touwaide’s “Collecting Books, Acquiring Medicines: Knowledge Acquisition in Galen’s Therapeutics” (79–88). Disagreeing with Rothschild and Thompson, who focus mostly on a library in Rome, Nichols maintains, “The Antium reading is gaining ground and, if it is to be accepted, we need to consider what its implications are for our understanding of books, libraries, and scholarship in the late second century C.E.” (67). Nichols follows Christopher P. Jones, who argues that *Ind.* 16, 17, and 18 should be read as ἐν Ἀντίῳ, which refers to the imperial palace known to have existed there. Touwaide focuses on Galen’s methods for knowledge acquisition, arguing that “there is a striking similarity between Galen’s search for, and care of, books and texts on the one hand and his quest for formulae for medicines and new medicines on the other” (79). As he notes, the words “books” and “medicines” are associated five times with φάρμακα, coming first in three of the five passages.

The section titled “*Philosophy*” consists of three essays, One written by the late Paraskevi Kotzia, another by Elizabeth Asmis, and the final one by Janet Downie. Kotzia’s “Galen,

De indolentia: Commonplaces, Traditions, and Contexts” (91–126), discusses the commonplace thematic elements that come to light in *De indolentia*, focusing on extant literature relating to the therapy of emotions. As she relates, “Given that, of the several attested works which bore the title Περὶ ἀλυπίας, Galen’s is the only one extant, a close study of the commonplaces and, more generally, the subject matter it shares with other works belonging to the same genre offers a promising approach toward a more concrete appreciation of the theme of ‘absence of grief” (93). Kotzie focuses her attention on the intertextuality present between *De indolentia* and Plutarch’s *De tranquillitate animi*, as well as Seneca’s *De tranquillitate animi*. In “Galen’s *De indolentia* and the Creation of a Personal Philosophy” (127–42), Asmis contends that a new label should be given to Galen’s philosophy, which she terms “personal philosophy” (128). She associates five features with “personal philosophy” between 100 BCE and 200 CE, which she also finds present in *De indolentia*: personal philosophy is critical, oriented toward the past, far-ranging, constructive, and integrated with one’s life. Complementing Asmis’s essay, Downie’s “Galen’s Intellectual Self-Portrait in *De indolentia*” (143–55), identifies the distinctive contribution of *De indolentia* to Galen’s autobiographical profile. As she notes, “Galen articulates the link between his ethical values and his scientific research, and manages, thus, to offer a philosophically consistent justification of his professional activities” (154). In Downie’s estimation, the “touchstone” of *De indolentia* is Galen’s “research-based observation that dynamism—ἐνέργεια—is the fundamental characteristic of life—of human life and of the life of all beings” (154).

The next section, “Irony,” contains essays by Ralph M. Rosen and Clare K. Rothschild. Rosen’s “Philology and the Rhetoric of Catastrophe in Galen’s *De indolentia*” (160–73) suggests that the very logic of Galen’s advice for avoiding grief brought on by material loss works against the very point Galen attempts to make in his section about his books and scholarly endeavors. Indeed, Rosen convincingly argues that “the treatise is more rhetorically persuasive as a brief for the critical importance of scholarship for the ‘philanthropic’ project of medicine at the highest level, than as a practical guide to ‘avoiding distress’” (160). In Rothschild’s “The Apocolocyntosis of Commodos or The Anti-imperial *Tendenz* of Galen’s *De indolentia*” (175–200), she examines the explicit anti-imperial commentary found at *Ind.* 49, 50a, 54–55. Since *De indolentia* seems to have been written in the months immediately following the death of Commodus, inarguably the worst emperor of his age, Rothschild maintains that in this letter to an old friend Galen “spells out his combative philosophical strategy for maintaining composure in the face of devastating loss [because] he just survived a reign of terror in which many like him were suddenly, unexpectedly, exiled, poisoned, or killed” (200). In her estimation, Galen’s most extensive critical opinions of the imperial palace occur at *Ind.* 51.

The last major section of this book, “Christian Trajectories,” contains some of the most fascinating material. As Rothschild and Thompson point out in the introduction, “Galen’s writings are often neglected in comparative studies of Early Christian literature, even though the two corpora treat many of the same topics” (15). Hoping to end this neglect, John T. Fitzgerald’s “Galen’s *De indolentia* in the context of Greco-Roman Medicine, Moral Philosophy, and Physiognomy” (203–20) surveys Christian interest in Galen among patristic writers, discusses the translation of λύπη, and explores *Ind.* 3 and what it contributes to our knowledge of Greco-Roman physiognomy. Addressing the neglect of Galen by scholars of the New Testament and Christian origins, he points out that “the sheer quantity of his literary corpus demands ... attention” (204). Indeed, Galen’s writings amount to approximately 10 percent of all surviving Greek literature before 350 CE. Fitzgerald concludes his important contribution to this volume by stating that Galen was “the quintessential *ιατροφιλόσοφος* or ‘physician-philosopher’ of the ancient Mediterranean world” as well as a pivotal figure in the history of ancient medicine (220). Focusing even more on the New Testament, L. Michael White’s “The Pathology and Cure of Grief (λύπη): Galen’s *De indolentia* in Context” (221–49) begins by analyzing Galen’s *De indolentia* in comparison to the Stoic taxonomy, which postulated four cardinal passions: grief (λύπη), fear (φόβος), desire (ἐπιθυμία), and pleasure (ἡδονή). Addressing themes in *De indolentia* and Paul’s letters, White notes that “grief is a common response or outgrowth of suffering hardship” for both men (233). For White, Paul, like Galen, deploys technical Stoic notions in his letters, particularly 2 Corinthians. As he relates, *De indolentia* helps us better understand “Paul’s peristasis catalogue and the references to consolation (in 2 Cor 4–5) in relation to the surrounding sections of the letter, in which Paul refers to his earlier ‘painful or greivous visit’ to Corinth (2 Cor 2:1) and the ‘painful aggrieved letter’ he wrote to them as a reprimand in order to bring them to ‘godly grief’ and repentance for their actions (2 Cor 2:2–4)” (233). Finally, Richard Wright’s “Possessions, Distress, and the Problem of Emotions: *De indolentia* and the Gospel of Luke in Juxtaposition” (251–73) shows how a comparison of *De indolentia* and the Gospel of Luke helps us to understand better Luke’s assessment of possessions and validity of emotions (252). As he relates, “In both the Third Gospel and *Ind.*, greed—the concern for abundant possessions—is inappropriate. Possessions should be used and not stored” (272). Additionally, “For both Luke and Galen, it is important,” Wright contends, “for human beings to have sufficient possessions for living: food and clothing” (273).

The final section of this volume, “Ancillary Material,” written by Trevor Thompson, contains a collation of the differences between the three critical editions of Galen’s *De indolentia*. These include: Paraskevi Kotzia and Panagiotis Sotiroudis’s text in *Hellenica* 60 (2010): 63–148, Véronique Boudon-Millot and Jacques Jouanna’s *Galien: Ne pas se chagriner*, and Ivan Garofalo and Alessandro Lami’s *Galeno: L’anima e il dolore*.

The importance of Rothschild and Thompson's volume cannot be overstated, particularly for scholars of the New Testament and early Christianity. Indeed, the two corpora treat many of the same themes. As the editors relate, "three comparative points offer a sample of questions for further research" between those who study Galen and those who work with early Christian materials: (1) second-century use of parchment codices to preserve valuable texts (*Ind.* 34) may be comparable to early Christian preference for the codex; (2) like *De indolentia*, more than one early Christian text preserves elements of an ancient epistle in the absence of standard epistolary elements; and (3) the "hermeneutics of self-interpretation" is an important new trajectory in investigations of early Christian literature (15). In other words, there is still much work to be done.