

ON THE LIFE OF ASCLEPIADES OF BITHYNIA*

ANY list of the most eminent Greek physicians must inevitably include the late Hellenistic doctor Asclepiades of Bithynia.¹ He was both extremely successful during his lifetime, and highly influential after his death. His revolutionary pathology and therapeutic method were the objects of much discussion. His importance, however, goes beyond the history of medicine as such. In spite of the fact that most current handbooks of ancient philosophy ignore him altogether, philosophy does appear to have been a major interest of his. He was an uncompromising opponent of providentialism and teleology. He challenged the idea, at the time the dominant one, that matter is continuous. He accounted for the functioning of the body in purely mechanistic and quantitative terms, and also developed an account of the soul, unique in its time, which arguably provides the closest ancient antecedent to modern reductionism.

However, while the number of extant testimonies on Asclepiades' doctrines is relatively large, evidence on his life is disappointingly meagre. Even so basic a fact as the correct century in which to place his activity has only recently been established. This was shown to be the second century BC by Rawson in her 1982 paper, where she demonstrated that the *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' death is the dramatic date of Cicero's *De oratore*, 91 BC.² On this basis Rawson dismissed as unreliable Pliny's dating of the beginning of Asclepiades' medical career to the time of Pompey,³ and thus also challenged the (then) dominant idea that Asclepiades' life stretched over the first century BC. Rawson also discussed other issues concerning Asclepiades' life, namely the precise location of his birth town Prouusias, and the places which he visited before moving to Rome: the Hellespont, Pergamon and Athens. Her findings, both chronological and geographical, can be taken for granted by now. Nevertheless, one may wonder whether it is possible to identify other facts and dates in Asclepiades' life. The ground here admittedly becomes much less firm, but it is worth exploring, because the current *status quaestionis* still leaves us in the dark about Asclepiades' historical and intellectual background.

In the first part of this paper, then, I shall concentrate on analysing some neglected texts of

* This paper, whatever its remaining defects, has benefited from the helpful criticisms and suggestions of F. Caizzi Declava, G. Lloyd, T. Lucchelli, D. Manetti, V. Nutton, D. Sedley, I. Sluiter, M. Tecusan, D. Thompson, J. Vallance, and F. Walbank, none of whom, however, should be assumed to agree with the views expressed in it.

¹ Most of the secondary literature available on Asclepiades, including Vallance's 1990 valuable monograph, focuses on specific issues of his doctrine. A comprehensive, though outline, account of Asclepiades is found in Wellmann (1908) and, more recently, in Vallance (1993), who also provides up-to-date bibliographical references. A complete collection of testimonies on Asclepiades is promised by Vallance.

² Cic. *De Oratore* 1.62: *neque uero Asclepiades, is quo nos medico amicoque usi sumus tum eloquentia uincebat ceteros medicos, in eo ipso, quod ornate dicebat, medicinae facultate utebatur, non eloquentia*. As Rawson argues, the verb tense *usi sumus* used by Crassus entails that Asclepiades was already dead by then. The hypothesis that Crassus speaks in this way because Asclepiades had left Rome (Allbutt (1921) 190 n.1) is refuted by Rawson (1982) 360-1. Another possible way of accounting for *usi sumus* would be to postulate a quarrel bringing relations between Crassus and Asclepiades to an end, the latter being still alive (Pigeaud (1982) 182). Rawson (1982) 361 does not satisfactorily tackle this hypothesis, dismissing it as a desperate resource. In fact, even if one leaves aside *usi sumus medico amicoque*, the hypothesis that Asclepiades was still alive, or at the very least still active, after 91 BC is ruled out by the verb tenses *uincebat... dicebat... utebatur*, which suggest that Asclepiades no longer did these things by 91 BC, either because he had died, or at least because he had retired. It is by considering the whole of the Cicero passage that alternative interpretations prove to be indefensible.

³ Pliny *N.H.* 26.12: 'In the time of Pompey the Great, one Asclepiades, a teacher of rhetoric, who found his gains in that profession too small, but had a brain brilliant enough for success in other professions, suddenly abandoned rhetoric for medicine. A man who neither had practised it nor knew anything of remedies that call for sharp eyes and personal experience but could attract by his eloquent and daily-practised oratory was forced to reject all simples, and reducing the whole of medicine to the discovery of causes, made it a matter of guess-work'.

potential relevance to Asclepiades' chronology. In the second part I shall discuss how the conclusions which can be drawn from this analysis might fill important lacunae in our knowledge of Asclepiades' career.

* * *

Wellmann (1908) 689 mentions an item in the catalogue of *auctores medicinae* found in the Laurentian codex of Celsus' *De medicina*.⁴ Here one Asclepiades is given as *Andreae filius*. If the author of the list is reliable, if this Asclepiades is Asclepiades of Bithynia, and, finally and crucially, if Andreas is someone who is known to us, then we would be in a position to go much further than establishing a *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' death. Neither Wellmann nor Rawson has made the most of this. However, as I hope to show, a closer examination of Anonymus' testimony, in parallel with the Suda entry under Ἀσκληπιᾶδης, may give some indications concerning Asclepiades' chronology and life in general. I shall open my investigation by discussing the aforementioned three points, starting from the first: is Anonymus Laurentianus a reliable source?

Anonymus' catalogue is divided into two sections: one covers Egyptian physicians, the other Greek and Latin ones. The first section, inspired by the orientalisising attitude which characterises late paganism, is rather whimsical, up to the point of counting Hermes Trismegistus and Queen Cleopatra as medical authors. However, when we come to the Greek–Latin section, it does prove to be reliable: when patronymics or toponymics are given, and when comparisons with other sources are possible, there is always correspondence between the two.⁵ Thus there is no reason not to trust Anonymus in the case of Asclepiades also. What needs to be decided is, rather, the identity of this Asclepiades. Hence we come to the next question I intend to address: is *Asclepiades filius Andreae* (whoever Andreas is) to be identified with Asclepiades of Bithynia?

No other source mentions this or any other patronymic for Asclepiades. Nonetheless, Wellmann (1908) 689 identifies the *filius Andreae* with Asclepiades of Bithynia by appealing to the fact that Tertullian at *De anima* 15.2-3 couples Asclepiades of Bithynia with a physician Andreas as regards their peculiar views on the soul.⁶ However, Asclepiades is found associated with other physicians as well on specific issues without thereby being the son of all of them. Thus the fact that Tertullian establishes a connection between Asclepiades of Bithynia and one Andreas is, in itself, too weak a basis for concluding that Anonymus' reference too is to our man. For Asclepiades of Bithynia was not the only physician with this name. Rawson (1982) 365 n.42 objects that 'doctors called Asclepiades are legion'. But she goes too far here. As a matter of fact, only two physicians with the personal name 'Asclepiades' had a significant

⁴ The entire list is published in Wellmann (1900) 369-71. The precise title is *nomina auctorum medicinae Aegyptiorum uel Graecorum et Latinorum*. The list comprises two pages of the Laurentian codex 73,1 (eleventh century). There is no apparent relationship with the other works incorporated there, except the common medical subject and the correspondence between the names of some of the physicians in the list (Cleopatra, Muscio, Soranus, the centaur Chiron) and the names of some of the (claimed) authors of the works incorporated in the codex. Each entry of the catalogue normally covers no more than one physician, of whom in some cases only the personal name is mentioned, and in other cases also the patronymic and/or the toponymic. No other identification, such as nicknames or school-affiliation, is provided. The list does not evince any order, at least on the whole, and looks like an onomastic pastiche. No medical author later than the sixth century AD is mentioned, and this suggests a composition date around that time (Wellmann (1900) 367). I am grateful to the Director of the Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence for allowing me to access their resources.

⁵ See also von Staden (1989) 482: 'on the face of it, this text would seem to be a relatively late onomastic pastiche and hence not particularly trustworthy, but Wellmann's analysis has shown that on the whole it is in fact fairly accurate' (the reference is to Wellmann (1900) 367-71).

⁶ 'A certain Dicaearchus of Messene, and Andreas and Asclepiades among the physicians abolished the ruling part of the soul, since they want the mind itself to be nothing more than the senses, to which they attribute the role of being the ruling faculty'.

enough place in ancient medicine that one may sensibly expect them to be covered in a list of *auctores medicinae*: Asclepiades of Bithynia, or of Prousius, and Asclepiades Pharmacion, or the Younger (first century AD), and when the name 'Asclepiades' occurs without one of the usual identifications, it usually turns out to refer to Asclepiades of Bithynia, by far the more influential of the two.⁷

The problem is that Anonymus does not list just one Asclepiades, but two: Asclepiades *filius Andreae* and another Asclepiades with no further identification.⁸ The number of the Asclepiadeses in the list agrees with that of the ancient eminent doctors called 'Asclepiades', and this suggests that Anonymus is covering both the Bithynian and the Pharmacion, as one might have expected a well-informed source to do. Unfortunately, the name of the father of the Pharmacion is equally unknown to us. Hence the question arises which one of the two Asclepiadeses between the Bithynian and the Pharmacion is the *filius Andreae*.

Usually it is the more famous between namesakes who needs identification less by means of patronymics or toponymics, which are therefore often omitted in contexts where the focus is on his doctrines. If this rule applies to Anonymus as well, one would have to conclude that the patronymic *Andreae filius* served precisely as a means to identify the less famous of the two Asclepiadeses and distinguish him from the Bithynian. But of course this rule does not apply to a catalogue the only purpose of which, if any, is to provide the names of physicians and also their patronymic and/or toponymic, when available. Anonymus admittedly does not always add these data, even in cases in which one would have assumed that they were available to him. However, when Anonymus does add these data, they normally, though not invariably, belong to the more eminent physicians such as Hippocrates, Diocles, Praxagoras, Herophilus and Erasistratus.

If we concentrate on the only other four cases of homonyms in the catalogue besides that of the Asclepiadeses, this consideration proves to be correct at least as regards the two Chrysippuses. One Chrysippus is said to be *Erinei filius Cnidius*; the other has no further description. Chrysippus of Cnidus the son of Erineus was a pupil of Philistion and Eudoxus, and probably identical to Chrysippus of Cnidus the teacher of Erasistratus.⁹ It is debatable to which

⁷ Unless, of course, the pharmacological context makes it obvious that the reference is to Asclepiades Pharmacion, even if his nickname is not given. On the use of the personal name Asclepiades alone to indicate the Bithynian see Vallance (1993) 707: 'in medical sources, the adjective Ἀσκληπιάδειος refers almost invariably to Asclepiades of Bithynia. Similarly in the case of the medical canons, those lists of the most important members of the various medical sects, it seems likely if not certain that when the name appears it relates to our man'. Rawson herself, (1982) 368, allows that Asclepiades of Bithynia 'was certainly well enough remembered in the third century AD to be commemorated, and even named without further identification' beside his first name, and if this is true for the herm found in the Via Appia, which Rawson wants to attribute to our man, it will be even more true for Asclepiades in Anonymus, not least because he is an *auctor medicinae*.

⁸ Neither Wellmann (1908) nor Rawson (1982) mentions this crucial particular.

⁹ Thus Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1881) 325-6 and Helm (1894). *Contra* Wellmann (1899) and Wellmann (1900) 371-82. See, however, Susemihl's reply to Wellmann in Susemihl (1901). Wellmann (1907) restates his point of view, but fails to deal with Susemihl's remarks. The dating of Erasistratus, on which much of Wellmann's argument turns, is itself a matter of controversy (see Fraser (1969) and von Staden (1989) 46-8). It is also questionable whether Erasistratus indeed was a direct pupil of Chrysippus, or only via Metrodorus (Sext. *Math.* 1.2 58; cf. Beloch (1904), III.2 474). It is possible to reconcile the controversial evidence available by hypothesising that the young Erasistratus came into contact with the late Chrysippus shortly before the latter died, but that he had his actual training only under Chrysippus' pupil Metrodorus. Wellmann's identification of the teacher of Erasistratus with Chrysippus the court-physician of Ptolemy II in Wellmann (1907) is certainly wrong: Diog. Laert. 7.186 makes it clear that the latter was, rather, a 'son' (or 'grandson') of the former. Wellmann himself (1930) 328 n.1 went on to drop this identification.

one of the other namesakes available the Chrysippus with no further identification corresponds,¹⁰ but this is a problem which does not matter much, insofar as Chrysippus of Cnidus the son of Erineus is the more eminent Chrysippus known to us, and also the only one whose patronymic is reported in ancient literature.

Another case of homonyms in the list is that of the two Apolloniuses. One is said to be *Pergamenus*; the other is without description. Apollonius of Pergamon is known to us from Galen and Oribasius. As to the *Apollonius* without identification, there were quite a few other Apolloniuses, some of whom admittedly were no less eminent than Apollonius of Pergamon.¹¹ A passage in Oribasius, however, suggests that the major one of them, Apollonius Mys, is in fact the same person as Apollonius of Pergamon, or at least that late medical writers failed to distinguish between the two.¹² It is therefore quite possible that not even Anonymus distinguished between these two Apolloniuses (if they are such), and that both have been covered in the same entry of the catalogue under Apollonius of Pergamon. I shall not embark on speculation concerning the identity of the Apollonius with no further identification.¹³ For our present purpose it is enough to observe that, although establishing different degrees of reputation is quite hard in the case of the Apolloniuses, there is at least no significantly more eminent namesake than Apollonius of Pergamon that one would have expected to be identified by his personal data, if the principle of specifying the more reputable homonym is followed.

Apparently contrary to this principle, however, is the case of the two Thessaluses: one is said to be *filius Hippocratis Cous*; the other has no further identification. The fact that the latter Thessalus is listed soon after Themison, the alleged founder of the Methodist school, leads quite safely to the conclusion that he corresponds to Thessalus of Tralles, the leader of the Methodist school in the first century AD, a very influential figure in Roman medicine, who is almost invariably associated with Themison in medical canons. There is no cause for surprise if Anonymus here evinces to be better acquainted with the personal data of the comparatively minor one of the two namesakes: Hippocrates was by far the most eminent physician in antiquity, and being born to him (and, moreover, being born in Cos) is something which one would hardly forget or pass over. Thus it is not by chance if the other son of Hippocrates, Dracon, not quite a medical authority on his own account, is also given his patronymic and toponymic *filius Hippocratis Cous*. In a sense Thessalus the son of Hippocrates could be regarded as the more eminent Thessalus purely on account of his illustrious father.¹⁴ The fourth and last group of homonyms in Anonymus is that of the two Luciuses, both without further identification. Although Anonymus knew that these two quite obscure physicians were different

¹⁰ Perhaps Chrysippus the Asclepiadean or Chrysippus the Erasistratean. Alternatively, Wellmann (1900) suggests Chrysippus the teacher of Erasistratus, whom he wants to distinguish from the son of Erineus, but see the previous note.

¹¹ See the entire list at *RE* 2.1, 148-51.

¹² See von Staden (1989) 549.

¹³ Three Apolloniuses were affiliates to the Empiricist school of medicine: Apollonius of Citium, and the two Apolloniuses of Antioch, father and son. If the Apollonius with no further identification corresponds to one of them, there would be no cause for surprise if he is not given his toponymic, and treated as a less eminent namesake, since Anonymus only very seldom lists Empiricists, and when he does, he never adds their personal data. Alternatively, one may think of Apollonius of Memphis the Erasistratean.

¹⁴ A similar explanation also applies to the third Thessalus in the list, *Thessalus ex Nechepso*, although here it is not a question of having a very illustrious father, but rather of being a descendant of Pharaoh Nechepso, admittedly not very eminent for us, but certainly so for Anonymus, who devoted a small section of the list to Egyptian gods and thaumaturges (among whom, as it happens, Nechepso is also mentioned).

people, their data were apparently unknown to him.¹⁵

The number of homonyms in the list is admittedly too small to offer a reliable test sample, but at least the few cases which are found there agree with the principle that it is the more famous physicians, if any, who are normally given their personal data in the list, also among namesakes. A notable exception is that of the Thessaluses, an exception which is nonetheless easily reconcilable with this principle, as we have seen. This should direct us toward identifying Asclepiades *filius Andreae* with the major Asclepiades available, that of Bithynia, although any inference based on reputation, a relatively tricky criterion, is highly conjectural.

However, the case of the Thessaluses, in particular that of Thessalus the Methodist, gives us a very important clue as to how to identify physicians when the information given does not suffice: by considering the place in which Anonymus lists them. The catalogue on the whole admittedly does not follow any order whatsoever. However, individual segments of it do evince a certain sequence, either chronological or of other kinds, which might indicate the author's immediate associations at the time of compilation. There are other instances of this besides the case of Thessalus and Themison: Erasistratus is listed after Herophilus, and Herophilus in turn after Praxagoras (we may call it the 'anatomist' sequence); Democritus is listed after Empedocles and Empedocles in turn after Pythagoras (we may call it the 'philosophical' sequence). The Asclepiades with no further description is listed soon after Dioscurides, Musa and Euphorbus, and before Menemachus, who all lived in the first century AD, exactly as Asclepiades the Younger did.

As to the son of Andreas, Anonymus writes: *Scomachus Bitinius* || *Asclepiades filius Andreae. Bitinius* belongs to the previous entry, and refers to *Schomachus* (a corruption of *Callimachus* according to Wellmann).¹⁶ However, listing Asclepiades the son of Andreas immediately after the only physician in the catalogue who is expressly said to come from Bithynia makes good sense if the reference here is to Asclepiades of Bithynia, whereas it definitely looks out of place if the reference is to a non-Bithynian Asclepiades instead. Suppose that the son of Andreas is either the Younger or any other Asclepiades, it would be perverse to list him soon after a physician *Bitinius* in spite of the fact that his far more influential namesake came precisely from there; since no Asclepiades *Bitinius* is registered as such, one would have to suppose that the author of the list was trying to confuse readers. I believe, rather, that the reference is to Asclepiades of Bithynia, and that the toponymic is here implied by association with the preceding entry. There is at least one case in which Anonymus appears to be doing so: this is the case with *Praxagoras Nicarchi filius* (no toponymic is provided, but the patronymic alone is enough here for us to identify him with Praxagoras of Cos), who is listed after his fellow citizen Dracon *Hippocratis filius Cous*.

However, recovering the name of Asclepiades' father is of little use unless we are able to give him an identity. Thus we come to the third question I propose to discuss: is Andreas, the father of Asclepiades of Bithynia, someone who is known to us? We do have a few reports on a physician Andreas, identified now by his affiliation to the Herophilean school, now by his patronymic, now by his native town. Although there is no positive evidence, such as a full statement of his particulars, that these data belong to one and the same person, it is commonly

¹⁵ However, one Lucius from the list exists only as Wellmann's conjecture for the given text *Licius*, which could perhaps be kept, and read as the toponymic of the preceding doctor mentioned, Marcellus, or perhaps also as a personal name in its own right.

¹⁶ Alternatively, one may think of Lysimachus, referred to at Caelius Aurelianus *Morb. chr.* 1.57 as *Silimachus* (*RE* 14.1, 39-40), which is closer to the *ductus litterarum* in Anonymus. Except that Lysimachus came from Cos, and therefore one would be compelled to posit a lacuna after his name: *lisimachus <cous || ...> bitinius* (I owe these ideas to V. Nutton).

assumed that they do.¹⁷ From a chronological point of view, it is in principle not impossible for this Andreas, who lived in the late third century BC, to be the father of Asclepiades. However, before going into complicated chronological issues, we should first of all make sure that it is worth the effort, that is, that identifying Andreas the father of Asclepiades with the eminent doctor of this name is something more than pure speculation.

On the face of it, Anonymus does not provide any indication at all, not even as to whether Andreas the father of Asclepiades was himself a physician. However, a positive presumption in favour of this supposition is to be allowed: medical art in antiquity, in the absence of public institutions in which to be trained, was mainly transmitted from father to son. This is the reason why a large number of ancient physicians came from medical families. It is difficult to assess to what extent this rule holds, since even doctors who are not explicitly said to be the sons of medical fathers may well have been such. As for Asclepiades, the very fact that he was given a name which in effect means ‘doctor’ lends at least a little support to the hypothesis that he was likewise a son of a doctor. This seems also to be confirmed by the fact that when Anonymus adds the patronymics of the physicians in the list, they almost invariably refer to medical fathers.¹⁸ Were it true that Asclepiades of Bithynia was a failed rhetorician who eventually became a medical charlatan, as Pliny at *N.H.* 26.12 (quoted above, n.3) maliciously suggests, this would pose a threat to the hypothesis that he came from a medical family. But the Pliny report is now unanimously rejected as unreliable,¹⁹ and scholars think that Pliny made it up either by speculating on Asclepiades’ rhetorical skills, which are praised by Cicero, or by conflating different Asclepiadeses.²⁰ The two explanations are in fact compatible.

However, the likelihood that Asclepiades came from a medical family does not take us very far. For all that we know of only one physician Andreas, there might have been hundreds of obscure namesake practitioners not mentioned in ancient literature, and Asclepiades’ father may well be one of these. For why must we have a famous father for a famous son? Of course, family connections were important at that time even more so than nowadays, and being the son of a celebrated father in one’s field could be a very good basis for a successful career. Moreover, we are not discussing physicians in general, but *learned* physicians in particular, and learned medicine was a highly select occupation in antiquity. Thus, in assuming that the job of Andreas the father of Asclepiades was comparable to that of his son, the hypothetical existence of some healer, sawbone or other non-learned physician called Andreas is not relevant. But we do need something more substantial than these generic considerations.

Tertullian’s coupling of Asclepiades with one Andreas at *De anima* 15.2-3 certainly looks more promising. A family connection between the two is by no means entailed in what Tertullian says. However, once we have good, independent reason to believe that Asclepiades did have a father Andreas, it becomes tempting to think that his father is the same person as the Andreas with whom Asclepiades of Bithynia is associated in Tertullian. This Andreas is certainly a physician (*ex medicis*), and presumably an eminent one, at least since Tertullian

¹⁷ As does von Staden (1989) 473. The new Pauly 1.687 adopts the same interpretation, and records just one physician Andreas. Anonymus too knows of the existence of only one *auctor medicinae* called Andreas. Wellmann (1894) is doubtful.

¹⁸ This is the case of Erasistratus’ father Cleombrotus; Praxagoras’ father Nicarchus; Diocles’ father Archidamus; Thessalus’ and Dracon’s father Hippocrates; Hippocrates’ father Heraclides, Democedes’ father Calliphon. The profession of Chrysippus’ father Erineus is unknown. No other patronymic in the Greek-Latin section of the list is provided.

¹⁹ See Rawson (1982) 365 and Vallance (1993) 708.

²⁰ We know of Asclepiades a grammarian who lived in the time in which Pliny mistakenly places our physician (see below), and it is tempting to think that Pliny here is conflating the two. Rawson is sceptical about this, but it is quite possible for a grammarian to be described as an *orandi magister*.

expects his readers to understand the reference immediately: ‘a certain citizen of Messene called Dicaearchus, and Andreas and Asclepiades among the physicians (*Messenius aliqui Dicaearchus, ex medicis autem Andreas et Asclepiades*)...’ (contrast the way in which the Peripatetic philosopher Dicaearchus needs further identification). Von Staden, the recent editor of the testimonies on Herophilus and his school, does not hesitate to identify this Andreas with the Herophilean.²¹ So does Wellmann (1891) 818. However, Wellmann (1908) 689 went on to resist this identification, on the grounds that Andreas the Herophilean is not likely to deny the existence of the ruling part of the soul, while Herophilus had located it in the brain. Yet to assume that Andreas should be committed to his teacher’s view, and, on the basis of this assumption, to reject a report which conflicts with it by postulating the existence of another Andreas, is definitely anti-economical. The very premise of the argument, namely the assumption that Andreas the Herophilean stuck to his teacher’s position, is not even a well-grounded supposition, in view of the traditionally relaxed school-loyalty among Herophileans.²²

As a matter of fact, if Andreas the father of Asclepiades in Anonymus and Andreas in Tertullian are one and the same person, as Wellmann and others have assumed,²³ they most likely correspond to Andreas the Herophilean. The problem is that they may, but need not, be the same person. Since this is the only text which suggests a connection between Asclepiades and Andreas the Herophilean, one must admit that there is no hard evidence available in support of the hypothesis that the former was the son of the latter. In the absence of such evidence, one may nevertheless want to check whether this hypothesis at least has the merit of some explanatory power with regard to our understanding of other reports.

Unfortunately, all biographical reports which explicitly refer to Asclepiades of Bithynia concern his stay at Rome as a distinguished physician, and while they do need close consideration for assessing whether our hypothesis is chronologically tenable, they are of little help in reconstructing earlier parts of his life. Basic biographical data are usually to be provided by lexicographers, but the Suda’s entry under Ἀσκληπιάδης quite surprisingly ignores Asclepiades the physician, and focuses on a fellow countryman of his, Asclepiades the grammarian of Myrlea, certainly to be distinguished from our man.²⁴ However, there may be something in the Suda of some relevance to *our* Asclepiades of Bithynia beneath the surface:

Asclepiades, the son of Diotimus, of Myrlea (this is a town in Bithynia, which we now call Apamea). His family originally came from Nicea. He was a grammarian, and a pupil of Apollonius. He lived in the time of Attalus and Eumenes the kings of Pergamon. He wrote emendations of philosophical books. He went to teach at Rome in the time of Pompey the Great and spent his youth at Alexandria in the time of Ptolemy IV. He wrote many things.²⁵

The Suda offers this as if it were a compact account covering just one Asclepiades. However, the conflicting chronologies which are attributed to him demonstrate that the entry amounts in fact to a pastiche of material concerning different Asclepiadeses.

²¹ See von Staden (1989) 448-9.

²² On the relaxedness among Herophileans see von Staden (1989) 445-6.

²³ Waszink too (1947) 222 identifies the two Andreas.

²⁴ Rawson (1982) 365-6.

²⁵ Ἀσκληπιάδης, Διοτίμου, Μυρλεανός (πόλις δὲ ἐστὶ Βιθυνίας, ἣ νῦν Ἀπάμεια καλουμένη), τὸ δὲ ἄνωθεν γένος ἦν Νικαεύς· γραμματικὸς, μαθητὴς Ἀπολλωνίου. γέγονε δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀττάλου καὶ Εὐμενοῦς τῶν ἐν Περγάμῳ βασιλέων. ἔγραψε φιλοσόφων βιβλίων διορθωτικά· ἐπαίδευσεν δὲ καὶ εἰς Ῥώμην ἐπὶ Πομπηίου τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ἐπὶ τοῦ τετάρτου Πτολεμαίου νέος διέτριψεν. ἔγραψε πολλά..

As to the first part of the entry, concerning the family, the native town, the job and the pedigree of the pseudo-person under review, some of the information given can be safely attributed to Asclepiades of Myrlea ('Asclepiades, the son of Diotimus, of Myrlea—this is a town in Bithynia, which we now call Apamea... He was a grammarian'), whilst some cannot be proved to refer to him ('His family originally came from Nicea... He was a pupil of Apollonius'). However, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, and of other suitable candidates,²⁶ one may want to follow the principle of parsimony and refrain from splitting the entry beyond what is necessary. The question, however, has to be left open in view of the fact that other parts of the entry are certainly spurious.

As to the chronology of Asclepiades, the Suda tells us that he γέγονε... ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀττάλου καὶ Εὐμενοῦς τῶν ἐν Περγάμῳ βασιλέων. The verb γίνεσθαι usually indicates 'being born' in the perfect tense, but being born is certainly not a continuous action which stretches over the reign of two kings. Therefore Rohde has suggested that γέγονε here takes the meaning of *floruit*,²⁷ and he has demonstrated that this meaning has parallels elsewhere in the Suda.²⁸ If Rohde is right, one should understand the text as saying that the life of this Asclepiades somehow overlapped with the reigns of Attalus and Eumenes.²⁹ The sequence Attalus—Eumenes applies only to Attalus I (king 237-197) and Eumenes II (king 197-158), and thus the *akme* of this Asclepiades falls sometime between 237 and 158 BC. The indication is clearly a very vague one. The only thing one can safely state is that this man was born before the death of Attalus in 197 (otherwise Attalus would not be mentioned).

Is this Asclepiades of Myrlea? The chronology which the Suda author here ascribes to him, on any of its possible stretches, disagrees with the real dating of the Myrlean (early, mid-first century BC).³⁰ As it happens, however, it is precisely in the first century BC that the Suda author goes on to place his Asclepiades ἐπαίδευσε... εἰς Ῥώμην ἐπὶ Πομπητοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου. It is therefore very likely that this is the part of the account relevant to the Myrlean. The report in Strabo that Asclepiades of Myrlea went to teach in the western part of Europe lends further support to this attribution.³¹ True, Strabo speaks of Spain, and not Rome. But Rome in the first century BC counted as the most obvious stop for any Greek intellectual on his way from Asia Minor to western Europe, and it may well be the case that the Myrlean did stay,

²⁶ Rohde (1879) 571 suggests that the Asclepiades whose family is said to come from Nicea is not Asclepiades of Myrlea, but the otherwise unknown Asclepiades of Nicea in Bithynia recorded among the eminent citizens of this town by Stephanus of Byzantium *Ethnika*, s.v. Νίκαια. On this account, the Suda made up the story τὸ δὲ ἀνωθεν γένος ἦν Νικαεὺς in order to accommodate a report concerning the native town of Asclepiades of Nicea to the Myrlean. However, what follows in the entry shows that the Suda author is not concerned with making up a consistent account out of the material he has excerpted from his source(s). Moreover, when he is uncertain between conflicting reports, it seems to be his procedure to leave the question open (see the singularly germane case of Parthenios: Παρθένιος, Νικαεὺς ἢ Μυρλεανός, κτλ.). As to Apollonius the teacher of Asclepiades, Rohde (1878) 174 suggests that the reference might be to the otherwise unknown Academic philosopher Apollonius listed at *Ind. Herc.* 36, a fellow of the otherwise equally unknown pupil of Carneades, Asclepiades of Apamea in Syria listed at *Ind. Herc.* 34 (= XXIV 4-6 Dorandi), who, Rohde speculates, is the actual author of φιλοσόφων βιβλίων διορθωτικά. However, the Academic Apollonius is not said to be the teacher of the Academic Asclepiades. Moreover there is no reason to think that the Academic Asclepiades is involved in the Suda entry, since it is quite possible that Asclepiades the grammarian of Myrlea himself corrected philosophical manuscripts.

²⁷ Rohde (1878) 173: 'hier lehrt die Nennung zweier Könige, daß γέγονε von der ἀκμῇ, nicht von der Zeit der Geburt zu verstehen sei'.

²⁸ E.g. Ἀριστοκλήης: γεγονῶς ἐπὶ τε Τραϊανοῦ καὶ Ἀδριανοῦ, and in other such cases in which 'kein Vernünftiger an das Geburtsjahr des Autors denken können' (Rohde (1878) 174).

²⁹ Rohde (1879) 571.

³⁰ *RE* 2.2,1630.

³¹ Strab., *Geo.* C 157.

and do some teaching there for a while. As to the Asclepiades who lived in the time of Attalus and Eumenes, if his *floruit* is given according to the dynastic succession in Pergamon, he presumably had some connections there, but any further supposition as to his identity is pure speculation.

The third, and last, chronological indication found in the Suda concerns one Asclepiades' stay at Alexandria in the time of Ptolemy IV while young. The chronology of this Asclepiades can be reconstructed with some accuracy. He stayed at Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy IV, that is, between 222 and 205 BC, and he was a boy (νέος) at the time. We do not know when to place his childhood within this span, nor, relatedly, when to place his birth date. But the very short duration of the reign of Ptolemy IV enables us to circumscribe this latter date within the 20s and 10s of the third century BC.

This Asclepiades is obviously not the one who will teach in Rome one and half centuries later, identifiable with the grammarian of Myrlea. Perhaps he is the same one who lived during the reigns of Attalus and Eumenes, some time between 237 and 158, as Rohde hypothesised. (But how then to explain the intrusion of the first-century Asclepiades right in the middle of the account?) In any case it would not be of much help, since we have no further independent evidence on the 'Pergamene' Asclepiades, and our problem is, rather, to find out whether the information given in the Suda may suit one of the Asclepiadeses who are known to us.

With this in mind there is something here which, I believe, should make us stop and pause: we already know from Anonymus that a physician Asclepiades, probably Asclepiades of Bithynia, was the son of a certain Andreas, possibly Andreas the Herophilean with whom Tertullian, *De anima* 15.2-3 associates our Asclepiades. The Suda author tells us that one Asclepiades spent his childhood in Alexandria under Ptolemy IV, that is, exactly in the time and place in which one would expect to find the son of Andreas the Herophilean, Ptolemy IV being the king at whose court Andreas was employed. The two reports square so well that identifying Andreas the father of Asclepiades in Anonymus with the doctor of Ptolemy IV, as well as identifying the Asclepiades who spent his early years in Alexandria under Ptolemy IV with the physician Asclepiades mentioned by Anonymus as *filius Andreae*, is very tempting. One cannot rule out the possibility that the Asclepiades who spent his childhood at Alexandria is the same one who lived in the time of Attalus and Eumenes. But this presents no actual problem, since our physician did have some connections with Pergamon.³² And while it is true that Asclepiades of Bithynia was certainly still alive long after Eumenes' death (158 BC), he was based in Rome in his late days, and a *floruit* given according to the Pergamene calendar need not take into account the last part of Asclepiades' life spent so far away from Asia Minor.

Of course the Suda author does not state that the 'Alexandrian' Asclepiades is our Asclepiades of Bithynia. However, there is very good reason why he should incorporate material relevant to our physician within his entry under 'Ἀσκληπιάδης... Μυρλεανός (πόλις δὲ ἐστὶ Βιθυνία κτλ.), conflating the two: both came from Bithynia, and the former is usually referred to simply as 'Asclepiades of Bithynia'. It is perhaps for the same reason that Pliny mistakenly dates Asclepiades the physician of Prousius *aetate magni Pompei*, recalling the part of the Suda report attributable to the Myrlean: ἐπὶ Πομπηίου τοῦ μεγάλου.

* * *

Let us now consider all the consequences that this identification entails from the point of view of the chronology of Asclepiades of Bithynia. Andreas died by falling victim to a failed

³² Rawson (1982) 366-7.

attempt on Ptolemy's life in 217 BC,³³ and his death, within 8-9 months, would be a *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' birth. Rawson (1982) 365 n.42 objects that making Asclepiades the son of one Andreas, if this Andreas is to be identified with the Herophilean, would compel us to backdate Asclepiades' birth too early: it is impossible for Asclepiades to be born in the late third century BC and still to be alive in the early first century BC. However, Cicero's testimony at *De oratore* 1.62 provides only a *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' death, and leaves the question open when Asclepiades died. If we are to assess whether so early a chronology for Asclepiades is possible, the *terminus ante quem* for his death is not of much use, and we should rather consider the *terminus post quem* for it. Thus the crucial question, and the one I shall next address, is how early Asclepiades' death could be placed on the basis of the evidence available.

If Pliny is to be trusted, king Mithridates issued an invitation to Asclepiades to come to Pontus from Rome, which the latter declined, sending some *praecepta* to the king instead.³⁴ This invitation must have taken place between 120 BC, when Mithridates became king, and 91 BC, by when Asclepiades had certainly died. Unfortunately, Pliny's report does not give any clue as to when to place it within this time span. However, it is likely that Mithridates approached Asclepiades (whose familiarity with Crassus' circle suggests good links with the political establishment in Rome) only *before* the king's relations with the Romans became openly hostile around the turn of the century.³⁵ If Mithridates' intention was to offer Asclepiades a position at the court, one may further hypothesise that Mithridates approached him at the time of his coronation, the time when a fresh king is engaged in appointing his entourage. But this is just speculation. The only thing one can safely assert is that Asclepiades was still alive in 120 BC, this year providing a *terminus post quem* for Mithridates' invitation and, relatedly, for Asclepiades' death. The fact that Asclepiades declined the invitation might suggest that by that time he was of so advanced an age as not to be able to undertake a long journey.³⁶

Thus we have come to a *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' birth and a *terminus post quem* for his death (216 BC and 120 BC, respectively). This makes a lifespan of at least 96 years, and, for all we know, Asclepiades' actual dates of birth and death need not exceed these *termini* by many years. In particular, the Suda's dating of Asclepiades' childhood some time between 222 and 205 fits very well within the hypothesis that he was born not much earlier than 216 BC.

Rawson rejects the hypothesis that Andreas the Herophilean is the father of Asclepiades on

³³ The anecdote is at Polyb. *Hist.* 5.8 11-7 (= Andreas T. 1 von Staden). Unfortunately, the only date available on Andreas is that of his death, and no inference on the basis of Herophilus' chronology can be made, since none of our sources identifies Andreas as a direct pupil of Herophilus, but only as one of his followers. If Andreas was murdered instead of Ptolemy, one may speculate that he was not significantly older than the king (aged 27 at that time), but Polybius does not make clear the precise reason why Andreas was eventually killed. Eratosthenes (275-194 BC) charged Andreas with plagiarism of his works (Andreas T. 2 von Staden), and this suggests that the latter was a contemporary (presumably younger) of the former, but nothing more than this. Soranus tells us that Andreas dedicated a work on difficult childbirth to a certain 'Sôbios', presumably a corruption for 'Sôsibius', a minister of Ptolemy IV (Andreas T. 9 von Staden; see Wellmann (1930) 325), but, again, this report (if 'Sosibius' is the correct reading) confirms only what we already know of Andreas' chronology, that the last part of his life overlapped with the first five years of the reign of Ptolemy IV.

³⁴ *N.H.* 25.6: 'Addressed to him [Mithridates] were volumes, still extant, written by the famous physician Asclepiades, who when invited to come from Rome sent instructions (*praecepta*) instead'. See also *N.H.* 7.124: 'But the highest reputation belongs to Asclepiades of Prousius ... for having despised the envoys and the offers of King Mithridates'. Pliny's trustworthiness here is secured by the fact that the books with the dedication to Mithridates were still available to readers in (*uolumina ... extant*).

³⁵ P. Green (1990) 559: 'at least from 103 Mithridates had been at odds with the Romans'. In 99/98 Mithridates received official warning to obey the Romans, unless he was willing to confront them. Gourevitch (1986) 70 hypothesises that Mithridates invited Asclepiades to Pontus after 99 precisely in order to spite the Romans, but this inference seems to me quite a strange one. Rawson (1982) 361 for her part appears to opt for an earlier date.

³⁶ Pliny for his part seems to explain Asclepiades' refusal in terms of conceit (*spretis legatis et pollicitationibus Mithridatis*), but this explanation is probably dictated by his overall biased representation of Asclepiades' personality.

the grounds that it presupposes too long a lifespan for Asclepiades. But a lifespan of 96 years or a little more is not impossible. Of course one may wonder whether granting a very long lifespan for Asclepiades, apart from being possible, is also plausible. Satisfyingly, Pliny provides evidence to this effect, reporting that our physician made a very bold boast in order to prove that his art was infallible: he asserted that he would never be affected by any disease. Pliny also tells us that Asclepiades succeeded in his boast, losing his life in *suprema senecta* by falling downstairs, one may assume at an age so advanced that despite his faultless constitution basic co-ordination proved problematic.³⁷ However fictitious the details of the anecdote may be, the very fact that this story was being told presupposes that it had its roots in the reality of Asclepiades' extreme senescence. But how extreme? Asclepiades is not mentioned in either of the two extant *Makrobioi*. This is perhaps the reason why those modern commentators who have bothered tackling the question of his lifespan tend to think of only 70-80 years.³⁸ However, any such inference *ex silentio* would be unreliable: Pseudo-Lucian does not mention Asclepiades nor any other doctor, presumably because of a lacuna in his source, embracing the whole category of physicians; Phlegon, whose focus is on Roman long-livers, omits even the most famous Greek cases such as Gorgias and Isocrates. Reports on the lifespans of eminent long-livers are admittedly found not only in strictly 'makrobiotic' literature. It is worth noticing, however, that the more than one hundred year lifespan of the most celebrated Greek doctor, Hippocrates, that one would have expected to be mentioned far and wide throughout ancient literature, is in fact reported only by the Suda author, by Tzetzes, and by the author of Pseudo-Soranus' *Life of Hippocrates*, who appears to be alone in being acquainted with the complete *status quaestionis*.³⁹ This being so, it is not surprising if Asclepiades' own lifespan, however long it might have been, is not mentioned by any of our sources.⁴⁰

While no actual figure concerning Asclepiades' lifespan has come down to us from antiquity, Fabricius and other early eighteenth-century authors agree in attributing 150 years of life to him.⁴¹ To my knowledge, the earliest source to report this figure is Longeville Harcouet, who wrote a celebrated *Makrobioi* in 1715, which was translated into English as early as 1722: 'Asclepiades, a Persian [i.e. 'Prouasian'] physician, might have lived much longer than he did, had not a fall put a period to his days at 150 years of age' (transl. Philalethes (1722) 71). A lifespan of 150 years is indeed hard to believe. But from where did the story arise? Perhaps it was made up on the basis of the same material on Asclepiades which is also available to us. However, it is not easy to explain how Pliny's expression *suprema senecta* alone could lead to such an inference. It is tempting to think that whoever originally made up the story had more

³⁷ Plin. *N.H.* 7.1 24: 'But the highest reputation belongs to Asclepiades of Prousius [...] most of all for having made a wager with fortune that he should not be deemed a physician if he were ever in any way ill himself: and he won his bet, as he lost his life in extreme old age by falling downstairs (*maxime sponsione facta cum fortuna, ne medicus crederetur, si umquam inualidus ullo modo fuisset ipse, et uicit suprema in senecta lapsu scalarum exanimatus*)'.

³⁸ Thus Cocchi apud R.M. Green (1955) 11; Harless (1828) 17. Gourevitch's dating of Asclepiades' birth around 170 BC in Gourevitch (1986) 81 presupposes a similar lifespan.

³⁹ [Soranus], *Vita Hippocratis*, II (CMG IV 177) offers four different figures: 85, 90, 104, 108 years. The Suda author and Tzetzes *Chil.* VII 155, deriving their overall accounts of Hippocrates from one and the same source, speak of 104 years only.

⁴⁰ If it is true that the Suda entry under 'Ασκληπιᾶδης incorporates material on our physician, as I have hypothesised, it may be asked why we do not find here an echo of his lifespan, were this notably long. However, it would be reasonable to assume that the Suda author may have had more information on Hippocrates than on Asclepiades whom he was unable even to distinguish one from the other. Moreover, the Suda author only occasionally mentions the lifespans of the people he covers, even in cases, such as that of Democritus (who lived 104 years according to [Lucian] *Makr.* 18), when this was remarkably long.

⁴¹ Fabricius (1726) 87. Other references can be found in R.M. Green (1955) 11.

material on Asclepiades than we now have, and that Longeville Harcouet's source here, though probably not itself ancient,⁴² was drawing on information ultimately stemming from antiquity.⁴³ This by no means entails that the figure of 150 years as such should gain more credence from us ('makrobiotic' literature, no matter how ancient, of its very nature tends towards exaggeration), but at least provides evidence that Asclepiades did have the reputation of an exceedingly long lifespan, well beyond the 96 years which my reconstruction of his genealogy requires.

While granting a very long lifespan for Asclepiades thus agrees with the evidence available, yet there does seem to be compelling reason for dating his birth long after Andreas' death in 217 BC. This is Sextus' report that Asclepiades lived at the same time as Antiochus. I shall quote the whole passage (*Math.* 7.201-2):

Not far removed, it would seem, from the opinion of these people [the Cyrenaics] are those who declare the senses to be the criterion of truth. For that there have been some who have maintained this view has been made clear by Antiochus the Academic, when in the Second Book of his *Canonics* he writes thus: 'But a certain other man, second to none in the art of medicine and a student also of philosophy (ἄλλος δὲ τις, ἐν ἰατρικῇ μὲν οὐδενὸς δεύτερος, ἀπτόμενος δὲ καὶ φιλοσοφίας), believed (ἐπέθετο) that the sensations are really and truly perceptions, and that we apprehend nothing at all by reason'. For in these words Antiochus seems to be stating the view mentioned above and to be hinting at Asclepiades the physician, who abolished the ruling principle, and who lived at the same time as himself (κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον αὐτῷ γενόμενον).

On the face of it, the chronology suggested by Sextus not only poses a threat to making Asclepiades the son of Andreas the Herophilean, but also to Rawson's *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' death. For, if Sextus' expression κατὰ... τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον γενόμενον is to be taken at face value as 'belonging to the same generation', one should think that Asclepiades' birth date was close to Antiochus' (the 120s), and hence that Asclepiades was—would have been—in his thirties in 91 BC. If Asclepiades was already dead by that time, as Rawson has argued, he definitely died very young. The problem is that this reading goes diametrically against the Pliny report that Asclepiades died in *suprema senecta*, even if we leave aside the implausibly long lifespan which is attributed to him elsewhere. Thus either Asclepiades belonged to the same generation as Antiochus, and died long after 91 BC, or he was not of the same generation as Antiochus, and Sextus' report needs to be reconsidered.

The former alternative seems to be ruled out not only by Cicero, but also, on closer inspection, by Sextus himself—or, more precisely, by Antiochus in Sextus, who uses a verb tense to present Asclepiades' views ('believed', Greek ἐπέθετο), which suggests, as Rawson (1982) 362 argues, that Asclepiades was already dead by the time Antiochus wrote those words in the *Canonica*. The actual date of this work is unknown, but there seems to be good reason to think

⁴² It is worth mentioning, however, that Longeville Harcouet elsewhere in his book does claim that he derives material directly from an ancient manuscript: 'This wonderful secret to re-establish Nature is not in the volume in folio of the celebrated Arnoldus de Villa Nova [...]. An ancient Latin manuscript which fell in the last century into the hands of Monsieur Poitier [...] who lent it to Monsieur l'Abbè de Vallemont [...] is what this wonderful secret of rejuvenescency is taken from' (transl. Philaletes (1722) 170).

⁴³ Longeville Harcouet usually follows Pseudo-Lucian quite closely, but also provides reports which either are not found in Pseudo-Lucian, or diverge from what Pseudo-Lucian says. Some of these reports agree with those of other sources, but others have no parallel elsewhere in ancient literature. This happens not only when Longeville Harcouet simply could not find the relevant information (this is the case with Asclepiades), but also when either Pseudo-Plutarch or other sources did supply the relevant information, and Longeville Harcouet provides his own report instead (this is the case with Sophocles and Galen). Unless Longeville Harcouet was simply inventing stories (but what for?), this might be taken to suggest that he had indirect access to ancient 'makrobiotic' material which has not come down to us.

that it goes back to Antiochus' early, Sceptical, phase, which was fading by about 87 BC.⁴⁴ One may go even further than Rawson: while Antiochus defected from the Academy only in 87, he had already become a Stoic sympathiser some time in the 90s.⁴⁵ Therefore, if he wrote the *Canonica* when he was still a Sceptic, he presumably wrote it by the 90s, and if Asclepiades died before the *Canonica* was composed, his death is to be placed either in the late second century or right at the beginning of the first.

If Asclepiades died in the late second century or at the beginning of the first (as the Cicero passage implies and the Antiochus one seems to confirm), and if he did so in a very advanced age, then he certainly did not belong to the same generation as Antiochus, and Sextus' report κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον αὐτῷ γινόμενον needs to be reconsidered. The crucial problem involves Sextus' accuracy and reliability here: how does he know of the chronology of both Antiochus and Asclepiades? To my knowledge, this is the only precise chronological indication found in Sextus, who, as a writer, does not appear to have been either concerned or familiar with chronological issues. Accordingly, one might have thought that he derived this information from Antiochus' own words, in the form of adverbs such as νῦν ('nowadays') or the like, but no such indications are found in the quotation from Antiochus, and the run of the quotation suggests that Antiochus' original report on Asclepiades amounted to the very few words which are found in Sextus. If so, Sextus' chronological indication is based on his own discernment of the matter, and this definitely allows us to interpret it in a very loose way, since Antiochus and Asclepiades could certainly be described as contemporaries, regardless of their precise chronology, by someone who lived more than three centuries later.

No less important for assessing how to read Sextus' chronological indication is the context in which it is given. This is a discussion of the Cyrenaics' theory of knowledge, which Antiochus argues to be comparable to Asclepiades' own.⁴⁶ Cicero, a younger contemporary of Antiochus, considers the Cyrenaics to be dead and buried already by the time of Epicurus,⁴⁷ and in fact the school seems to have been extinct in the early third century BC (no later affiliate is mentioned by Diogenes Laertius in his life of the founder Aristippus). In the context of a comparison between the Cyrenaics and Asclepiades, Sextus' making the latter a contemporary of Antiochus sounds very much like a relative description: Asclepiades lived at the same time as Antiochus *as opposed to* the Cyrenaics. This interpretation has the advantage of not attributing to Sextus any accurate knowledge of Asclepiades' and Antiochus' absolute chronology (something which is hardly likely), but only a vague idea of comparative chronology.

But why does Sextus here bother dating Asclepiades against his normal procedure? His rationale is in fact easily recoverable: identifying the unnamed physician referred to by Antiochus with Asclepiades is just an inference, and needs justification. One justification rests on the agreement between the doctrine which Antiochus attributes to this physician and Asclepiades' own. The second justification, which specifically relates to the way in which Antiochus refers to the anonymous physician (τις), rests on chronological considerations: describing Asclepiades as 'a chap second to none in medicine and a student also of philosophy' makes sense at the beginning of the first century BC when Antiochus was writing (no matter that

⁴⁴ This has been argued by Glucker (1978) 20-1 and Tarrant (1981) 81. Barnes (1989) 64-5 does not commit himself to any view.

⁴⁵ Evidence for this is the fact that the question was being asked why Antiochus did not defect to Dardanus and Mnesarchus (Cic. Ac. 2.69), who were active then.

⁴⁶ This was no doubt the original context in Antiochus as well, whose phrasing ἄλλος δὲ τις κτλ. presupposes a previous reference to the Cyrenaics: 'someone else, *other than the Cyrenaics* ...'.

⁴⁷ See Cicero, *De officiis* 3.116 (= Aristippus B 43 Giannantoni): *quibus [Cyrenaicis] obsoletis floret Epicurus*.

Asclepiades was already dead by then: he would be the first to come to mind anyway), but it no longer makes sense to Sextus and his readers in the late second century AD, and Sextus has to make explicit the reason why he thinks Antiochus is referring to Asclepiades in this way: because they were (roughly) contemporary.

If I am right, Sextus' expression κατὰ... τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον γινόμενον cannot be taken as evidence for Asclepiades' precise chronology. Ancient literature is full of comparable chronological indications, such as 'now', 'a short time ago' and the like, which prove to be inaccurate, either because they have a merely comparative meaning, or because they express the subjective feeling of the author.

Having established that, from a chronological point of view, it is neither impossible nor for that matter implausible that Asclepiades was the son of Andreas the Herophilean, I shall discuss other possible objections, (some of which also necessarily entail certain chronological considerations).

(1) One may wonder why none of our medical sources reports such a remarkable piece of information concerning Asclepiades' family. However, this argument *ex silentio* is much less strong than it might seem, because patronymics are very seldom mentioned in discussions concerning the doctrines of physicians. This is not, or not necessarily, because these data are not known, but because they are not relevant. According to Waszink (1947) 222, Soranus, the source of much of ancient medical doxography, 'when quoting physicians and philosophers, never adds the names of their fathers'. Patronymics and biographical data in general are rare in Galen as well. Moreover, the works that Galen specifically devoted to discussing Asclepiades' doctrines (two according to Galen's own list at *De libr. propr.* K XIX 38), are lost. There is no cause for surprise if Anonymus is the only author to mention Asclepiades' patronymic, since Anonymus is also the only author to mention the name of Diocles' father Archidamus, himself a distinguished physician. I should add that Pliny's description of Asclepiades as *homo e leuissima gente* [...] *orsus* (*N. H.* 26.16) 'has of course nothing to do with family descent, but reflects Roman contempt for Asiatic Greeks', as Rawson (1982) 365 n.42 puts it.

(2) Andreas is not likely to have had a son born to him so far away from Egypt, in Bithynia, while he was based in Alexandria. One could reply that Herophilus, Callimachus (if Wellmann's emendation of the Laur. codex is correct), and a later Herophilean called Demetrius all came from Bithynia. Andreas is admittedly not himself from Bithynia: he is from Carystus in Euboea. However, the attested links between Herophileans in Alexandria and Bithynia⁴⁸ make it less odd if one of them should visit Bithynia, or at least have close enough relations with women from that region, so as to have a son born to him there.⁴⁹

(3) How can Licinius Crassus, born 140 BC, describe Asclepiades as a friend at *Cic. Or.* I 62 in spite of the huge gap of their ages? In fact, Cicero's precise phrasing: *nos medico*

⁴⁸ See von Staden (1989) 482 and 508. Von Staden (1989) 482 observes that Callimachus' Bithynian origin 'might be of significance for evaluating Erotian's testimony that he was accepted into the "house" of Herophilus'. A comparable case is, perhaps, that of the Stoic philosopher Perseus of Citium, who lived in the same house as his teacher Zeno of Citium during his stay in Athens (*Diog. L.* 7.13 = *SVF* 1.439). If the two cases were comparable, the reference of the expression 'those from the house of Herophilus' to indicate the early followers of Herophilus would be to a community life, which perhaps also related to the common place of origin of the members, or at least of some of them (on medical 'houses' in Alexandria see Fraser (1972) I 357-8).

⁴⁹ His native town was Prouusias, referred to as Cius until its destruction in 202 BC (*Strab., Geo.* C 564). We do have one report which suggests that the actual toponymic of Asclepiades was 'Cian', rather than 'Prouasian', which might then be taken to provide evidence to the effect that Asclepiades was born before 202, as my reconstruction of Asclepiades' chronology also demands. This is at [*Gal.*] *Introductio* K XIV 683: 'Ἀσκληπιάδης Βίθυνος, Κιωνός, ὃς καὶ Προυσιεὺς ἐκαλεῖτο. Rather than overemphasising this text, however, one should consider that Prouusias returned to its old name in the time of Claudius, and that the Pseudo-Galen report may have been affected by this.

amicoque usi sumus suggests that the actual reference is not to a personal friendship of Asclepiades with Crassus, but to Asclepiades' acquaintance, as a medical advisor, with the circle of upper-class Romans to which Crassus, his fellows and their families belonged.⁵⁰

(4) If Pliny is to be trusted, Themison was a direct pupil of Asclepiades.⁵¹ However, this is of no use for deciding Asclepiades' chronology, and cannot therefore be taken as evidence against the chronology I have argued for, since Themison's own chronology is in turn fixed on the basis of that of Asclepiades.⁵² It is for this reason that Rawson (1982) 363 places Themison's activity at the beginning of the first century BC, and Gourevitch (1986) 81 dates his birth about 150 BC, whereas earlier commentators went so far as to suggest the beginning of the first century AD. The chronology of other followers of Asclepiades is equally of no relevance, either because it is a matter of conjecture or because they cannot be proved to be direct pupils of his (the case of Antonius Musa is discussed by Rawson (1982) 363; on Asclepiades' early pupils see Gourevitch (1986) 74-7).⁵³

* * *

As stated above, the very meagre evidence available makes any attempt to identify dates in Asclepiades' life somewhat speculative, and the chronology which I have suggested rests on a conjectural reconstruction of his genealogy. Nevertheless this chronology, as long as it agrees, or at least does not conflict, with what we know of Asclepiades, is, I believe, a suitable one. Moreover, placing his medical education in Alexandria at the end of the third century BC enables us to account for the apparent background of his doctrine much better than has been possible on the basis of the current reconstructions of his life.

Rawson (1982), it seems, did not realise that establishing 91 BC as a *terminus ante quem* for Asclepiades' death raises the question of how Asclepiades could be acquainted with Hellenistic medical debate while staying in a place, Rome, which in the second century BC was too peripheral to enable him to be so. Asclepiades, of course, might simply have come across that debate and partaken in it without physically being in the place in which it took place. However, this would be contrary to the usual pattern of transmission of ideas in the Hellenistic world.⁵⁴ Moreover, the books of Alexandrian doctors are not likely to have been easily available to readers in Rome during the second century BC, when there was little or no interest in Greek science there. A medical debate did flourish in Rome from the first century BC onwards, but this is definitely too late to have been the background for Asclepiades' activity.

⁵⁰ A similar reading is already suggested by Rawson (1982) 361 n.17, who finds it probable that '*nos* in the *De oratore* quotation means "we" not "I", and therefore that Asclepiades was doctor to all Crassus' circle'.

⁵¹ Plin. *N.H.* 29.6.

⁵² Celsus' *nuper* at *De medicina Pr.* 11 (*ex cuius [Asclepiadis] successoribus Themison nuper ...*) may just be a subjective description of time, and does not provide compelling evidence that Themison died shortly before Nero's time, when Celsus lived (see Rawson (1982) 363).

⁵³ My revision of Asclepiades' chronology of course creates a gap in the allegedly continuous chain that links Asclepiades to Thessalus via Themison. Indeed, it is the Cicero passage itself that does so: if Asclepiades died *before* the dramatic date of the dialogue, and if a significant part of Themison's life overlapped with the latter part of Asclepiades' (to the point that Themison anticipated Asclepiades' own discussion of a medical disease; cf. Caelius Aurelianus *Morb. ac.* 2.84), then it is chronologically impossible that Themison was the teacher of Thessalus, who lived more than one century later, well into the first century AD. As things stand, either we must find out an alternative explanation for the Cicero passage, or we shall simply have to accept the fact that there was no such thing as a continuous chain Asclepiades—Themison—Thessalus. In the absence of evidence to the effect that Thessalus knew Themison personally, allowing a chronological gap between the two eminent forerunners and the actual founder of the Methodist school is not a problem.

⁵⁴ Romans became acquainted for the first time with Greek philosophy owing to the physical presence of Carneades, Diogenes and other Greek philosophers in Rome at the time of the famous embassy in 155 BC; the diffusion of Stoicism in Rome is mostly due to Panaetius' activity there; Cicero's acquaintance with Academic philosophy goes back to his stay in Athens.

Rawson (1985)¹⁷⁴ appeals to the presence of some Greek doctors in Rome in the late second century. However, as far as we know, these doctors were mere sawbones and comparable figures taken from Greece to Rome as war captives, whereas Asclepiades' background appears to be in 'scientific' medicine, this being sharply distinguished from the expertise of other practitioners. Moreover, Asclepiades' medical training, even on Rawson's own dating of him, cannot be placed in the late second century, unless one trusts Pliny's story of his late conversion from rhetoric to medicine—a story which is meant to substantiate the claim that Asclepiades was only a quack, and which is therefore by no means to be trusted.⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, Rawson (1985) 174 herself goes on to admit that 'he could not have got this knowledge of his predecessors at Rome in the late second century', thus leaving the question unanswered.

If Rome is only the place where Asclepiades eventually practised his art, his historical and intellectual background is to be sought elsewhere. But where? Neither his Bithynian origin, nor his having being in the Hellespont, in Pergamon and in Athens before moving to Rome is sufficient to account for it. It is the hypothesis that Asclepiades received his medical education in Alexandria that provides the most straightforward explanation for his deep acquaintance with the medical debate there. His critical discussion of the Empiricists' theory of knowledge, his reworking of Erasistratus' corpuscular theory of matter,⁵⁶ and in fact most of Asclepiades' doctrines would hardly have been conceivable outside the Alexandrian milieu.

To do full justice to other scholars, it must be said that the hypothesis of an Alexandrian background for Asclepiades is not entirely new. However, it has never before found a suitable formulation.⁵⁷ Rawson for her part is sceptical about it. In her view, Asclepiades' ignorance of anatomy counts as evidence that he did not study in Alexandria. One easy reply to this argument might have been that the Empiricists too did not appeal to anatomical evidence, in spite of their school being located in Alexandria. In fact, however, the very assumption that Asclepiades was not at all acquainted with anatomy relies on a mistaken reading of the texts. Galen does say that Asclepiades was not very well acquainted with anatomy.⁵⁸ But Galen addresses the same criticism to the followers of the anatomist Erasistratus,⁵⁹ and the criticism is therefore far from entailing that Asclepiades was not acquainted with anatomy. No one could seriously suppose that Asclepiades discussed the structure of the pulmonary vein and other internal organs without appealing to anatomical observations. Positive evidence that Asclepiades did use arguments based on dissection is found at Gal. *De nat. fac.* K II 166, in which we are told that he appealed to anatomy in order to prove his theory that food does not undergo concoction in the body. Elsewhere Galen does refer to Asclepiades as 'you who despise Herophilus' dissections (ὁ τὰς Ἡροφίλου διαπτύων ἀνατομάς),⁶⁰ but the reference here need not be to anatomical practice as such, but rather to Herophilus' own account of anatomy,

⁵⁵ See above p. 53.

⁵⁶ On Asclepiades' reworking of Erasistratus' physics see Vallance (1990), in particular 62-79.

⁵⁷ Allbutt (1921) 154 and Scarborough (1969) 38 argued for Asclepiades' Alexandrian background by appealing to his alleged pupillage with Erasistratus' brother Cleophantus. But the reports in which Asclepiades is associated with Cleophantus do not mention any pupillage. Moreover, Asclepiades' direct acquaintance with Cleophantus, who lived in the early third century BC, is to be ruled out on chronological grounds. Phillips (1973) 162 describes Asclepiades as 'a link between Alexandrian medicine and the medical sects of Roman times', and goes so far as to make him a disciple of Erasistratus, but Phillips' overall account of Asclepiades' pedigree and career is inaccurate and inconsistent.

⁵⁸ Gal., *De us. part.* K III 467 (ἐκ βραθυμίας τῆς περὶ τὰς ἀνατομάς) and *De us. part.* K III 473 (τὰ διὰ τῶν ἀνατομῶν φαινόμενα κατάφωρος εἶναι μὴ γινώσκων).

⁵⁹ Gal., *An in art. sang.* K IV 718; see also *De nat. fac.* K II 91 on Erasistratus' own incapability of understanding anatomy.

⁶⁰ Gal., *De us. part.* K III 467.

or perhaps even certain implications which Galen himself sees in it. If one leaves aside Galen's testimony, anatomical arguments are not only attributed to Asclepiades in the Tertullian passage which I have already mentioned in connection with his link to Andreas (*De anima* 15.2-3), but are also found in Calcidius' account of how the soul comes-to-be in the view of those who deny a specific location to the ruling part.⁶¹

So much for Asclepiades' pedigree. However, one may wonder whether the revision of his biography that I have suggested also has some consequences for the geographical area of his subsequent career. The Suda report does not enable us to tell how long Asclepiades may have stayed in Alexandria, so as to assess whether he merely received his education in Alexandria, or whether a significant part of his life is also to be placed there. But some suppositions can be advanced on the basis of what we already know of Asclepiades from other sources.

Both Cicero and Pliny appear to consider Asclepiades' rhetorical skills his outstanding characteristic, whereas neither of them knows of his interests in philosophy. By contrast, Antiochus, who spent some time in Alexandria and was never in Rome, (thus probably owing his knowledge of Asclepiades to the traces the latter left in Alexandria), for his part grants Asclepiades a unique place in his account of epistemological doctrines of earlier philosophers in the *Canonica*: no other physician is mentioned in the section of Sextus thought to be based on this work, in spite of the fact that both the Empiricists and the Rationalists were deeply concerned with epistemological issues. This is evidence that Antiochus and his readers regarded Asclepiades' philosophical legacy as far more relevant than that of any other physician, and as a major area of his interests. Conversely, neither Antiochus nor any other Greek, or Greek-derived source, mentions Asclepiades' rhetorical skills.⁶² This suggests that Asclepiades' medical activity included practising some rhetoric only at Rome, possibly in order to overcome the Romans' hostility towards Greek doctors (thought to be mere butchers).

Another key to Asclepiades' popularity in Rome appears to have been his therapeutic method based on mild treatments, which the Romans welcomed regardless of any underlying theoretical motivations or premises.⁶³ The silence of Roman sources on the speculative and 'philosophical' part of Asclepiades' teachings may suggest that he developed that part before he came to Rome, while working in an environment in which a physician was expected to explore theoretical issues. I do not go so far as to suggest that Asclepiades abandoned his interests in this area once he had moved to Rome (on the contrary, it is highly likely that these issues were the subject of his teaching within the circle of his pupils),⁶⁴ but I find it plausible to think that most of his 'scientific' output dates back to his stay in Alexandria. Thus it seems to me unlikely that he wrote commentaries on Hippocrates⁶⁵ during his stay in Rome, where nobody would have been interested in them around the mid-second century BC, whereas the commentary on Hippocrates was a very popular genre among both Herophileans and Empiricists in Alexandria, and a

⁶¹ Calc. In *Platonis Timaeum* c. 215 p.229 W. On Asclepiades and anatomy see also Vilas (1903) 43.

⁶² The dialectical skills that Galen ascribes to Asclepiades (*De nat. fac.* K II 34 and elsewhere) relate to Asclepiades' allegedly sophistic method of arguing rather than to his rhetorical ability.

⁶³ Pliny at *N.H.* 26.13 does say that 'Asclepiades, [...], reducing the whole of medicine to the discovery of causes, made it a matter of guess-work', but the reference here may simply be to the most superficial level of Asclepiades' aetiology, (such as the claim that the alleged longevity of the British is due to the coldness of the climate there; cf. [Plut.] *Plac.* 911 B), rather than to his systematic deduction of the causes of diseases from the working of the corpuscles in the body, with which Pliny does not appear to be acquainted.

⁶⁴ A Roman follower of his, Titus Aufidius, wrote a treatise *On the Soul* (*Cael. Aur. Morb. chr.* I. 178). Asclepiades is the first ever physician for whom a treatise which bears this title is known (*Gal., De usu resp.* K IV 484). Writing treatises *On the Soul* subsequently became a well-established genre of medical literature by Tertullian's day (*Tert. De an.* 2 and 13).

⁶⁵ *Gal., In Hp. Off.* K XVIIIb 631. See also the list of Asclepiades' works in Vallance (1993) 709.

well-established part of learned medicine. Since one of Asclepiades' readings of Hippocrates echoes a distinctive motif of his own theory of the soul,⁶⁶ one may hypothesise that he may have developed this theory as early as his Alexandrian stay.

Finally, the fact that some of Erasistratus' followers reformulated their teacher's position in terms which Galen finds comparable with Asclepiades' corpuscularism might suggest that Asclepiades interacted with, and had some influence on, the medical debate going on there.⁶⁷

* * *

In conclusion, the report in Anonymus Laurentianus concerning the family name *Andreae filius* of one *auctor medicinae* Asclepiades, in parallel with the Suda's placing one Bithynian Asclepiades' early years in the late third-century Alexandria, and also with Tertullian's coupling of Asclepiades of Bithynia with one physician Andreas, makes it tempting to think that Asclepiades of Bithynia was born to Andreas the Herophilean shortly before Andreas' death in 217. I have shown that this chronology (including the attribution of a very long lifespan to our man, which is implied in it) does not conflict with any of the biographical reports available on Asclepiades of Bithynia (except Pliny's dating of him in the early, mid-first century BC, which has already been proven incorrect by Rawson). In addition to this, I have shown that distinctive features of Asclepiades' doctrines as well as testimonies on his activity converge in locating his medical training in the place which, as it happens, making him the son of Andreas also suggests. This may be regarded as lending further support to my reconstruction of Asclepiades' genealogy, although his Alexandrian background only presupposes a stay there, and need not relate to the identity of the father.

The revision of Asclepiades' chronology which I have been arguing for and also my reconstruction of his early career, if correct, would significantly contribute to a better evaluation of this figure, whose historical background has been only very loosely discussed so far.

ROBERTO POLITO

St John's College, Cambridge

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allbutt, T.C. (1921) *Greek Medicine in Rome* (London; repr. New York 1970)
- Barnes, J. (1989) 'Antiochus of Ascalon', in J. Barnes and M. Griffin (eds.), *Philosophia Togata, Essays on Roman Philosophy and Society* (Oxford) 51-96
- Beloch, J. (1904) *Griechische Geschichte*, 4 vols. (Strassburg-Berlin-Leipzig: 2nd edn. 1927)
- Fabricius, J.A. (1726) *Elenchus medicorum veterum*, in J.A. Fabricius, *Bibliotheca Graeca*, 14 vols. (Hamburg 1705-28) vol. XIII, 15-456
- Fraser, P.M. (1969) 'The career of Erasistratus of Ceos', *Rendiconti dell'Istituto Lombardo, Classe di lettere e scienze morali e storiche* 103, 518-37
- , (1972) *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 3 vols. (Oxford)
- Glucker, J. (1978) *Antiochus and the Late Academy (Hypomnemata 56, Göttingen)*
- Gourevitch, D. (1986) 'Asclépiade de Bithynie dans Pline', *Helmantica* 37, 67-81
- Green, P. (1990) *The Hellenistic Age* (London)
- Green, R.M. (1955) *Asclepiades: His Life and Writings. A Translation of Cocchi's 'Life of Asclepiades' and Gumpert's 'Fragments of Asclepiades'* (New Haven)
- Harless, Ch.F. (1828) *Medicorum veterum Asclepiades dictionum lustratio historica et critica* (Bonn)
- Helm, R. (1894) 'Über die Lebenszeit der Aerzte Nikias, Erasistratos, Metrodor und Chrysipp', *Hermes* 29, 161-70

⁶⁶ Gal., *In Hp. Epid.*: K XVIIIb. 246.

⁶⁷ Gal., *De nat. fac.* K II 98: 'For I see that the Erasistrians themselves are at variance on this subject [the question of the small elementary nerve]. Some of them consider it one and continuous ... while others venture to resolve it into yet other elementary bodies ... But if it consists of many bodies, then we have escaped by the back door, as the saying is, to Asclepiades, seeing that we have postulated certain *anormoi ogkoi*'. It is unfortunate that Galen offers no clue as to when this dispute arises, and, relatedly, on the chronology of the people involved.

- Philalethes, E. (1722) (Pseud. = R. Samber) *Long Livers: A Curious History of Such Persons of Both Sexes who have Liv'd Several Ages, and Grown Young Again: With the Secret of Rejuvenescency of Arnoldus de Villa Nova* (London) [A translation of Monsieur de Longeville Harcouet, *Histoire des personnes qui ont vécu plusieurs siècles, et qui ont rejeuni; avec le secret de rajeunissement, tiré d'Arnould de Villeneuve* (Paris 1715)]
- Phillips, E.D. (1973) *Greek Medicine* (London)
- Pigeaud, J. (1982) 'Sur le Méthodisme', in G. Sabbah (ed.), *Médecins et médecine dans l'antiquité (Mémoires III Centre Jean Palerne, Saint-Étienne)* 181-3
- Rawson, E. (1982) 'On the life and death of Asclepiades', *Classical Quarterly* 32, 358-70; repr. in E. Rawson, *Roman Culture and Society: Collected Papers* (Oxford 1991) 427-43 (1985)
- *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (London)
- Rohde, E. (1878) 'Ἐγὼνε in den Biographica des Suidas', *Rheinisches Museum*, 33, 161-84; repr. in E. Rohde, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 vols. (Tübingen-Leipzig 1901) vol. I, 114-84
- (1879) 'Philo von Byblus und Hesychios von Milet', *Rheinisches Museum* 34, 561-74; repr. in E. Rohde, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 vols. (Tübingen-Leipzig 1901) vol. I, 365-79
- Scarborough, J. (1969) *Roman Medicine* (London)
- von Staden, H. (1989) *Herophilus, the Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria* (Cambridge)
- Susemihl, F. (1901) 'Chrysisippos von Knidos und Erasistratos', *Rheinisches Museum* 56, 313-8
- Tarrant, H. (1981) 'Agreement and the self-evident in Philo of Larissa', *Dionysius* 5, 62-79
- Vallance, J.T. (1990) *The Lost Theory of Asclepiades of Bithynia* (Oxford)
- (1993) 'The medical system of Asclepiades of Bithynia', *ANRW* 37.1 (Berlin-New York) 693-727
- von Vilas, H. (1904) *Der Arzt und Philosoph Asklepiades von Bithynien* (Wien-Leipzig)
- Wellman, M. (1891) 'Die Medicin bis in die zweite Hälfte des zweitem Jahrhunderts', in F. Susemihl, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur in der Alexandrinerzeit* (Leipzig 1891-2) vol. I, 777-828
- (1894) 'Andreas (11)', *RE* 2.1, 2136-7
- (1899) 'Chrysisippos (15)-(19)', *RE* 3, 2509-11
- (1900) 'Zur Geschichte der Medicin im Alterthum', *Hermes* 35, 349-84
- (1907) 'Erasistratos (2)', *RE* 6.1, 333-50.
- (1908) 'Asklepiades von Bithynien, von einem herrschenden Vorurteil befreit', *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Alterthum* 21, 684-703
- (1930) 'Beiträge zur Geschichte der Medizin in Alterum', *Hermes* 65, 322-31
- Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. (1881) *Antigonos von Karystos (Philologische Untersuchungen 1, Berlin)*
- Waszink, J.H. (1947) *Q. Septimi Florentis Tertulliani De anima* (Amsterdam)