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# A Battle Against Pain? Aristotle, Theophrastus and the *Physiologi* in Aspasius, *On Nicomachean Ethics* 156.14-20

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## Abstract

Aspasius, *In EN* 156.14-22, commenting on *EN* 7.14, 1154b7-9, reports that Theophrastus joins Aristotle's battle against the so-called *physiologi* in trying to disprove their belief in the ubiquity of pain. I argue that there are theoretical and exegetical difficulties in Aspasius' comment which have not been noticed by scholars and cannot be fixed by textual emendation. In fact, *In EN* 156.14-22 can be regarded neither as a reliable interpretation of Aristotle, nor as an authentic source for Theophrastus.

## Keywords

Aristotle – Theophrastus – Aspasius – *physiologi* – pain

## 1 Introduction

In explaining why physical pleasures (τῶν σωματικῶν ἡδονῶν, *EN* 7.14, 1154a8) appear most attractive,<sup>1</sup> Aristotle adduces an idiosyncratic doctrine held by some anonymous *physiologi* according to which pain pervades all the activity of animals (1154b7-9, tr. Irwin, modified):

1 What I call 'physical / bodily pleasures' here are limited to pleasures of tactile type, which is narrower than what the ordinary sense of this phrase refers to (cf. *EE* 3.2, 1230b21-1231a26; *EN* 3.10, 118a1-b4). For discussion of this constraint, see Young 1988, 524-9.

ἀεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ τὸ ζῶον, ὡσπερ καὶ οἱ φυσιολόγοι μαρτυροῦσι, τὸ ὄραν, τὸ ἀκούειν φάσκοντες εἶναι λυπηρόν· ἀλλ' ἤδη συνήθεις ἐσμέν, ὡς φασίν.

For the animal is always toiling, as the natural scientists also testify, since they maintain that seeing and hearing are painful. However, we are already accustomed, so they say.

On Aristotle's account, the *physiologoi* have two arguments for this extraordinary view. First, they use a puzzling example—seeing and hearing are painful (λυπηρόν)—to illustrate or to prove that animals are always in πόνος, an ambiguous term whose semantic field encompasses labor / exercise and pain / suffering (LSJ s.v.). This argument, if it makes sense, seems to take animal activities—even the most basic ones such as seeing and hearing—as a *pains-taking operation* (πονεῖν) of animals' faculties, so that their life is constantly permeated by pain (πόνος) as long as they are sentient. Secondly, presumably in order to forestall a criticism of their teaching as counter-intuitive, they further point out that, with habituation, pain can be unfelt or unnoticed by animals despite its presence.

The doctrine that Aristotle reports is obscure. What kind of motivation lies behind his appeal to this strange view is also puzzling. At first glance, as γὰρ in 1154b7 suggests, the *physiologoi* are invoked by Aristotle to support his explanation of the nature of physical pleasures, in particular why many people are attracted by such pleasures.<sup>2</sup> On closer examination, however, their doctrine seems to undermine, rather than to reinforce, what Aristotle has just said, because the elimination of the neutral state—a condition which is supposed to involve neither pleasure nor pain—is immediately at odds with his claim that the corrupted people even *misrepresent this state* (τὸ μηδέτερον) as painful (1154b6).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the view of the *physiologoi* violates, *a fortiori*, Aristotle's basic belief—his central argumentative aim in the two accounts of pleasure

2 In tune with this trend, Francis, for instance, repeatedly quotes the doctrine of the *physiologoi* in *EN* 1154b7-9 as textual evidence to support the idea that Aristotle is of the opinion that all living beings are constantly in Heraclitean flux (2011, 157: 'at *EN* 1154b5-15, Aristotle *directly acknowledges* the evidence of the *physiologoi*' [my emphasis]; see also 162 n. 163 and 166 n. 189). Francis does not seem to notice the consequence of this attribution, namely that, if this were Aristotle's position, he would believe that neither the neutral state nor pure pleasure is possible for human beings, which is absurd. For a similar reading, see *Anon. in EN* 458.28-31 Heylbut; Joachim 1955, 240.

3 This implies that in normal cases people must represent the neutral state as neutral, i.e. neither pleasant nor painful, so that the thesis of the ubiquity of pain is untenable (cf. Warren 2007, 24-5).

in the *EN*—that the normal actualization (*energeia*) of animal cognitive faculties is in principle *good* and *pleasant*.<sup>4</sup> It is thus not an accident that, in his commentary on *EN*, Aspasius, who is quite familiar with Aristotle's positive attitude to pleasure,<sup>5</sup> suggests that the quotation of the *physiologoi* is not due to Aristotle's alliance with them, but is motivated by his polemical interests. More importantly, Aspasius informs us that behind this succinct report, there is a more sophisticated story, namely the dispute between the Peripatetics (Aristotle and Theophrastus) and Anaxagoras about the range and role of pain in animal life. His comment on this episode is worth quoting in full (*in EN* 156.11-22 Heylbut = Theophrastus fr. 555 FHS&G; tr. Konstan, modified):

τὸ δὲ μῆδέτερον τὸ μῆτε ἡδεσθαι μῆτε λυπεῖσθαι πολλοῖς λυπηρὸν † καὶ τὸ δοκεῖν ἢ κρατίστη αὐτῷ εἶναι κατάστασις· ὃ δὲ φησι πολλοῖς ἀλγεινὸν εἶναι, τοῦτο διὰ τὴν φύσιν. αἰεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ τὸ ζῶον, ὡσπερ καὶ οἱ φυσιολόγοι λέγουσιν. ὁ γὰρ Ἀναξαγόρας ἔλεγεν αἰεὶ πονεῖν τὸ ζῶον διὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων. ταῦτα δὲ οὐχ ὡς συγκατατιθέμενος λέγει ἀλλ' ἱστορῶν· ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἔδοκει γε αὐτοῖς<sup>6</sup> αἰεὶ ἐν πόνῳ εἶναι τὸ ζῶον. καὶ τὸν Ἀναξαγόραν αἰτιάται Θεόφραστος ἐν Ἡθικοῖς λέγων ὅτι ἐξελαύνει ἡδονὴ λύπην ἢ γε ἐναντία, οἷον ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ πίνειν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ διψῆν, καὶ ἢ τυχοῦσα, τουτέστιν ἥτις οὖν ἂν εἴη ἰσχυρά, ὥστε ἐνίστε πείναν ἐξελαύνει καὶ ἀκοῆς ἡδονή, ὅταν ἄσμασιν ἢ ἄλλοις τισὶν ἀκούσασιν διαφερόντως χαίρωμεν. καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἀκόλαστοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι· ἴν' ὅλως γὰρ μὴ λυπῶνται μῆδὲ ἀλγῶσι, μεγάλας καὶ σφοδράς ἡδονὰς ἑαυτοῖς πορίζουσι.

What is neither—neither taking pleasure nor feeling pain—[seems] painful to many people, † and the fact that it seems to him to be the

4 *EN* 7.12, 1153a13-15; 7.13, 1153b9-10; 9.9, 1170a29-b4; 10.4, 1174a14-b3. Aubry's excellent article is here worth mentioning. She is clearly aware that the view of the *physiologoi* cannot be approved by Aristotle, yet she still seems to ascribe to him a moderate form of the doctrine of the *physiologoi* by reading *EN* 7.14 as a demonstration of the fragility of human condition (2009, 249). Consequently, she reverses Aristotle's optimistic view of human nature, replacing it with a rather pessimistically coloured image of human existence. In my view, she goes too far in claiming that for Aristotle 'human nature is constitutionally unbalanced', or that the neutral state is 'the result of human imbalance' (238), or that, necessarily, 'the activity of the soul's rational part is painful for its irrational part, and reciprocally' (258).

5 Cf. *In EN* 22.23-5 (tr. Konstan): 'pleasure invariably accompanies noble actions. That is why he [sc. Aristotle] says that a life of activities (τὸν βίον τῶν ἐνεργειῶν) in important matters in accord with virtue is in itself pleasant (καθ' αὐτὸν ἡδύν).'

6 I keep the MS reading, instead of Fortenbaugh's conjecture of αὐτῷ in FHS&G; cf. Konstan 2006, 205 n. 413. The plural form is supposed to refer to the Peripatetics: cf. Barnes 1999, 7-8.

strongest condition. But he says, it is painful to many, and this ‘because of nature’. ‘For an animal is always suffering’, as the *physiologoi* also say. For Anaxagoras said that an animal is always suffering because of its senses. But he [i.e. Aristotle] says this not by way of agreeing with him, but rather investigating it,<sup>7</sup> since it did not seem to them [i.e. the Aristotelians], in fact, that an animal is always in discomfort. Theophrastus too, in his *Ethics*, criticizes Anaxagoras, saying that pleasure, or at least the contrary pleasure, drives out pain, for example the pleasure of drinking drives out the pain of being thirsty; and so too does any pleasure that occurs, that is, one that is strong: thus, sometimes even the pleasure of hearing drives out hunger, when we very much enjoy songs or other kinds of music. And this is why human beings become indulgent: so that they may not feel pain or grief *at all*, they provide for themselves great and intense pleasures.

Few scholars doubt the historical value of Aspasius’ report.<sup>8</sup> In his recent article, for instance, James Warren characterizes this passage as the ‘foremost’ evidence for reconstructing Theophrastus’ criticism of Anaxagoras’ theory of sense perception, ‘because it both contains a number of Theophrastan objections to Anaxagoras and also leads us back to the Aristotelian source text and to some questions about an important additional note to Anaxagoras’ theory.’<sup>9</sup> In spite of such significance, however, there is a textual difficulty that makes several scholars hesitant to take Aspasius’ story at face value. That is, the alleged quotation of Theophrastus’ *Ethics*—which is characterized by Aspasius as an objection to the theory of the *physiologoi* / Anaxagoras—seems to be blended with a *verbatim* citation of Aristotle’s *EN* 7.14, 1154b13–15:

7 The translation of ἰστροῶν follows FHS&G because, if we accept the transmitted text, Aspasius seems to read *EN* 1154b13–15 as Aristotle’s *criticism* of the *physiologoi*, which is then happily adopted by Theophrastus. In comparison with Konstan’s translation—‘he [i.e. Aristotle] says this not by way of agreeing with him, but rather *recording* it’ (my emphasis)—this rendering sits better with Aspasius’ further comments. So the contrast between συγκατατιθέμενος and ἰστροῶν should be a contrast between agreement and critique.

8 E.g. Gauthier and Jolif 1958–9, 813 on *EN* 1154b7: ‘Au témoignage de Théophraste et d’Aspasius, c’est Anaxagore qui est ici visé;’ or Romeyer-Dherbey 1999, 16: ‘Théophraste devait bien connaître l’oeuvre d’Anaxagore ... il l’analysait dans ses *Éthiques*.’

9 Warren 2007, 20; cf. Holmes 2010, 115 n. 125.

EN 7.14, 1154b13-15

Aspasius, *In EN* 156.16-22 = Theophrastus  
fr.555 FHS&G

ἐξελαύνει δὲ ἡδονὴ λύπην ἢ τ' ἐναντία  
καὶ ἡ τυχοῦσα, ἐὰν ἦ ἰσχυρά· καὶ διὰ  
ταῦτα ἀκόλαστοι καὶ φαῦλοι γίνονται.

καὶ τὸν Ἀναξαγόραν αἰτιάζεται Θεόφρα-  
στος ἐν Ἠθικοῖς λέγων ὅτι ἐξελαύνει  
ἡδονὴ λύπην ἢ γε ἐναντία, οἷον ἡ ἀπὸ τοῦ  
πίνειν τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ διψῆν, καὶ ἡ τυχοῦσα,  
τουτέστιν ἡτις οὖν ἂν εἶη ἰσχυρά, ὥστε  
ἐνίοτε πείναν ἐξελαύνει καὶ ἀκοῆς ἡδονή,  
ὅταν ἄσμασιν ἢ ἄλλοις τισὶν ἀκούσμασι  
διαφερόντως χαίρωμεν. καὶ διὰ ταῦτα  
ἀκόλαστοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι· ἴν' ὅλως  
γὰρ μὴ λυπῶνται μηδὲ ἀλγῶσι, μεγάλας  
καὶ σφοδράς ἡδονὰς ἑαυτοῖς πορίζουσι.

Although Heylbut, Burnet, Kenny, and Warren<sup>10</sup> seem happy to accept that Theophrastus here appeals to Aristotle's *EN* in his criticism of the Anaxagorean doctrine that all sense perceptions are accompanied by pain, there are critics who doubt that Theophrastus would make such a digression for this purpose, especially if one takes it into account that Theophrastus has laid out a relatively detailed criticism of Anaxagoras' view of pain in the *De Sensibus*. To remedy this unevenness, various kinds of textual interventions have been proposed in classical scholarship. Diels, for instance, tries to compromise the *ipsisima verba* of Aristotle and the attribution to Theophrastus by supplementing ὡς καὶ before Θεόφραστος ἐν Ἠθικοῖς (59 A94 DK). This remedy, followed by Dirlmeier and Walzer,<sup>11</sup> makes *In EN* 156.16-22 to be a report of Aristotle's criticism of Anaxagoras based on *EN* 1154b13-15, but it leaves open how in the *Ethics* Theophrastus *formulates* his fundamental agreement with his master. However ingenious and economical this proposal may be, Mulvaney has pointed out

10 Heylbut 1888, 198; Burnet 1900, 342; Kenny 1978, 15; Warren 2007. Zeller 1921, 864 does not seem to realize the problem of textual overlapping. He trusts Aspasius' report, but regards it as one of Theophrastus' 'einzelne Aussprüche, meist treffend und von feiner Beobachtung zeugend, aber ohne wissenschaftliche Eigentümlichkeit'.

11 Dirlmeier 1964, 506: 'Was bei Aspas. weiter folgt, ist so wie es dasteht, nicht in Ordnung. Richtig dagegen in Vors. 59A94.' See also Walzer 1929, 79.

that the conjecture is unpromising and *ad hoc*, because it cannot change the worry that neither *EN* 1154b13-15 nor Aspasius' extended version seems to have a bearing on the doctrine of the *physiologoi*. He thus puts forwards a different solution, inserting a textual lacuna between λέγων ὅτι and ἐξελαύνει ἡδονή (*In EN* 156.16), the content of which should be Aspasius' remarks on *EN* 1154b7-13 and Theophrastus' (lost) text, presumably gathered from the *De Sensibus*. Correspondingly, *In EN* 156.16-22 is no longer Theophrastus' refutation of Anaxagoras, but Aspasius' own comment on *EN* 1154b13-15.<sup>12</sup> This hypothesis, with slight modification and additional arguments,<sup>13</sup> has been accepted by Fortenbaugh, the most recent editor and commentator of Theophrastus' ethical sources.<sup>14</sup> The reason, as he tells us, is that it explains not only why 156.16-22 seems 'out of place', but also why the extant commentary leaves *EN* 1154b9-13, an interesting passage, unmentioned. Fortenbaugh 2011, 656 also draws attention to the textual disturbance at 156.12 which, according to him, functions as a sign for the possibility that the text has undergone corruption in transmission.

Mulvany and Fortenbaugh are correct to maintain that Aspasius' story and Aristotle's account cannot be made to accord with each other by Diels' textual emendation. The critical reason is that Diels and his followers fail to recognize what the real problem underlying Aspasius' testimony is. They do not realize that behind the problem of textual overlap there are more serious difficulties, for instance the problem of argumentative relevance, with which 156.16-22 is fraught. On the other hand, however, the arguments of Mulvany and Fortenbaugh in favor of the textual lacuna are also not beyond suspicion. In general, their proposal presupposes that Aspasius must have written an exhaustive line-by-line commentary, which is not only in conflict with Aspasius' own statement,<sup>15</sup> but also has been (in my view convincingly) refuted by Barnes' excellent illustration of how Aspasius *selectively* deals with the *lemmata* (1999, 23.) Secondly, it is a subjective judgement whether or not *EN* 1154b9-13 is an *interesting* passage and thus deserves its own comment. The comprehensive commentary on the *EN* by Gauthier and Jolif, for example,

12 Mulvany 1919, 18-19; cf. Fortenbaugh 2011, 655.

13 He disagrees with Mulvany that the title *Ethics* in *In EN* 156.17 should be replaced by *De Sensibus*, because it is not impossible that in the *Ethics* Theophrastus adopts some materials from *De Sensibus* and *Reply to Anaxagoras* (Fortenbaugh 2011, 656).

14 In using the term 'attractive', Fortenbaugh seems to be more cautious than Mulvany about setting a textual lacuna here.

15 *In EN* 110.22-24: τὰ δὲ ἐξῆς, ἐπειδὴ καὶ καθ' αὐτὰ δῆλόν ἐστι καὶ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων, οὐκ ἀνάγκη πάντα ἐπιέναι, ἀλλ' εἴ τινα ἔχει ἔνστασιν κατὰ τὴν λέξιν ταῦτα θεωρητέον.

does not seem to care much about the passage at issue.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Aspasius' selection of the texts depends both on the introductory character of the commentary and on contemporaneous concerns.<sup>17</sup> Many passages or topics that are significant for us (e.g. the so-called 'function argument' in *EN* 1.7 or the compatibility of the definitions of pleasure in *EN* 7.11-14 and 10.1-5) are of little interest for the philosophical tyro in the Roman Empire, and conversely what Aspasius takes pains to articulate (e.g. his elaboration of the ἔνδοξα at the beginning of *EN* 7.12) might be otiose or too elementary for contemporary Aristotelian scholars. Moreover, the textual corruption in Aspasius 151.11—a few words seem to fall out after πολλοῖς λυπηρόν—merely raises some syntactic difficulty in construing the following sentence (i.e. καὶ τὸ δοκεῖν ἢ κρατίστη αὐτῷ εἶναι κατάστασις), which certainly does not jeopardize the reader's ability to discern the moral of Aspasius' comment, namely to show why, according to Aristotle, many people feel the neutral state as painful. In contrast, if we accept Mulvany's proposal, we have to conceive of a *substantial* and *huge* textual gap existing in 156.17, the alleged missing comments on the *physiologoi* and on *EN* 1153b13-15, which can hardly gain support from the trivial corruption in 156.11. Finally and most importantly, the claim that the comment at 156.16-22 seems *irrelevant* to the doctrine of the *physiologoi* can be undermined by Warren's recent reconstruction of Theophrastus' arguments against the *physiologoi* / Anaxagoras.<sup>18</sup> Warren argues that the two theses in *EN* 1154b12-15—(a) that (physical) pleasure drives out (physical) pain, and (b) that pleasure and pain are in this sense opposites—are adopted by Theophrastus to resist the expansion of pain held by the *physiologoi* / Anaxagoras. No matter whether or not this is a good argument,<sup>19</sup> it is hard to envision why the two theses, taken together, *cannot* serve the polemical purpose against the *physiologoi* or Anaxagoras. For if pain can be driven out by its opposite pleasure, then the existence of pleasure, at least in some cases, has disproved the belief of the *physiologoi* that pain exists ubiquitously for living animals.

In view of such difficulties, it seems prudent to accept the transmitted text at 156.16-22 as Aspasius' comment on *EN* 1154b7-9. If so, should we then dispel

16 Gautier and Jolif 1958-9, 813 only provide a cross-reference for the term οἱ μελαγχολικοί, and mention a textual problem in 1154b11, namely whether the phrase ἡδὺ ἢ νεότης should be <τὸ> ἡδὺ ἢ νεότης <διώκει>. *EN* 1154b8-10 and 12-13 are skipped.

17 See Barnes 1999, 25-30.

18 Warren 2007, 20-5. Following the mainstream view, Warren identifies Anaxagoras with the *physiologoi*. I shall address the relationship between the *physiologoi* and Anaxagoras below in Section 3.

19 I shall return to this issue below in Sections 2 and 3.

the doubts of scholars and re-establish the credibility of Aspasius' story of Theophrastus' adoption of Aristotle in his confrontation with Anaxagoras? My answer is no. The reason is that the critics, whether Diels or Mulvany and Fortenbaugh, fail to grasp what the fatal weakness of Aspasius' comment lies in. While Diels does not realize that there is a deeper theoretical difficulty underlying 156.16-22, which cannot be fixed by philological remedy, Mulvany and Fortenbaugh come close to revealing where the real problem is: yet their diagnosis seems merely to touch upon its surface. Let me call the former—the puzzle of textual overlap—the Easy Problem, and the theoretical weakness the Hard Problem. The Hard Problem, as I shall argue, is not that Aspasius' comment is not well connected with, or is irrelevant to, the doctrine of the *physiologoi*,<sup>20</sup> but that the argument ascribed to Theophrastus is illogical and anti-Aristotelian if it is taken as a comment on *EN* 1154b7-9. As a result, 156.14-22 cannot offer a reliable interpretation of Aristotle either, which leads to a more fundamental question, namely to what extent we can trust the whole story Aspasius tells us, especially whether this passage actually preserves solid sources for the Peripatetic battle against Anaxagoras' doctrine of pain.

## 2 The Hard Problem in Aspasius, *In EN* 156.16-22

Before embarking on our diagnosis of Aspasius' testimony, it would be useful to consider Aristotle's arguments in a broader context. As if an appendix to his discussion of the value of pleasure as such (*EN* 7.11-13), *EN* 7.14 is primarily concerned with is the nature of physical pleasures, in particular those of the indulgent (περὶ ἃς ὁ ἀκόλαστος, 1154a10) and excessive kind (τὴν ἡδονὴν ... τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν, 1154a29). For Aristotle believes that we ought not only to spell out the truth (as he has already undertaken in *EN* 7.11-13), but also explain what is false (1154a22-3). In particular, he intends to elucidate why sensory pleasure appears attractive for many people, even if in his eyes it is at best *accidentally* pleasant. His strategy, as usual, is not to repudiate ordinary experience by reducing the attractiveness of physical pleasures to pure illusion, but to trace it back to its subjective and objective conditions, namely to an interplay of the imperfect nature of animals and the intensity (τὸ σφοδραὶ εἶναι, 1154b2) of such pleasures. These two conditions converge towards a congruent picture: those whose natures are defective are more inclined to experience pain even in the neutral state, so that they permanently need a more intense physical pleasure

20 E.g. 'having no bearing on'; 'not warranted by logic nor in any way suggested by our text of E.N.' (Mulvany 1919, 18); 'out of place' (Fortenbaugh 2011, 656).



in order to counterbalance this pain. The theory of the *physiologi* occurs in the midst of Aristotle's explanation. It is worthwhile to present this episode in its full context (*EN* 7.14, 1154b2-15, tr. Irwin, modified):

ἔτι διώκονται διὰ τὸ σφοδραὶ εἶναι ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλαις μὴ δυναμένων χαίρειν· αὐτοὶ γοῦν αὐτοῖς δίψας τινὰς παρασκευάζουσιν. ὅταν μὲν οὖν ἀβλαβεῖς, ἀνεπιτίμητον, ὅταν δὲ βλαβεράς, φαῦλον. οὐτε γὰρ ἔχουσιν ἕτερα ἐφ' οἷς χαίρουσιν, τό τε μῆδέτερον πολλοῖς λυπηρὸν διὰ τὴν φύσιν. ἀεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ τὸ ζῶον, ὡσπερ καὶ οἱ φυσιολόγοι μαρτυροῦσι, τὸ ὄραν, τὸ ἀκούειν φάσκοντες εἶναι λυπηρὸν· ἀλλ' ἤδη συνήθεις ἐσμέν, ὡς φασίν. ὁμοίως δ' ἐν μὲν τῇ νεότητι διὰ τὴν αὔξησιν ὡσπερ οἱ οἰνωμένοι διάκεινται, καὶ ἡδὺ ἢ νεότης. οἱ δὲ μελαγχολικοὶ τὴν φύσιν δέονται ἀεὶ ἰατρείας· καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα δακνόμενον διατελεῖ διὰ τὴν κρᾶσιν, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐν ὀρέξει σφοδρᾷ εἰσίν· ἐξελαύνει δὲ ἡδονὴ λύπην ἢ τ' ἐναντία καὶ ἡ τυχοῦσα, ἐὰν ᾗ ἰσχυρά· καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἀκόλαστοι καὶ φαῦλοι γίνονται.

Bodily pleasures are pursued furthermore because they are intense, by people who are incapable of enjoying other pleasures. In any case, they themselves are wont to induce some kinds of thirst in themselves. What they do is not a matter for reproach, whenever [pleasures] are harmless, but it is base whenever they are harmful. These people do this because they enjoy nothing else, and many people's natural constitution makes the neutral condition painful to them. *For an animal is always toiling, as the natural scientists also testify, since they maintain that seeing and hearing are painful. However, we are already accustomed, so they say.* Indeed, growth makes young people's condition similar to an intoxicated person's and youth is pleasant. Naturally melancholic people, by contrast, are always requiring a cure, since their bodies are continually stung because of their mixture, and they are always having intense desires.<sup>21</sup> A pain

21 There are a few interpretative problems in *EN* 1154b9-12, especially as regards the *comparandum* of the young people introduced by the adverb ὁμοίως at 1154b10. Different proposals yield different translations. Some suggest that the *comparandum* of the young are the people who are driven by their hypersensitivity to seek excessive pleasures (1154b5-6). Some, by contrast (Ross, Festugière; adapted by Aubry 2009, 250), believe that melancholics should be the *comparandum* of the young people, causing them to read a full stop after ἢ νεότης (1154b11) instead of a comma. According to the latter view, the text should be translated as follows: 'And just as the young, because of growth, are in a disposition similar to that of drunkenness—and youth is a pleasant thing—those who are melancholy by nature always have need of a remedy' (Aubry 2009, 250). Although this proposal is obviously better than the first one, it is unlikely for the following reasons. First, ὁμοίως at 1154b10 is so closely combined with the ὡσπερ at 1154b11 that it appears far-fetched

is driven out by its contrary pleasure, indeed by any pleasure at all that is strong enough; and this is why such people become intemperate and base.

For what purposes does Aristotle appeal to the *physiologoi*? As we have seen, he is concerned to show that it is due to their corrupted constitutions that many people take the neutral state—which should be neither pleasant nor painful—as painful. From a normative perspective, what he is referring to is obviously an *abnormal* or *unnatural* situation, which is *not* identical with the situation addressed by the *physiologoi*, who claim that pain is even involved in normal activities such as seeing and hearing. The whole argument proceeds, as Aubry 2009, 247 already points out, from the case of ‘some people’ (τινάς, 1154b4), via the case of ‘many people’ (πολλοῖς, b6),<sup>22</sup> eventually to what concerns the *physiologoi*—‘animals in general’ (τὸ ζῶον, b7). In this process of generalization, Aristotle seems deliberately to appeal to the *physiologoi*, the experts on bodies, as some sort of authority in his naturalistic explanation of the overwhelming power of sensory pleasure in animal life. Since, according to the *physiologoi*, pain exists constantly even in the natural state, i.e. when the capacities of the natural organs are doing their regular work, then Aristotle hints that they must also approve his claim that pain can be involved in the neutral state when people have a flawed constitution, i.e. are in an abnormal

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to identify the *comparandum* with the remoter reference to melancholy than the nearer reference to drunkenness (for ὁμοίως ... ὥσπερ as a set collocation in Aristotle, see *Int.* 9, 19a33; *APr.* 2.5, 58b8-9; *Cael.* 2.13, 295b30-2; *DA* 2.11, 423b10-11; *MA* 10, 703a12). Secondly, if ὥσπερ at b11 aims to draw an analogy between the young and melancholics, the inserted sentence καὶ ἡδὺ ἢ νεότης at b10-11 appears syntactically awkward. Thirdly, the resemblance of the young and the drunk is a well-established analogy in the Aristotelian tradition (see *Rhet.* 2.12, 1389a18, *Pr.* 30.1, 954b35-955a22; cf. Plato, *Leg.* 653d, 664e). Finally, melancholy seems to be introduced by Aristotle as another example, together with the young and the drunk, to illustrate and substantiate his theoretical explanation for the attractiveness of physical pleasure. The particles μέν, b9, and δέ, b11, seem to draw a contrast between different ways of being attracted by physical pleasure between young people and melancholics, namely διὰ τὴν αὔξησιν (cf. *Rhet.* 1389a19; διάθερμοὶ εἰσιν οἱ νέοι ὑπὸ τῆς φύσεως) and διὰ τὴν χρᾶσιν. Hence, I keep the text of Bywater and Susemihl unchanged.

22 I take the term πολλοῖς in 1154b6, which is without a definite article, to refer primarily to the majority of human beings, which is different from Aristotle's more technical use of οἱ πολλοί (*the many*), a term whose moral-psychological aspect often plays a more important role than its numerical aspect. For Aristotle's various uses of the term οἱ πολλοί in his practical philosophy, see Garrett 1993.

condition.<sup>23</sup> In other words, if the *neutral* state does not exist in the *natural* state, much less can it exist in an *unnatural* state, the condition in which many people, due to their corrupted life, are immersed. This is a dialectical argument in which Aristotle takes advantage of the phenomenon mentioned by the *physiologoi* in order to *uphold* his own explanation of the possible existence of pain in the neutral state, although he does not commit himself to endorsing all of its *theoretical* implications.

It is remarkable that after this short *physiologoi*-episode, Aristotle does not raise any objection to their doctrine, but goes on to use illustrative examples to show the close link between the attractiveness of sensory pleasures and the flawed physical constitutions (cf. *EN* 1154b9-15). This episode, then, functions as a bridge that links Aristotle's theoretical explanation of the nature of sensory pleasure with his naturalistic account for the generation of the character trait of indulgence. In the analogy with the young and the drunk, he especially foregrounds the case of melancholic people, so as to elucidate how people, due to their flawed nature, fall into *constant* need of cure (δέονται ἀεὶ ἰατρείας, 1154b11-12) and are *constantly* in a state of intense desire (ἀεὶ ἐν ὀρέξει σφοδρῶ, 1154b13). This gives an explanation for why they cannot escape the vicious circle of ceaselessly swinging like a pendulum to and fro between intense pleasure and pain. The description unambiguously echoes the motto of the *physiologoi* that animals are *constantly* (ἀεὶ) in πόνος (1154b7). Taking the argument in *EN* 1154b2-15 as a whole, therefore, we can unmistakably discover that *EN* 1154b9-15—where the overlap with Aspasius happens—is neither a *polemical reaction* nor something *irrelevant* to such a theory, but obviously a *further development from*, or at least a *supplement to*, the doctrine of *physiologoi*.

If this outline of Aristotle's dialectical use of the *physiologoi* is on the right track, Aspasius' comment seems to have gone astray from its starting point. For the theory of the *physiologoi*, as noted above, is not the target of Aristotle's polemic, but is appealed to as an ally to reinforce his explanation of the attractiveness of physical pleasure. It is of course correct to maintain that Aristotle quotes the *physiologoi*, not in order to express his approval (οὐχ ὡς συγκατατιθέμενος). Nevertheless, to say that Aristotle here aims to investigate / question (ἰστορῶν) this theory is to confuse *explanandum* with *explanans*.<sup>24</sup>

23 οἱ δὲ μελαγχολικοὶ τὴν φύσιν δέονται ἀεὶ ἰατρείας, 1154b11-12; καὶ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα δακνόμενον διατελεῖ διὰ τὴν κράσιν, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐν ὀρέξει σφοδρῶ εἰσίν, 1154b12-13; cf. ἀεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ τὸ ζῶον, 1154b7.

24 Neither the proposal of Diels nor the proposal of Mulvany can affect the fact that Aspasius has already read Aristotle's motivation here as critical.

A more serious mistake occurs in Aspasius' detailed accounts of how Theophrastus, in the wake of Aristotle, criticizes the doctrine of the ubiquity of pain held by the *physiologi*. The mistake is double-sided. One side is to think that Aristotle's proposition that pleasure drives out pain (cf. ἐκκρούει τὴν λύπην, 1154a27; ἐξελαύνει λύπην, 1154b14) is aimed at refuting and *can* refute the *physiologi* who countenance the omnipresence of pain (Aspasius, *In EN* 156.17-20). The other side is to attribute a conviction to Theophrastus that indulgent people—who are representative of ethical vice in Aristotle's ethics—would not feel pain *at all* owing to the great and intense pleasure they are pursuing or enjoying.<sup>25</sup> Both not only violate the intention of Aristotle, but are also bad arguments.

Let us take stock of the first one—the function of pleasure as pushing out pain—in more detail. In general, for Aristotle, to say that motion *x* pushes out (ἐκκρούειν) motion *y* means that *x* makes *y* either unseen (ἀφανίζουσιν) or weak (ἀσθενεῖς),<sup>26</sup> which obviously includes the situation where *x* overwhelms *y* while *y* exists in some non-distinct way or, in Aristotle's words, becomes less perceptible (ἥττον αἰσθητήν, *Sens.* 7, 447a22-3). This means that the pushing-out relation does not necessarily lead to the result that only *x* exists while *y* has been destroyed or disappears completely.<sup>27</sup> In the case of akratic and enkratic actions, for instance, no matter whether appetite pushes out reason or conversely (ἐκάτερα ἐκκρούεται ὑπ' ἀλλήλων, *EE* 2.8, 1224b24), the part that is pushed out seems still present, but cannot function in a way it should. If we apply this principle to the opposition between pleasure and pain, it is clear that to claim that pleasure can push out pain does not *necessarily* entail that the former is *completely* eliminated or replaced by the latter. Especially in the psychological case of the indulgent, the pain cannot be eliminated, because indulgent pleasure itself bears intrinsic pain, the violent appetite, during the whole process.<sup>28</sup> As a result, no matter whether the earlier pain is driven out

25 *In EN* 156.21-2: ἴν' ὄλλως γὰρ μὴ λυπῶνται μηδὲ ἀλγῶσι, μεγάλας καὶ σφοδράς ἡδονὰς ἑαυτοῖς πορίζουσι.

26 ἐκκρούουσι γὰρ αἱ κινήσεις ἀλλήλας αἱ ἅμα, καὶ ἢ ἀφανίζουσιν ἢ ἀσθενεῖς ποιοῦσιν, *Rhet.* 3.17, 1418a14-15; cf. *Sens.* 7, 447a21-8, 447b10-11; *Insomn.* 3, 460b32-461a8; *GA* 5.1, 780a7-9.

27 Only when ἀφανίζειν is understood in the strongest sense, namely as 'destroy' or 'obliterate', is *y* completely replaced by *x*. Otherwise, even *x* ἀφανίζει *y*, *y* can still coexist with *x* in some way (cf. LSJ s.v. ἀφανίζω).

28 Aristotle usually uses ἐκκρούειν to express the pushing-out-relation. In *EN* 7.14, 1154b14, he also uses ἐξελαύνειν—a word predominantly employed to depict the behavior of wild animals (HA 3.17, 520b1-2; 6.17, 570b10; 6.18, 571b19; 572b12; 9.1, 609b15-17; 9.40, 627a19)—to describe how indulgent people are formed by pursuing intense sensory pleasure for the sake of pushing out pain. This word seems suitable for highlighting the way intense

by pleasure completely or only in part, the patients still cannot go beyond the algedonic space in which they are immersed.

In fact, according to Aristotle's official doctrine, unimpeded, joyful activity is an activity in which *pain is not involved* rather than activity in which the corresponding pain is lessened, oppressed or driven out *by pleasure of another kind*. Correspondingly, the enjoyment of the ideal activity is a pleasure rooted in and aroused by *one and the same activity* rather than a remedial pleasure from an alien activity (*EN* 10.5, 1175a29-b24; cf. *EN* 7.12, 1152b25-1153a17). This is the core lesson from Aristotle's explanation of why alien pleasure is, for the agent who is enjoying another activity, painful. Aristotle thus cannot take the case where pain is driven out by pleasure—regardless of whether it is the opposite pleasure, or any pleasure at random (1154b14)—as ideal. On the contrary, he takes the case in question, the battle between physical pleasure and its opposite pain, as a vicious circle, which often result in self-indulgent personality through long-term habituation (cf. *EN* 7.14, 1154b13-15). The end of this process is *not* to get accustomed, or become insensitive, to pain (as the *physiologi* claim), nor to succeed in getting rid of pain (as Aspasius believes), but an indulgent personality, which renders people oversensitive to, and overactive in, pleasant and painful things. This shows that, theoretically, it is not sufficient to refute the theses of the *physiologi* by arguing that pleasure, especially pleasure of the intense kind, can drive out pain, because one can completely embrace both theses without any inconsistency. As a matter of fact, the general picture Aristotle draws in *EN* 7.14 is probably one that these *physiologi* would also acknowledge, if they, like Aristotle, want to explain why *all* animals are usually inclined to pursue more pleasure. The basic idea is that pain—whether it exists universally (according to the *physiologi*) or under certain conditions (according to Aristotle)—stimulates those who are suffering to pursue intense physical pleasure as a cure, in the hope of alleviating this pain, no matter whether and to what extent a better state can be realized.<sup>29</sup>

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sensory pleasure, like a wild animal, plays a significant role in contributing to the formation of the indulgence. It is remarkable that Aristotle explicitly characterizes the pleasures enjoyed by the indulgent as θῆριώδεις (*EN* 3.10, 1118b4).

29 In Aristotle's explanation of the transformation from people whose nature are oversensitive (the young and the melancholy) to people of the indulgent type, the remedial purpose—to stop pain—plays a significant role in the initial and intermediate stages of this process, yet it can hardly count as the ultimate end of the indulgent, who is representative for the final stage of the development from a *natural* deficiency to an *ethical* deficiency. Hence, even if, following Mulvany and Fortenbaugh, we read 156.16-22 as Aspasius' comment on *EN* 1154b13-15 rather than on *EN* 1154b7-9, this passage is still fraught with interpretative problems.

Aspasius' further claim—that indulgent people may enjoy pleasure without pain—renders a more dubious result vis-à-vis the evidence. For Aristotle depicts indulgent people in *EN* 1154b15 as those who are entangled in *extreme pleasure* as well as in *extreme pain*, not as those who, in Aspasius' eyes, may enjoy some pleasure without any concomitance of pain *because* of one's excluding the other. The symptom of the indulgent people, as noted above, is adduced by Aristotle to reaffirm his previous explanation of the dangerous nature of physical pleasure. From this point of view, Aspasius' account can hardly even function as a reasonable interpretation of *EN* 1154b13-15,<sup>30</sup> because in Aristotle's account 'not to feel pain or grief *at all*' (Aspasius, *In EN* 156.21) is neither the aim of indulgent people nor can it be the result of their pursuit. Rather it is a characteristic of the temperate, the opposite of the indulgent, when they are enjoying pure pleasure or in the neutral state.<sup>31</sup> What the indulgent are prone to seek is usually to enjoy pleasure as much as possible, no matter what state they are in. For this purpose, they would not be hesitant about paying the price if required, that is, enduring pain that might be involved in the pleasure they are looking for. In other words, it is possible for them to ignore how much pain would be involved as long as they can enjoy greater and more pleasure. Aristotle goes as far to claim the following (*EN* 3.10, 1118b30-1119a4, tr. Irwin, modified):

someone is indulgent because he feels *more pain* than is right failing to get pleasant things, *and even pain is produced by the pleasure [they pursue]* ... The self-indulgent man, then, has an appetite for all pleasant things or for those that are most pleasant, and his appetite leads him to choose these at the cost the other things. That is why he also feels pain both when he fails to get something and when he has an appetite for it, since appetite involves pain.<sup>32</sup>

30 Pace Mulvany 1919 and Fortenbaugh 2011.

31 Cf. *EN* 4.12, 1191a14-15. In other words, in opposition to the indulgent, who cannot endure the neutral state and take it (paradoxically) as painful, the temperate find no trouble with this state and are capable of representing it as it is.

32 ὁ μὲν ἀκόλαστος τῷ λυπεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἢ δεῖ ὅτι τῶν ἡδέων οὐ τυγχάνει (καὶ τὴν λύπην δὲ ποιεῖ αὐτῷ ἢ ἡδονῇ) ... ὁ μὲν οὖν ἀκόλαστος ἐπιθυμεῖ τῶν ἡδέων πάντων ἢ τῶν μάλιστα, καὶ ἄγεται ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ὥστε ἀντὶ τῶν ἄλλων αὐθ' αἰρεῖσθαι· διὸ καὶ λυπεῖται καὶ ἀποτυγχάνων καὶ ἐπιθυμῶν· μετὰ λύπης γὰρ ἢ ἐπιθυμία. Cf. also *EN* 3.10, 1191a1-5; 7.4, 1148a17-22. For indulgence in Aristotle, see *EN* 3.10-12; 7.8; cf. also Young 1988 and Curzer 2012, 65-85.

To sum up: Aspasius' thesis (1), that pleasure can push out pain, would be acknowledged by Aristotle and his pupil, but it nonetheless does not suffice to rebut the elimination of the neutral state upheld by the *physiologoi*. Thesis (2), that indulgent people may not feel pain owing to the intensiveness of pleasure, is not only anti-Aristotelian, but also incapable of accomplishing the alleged aim, namely to counter the doctrine of the *physiologoi*. It is especially telling to see that Aspasius takes (1) as a *conclusion* of (2) (cf. διὰ ταῦτα, *In EN* 156.20), so that they are *not* just two *paratactic* statements, but rather coalesce in a *unified* argument which, *as a whole*, is used to disprove the *physiologoi* by pinning down under which condition pain is absent (cf. μὴ λυπῶνται μηδὲ ἀλγῶσι, 156.21). Aspasius tells us that this condition may be fulfilled if people become indulgent.

Here, the expression ὄλως μὴ λυπῶνται μηδὲ ἀλγῶσι ('so that they may not feel pain or grief at all', 156.21) is striking, not only because Aristotle does not make such a strong claim in *EN* 1154b13-15, but also because this characterization of the indulgent is absurd from an Aristotelian point of view, since it ascribes a Stoic-like aim to the pursuit of the indulgent—as if they are ultimately aimed at nothing but some kind of tranquillity of mind. This oddity seems only to be explained by assuming that Aspasius is misled by his assumption that Aristotle's appeal to the *physiologoi* must imply a polemical reaction since the Peripatetic theory of pleasure differs fundamentally from the pessimistic teaching of the naturalists. The emphasis of ὄλως μὴ obviously serves to rebut the doctrine of the *physiologoi*, namely their denial of the existence of the neutral state. This, from another perspective, undermines the hypothesis of Mulvany and Fortenbaugh, namely that *In En* 156.16-22 might be Aspasius' comment on *EN* 1154b13-15.

### 3 Anaxagoras and the *Physiologoi*?

If *In EN* 156.11-22 is indeed plagued with what I called Hard Problem behind the puzzle of textual overlap, we have good reason to be suspicious not only about the ascription of lines 16-22 to Theophrastus<sup>33</sup> but, more fundamentally,

33 The name 'Theophrastus' at 156.17 is missing in Parisinus 1902, Parisinus 1903 and Laurentianus 81.14 (see Rose 1871, 198 and Fortenbaugh 2011, 655). If the name we have is only an interpolated gloss, the situation appears less complicated—although the Hard Problem remains.

also about the whole narrative in this comment.<sup>34</sup> It is thanks to Aspasius that current scholarship takes it as common sense that Anaxagoras is the mask behind the *physiologoi* mentioned in *EN* 1154b7-9. Aubry, for instance, takes this identification for granted by asserting that the reference is ‘*identified* by Theophrastus’, and then it is ‘*confirmed* by Aspasius’ (my italics).<sup>35</sup>

In fact, however, we do not have any independent text prior to Aspasius which can verify the identity of the *physiologoi* as Anaxagoras. Theophrastus never addresses the identification of the *physiologoi* in his criticism of Anaxagoras. And Aspasius cannot confirm something that has not yet been stated. It seems more likely that Aspasius himself detects the resemblance between Aristotle’s account of the *physiologoi* and what Theophrastus reports about Anaxagoras in *De Sensibus*, so that he infers that Aristotle and Theophrastus must have one and the same person in mind. As Fortenbaugh 2011, 656 points out: ‘on the basis of *On Sensation*’ (i.e. *De Sensibus*) ‘... we can gain an idea of what the commentator’ (sc. Aspasius) ‘is likely to have drawn from Theophrastus.’

If it is via Theophrastus that Aspasius establishes the identity of the *physiologoi* and Anaxagoras, it is also reasonable to question to what extent this identification can stand. In accordance with the plural form οἱ φυσιολόγοι in

34 Someone might ask whether it is possible that it is not Aspasius but Theophrastus who commits this mistake. Theoretically, it is not impossible that Theophrastus follows Aristotle’s footsteps in such a way that he just repeats the *ipsissima verba* of his master. It is also possible and it is indeed a fact that sometimes he distances himself from Aristotle with respect to a given topic, endorsing non-Aristotelian or anti-Aristotelian positions. (For a lucid discussion about the relationship between Aristotle and Theophrastus, see Gottschalk 1998, 284-8 and Sharples 1998, 49.) However, it is hard to imagine that Theophrastus—who is certainly familiar with Anaxagoras’ doctrine (in addition to the discussion in the *De Sensibus*, he has two treatises on Anaxagoras: Πρὸς Ἀναξαγόραν α’ and Περὶ τῶν Ἀναξαγόρου α’: DL 5.42), and has a strong theoretical interest in the concept of pleasure—commits the inconsistencies revealed above *simultaneously*. Theophrastus devoted at least three books to pleasure: Περὶ ἡδονῆς ὡς Ἀριστοτέλης α’, Περὶ ἡδονῆς (ἄλλο) α’ and Περὶ ψεύδους ἡδονῆς α’ (fr. 436.26-8 FHS&G, from DL 5.44-6). Fortenbaugh 2011, 748 also indicates with good reason that ‘Theophrastus will have discussed pleasure in other works like *On Emotions*, *On Education* and *On Happiness*. The same holds for *Ethics*’. In Aspasius’ story, if we believe it, Theophrastus quotes Aristotle as if he aims to defend the official doctrine of his teacher, but thoughtlessly smuggles both *anti-Aristotelian* and *illogical* elements into his argument in order to serve a purpose which is at odds with the original intention of Aristotle. This is certainly not the way that Theophrastus does philosophy.

35 Aubry 2009, 248. Cf. almost the same expression in Romeyer-Dherbey 1999, 20: ‘La référence à Anaxagore en *Éthique à Nicomaque* 7.14, 1154b7, est identifiée par le *De Sensibus* de Théophraste, identification confirmée par Aspasius.’



Aristotle, Romeyer-Dherbey reminds us of the affinity between the *physiologi* in *EN* 1154b5-9 and the *dyschereis* in Plato, *Philebus* 42c-46b insofar as the latter, who are also characterized as good at natural science,<sup>36</sup> likewise deny the existence of the neutral state in ordinary life.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the concept of unfelt pain seems also to be attested in Plato's account of the doctrine held by the physician Herodicus, who tries to *persuade* people to believe that they are in fact *always* in suffering and *never* cease to feel pain in the body (κάμνειν γὰρ οἴεσθαι ποιεῖ ἀεὶ καὶ ὠδίνοντα μῆποτε λήγειν περὶ τοῦ σώματος, *Rep.* 407c4-5). In appealing to the unfelt suffering and pain, Herodicus seeks to justify his belief in the need for comprehensive medical care (cf. *Rep.* 406a-b), a method called by the author of the Hippocratic *Epidemics* 6 as πόνος πόνω.<sup>38</sup>

All of these factors show that, only based on the similarity between Anaxagoras and the *physiologi*, it is difficult to ascertain that Anaxagoras is the very person behind Aristotle's appeal to the *physiologi* in *EN* 7.14. No doubt both Anaxagoras and the *physiologi* hold that sense-perception involves pain. But if we take a closer look at the theses of the *physiologi* and of Anaxagoras respectively in the accounts of Aristotle and Theophrastus, their doctrinal divergences should not be ignored. In Theophrastus' confrontation with Anaxagoras, he not only seems to use πόνος differently from the use of πονεῖν in Aristotle's account, but also does not show any interest in the phenomenon of unfelt pain due to habituation. Moreover, Aristotle's concern with melancholy, at the intersection between physiology and ethics, and the

36 *Phlb.* 44b9; μάλα δεινούς λεγομένους τὰ περὶ φύσιν.

37 Romeyer-Dherbey 1999. Aubry 2009, 249 criticizes this proposal on the grounds that the subjects affected by pain are different according to these two groups. For the anti-hedonists maintain that *pleasure* is constantly accompanied by pain, while the view of the *physiologi* is that pain is omnipresent in *sensation / perception* rather than in pleasure. In spite of this observation, I doubt that this difference is substantial. Leaving aside the question of whether, according to the *physiologi*, only *perceptions* are accompanied by pain (the claim—ἀεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ τὸ ζῶον at 1154b7—seems to imply something stronger), the *physiologi* must agree that every pleasure is accompanied by pain if they do not deny the fact that animals can also enjoy pleasure. Moreover, it is important to note that the anti-hedonists in the *Philebus* disavow the existence of the neutral state, and also take pleasure as a process of escaping from pain. From these two premises it follows that animal life must be to varying degrees permeated by pain, so that perception cannot be exceptional. To admit the similarity between the *dyschereis* and the *physiologi*, however, does not mean that I agree with the further proposal of Romeyer-Dherbey, obviously influenced by Aspasius, that Anaxagoras is the philosopher behind both the *dyschereis* in Plato and the *physiologi* in Aristotle.

38 *Epidemics* 68.12-70.2 Manetti-Roselli = v. 302 Littré; cf. ἀεὶ πονεῖ in *EN* 1154b7.

vicious circle arising from the exchange between sensory pleasure and pain are all absent in Theophrastus' account. For this reason, Warren 2007, 20-5 accepts Aspasius' ascription and has to read *In EN* 156.16-22 as a more or less *independent* critique which supplements Theophrastus' refutation of Anaxagoras in the *De Sensibus*. By contrast, Baltussen 2000, 169-71 is more cautious about Aspasius as a witness, but does not even mention his testimony in reconstructing the confrontation between Theophrastus and Anaxagoras.

Theophrastus does indeed use πόνος once in explaining why, according to Anaxagoras, every sense perception is accompanied by pain (ἄπασαν δ' αἴσθησιν μετὰ λύπης, *Sens.* 29.1). He takes this belief as a natural consequence of Anaxagoras' theory of perception based on the principle of unlike by unlike because, Theophrastus continues to report, the unlike, when in contact, will cause pain.<sup>39</sup> This argument seems to appeal to an older ἔνδοξον that pain and suffering are caused by the interplay between things that are unlike. This notion is the cornerstone of Melissus' argument for the Eleatic thesis that being or what is must be homogeneous (ὅμοιον, cf. 30 B7 DK). The close link between pain / suffering and things that are unlike is also found in ps.-Aristotle, *MXG* 974a18-21 and is used in the Hippocratic treatise *On the Nature of Man* in its justification of pluralism and the value of medicine.<sup>40</sup> This parallel suggests that the unique occurrence of πόνος in the *De Sensibus* is interchangeable with ἀνιάσθαι, ἀλγέω and its cognates in Melissus.<sup>41</sup> It is a *passive* affection *caused by* things that are not in harmony (cf. πόνον παρέχει, *Sens.* 29.3), which, strictly speaking, is different from the pain inherent to the effort of animals devoted to their life in *EN* 1154b7 (πονεί).<sup>42</sup> It is thus hasty to claim, as Warren does, that Theophrastus'

39 πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ἀνόμοιον ἀπτόμενον πόνον παρέχει, *Sens.* 29.2-3.

40 Cf. *Nat. Hom.* 1 = vi. 32 Littré; cf. 34 Littré. On the relation between the argument of Melissus and its different use in *On the Nature of Man*, see Holmes 2010, 106-8.

41 30 B7 DK = Simplicius, *In Phys.* 112.1-6 Diels (tr. Graham 2010): οὐδὲ ἀλγεί· οὐ γὰρ ἂν πᾶν εἴη ἀλγέον· οὐ γὰρ ἂν δύναίτο αἰεὶ εἶναι χρῆμα ἀλγέον· οὐδὲ ἔχει ἴσην δύναμιν τῷ ὑγιεί· οὐδ' ἂν ὅμοιον εἴη, εἰ ἀλγέοι· ἀπογίνομένου γὰρ τευ ἂν ἀλγέοι ἢ προσγινομένου, κούκ ἂν ἔτι ὅμοιον εἴη. οὐδ' ἂν τὸ ὑγιές ἀλγήσαι δύναίτο· ἀπὸ γὰρ ἂν ὄλοιτο τὸ ὑγιές καὶ τὸ ἐόν, τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἐόν γένοιτο. καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀνιάσθαι ὡς τὸς λόγος τῷ ἀλγέοντι. ('Nor does it [sc. what-is] suffer pain. For it would not be whole if it were in pain. For it would not be possible for a thing suffering pain to exist always. Nor would it have strength equal to what was healthy. Nor would it be the same, if it were in pain. For it would feel pain when something was taken way or added to it, and hence it would not be the same. Nor could what was healthy be in pain. For the health that would perish, and what was not would come to be. And concerning being afflicted, the argument is the same as for being in pain.')

42 In the same way, Aetius 4.9.16 (Anaxagoras 59 A94 DK, part) obviously follows Theophrastus' slogan ἄπασαν δ' αἴσθησιν μετὰ λύπης (*Sens.* 29) in his testimony that πᾶσαν

use of πόνος in *Sens.* 29 reflects Aristotle's use of πονεῖν in his report of the doctrine of the *physiologi* (2007, 25). Even if we grant that Theophrastus also keeps some of the semantic subtlety of πόνος in mind, his argument moves from the involvement of πόνος (cf. πᾶν γὰρ τὸ ἀνόμοιον ἀπτόμενον πόνον παρέχει, *Sens.* 29. 2-3) to the conclusion, namely the involvement of λύπη (cf. ἅπασαν δ' αἴσθησιν μετὰ λύπης, 29.1), whereas the argument of the *physiologi* seems to follow the opposite procedure, i.e. to illustrate the πόνος of living animals by appealing to the λύπη in their sense perceptions (*EN* 1154b7-8).<sup>43</sup> The former can be seen as an argument from a general principle (sc. the principle of unlike by unlike) to its application in the concrete field of sense perception.<sup>44</sup> By contrast, the latter is rather an argument which means to reinforce a general conclusion, the ubiquity of pain in animal life, via some particular or typical cases, namely the involvement of pain in vision and audition.

Unlike Theophrastus' account of Anaxagoras, we do not know how the mechanism of the generation of pain functions according to the *physiologi*. Correspondingly, it is an open question for them to explain how pleasure comes about if they do not want to violate our ordinary experience and allow a certain role of pleasure for animal life.<sup>45</sup> In other words, to say that animals are always in πόνος and that seeing and hearing are painful is theoretically compatible with the phenomenon that animals can also enjoy pleasure. The *physiologi* might maintain, for instance, that the pain of seeing is caused by the painstaking use (πόνος) of our eyes, whereas the pleasure of seeing can come from a different source, say, the purposiveness of a visual object. The *physiologi* can even go so far as to allow some sort of omnipresence of pleasure, as long as they are able to give a reasonable account for how such pleasure is mixed with pain in some way. As far as the status of pleasure is concerned, however, Anaxagoras has serious difficulty in explaining its possibility within

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αἴσθησιν μετὰ πόνου. The term πόνος itself does not prove that Aetius follows Aristotle's *EN* 1154b7 nor that πόνος must be the original term of Anaxagoras.

43 Pace Warren 2007, 31: 'there is a very swift transition from a claim that perception involves πόνος to the conclusion that perception involves pain. In the initial survey of the evidence I noted that Aristotle makes a similar move in *NE* 7.14' (my emphasis). Note that this view is even incompatible with Warren's paraphrase of the doctrine of the *physiologi*: 'Aristotle explains that these "natural philosophers" say that animals are constantly toiling (ἀεὶ γὰρ πονεῖ) because they say that "seeing and hearing are painful"' (my emphasis).

44 Cf. *Sens.* 29.1-2: ὅπερ ἂν δόξειεν ἀκόλουθον εἶναι τῇ ὑποθέσει.

45 I think they respect our phenomenology—otherwise they would not adduce the unfelt pain to defend their doctrine.

his doctrinal framework, at least according to Theophrastus' testimony.<sup>46</sup> The reason is that, if we are meanwhile committed to the two Anaxagorean theses (1) that sense perception is based on the principle of unlike by unlike and (2) that the interaction of things that are unlike gives rise to pain, then the generation of pleasure (if it is a case of sense perception or if it depends on sense perception) seems either impossible or theoretically mysterious. Baltussen 2000, 170 formulates the problem by saying that 'the *paradoxon* that pain is natural is countered by the *endoxon* that pleasure is according to nature'. It is thus understandable why Warren is forced to struggle with this problem, striving to show how the existence of pleasure can theoretically be explained by the Anaxagorean model (Warren 2007, 45).<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, it is striking for those who believe in the identity of Anaxagoras and the *physiologoi* that Theophrastus never mentions unfelt pain due to habituation in the *De Sensibus*, a strategy probably used by the *physiologoi* to resist the criticism that their doctrine violates intuition or phenomenology.<sup>48</sup> The concept of unfelt pain in Anaxagoras, according to the excellent reconstruc-

46 According to Nicolaus Damascenus (*De Plantis* 3), Anaxagoras even believes that plants can feel pleasure: see Lulofs and Poortman 1989, 9, 56, 218, 448, 517.

47 This is not the right place to evaluate Warren's proposal in detail. For our purposes, it suffices to show that, whereas the existence of pleasure causes trouble for Anaxagoras (even if he can solve it as Warren suggests), there are more flexible ways available for the *physiologoi* to explain its generation. It is worth noting however that, although in general Warren provides a very attractive picture about how Anaxagoras would deal with the problem of pleasure, some of his comments are still misled by Aspasius' story about the battle of Aristotle and Theophrastus against the *physiologoi* (= Anaxagoras). For example, Warren tells us that according to Anaxagoras it is 'possible for a perceiver to be simultaneously in pain and experiencing pleasure, a possibility which Theophrastus and Aristotle deny'. In Theophrastus' case, so Aspasius tells us in the passage discussed above, this denial was aimed explicitly at Anaxagoras. In the *Ethics* Theophrastus objected to Anaxagoras on the grounds that pleasure "drives out pain, being its opposite" (ἐξελαύνει ἡδονὴ λύπην ἢ γὰρ ἐναντία) (2007, 44-5, my emphasis). In addition to the evidence from Aspasius, Warren also invokes *EN* 1154a25-6 to show Aristotle's alleged denial of the co-presence of pleasure and pain. As noted above, however, to say that pleasure drives out or pushes out pain does not necessarily mean that pleasure and pain cannot exist simultaneously. More importantly, Aristotle's accounts of emotions (cf. *Rhet.* 1.1; 2.1-11) and his discussions of pleasure *per accidens* (cf. *EN* 7.12-14) unambiguously show that he allows the coexistence of pleasure and pain in ordinary life. For this reason, the divergence between the Peripatetics and Anaxagoras does not lie in the question of whether pleasure and pain can be *simultaneously* experienced.

48 Warren 2007, 25 also admits that '*De sensibus* contains no mention of the idea that most people are simply accustomed to the constant pain'.

tion of Warren (2007, 31-6), is rather grounded in the combination of his belief in the weakness of the senses with the Anaxagorean theory of universal mixture. According to this theory, we become aware of  $x$  only when portions of  $x$  beneath the threshold of consciousness assemble in such a way that they comprise a distinctive mental event for our cognitive faculty. If pains, like gradual changes or small portions in the whole mixture, coexist in a variety of experiences, it is natural that animals—due to the limitation of their senses, the disturbance of co-existing experiences, and many other obstacles—are not always able to register them in the stream of living experiences. Leaving aside whether Theophrastus' account faithfully reflects Anaxagoras' thought, it is enough to note that Anaxagoras' explanation of the generation of unfelt pain is *not* identical with the *physiologoi's* explanation of the similar phenomenon. Consequently, Warren, who follows the mainstream view that Aristotle's *physiologoi* must be Anaxagoras, can only speculate that 'perhaps Anaxagoras could indeed endorse such an explanation' (i.e. that unfelt pain is the result of habituation) (2007, 36). But, according to Theophrastus, Anaxagoras tries to substantiate the ubiquity of pain in sense perception by appealing to the pain involved in long-lasting activity (τῶ τε τοῦ χρόνου πλῆθει, cf. *Sens.* 29.3). This argument is probably an application of Anaxagoras' famous method of inferring the non-apparent nature of something from something apparent (cf. φανερόν δὲ τοῦτο τῶ τε τοῦ χρόνου πλῆθει, 29.3),<sup>49</sup> i.e. he avails himself of the familiar fact of experiences that we cannot keep perceiving something for a long time to reveal that a kind of *unfelt pain* exists constantly in the normal function of an organism. It has been clear that, although the *physiologoi* also use long-lasting activity to support their doctrine of the omnipresence of pain, the way they use this is different from what we have seen from Theophrastus' account of Anaxagoras. For the *physiologoi*, it is the long-lasting habituation that blunts animals' current experiences, so that they are even insensible to the pain they are undergoing; whereas, according to Anaxagoras, the extension of perceptual time, conversely, makes the pain which is supposed to be latent in every perceptual act manifest. While the former is geared to the task of reconciling the counter-intuitive implication of their theory with the phenomenology of our experience, it is in terms of ordinary phenomenology that the latter tries to reinforce his extraordinary claim.

In *EE* 1.4, 1215b11-14, Anaxagoras is said to characterize a blessed life (μακάριον) as living painlessly and purely (ἀλύπως καὶ καθαρῶς), or engaged in

49 59 B21a DK. On this method, see Diller 1932; Lloyd 1966, 338-41.

some divine contemplation (τινος θεωρίας κοινωνούντα θείας).<sup>50</sup> This position is compatible with Anaxagoras' doctrine about pain, because that only asserts the ubiquity of pain in *sense perception*, which leaves room for living a painless life in other activities such as contemplation—as long as they do not belong to the category of perception. On this issue, the *physiologoi* seem to diverge from Anaxagoras in substantial respects, for their belief in the omnipresence of pain is not limited in sense perception. Perceptual pain is rather used as an example or as a piece of evidence to support a more ambitious theory that living animals are (in some sense) always suffering. This is obviously in tension with Anaxagoras' determination of the happy life as a life without pain. To avoid this inconsistency, those who identify the *physiologoi* with Anaxagoras might claim that, according to Anaxagoras, the happy life is too ideal for the mortals to realize *fully*, or they might appeal to the concept of *unfelt pain* used by the *physiologoi*, maintaining that for Anaxagoras the happy life is not painless without qualification, but is a life with pain which, nevertheless, is not noticed by the agent.<sup>51</sup> Neither option is promising however. First, according to Aristotle, Anaxagoras refuses to identify happiness (εὐδαιμονία) with external goods such as beauty or wealth, but associates it with *sharing* in divine contemplation (τινος θεωρίας κοινωνούντα θείας). Obviously, Anaxagoras is not talking about two kinds of happiness (from something real to something unachievable), but is concerned to determine the genuine nature of one and the same object, namely human happiness: the ultimate goal a human can realize and share, which is meanwhile characterized by him as painless and pure. Secondly, the key to the *physiologoi*'s notion of *unfelt pain* is habituation. Our life can be painless at times only because we get accustomed to the pain we are constantly undergoing. Such a life, however, can hardly be regarded as pure. Its painlessness is *descriptive*, consisting merely in normal experience, which has nothing to do with Anaxagoras' *normative* concern in characterizing the

50 Pace Porter 2010, 143, who takes Anaxagoras and his followers to be the supporters of 'a moderate form of hedonism'. To substantiate this characterization, he quotes Aristotle, *EE* 1.4, 1215b11-14, interpreting it as if Anaxagoras opts for the moderate hedonism on the grounds that he regards the absolute hedonism as an unreachable goal which man cannot achieve. The *EE* passage, however, has nothing to do with the strong and weak versions of hedonism. Rather, it concerns the essence of εὐδαιμονία (cf. *EE* 1.4, 1215b6-7).

51 Cf. Warren 2007, 26: 'It would seem that if Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Aspasius interpret Anaxagoras correctly, the first of these conditions is impossible to fulfil while still doing any sort of perceiving. Now, perhaps Anaxagoras would simply say that the ideal life is impossible for humans to attain, given that they are perceivers, or perhaps this painlessness is compatible with our experiencing—but not noticing—the constant pain of perception.'

blessed life as pure and being free from pain. This concept of unfelt pain even renders his emphasis on the role of contemplation in living a painless happy life meaningless because, since any kind of habituation can achieve this aim, one might ask why contemplation enjoys priority in human happiness compared to other activities. In view of these difficulties, again, it seems better to distinguish between the doctrine of the *physiologi* and that of Anaxagoras, rather than to conflate them.

#### 4 Conclusion

As I have shown, there are insurmountable difficulties in Aspasius' ascription, description and interpretation of the so-called Theophrastan counterargument against Anaxagoras. Consequently, his comment can neither count as a reliable interpretation of Aristotle, nor be easily regarded as an authentic source for Theophrastus' ethics. Even the widely accepted identification of Anaxagoras with the *physiologi* in *EN* 7.14 is not something actually guaranteed by Theophrastus, but what Aspasius reconstructs or extrapolates from his reading of Aristotle and his successor. This outcome not only helps us, from a negative point of view, resist the temptation to believe an informative, yet doubtful dialectic among Aristotle and Anaxagoras, but, as hinted above, also opens up the possibility of reconsidering Aristotle's dialogue within a broader naturalistic tradition about the role of pain in human life and about the relationship between ethics and physiology / medicine, which needs further independent research to flesh out.

As far as the role of Aspasius is concerned, the significance of his commentary, especially his treatment of sources, is sometimes overrated in Aristotelian scholarship. His reference to Eudemus is a revealing case (*In EN* 151.18-27). It has been held for a long time that what he is carrying out is 'higher criticism' aiming to solve the problem of the distribution of the so-called common books.<sup>52</sup> Yet in a recent article Carlo Natali has (in my view successfully) refuted this romantic view (Natali 2007). Instead of the sensitive practice of source criticism, Aspasius' reference to Eudemus is actually like his other references, which are usually superficial, and at times not without error.<sup>53</sup> Aspasius' interpretation of Speusippus is another example which strikingly reverses what Aristotle meant to say (*In EN* 142.9). So why suppose that he cannot commit a similar error in our passage, in particular if we take into account the fact that Aspasius refers to

52 Kenny 1978, 29-36; Moraux 1984, 258-9; Gottschalk 1987, 1158; Barnes 1999, 19-20.

53 On how Aspasius deals with his predecessors, see Moraux 1984, 261-70; Barnes 1999 26-7.

Theophrastus only three times (*In EN* 133.14, 156.17 and 178.3), in none of which does he indicate that he has substantial knowledge about him? Although I am hesitant to embrace the proposal of Fortenbaugh about how to interpret *In EN* 156.16-22, nevertheless his general comment on Aspasius' treatment of sources provides a good summary of my struggle with his report about Theophrastus' criticism of Anaxagoras, and is worth quoting (2011, 43):

The preceding is not intended to destroy Aspasius' credibility as a commentator, but it may serve as a reminder that in dealing with sources, it is well to consider each text critically and apart from any general view of the author's reliability.<sup>54</sup>

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