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THE LIFE AND DEATH OF ASCLEPIADES OF BITHYNIA

It can be argued that there was no intellectual figure at work in Rome in the period of the late Republic who had more originality and influence than the Bithynian doctor Asclepiades,[1] who founded an important medical school and was still being attacked nearly three hundred years after his death by Galen, and two hundred years later still by Caelius Aurelianus.[2] His claims to originality rested both on his theory of the causes of disease, and on his methods of treatment. Turning away from the Empiricism recently fashionable, he argued that experience without λόγος, theory or reason, was useless. His own theory was based on the scientific ideas of the late fourth-century philosopher Heraclides Ponticus,[3] and seems to have postulated not ἄτομα, tiny indivisible particles, but ὄγκοι, masses, which are continually in motion and splitting into innumerable fragments, θραύσματα, of different shapes and sizes, which re-form to create perceptible bodies. The particles were separated by invisible gaps, πόροι or pores; friction between particles created the heat of the human body, but jamming of its pores was often the cause of pain and disease. This purely mechanistic doctrine was anathema to Galen because of its insufficient reverence for the doctrines of Hippocrates, and above all for the belief in the sympathy of the various parts of the body, the purposive character of Nature's creation, and her own healing effort; and also for the doctrine of the four, or more, humours.

Pliny the Elder, from whose somewhat hostile account of Asclepiades most of our knowledge of his career is nevertheless derived, has more to say on his methods of treatment. The ancient tradition of Greek medicine, based on herbal remedies, remained, Pliny says, until in the time of Pompey the Great Asclepiades of Bithynia, an impoverished professor of rhetoric (*orandi magister nec satis in arte ea quaestuosus*), thinking to make more money, suddenly turned to medicine, though he knew nothing of drugs; but he recommended himself by his eloquence (*torrenti ac meditata cotidie oratione blandiens*), and reduced medicine to guess-work about causes. He applied five principles of treatment to a wide variety of ailments: abstinence from food and from wine, and massage, walking and carriage-exercise. Since everyone could easily provide these for himself, *universum prope humanum genus circumegit in se non alio modo quam si caelo demissus advenisset*. Pliny goes on to say that he also often prescribed wine for the sick, and often cold water. He devised other *blandimenta*, such as suspended beds that could be rocked, 'hanging baths', and other forms of hydrotherapy, which were immensely enjoyable. His great reputation was increased when he saved a man from his funeral procession. Pliny is angry that a man *levissima ex gente* should turn

[1] Comparatively modern accounts of Asclepiades' life are to be found in A. G. M. Raynaud, *De Asclepiade Bithyno medico ac philosopho* (1862), M. Wellmann, *RE* 2. 1632, s.v. Asclepiades (39), and 'Asklepiades aus Bithynien von einem herrschenden Vorurteil befreit', *NJ f.d. Kl. Alt.* 21 (1908), 684; H.v. Vilas, *Der Arzt u. Philosoph Asklepiades von Bithynien* (1903); T. C. Allbutt, *Greek Medicine in Rome* (1921); and J. Benedum, 'Der Badearzt Asklepiades und seine Bithynische Heimat', *Gesnerus* 35 (1978), 20. There are numerous shorter accounts in the histories of medicine and the classical encyclopaedias, mostly very inaccurate, and *obiter dicta* are legion. There have also been a number of recent articles on medicine in Rome in the late Republic, none of any value.

[2] Obviously in the long run Cicero's intellectual influence was far greater, but in the shorter term it was probably his stylistic influence that was most marked.

[3] See H. B. Gottschalk, *Heracleides of Pontus* (1980), pp. 37 ff.

medicine upside down simply to make money, but he admits that Asclepiades' success owed something to the *nimis anxia et rudia* in older treatments, and even that he was right in thinking that many traditional drugs were injurious to the stomach; and that he was also helped by a reaction against the exaggerated claims of the 'Magi' (oriental magicians) for the effects of plants and other substances.[4] And elsewhere Asclepiades is granted *summa fama* among all the doctors known to Pliny.[5]

The medical sources proper, starting with Celsus, give us more detailed accounts of Asclepiades' treatment of particular troubles, and Scribonius Largus in particular shows that he was not so wholly hostile to pharmacology as Pliny and to some extent Celsus imply.[6] Indeed Pliny elsewhere tells us that Asclepiades was invited to leave Rome for the court of King Mithridates of Pontus, who notoriously studied plants and experimented with poisons, but refused the invitation and sent the King works instead (*volumina* or *praecepta*); and the whole context of the passage, which is concerned with the study of plants, strongly suggests that Asclepiades' *praecepta* were concerned with their properties.[7]

It is Asclepiades' ideas, not his life, that are ultimately important (though no major discovery can be put to his credit, and to us he may not seem to count as one of the very greatest doctors of antiquity, humane and civilized as his treatment, particularly of mental cases, appears to have been). The understanding of his ideas has been advanced in the present century; but this understanding must rest to some extent on an accurate knowledge of his date of birth and his place in the social and intellectual life of his own time. Unfortunately, knowledge of his life has gone backwards since the eighteenth century, a period which could build on a well-established interest in Asclepiades, on account of his differences with Galen and his mechanistic view of Nature.

In the first place, his very town of origin has been obscured. It has often been forgotten that the pseudo-Galenic *Introduction to Medicine* refers to him as *Κιανὸς, ὃς καὶ Προυσίας* (certainly to be emended to *Προυσιεύς*) *ἐκαλεῖτο*.[8] Cius, at the head of its gulf on the Bithynian shore of the Propontis, was also for a time called Prousias-on-Sea. A city supposedly of Athenian foundation, it was destroyed by Philip V of Macedon in 202 B.C., but handed over to and refounded by Prusias I of Bithynia.[9] Many scholars, however, have thought that the better known city of Prusa, also in

[4] *HN* 26. 12–20. [5] Id. ib. 7. 124. [6] Proem 3 (Helmreich).

[7] *HN* 25. 6. Pliny also lists Asclepiades 'the doctor' among his sources for a number of his books (7, 11, 14, 15, 20, 21–2, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), including all those which deal with plants; he draws on Asclepiades for information about vines and wine, but also other plants and their properties. It is interesting, however, that Asclepiades is not used in the books dealing with drugs from animal or mineral sources. (There can be no doubt that Pliny is quoting the Bithynian; he does not know the Asclepiades, of perhaps about his own date, called 'the Younger' or Pharmakion, who wrote particularly on drugs.)

HN 25. 7 possibly suggests, though strictly speaking Pliny does not imply it, that Asclepiades' work dedicated to Mithridates was translated (or rather adapted, it seems) into Latin with the other treatises found among the King's property, by Pompey's freedman Lenaeus. There is no evidence at all, and no likelihood, that any of his other writings were available in Latin.

[8] Galen 14. 683 K. So Kühn, but the fifteenth-century Bodleian MS at least (D'Orville 3) has the Ionic form *Κιηνός*. Dr J. Harig-Kollesch kindly confirms that the manuscripts of which the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* in E. Berlin has films or photographs (including Vat. 1843 of the thirteenth century) read *Προυσιάς* or *Προυσίας*; she points out that *ευ* in minuscle can easily be read as *α*.

[9] Polybius 15. 22; Strabo C564. Polybius, and Livy following him, continue to write of Cius rather than Prusias; it returned officially to its old name in the time of Claudius – D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (1950), p. 1189. It is thus not surprising that pseudo-Galen chooses to identify Asclepiades by both names.

Bithynia and founded by King Prusias, must have been intended, and this is often now referred to without discussion as Asclepiades' birthplace. In fact, however, there can be no dispute about the matter. Strabo calls Asclepiades *Προυσιεύς*[10] as pseudo-Galen surely did; and this is the form he has just used for the inhabitants of Prusias-on-Sea. Contrast later literary sources, for whom Dio of Prusa is always *Προυσαεύς*.[11] There is a perfectly clear distinction in Latin too. The Elder Pliny refers to Asclepiades as *Prusiensis*; his nephew, as governor of Bithynia, has repeated occasion to refer in his correspondence with Trajan to the people of Prusa, always as *Prusenses*.[12] Coins and inscriptions bear the distinction out: the coins read *Προυσιέων τῶν πρὸς θαλάσσῃ* (and also, for the inhabitants of the less important Prusias, earlier Cierus, on the river Hypius, *Προυσιέων πρὸς Ὑπίῳ*); but refer to the people of Prusa as *Προυσαεῖς διὰ Ὀλύμπων*.[13] And among the inscriptions is one that is a veritable page from a grammar book. It was set up, probably in the first century A.D., to a Roman patron whose name is incompletely preserved, by various Bithynian communities, both in Latin and Greek. The three towns of which the names are most fully preserved are, precisely, those of the *Prusienses ab Hippio* (*sic*) or *Προυσιεῖς ἀπὸ Ὑπίου*; the *Prusais* (*sic*) *ab Olym*[*po*] or *Προυσαεῖς ἀπὸ Ὀλύμπ*[*ου*]; and the *Prusienses ab mare* or *Προυσιεῖς ἀπὸ θαλάσσης*.[14] The evidence is thus entirely consistent.[15] When Asclepiades was born at Prusias-on-Sea, it was a town in the kingdom of Bithynia, with little independence; it did not coin. Loyalty to Rome earned it 'freedom' when the area was turned into a province in 74 B.C.;[16] one wonders if this loyalty had anything to do with the great success at Rome of its most distinguished son.

All arguments about Asclepiades' date must begin and end with the well-known passage of Cicero, *De Oratore* 1. 62:

> neque enim si Philonem illum architectum, qui Atheniensibus armamentarium fecit, constat perdiserte populo rationem operis sui reddidisse, existimandum est architecti potius artificio disertum quam oratoris fuisse; nec, si huic M. Antonio pro Hermodoro fuisset de navalium opere dicendum, non, cum ab illo causam didicisset, ipse ornate de alieno artificio copioseque dixisset; neque vero Asclepiades, is quo nos medico amicoque usi sumus, tum cum eloquentia vincebat ceteros medicos, in eo ipso quod ornate dicebat, medicinae facultate utebatur, non eloquentiae.

The dramatic date of the dialogue is 91 B.C.; the speaker is the great orator L. Crassus. *Usi sumus* makes it impossible to doubt that Asclepiades is now dead (for an explanation of the subsequent imperfect tenses see below). It is not likely that he has simply left Rome to work elsewhere – he would still be the friend of Crassus, and probably of the other interlocutors in the dialogue, as Posidonius, now in Rhodes, is still the *familiaris* of the speakers in the *De Natura Deorum*; or as (an even better

[10] Strabo, loc. cit. and C566. Benedum (n. 1) recognizes that Asclepiades must have been born in Prusias but tries to argue that antiquity was already uncertain about his origin and he therefore perhaps at least held the citizenship of Prusa. But the fact that two fifteenth-century MSS of Strabo carry *Προυσαεύς* is wholly insignificant. One is *o*, of a class all members of which are 'dépourvus de valeur' (G. Aujac, Budé ed. I (1969), p. lxiv), the other *z*, which shows 'frequent omissions... arbitrary readings that depart freely from the paradosis' (A. Diller, *The Textual Tradition of Strabo's Geography* (1975), p. 119).

[11] Synesius, *Dio* 41D; Photius, *Bibliotheca* no. 209; Suidas s.v. *Δίων ὁ Πασικράτους* (no textual problems). It is worth observing that Dio, anxious to praise Prusa for everything that he can, never mentions a connection with Asclepiades.

[12] Pliny, *HN* 7. 124; Pliny the Younger, *Epp.* 10, 17a. 3, 17b. 2, 23, 24, 58. 3, 71.

[13] Head, *Historia Numorum* 513, 517–18.

[14] *IG* XIV 1077 = *CIL* VI 1508. See for protests against confusion L. Robert, *Études Déliennes*, *BCH* Suppl. I (1973), 437 n. 13 (cf *Hellenica* 2. 98 n. 1).

[15] Men from Prusa who bore the name Asclepiades in imperial times are thus unlikely to be related to the Bithynian doctor, *pace* Wellmann, article in n. 1.

[16] Strabo C564.

parallel, from the use of the verb *uti*) Cicero can say *utor familiariter* of the doctor Asclapo, whom he had known in Greece and probably had no expectation of ever seeing again.[17] Besides, Pliny does not suggest that Asclepiades finally abandoned Rome (after refusing Mithridates' flattering invitation to move), or that his death by a fall (*lapsu scalarum*) took place anywhere else.[18] And if he had been working in Rome, and moving in fashionable society, down to about 45, or even 30 B.C., as is often thought, Cicero would probably have referred to him elsewhere in his works. To postulate a quarrel, bringing relations between Crassus and Asclepiades to an end, seems a desperate resource; Cicero would surely have explained himself further.

It cannot be sufficiently stressed that Cicero cannot have been mistaken about the date of Asclepiades' death; not only was he very scrupulous about dates and facts in his dialogues,[19] but he had been largely educated in the house of his admired mentor L. Crassus,[20] and in fact may well have known Asclepiades himself, if the latter's death was not long before 91. There are two other indications that Asclepiades was in Rome before 90 B.C. The excellent Antonio Cocchi[21] observed in the mid-eighteenth century that, while Asclepiades is said by Pliny to have been the first to prescribe *balneae pensiles* (whatever exactly these were) to patients, the only other reference to these in our sources concerns one C. Sergius Orata, the first according to Cicero to build them; Orata erected villas as a speculation on the Lucrine Lake in Campania, and fitted them out with such *balneae*.[22] Orata was also a friend of L. Crassus, who represented him in court, and who died himself in 91 (shortly after the dramatic date of the *De Oratore*). After this, owing to the Social and Civil Wars, there will have been little luxury building in Campania for a number of years. It is surely not rash to infer a fashion for these fitments in (or a little before) the nineties, and some connection between Orata and Asclepiades. Cocchi also noted that it was probably before the relations of Mithridates and Rome became hopelessly embittered, as they did around 90, that the

[17] Cicero, *De nat. deor.* 1. 123, *familiaris omnium nostrum*, cf. 2. 88, *familiaris noster*, and *De fin.* 1. 6, *familiarem nostrum*; *Ad fam.* 13. 20, *Asclapone Patrensi medico utor familiariter, eiusque cum consuetudo mihi iucunda fuit tum ars etiam, quam sum expertus in valetudine meorum.* The passages concerning Posidonius make it probable that *nos* in the *De oratore* quotation means 'we' not 'I'. If Asclepiades was doctor to all Crassus' circle, one wonders if he was responsible for the famous operation on Marius' varicose veins (Plut. *Mar.* 6. 3, *HN* 11. 252); for Marius' son was married well before 91 to L. Crassus' daughter. Though not primarily a surgeon, Asclepiades did recognize that surgical intervention was sometimes necessary. However, we do not know the date of Marius' operation, which might be after Asclepiades' death.

[18] *HN* 7. 124, 25. 6.

[19] See my 'Cicero the Historian and Cicero the Antiquarian', *JRS* 62 (1972), 33, and P. A. Brunt, 'Cicero and Historiography', *Misc. di Stud. Class. in honore di E. Manni* I (1980?), 311; this should no longer be controversial.

[20] See my 'L. Crassus and Cicero: the Formation of a Statesman', *PCPS* 197 (1971), 75.

[21] A. Cocchi, *Discorso primo sopra Asclepiade* (1758, Eng. trans. 1762), not reprinted in *Discorsi Toscani* (1761), but in his collected *Opere* (1824); English version also in R. M. Green, *Asclepiades: His Life and Writings* (1955), which also reprints the very incomplete *Asclepiadis Bithyni Fragmenta* of C. G. Gumpert (1794). Cocchi spent three years in England, knew Newton, and turned down a job offered him by the Princess of Wales, returning to teach and work in Tuscany, where he became known as 'il filosofo Mugellano'. Both doctor and classical scholar, he was responsible for the first edition of the novel of Xenophon of Ephesus (collations and other evidences of his work on the Greek romances remain in the Bodleian), published in London in 1726. His *Discorso* on Asclepiades is learned and often penetrating, though over-enthusiastic about his subject's moral virtues; his pure Tuscan was much admired in his own time as a model for scientific writing.

[22] Pliny, *HN* 26. 16; 9. 168. For Orata see also Cicero, *Hort.* fr. 68 Grilli, Val. Max. 9. 1. 1, Macrobius, *Sat.* 3. 15. *J. Benedum*, 'Die *Balnea Pensilia* des Asklepiades von Prusa', *Gesnerus* 24 (1967), 93. *Balneae pensiles* appear to have been heated from below.

King's ambassadors asked Asclepiades to come to Pontus. His refusal probably lost him the opportunity of considerable political power.[23]

But is there not evidence suggesting that Asclepiades really was at work in Rome later than 91 B.C.? There is absolutely nothing that weighs a feather against Cicero's testimony. If Pliny says that Asclepiades lived in the time of Pompey the Great he must simply be wrong – he is *notoriamente fallace*, as Cocchi not unjustly observes. Asclepiades might have been connected with another Pompeius, perhaps Pompeius Strabo, father of Pompey the Great. More likely, as Cocchi held, Pliny's date is simply a deduction from the exchange with Mithridates, for the later part of the King's lengthy career, and his final defeat, were emphatically 'in the time of Pompeius Magnus'.[24] If Asclepiades dedicated a book to a certain Geminius, this need not be Pompey's friend and officer, heard of in the 70s as a young man (he took over the fair Flora from Pompey).[25] There was a slightly earlier Geminius, powerful in Tarracina and an enemy of Marius, and epigraphic evidence suggests that the family was widespread in Latium and Campania, and even had connections with the Aegean world.[26]

Sextus Empiricus' remark that the Academic philosopher Antiochus of Ascalon and Asclepiades were contemporaries might appear to indicate a late date for the latter, since Antiochus does not seem to have died till 68 B.C. But Sextus believes that Antiochus attacked Asclepiades under the description of 'a man second to none in medicine, but having also a tincture of philosophy, who thought that perceptions were really cognitions and that we learn nothing by reason'.[27] This quotation comes from Antiochus' *Canonica*, which has been thought to date from his early, purely Academic, phase, which was passing by about 88 B.C.;[28] thus Asclepiades, who 'thought' in the past tense, ought in fact to be dead by then. But we cannot be certain of the date of the *Canonica*. A passage in Celsus might seem to imply that Asclepiades was later than Heraclides of Tarentum, who is now usually placed about 75 B.C.; but probably all that one ought to see in it is a statement that the beginnings of the Empiric School (later represented by Heraclides) were earlier than the time of Asclepiades.[29]

[23] The King's doctor Papias was one of his πρῶτοι φίλοι, and τεταγμένος ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνακρίσεων (*OGIS* 374; cf. J. Benedum, *RE* Suppl. XIV 367); Metrodorus of Scepsis, the polymath (not, however, the doctor and pharmacologist used by Pliny), rose to high legal office and was called 'the King's Father', Strabo C609, Plutarch, *Luc.* 22. Note that the Alexandrian doctor Zopyrus, a distinguished pharmacologist, sent Mithridates an account of an antidote to poison that he had invented, asking the King to experiment with it on criminals (Galen 14. 150 K; cf. Scrib. Larg. 69 Helmreich).

[24] *HN* 26. 12, cf. 22. 128. Note 25. 5–7, associating Pompey and Mithridates (and referring to Asclepiades).

[25] Caelius Aurelianus, *Morb. Chron.* 2. 110; Plut. *Pomp.* 2. 3, 16. 4. F. Münzer, *RE* s.v. Geminius (3) regards Antony's friend (Plut. *Ant.* 59) as a separate and younger man.

[26] Plut. *Mar.* 36. 1, 38. 1; *ILLRP* 60, 132, 721, 724, 727, 858 – from Praeneste, Cora, Minturnae, Capua and Delos.

[27] *Against the Logicians* 1. 201–2.

[28] So Cocchi; cf. G. Luck, *Der Akademiker Antiochos* (1953); J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists* (1977), p. 59 does not commit himself. I find no discussion in J. Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy* (1978).

[29] Celsus, proem 11; K. Deichgräber, *Die griechische Empirikerschule*[2] (1965), p. 258. For the rest, Asclepiades is known to have said that the Britons' cold climate led them to live a hundred years (Plut. *Epit.* 5. 30; see H. Diels, *Doxog. Graec.* 443–4), and it has been suggested that this will have been written after Caesar's invasion; on the contrary, Asclepiades probably could not have made this statement when Britain was better known, and is simply contrasting Britons and Ethiopians as living in the most extreme climates possible. No one should be misled by the Latin translation in Kühn's Galen into thinking that Asclepiades criticized the terminology regarding the pulse used by Athenaeus of Attaleia, who was probably a pupil of Posidonius and thus doubtless active some time around the middle of the first century B.C.; the Greek text makes it clear, by using the future tense, that Galen is simply putting objections into the mouth of Asclepiades (8. 646 K).

Can the dates of Asclepiades' pupils help us? Though the ancient *catenae* linking master and pupil are often artificial and unreliable, it is hard to disbelieve Pliny's statement that Themison of Laodicea in Syria (the true founder of the Methodist School) was Asclepiades' *auditor* or direct pupil;[30] for a passage of Caelius Aurelianus is taken to mean that Themison's work on periodic fevers was written before Asclepiades had distinguished catalepsy;[31] their careers will thus have overlapped chronologically. Celsus, probably writing in the later years of the Emperor Tiberius, uses the word *nuper* in speaking of Themison; but this is often employed rather vaguely – here it distinguishes Themison from 'the ancients' and Asclepiades himself.[32] It is a pity that we have no unambiguous evidence placing his activity in Italy (he saw a case at Mediolanum) in the period around and after 90 B.C., which is where we shall have to put him. But nor is there any firm evidence for a later date. There is some sign, however, that he was earlier than Augustus' famous physician Antonius Musa, for Pliny once says that Musa altered some of Themison's precepts. It is usually supposed that this same passage also tells us that Musa was himself an *auditor* of Asclepiades, but the word is only a supplement to the text, though a tempting one, and probably one should restore something implying mere adherence to the school of Asclepiades, perhaps *sectator;* for it is not very likely that Musa should rise to fame for curing Augustus at the age of about ninety, some seventy years after his master's death.[33] Some other early followers of Asclepiades, who can only be fixed to the first century B.C., are described as ἀκουσταί, i.e. *auditores*.[34]

We may learn rather more from our passage of Cicero than Asclepiades' bare date. It does not seem to have been noted that Cicero is here referring (in typically elegant fashion), by his three examples of eloquence on technical subjects, to the three great branches of oratory as defined in the ancient world. Philo is envisaged as addressing

[30] *HN* 29. 6: *auditor eius Themison fuit, seque inter initia adscripsit illi, mox procedente vita sua et placita mutavit, sed et illa Antonius Musa eiusdem* [*auditor*].

[31] Cael. Aurel. *Morb. Acut.* 2. 84: *libris quos periodicos dixit, adhuc quidem in iuventute constitutus, nec dum* [*necdum* ⟨*enim*⟩ Wellmann, *Hermes* 57 (1922), 397] *Asclepiades in libris suis eos discreverat.* [Galen] 14. 648 K does not prove Themison a direct pupil.

[32] Celsus, proem 11; but cf. 7 proem 3, *nuper Tryphon pater*: this man was probably active in the early first century A.D., and is perhaps Scribonius Largus' *praeceptor* (Diller, *RE* VII A. 1, Tryphon no. 28). Also proem 69: *ingeniosissimus saeculi nostri medicus, quem nuper vidimus, Cassius.*

[33] See n. 30. Modern scholars vary widely as to Themison's date, often said to be Augustan; but L. Edelstein, *RE* Suppl. VI 358 s.v. Methodiker (= his *Ancient Medicine* (1967), 173) and F. Kudlien, *Kl. Pauly* V 677 put him well into the first century A.D., which is quite impossible; the former holds on the basis of Cael. Aurel. *Morb. Acut.* 1. 16. 165 that Themison borrowed *from* the Methodists (and so was influenced by Nero's doctor Thessalus). But Caelius is surely confused here. (*HN* 25. 77–80 do not prove that Juba and Musa, who lived *patrum nostrum aetate*, are earlier than Themison; Pliny is arranging his discussion by plants, not by the dates of those discussing their use.)

[34] Steph. Byz. s.v. Δυρράχιον mentions Philonides of that town, who practised and wrote extensively, and Nicon of Acragas, probably the Nicon of Cic. *ad fam.* 7. 20. 3, author of a work on diet and perhaps the teacher of one Sex. Fadius (possibly of Veleia in south Italy, which was well-known as a health resort). Cicero mentions Nicon's book περὶ πολυφαγίας and remarks *o suavem medicum*; this does perhaps suggest the Asclepiadean. Stephanus further mentions T. Aufidius Σικελός, named by Caelius Aurelianus as a *sectator* of Asclepiades (*Morb. Acut.* 2. 29. 158 and *Morb. Chron.* 3. 78). There was a T. Aufidius in Cicero's time who began his career as a *publicanus* but rose to the praetorship (Val. Max. 6. 9. 7); the doctor, if genuinely a Sicel, might have owed his Roman citizenship to this man or a relation; Aufidii are also found in business in the East. *ILLRP* 799, from Lucania, concerns a doctor, born Menecrates of Tralles, who describes himself as φυσικὸς οἰνοδότης, which as Degrassi notes ad loc. suggests an early follower of Asclepiades.

the People of Athens in the assembly: political or symbouleutic oratory. Antonius is imagined as speaking *pro Hermodoro*, as the phrase shows in the law-courts, where he was a famous practitioner of judicial oratory. Asclepiades is left to be the representative of epideictic oratory, show speeches for special occasions. We cannot doubt that he has been giving lectures on medicine and its virtues in Rome (encomium is the main type of epideictic oratory). *Ornate*, a technical term for finished eloquence, also makes it clear that formal speeches are in question, not just bedside chats (as does Pliny's *torrenti ac meditata cotidie oratione*).[35] It is fascinating to think of lectures on medicine being listened to by the fashionable world in Rome at this stage of the city's development, but it is in no way a surprising fact.[36] Hellenistic doctors often lectured to a general audience, usually in order to introduce themselves to a new city.[37] If Asclepiades did this for a time on arrival at Rome, and *tum cum* does suggest that a special period in his career is being envisaged, rather than the whole of it, then the imperfect tenses used by Cicero would find a natural sense (and could not simply be taken as supporting evidence for Asclepiades being dead by 91, a thesis that rests securely enough on *usi sumus*).

Pliny implies that Asclepiades had to overcome a certain amount of hostility towards Greek medicine in Rome.[38] He quotes the Elder Cato, who detested Greek doctors. Cato is not necessarily typical, but a fragment of his near-contemporary, the historian Cassius Hemina, does suggest that in the mid-second century B.C. Greek doctors may have been popularly regarded as butchers.[39] One should also note Pliny's statement about a reaction in, as we now see, the Rome of the late second or very early first century, to the so-called Magi; it was of course not permanent or complete – Nigidius Figulus, in Cicero's day, was still sympathetic to their doctrine.[40]

The stress in both Cicero and Pliny on Asclepiades' eloquence, and the probable link with the circle of Crassus provided by Pliny's reference to *balneae pensiles*, are sufficient answer to those who have tried to argue that Cicero's man is not Pliny's, and therefore not the famous Bithynian.[41] Presumably the successful introductory lectures are all that lie behind Pliny's biased picture of Asclepiades as a fraud. But though as we shall see Pliny's source or sources may be Roman, it is likely that Asclepiades also had opponents among his Greek colleagues. *Vincebat ceteros medicos*

[35] *HN* 26. 12.

[36] See Ad. Wilhelm, *Neue Beiträge* IV 54–5 for the ἀκροάσεις in the gymnasium at Perge by the local doctor Asclepiades son of Myron: πολλὰ χρήσιμα διατέθειται ἐν αὐτοῖς πρὸς ὑγείαν τοῖς πολίταις ἀνήκοντα. He received honours also in Seleucea on Calycadnus, and had lectured there too. In *SEG* III no. 416, from Elateia, ἀκροάσεις is a probable supplement. For published ἀκροάσεις (on the pulse) by the distinguished Baccheius of Tanagra, from the later third century B.C., Galen 8. 732, 749 K. Athenaeus of Attaleia, in the first century B.C. (*ap.* Oribasius, *Coll. Med.* IV (*Libri Incerti*) *CMG* VI 2. 2. 139–141 Raeder) thought all should study medicine as part of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία; the fragment is perhaps itself from a lecture (it is at all events in rhetorical style), F. Kudlien, *Der griechische Arzt im Zeitalter des Hellenismus* (1979), p. 50.

[37] *Bull. Ep.* (1958), no. 336, a doctor from Istros lectures at Cyzicus and gets a public post (cf. the military engineer who lectured on arriving at Rhodes and was given an official job, displacing the incumbent, Vitruv. 10. 16. 3). Galen's public demonstrations in Rome date from his first visit, 14. 612 K ff. There were no public posts at Rome; Asclepiades will simply have wanted to become known. Besides praising medicine he may have lectured on such general subjects as hygiene or the healthy life, on which he published, or on his physical theories.

[38] *HN* 29. 12–14.

[39] Cato and Hemina in *HN* passage cited in last note; cf. Plut. *Cato Mai.* 23. 3.

[40] Frr. 127–8 Swoboda; cf. *HN* 29. 138, 30. 83–4.

[41] For this view see F. Susemihl, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur in der Alexandrinerzeit* II (1892), p. 428, and sources there quoted.

possibly suggests rival lecturers; there were also those who did not approve of doctors lecturing at all, such as the Hellenistic or early Imperial author of the pseudo-Hippocratic *Precepts*, who regards the desire to address a crowd as an unworthy ambition. (If you *must* do it, at least avoid quotations from the poets.) The author condemns the employment of all arts not part of medicine itself; a neat contrast to our passage of Cicero, with its belief that the art of eloquence must be deployed on any subject before this can be communicated at all.

Asclepiades had doubtless had a good rhetorical education, but even if he did not come from a medical family, as Wellmann suggested,[42] he had certainly observed cases at Parium on the Propontis, by the Hellespont, and at Athens,[43] and he plainly had considerable knowledge of the writings of Greek philosophers and doctors – more, probably, than could have been acquired at Rome when he first went there. We do not know where he studied (probably not Alexandria, for Galen as well as Pliny complains that he was ignorant in anatomy, though they may exaggerate),[44] but he was clearly a real doctor. There is therefore, now that we understand what lies behind Pliny's attack on him as a teacher of rhetoric, less reason than ever to suppose that Pliny has confused him with his fellow-Bithynian and near-contemporary Asclepiades of Myrlea (otherwise Apamea, just down the gulf from Prusias), who is known to have taught *grammatice* in Spain,[45] and is only said to have visited Rome in a patently confused notice in the *Suda*, which conflates several different men. Far less should we confuse him ourselves, as is now common, or even simply argue that the doctor Asclepiades of Bithynia, whether he was the Myrlean or not, was at least the Asclepiades who wrote a work on grammar cited by Sextus Empiricus;[46] Sextus admittedly does not say explicitly that his grammatical Asclepiades is a different person from his medical one, but he might surely take for granted that, in totally different contexts, his readers would think of different men. Those who identify the different figures forget that, anyway, grammar and rhetoric are not the same thing (indeed Asclepiades of Myrlea is often called a rhetor by recent historians of medicine, with no ancient warrant whatsoever); the two professions are normally quite distinct, as Suetonius shows clearly for Rome,[47] though there might sometimes be a slight overlap of interests, especially in matters concerned with prose style. It is certainly

[42] Wellmann, article cited in n. 1; our Asclepiades might be the *Asclepiades Andreae filius* on a list of doctors published by Wellmann in *Hermes* 35 (1900), 370, and this Andreas might be the Andreas who held views on the soul similar to those of Asclepiades of Bithynia (Tertullian, *De Anima* 15). But there is a third-century B.C. doctor called Andreas, and doctors called Asclepiades are legion. Pliny's *e levissima gente* has of course nothing to do with family descent, but reflects Roman contempt for Asiatic Greeks; cf. Cicero, *pro Flacc.* 65. (H. v. Vilas also misreads Strabo C566 to provide Asclepiades with a family.)

[43] Caelius Aurel. *Morb. Acut.* 2. 129 (Parium, not Paros as in Drabkin's translation); another case at Parium, *ap.* Oribasius, *Coll. Med.* iii *CMG* VI 2. 1 256 R.

[44] Galen, *De Fac. Nat.* 3. 7. 166 (Brock).

[45] Strabo C157, C166. Listing famous Bithynians at C566 he omits Asclepiades the Myrlean, but this is hardly evidence that he was the same man as ὁ Προυσιεύς, whom Strabo firmly calls ἰατρός and nothing else. (Meineke supplemented the text to get both men in.) Gumpert (op. cit. in n. 21) gave currency to the notion that Pliny confused the two (he also sowed confusion over Asclepiades' birthplace by maintaining that Prusias (Cius) was in Mysia, not Bithynia; but it was part of the Kingdom of Bithynia in Asclepiades' day).

[46] W. J. Slater, 'Asklepiades and Historia', *GRBS* 13 (1972), 317. His argument that the grammarian's use of *historia* is influenced by the medical sense of the word, and especially by the Dogmatic sect's criticism of the Empirics' reliance on case-histories, hardly compels the identification, though Asclepiades of Prusias was certainly no Empiric.

[47] Writing separately *de grammaticis* and *de rhetoribus*, as other writers do.

hard to believe that Asclepiades of Prusias, who wrote a large number of books on medical subjects ('citiert werden von ihm 17 Schriften'[48]) and clearly had a busy and fashionable practice and a number of pupils, had also the time or the interest, even in the long life attested by Pliny, to write on Nestor's Cup, the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, probably Theocritus, also a work on Bithynia in at least ten books, lives of previous *grammatici* in at least eleven, and a *periegesis* of Turdetania in Spain much concerned with Greek mythology; all of which are attributed to the Myrlean, and constitute a sufficiently typical *oeuvre* for a *grammaticus* at this period (and betray no interest whatsoever in rhetoric).[49] Men of the name of Asclepiades were common enough, especially perhaps in north-western Asia Minor, where the worship of Asclepius was prominent.[50] Many, but by no means all, were doctors, whether because the profession was certainly often hereditary, or because doctors sometimes took a suitable and auspicious name.

One detail about the earlier career of Asclepiades of Prusias may be recoverable. The case in Parium that Caelius Aurelianus tells us that Asclepiades saw is certainly also the case referred to by Galen in *Med. Exp.* 26;[51] it concerns the favourable effects of bloodletting in phrenitis here, as opposed to other places. Galen's work is a confutation of Asclepiades and his followers which survives only in an Arabic translation, itself taken from a good Syriac version. The Arabic is apparently very wordy, and its translator into English admits to having compressed it. The result, at fourth hand, is not easy to make sense of; in particular, it is unclear when 'you' means Asclepiades, and when it means the unnamed Dogmatist who is Galen's immediate target. Where the Parium case is referred to, 'you' must be Asclepiades, as again at the end of the chapter where we seem to be told that it was a humble old woman of Parium who informed him about the beneficial effects of venesection; it is surely also Asclepiades in the intervening passage, where the addressee is being reproached for incapacity to provide a *logos* for his account of particles and pores, because he left all his papers at home when sailing to 'a certain city', for fear of shipwreck. This is also obviously too circumstantial to refer to the anonymous Dogmatist. Asclepiades is fairly clearly being criticized for not telling us *why* venesection is beneficial in Parium when it is not so elsewhere, but simply reporting popular tales – and this is just like your empty boastings about particles and pores, the arguments for which you left in your papers at home. (The next chapter, which opens by saying that Asclepiades was not the only Dogmatist to say such silly things, perhaps also implies that ch. 26 had been entirely concerned with him.)

Possibly this story, whether true or not, might have some connection with Pliny's charge that Asclepiades had no medical training[52] – he was at least rather short of evidence for it. Could Athens or Rome be simply described as 'a certain city', even by a Syriac or Arabic scholar? One could perhaps fear shipwreck even coasting from Prusias to Parium or the Hellespont, but possibly there were other travels of which we know nothing. Since we know of a second case that he saw at Parium, it is possible

[48] Wellmann, *RE* 2. 1632 s.v. Asclepiades (39).

[49] Wentzel, *RE* 2. 1628, s.v. Asclepiades (28); B. A. Müller, *De Asclepiade Myrleano* (1903).

[50] Apart from the old-established temple at Pergamum, there were in the imperial period shrines at Nicomedeia (Paus. 3. 3. 8) and Poemanum in Mysia (Ael. Arist. *Orat.* 50. 3 – ἅγιόν τε καὶ ὀνομαστόν). His worship is also attested then by coins and inscriptions in numerous other cities, including Prusias (Cius) – C. Bosch, *Die kleinasiatischen Münzen der römischen Kaiserzeit* (1935), pp. 106, 154. Of the men called Asclepiades registered in *RE*, note esp. nos. 18, 40, 46, 49, 50.

[51] Ed. and tr. R. Walzer (1944).

[52] *HN* 26. 12: *huc se repente convertit...qui nec id egisset nec remedia nosset oculis usuque percipienda.*

that Asclepiades actually practised there for a time, so that it is perhaps not irrelevant to point out its Pergamene connections, and its interesting γένος of Ophiogeneis, who cured snake-bites.[53]

How reliable is Pliny's other information about Asclepiades? We have seen that there is something behind his wildest charges. For one of his statements (that Asclepiades bore the nick-name the 'water-giver') he tells us that he is using Varro, and it is very possible, as Wellmann observed,[54] that the great polymath stands behind most of his account. Varro is in fact mentioned as one of the sources for this particular book of the *Natural History* in Pliny's index. Wellmann observed that one of Varro's (probably early) *Menippean Satires* is known to have dealt with doctors, and thought that Pliny could have used this, though importing much of the anti-Greek bias himself. The fragments of the Satire concerned, the *Quinquatrus*, do mention both water and wine, crucial elements in Asclepiades' therapy, and also Heraclides Ponticus (though not in the context of physical theories). It also probably complains about patients lapped in luxury, which might well tie up with Pliny's jeers about Asclepiades' agreeable methods.[56] But it is a little difficult to see the prosaic Pliny turning to the obviously fantastic *Satires* (partly in verse) for his information, rather than to the other works that Wellmann notes, notably the book on medicine in the *Disciplinae*. This seems to have been untechnical and to have retailed popular remedies,[57] and might thus have shown some hostility to Greek scientific medicine. There was also discussion of medical matters in more than one of the *Logistorici*, dialogues on serious subjects.[58] But even if Pliny's source was a Latin one, the Greek ones used by Galen may have had a similar attitude to Asclepiades, for Galen accuses him of being boastful and arrogant – also frequently self-contradictory and even, though this is doubtless rhetorical, out of his mind.[59]

We need hardly believe Pliny's story that Asclepiades once met a funeral procession and, recognizing that the supposed corpse was alive, rescued the man;[60] this is a tale told of many famous doctors, notably of Empedocles.[61] The story is also in Celsus and Apuleius, who might very well have got it from Varro.[62] The fullest and most rhetorical version, that of Apuleius, says that the doctor was coming into Rome *rure suo suburbano*, from his country house just outside the town. This would suggest the comfortable circumstances that he is extremely likely to have attained, if not perhaps the purity of moral taste that Cocchi infers; but one cannot press such an anecdote.

[53] Strabo C588.

[54] *HN* 27. 14 *ipse cognominari se frigida [sc. aqua] danda praeferens ut auctor ait M. Varro.* Cf. Wellmann, second article in n. 1.

[55] Bücheler, 440 ff.

[56] Bücheler, 447: *tu medicum te audes dicere, cum in eborato lecto ac purpureo peristromo cubare videas aegrotum et eius prius alvum quam τύλην subducere mavis?* The text is very uncertain, but probably does not contain a panegyric of Asclepiades' gentle methods, as Wellmann thought, but rather one of Varro's diatribes, frequent in the *Satires*, against modern luxury.

[57] It is not mentioned by Celsus, but may be by Pliny, a less technical author where medicine is concerned than Celsus: see U. Capitani, 'Celso, Scribonio Largo, Plinio il Vecchio e il loro atteggiamento nei confronti della medicina popolare', *Maia* 24 (1972), 120.

[58] Notably *Messala de valetudine*, but to some extent *Catus de liberis educandis* as the fragments show, and possibly *Orestes de insania*. Varro also wrote three books *De valetudine tuenda*, and the *Hebdomades* perhaps included doctors among the famous men of whom portraits and brief notices were given.

[59] Especially *Med. Exp.* (see n. 51) 1–2 and 13. 6.

[60] *HN* 7. 124, 26. 15.

[61] *HN* 7. 175; see Heraclides Ponticus' dialogue περὶ τῆς ἄπνου (Gottschalk, op. cit. in n. 3, 13).

[62] Celsus 2. 6. 15; Apuleius, *Florida* 19 (calling Asclepiades the greatest doctor after Hippocrates, an exaggeration perhaps only current in Rome – cf. Celsus 1. 10, Pliny, *HN* 7. 124).

Pliny also reports that Asclepiades had a wager with his patients that he would never fall ill himself; he never did, being killed in old age by a fall down some steps.

Finally, it is often forgotten that there is a chance that we have a portrait of Asclepiades, though the work in question is in no more remote place than the Capitoline Museum and well known to art historians. A herm engraved with this name was found near the Via Appia close to Rome in the early eighteenth century, and identified by Garofalo with the great doctor.[63] It represents a strikingly individual head, with large eyes, a lined and protruding forehead, a very strong chin, and a close-shaved beard.[64] The date of the work is now agreed to be the third century A.D.; the question is whether it can be based on an earlier original. The most recent edition of Helbig suggests that it is, but that this original must date to the fourth century B.C.[65] It is doubtful, however, if a suitable Asclepiades can be found from that period; and dangerous as such arguments are recognized to be, it seems improbable that this austere and forceful head can belong to the other famous Asclepiades, him of Samos, the author of erotic epigrams in the early third century B.C. It surely suits better a philosopher, or a philosopher-doctor such as our man, who was certainly well enough remembered in the third century A.D. to be commemorated, and even named without further identification.[66] But it may be that, as others hold, there was no earlier original and an otherwise unknown figure of the third century A.D. is here put before us.[67]

If we have succeeded in restoring to Asclepiades, above all, his right date, certain consequences for his intellectual development, and for the intellectual history of his time, clearly follow. For example, it will no longer do to suggest, as Gottschalk does, that Asclepiades based his corpuscular theories on Heraclides Ponticus because Heraclides was popular in Rome in the time of Varro and Cicero (meaning the mid-first century B.C.).[68] We will need to go back to, and perhaps quite a long way into, the second century B.C. – to a period when Greek intellectuals are not likely to have taken much notice of what the Romans liked or disliked[69] (though of course where practical treatment was concerned Asclepiades did think that different areas required different methods, and he may also not have been above trying to please his patients and overcome their prejudices, as Pliny holds). It is improbable that many of the Romans had read Heraclides at this time, or indeed that much serious medical literature was

[63] B. Garofalo, 'Lettera intorno a un Busto di Asclepiade', *Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia* 11 (1712), 235.

[64] Photographs in G. M. A. Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks* (1965), fig. 2055; R. H. Major, *A History of Medicine* I (1954), p. 177; J. J. Bernoulli, *Griechische Ikonographie* II (1901), Taf. 26 (two views, one in profile). Engravings in Garofalo, Gumpert and other eighteenth-century sources, sometimes quite unrecognizable.

[65] W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*[4] (1966), no. 1344.

[66] H.P. L'Orange, *Studien zur Geschichte des spätantiken Porträts* (1933), p. 119 says that the head is 'von entschieden ungriechischem Typus'. If we were to take this seriously we could reply that Prusias undoubtedly had a very mixed, perhaps mainly Bithynian population (note a reference to one *Διντίπορις Σκιρπάζιος Προυσιέα*, *OGIS* 341, though it is uncertain which Prusias he comes from).

[67] Bernoulli and Richter (n. 64) hesitate between our Asclepiades and a man of the third century A.D., Bernoulli rather preferring the latter and Richter the former. It is usually assumed that the herm was found in a tomb, but Garofalo does not say and indeed clearly does not believe this. Herms of famous men were of course commonly used to decorate architectural complexes. (Mr R. R. R. Smith tells me that he thinks the head too typically third century to be a copy.)

[68] Gottschalk (op. cit. in n. 3) pp. 56, 146.

[69] It is probably wrong to see Panaetius' modified Stoicism as produced for Roman consumption, rather than in reaction to the criticisms of the Sceptic Carneades and others; certainly his rejection of divination will not have been to Roman taste.

available in Rome; before the Mithridatic Wars the only great library to have come to Italy was that of the Kings of Macedon.[70] Rather we shall have to look to the intellectual climate in northern Asia Minor in the second century (and of course also in Athens, which Asclepiades visited, although we do not know how long he stayed there). Was Heraclides, who had returned to his native Heraclea Pontica to teach, still honoured in that area? Can any connections be made between Asclepiades and Attalid Pergamum, where at all events in the imperial period many serious doctors, including Galen, were in the service of the famous Asclepeion, and where the library of course had a great reputation; and where in the second century B.C. King Attalus III, and Nicander, who is described as physician as well as poet, at least studied medicinal plants?[71] We have noted Pergamene links with Parium; they were also strong with Athens. It would be interesting to put Asclepiades into the context of Pergamene intellectual influence at Rome, most notably marked by the visit of the great grammarian Crates, though other scholars working in the country seem to have ignored or been hostile to the new power.

Cocchi, trying to fill in the background, pointed out that the great anatomist Herophilus was born in Chalcedon on the Bosphorus (before 300 B.C.), and that Epicurus taught at Lampsacus (though it is not clear that Asclepiades' corpuscular theories were very closely connected with Epicurus' atomism).[72] Benedum has rightly called attention to a distinguished doctor Demetrius of Apamea (otherwise, as we saw, Myrlea) from perhaps around 100 B.C. and so roughly contemporary with Asclepiades; unfortunately little is known of him. But Benedum's attempt to find a context for Asclepiades' use of hot and cold baths in the fact that Prusa had well-known hot springs, as Smyrna also did,[73] suffers from the disadvantage that there is no evidence whatsoever that Asclepiades ever set foot in either Prusa or Smyrna, though of course he may have done so; and the Hicesius who founded an Erasistratean school of medicine in the latter place, 'in the time of our fathers' according to Strabo,[74] and so perhaps in the earlier first century B.C., was probably active after Asclepiades had left for Italy.[75]

[70] Plutarch, *Aem. Paul.* 28. 6. Only in the time of Diodorus Siculus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus had Rome become a good place for scholarly Greeks to work, i.e. after the Mithridatic Wars.

[71] C. Habicht, *Die Inschriften des Asklepeions, Altertümer von Pergamum* VIII 3 (1964), pp. 15 ff: note Theodotus, who treated Aelius Aristides. Kudlien, op. cit. in n. 36, 123 suspects that there were also doctors attached in Hellenistic times (special library of the Asclepeion in Roman times: O. Deubner, *Das Asklepeion von Pergamum* (1938), pp. 40–3). See also E. V. Hanson, *The Attalids of Pergamum* (1971), p. 425. We know too that Menander of Pergamum was doctor to King Eumenes II (Syll. 655; cf. Suidas s.v. *Λεσχίδης*), possibly the doctor of that name who wrote a work used by Pliny in Bk 30 (l. 30) but not the Menander *qui βιόχρηστα scripsit* used for 19. 113 and elsewhere (see l. 19–17); so Kroll, *RE* Suppl. VI 297. Another trusted doctor of Eumenes, Livy 45. 19. The distinguished doctors, e.g. Cleophantus, whose views Asclepiades is known to have followed on occasion, cannot on chronological grounds be direct teachers (apart possibly from the obscure Patron, Galen, *Med. Exp.* (see n. 51) 13).

[72] Nor that they were taken up by Epicureans, though there have been attempts to trace a knowledge of his theories in Lucretius (esp. a theory of the magnet, W. Lück, *Die Quellenfrage im 5 u. 6 Buch des Lukrez*, Diss. Breslau, 1932). Also now J. Pigeaud, 'La physiologie de Lucrèce', *REL* 58 (1980), 176. But see Gottschalk, op. cit. in n. 3, 55.

[73] Op. cit. in n. 1. But all shrines of Asclepius may have practised hydrotherapy to some degree, L. Edelstein, *Asclepius* II 167; for Pergamum in the imperial period at least, R. Herzog, *Philol.* Suppl. 22 (1931), 156.

[74] Strabo C580.

[75] J. Scarborough, 'The Drug Lore of Asclepiades of Bithynia', *Pharmacy in History* 17 (1975) does not succeed in enriching our knowledge of Asclepiades' life by endowing him with a criminal son-in-law, who rests on a misreading of Scribonius Largus (p. 3 Helmreich) and especially a mistake of *genere* for *genero*; the article also fails to distinguish sufficiently clearly between the

All this must be gone into by a scholar better qualified than the present writer, one from whom we also need, as has long been recognized, a proper collection of the numerous fragments surviving from the works of Asclepiades in later medical and other writers.

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