

## BELLARIA XLIV



Pliny the Elder, Sta Maria Maggiore, Como

### PLINY THE ELDER 5

In his introduction, Pliny tells us that he consulted 2,000 volumes in the compilation of his *Natural History*, an extraordinary fact. It certainly reads like it. But he does not just repeat them: he occasionally disagrees with them – even with Aristotle - and is not backward in being forward about his own views on many of the matters they discuss.

For this last *Bellaria* on Pliny, I have selected some pieces that struck me as being of interest out of the astonishing 20,000 items he claims to have covered, surely a serious underestimate. But we start with the animal nearest in intelligence to man...

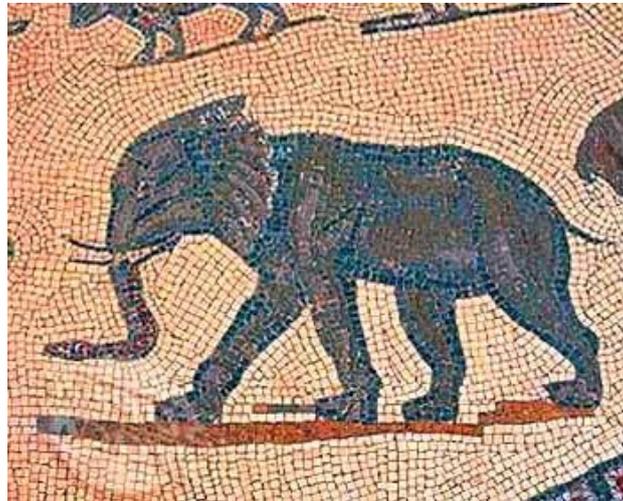
#### 8.1, 5-6, 11-15 Elephants

1 Let us now pass on to the other animals, and first the land animals. The elephant is the largest and nearest to man in intelligence, since they understand [lit. since (there is) to them understanding of] the language of their country, obey commands, remember the duties they have learned, enjoy love and glory and indeed—rare even in man—possess notions of honesty, prudence, equity, respect also for the stars, and reverence for the sun and the moon.

1 *ad reliqua transeamus animalia et primum terrestria. maximum est elephans proximumque humanis sensibus, quippe intellectus illis sermonis patrii et imperiorum obedientia, officiorum quae didicere memoria, amoris et gloriae uoluptas, immo uero, quae etiam in homine rara, probitas, prudentia, aequitas, religio quoque siderum solisque ac lunae ueneratio.*

5 [In the context of displays] they walked upon the tight-rope four at a time, each of them carrying a bed on which lay a woman pretending to be in labour, and in dining rooms crowded with men walked between the couches to take their places with such delicate steps as not to touch anyone drinking.

*5 postea et per funes incessere, lecticis etiam ferentes quaterni singulos puerperas imitantes, plenisque homine tricliniis accubitus ire per lectos ita libratis uestigiis, ne quis potantium attingeretur.*



## Writing in Greek

6 It is a well-known that one elephant, slower at learning what was taught him, and often beaten, was found rehearsing what he had to do at night. It is also amazing that the elephant can walk up tight-ropes in front of them; but most of all to come down them sloping. Mutianus, who was three times consul, informs us that one of them had learned the drawing of Greek letters, and used to write in the words of that language: 'I have myself written these words, and have dedicated the Celtic spoils'; and also, as he was watching at Puteoli, that when some elephants being landed there were compelled to disembark, terrified at the length of the gangplank extending far from the shore [to the ship], in order to deceive themselves about their estimate of the distance, turned round and walked backwards.

*6 certum est unum, tardioris ingeni in accipiendis quae tradebantur, saepius castigatum uerberibus, eadem illa meditantem noctu repertum. mirum et aduersis quidem funibus subire, sed maxime regredi, utique pronis. Mucianus III consul auctor est aliquem ex iis et litterarum ductus Graecarum didicisse solitumque perscribere eius linguae uerbis: ipse ego haec scripsi et spolia Celtica dicaui, itemque se uidente Puteolis, cum aduecti e naue egredi cogentur, territos spatio pontis procul a continente porrecti, ut sese longinquitatis aestimatione fallerent, auersos retrorsus isse.*



11 Elephants always move in herds. The oldest takes the lead, and the next in age brings up the rear. When they are crossing a river, they first send over the smallest, lest with the footsteps of the larger ones wearing away the channel, the depth of the river be increased.

11 *elephanti gregatim semper ingrediuntur. ducit agmen maximus natu, cogit aetate proximus. amnem transituri minimos praemittunt, ne maiorum ingressu atterente alueum, crescat gurgiti altitudo...*

### Ajax and Patroclus

12 When Antiochus was testing the ford of a river, Ajax [an elephant] refused, [though] on other occasions being the leader of the herd. Then it was announced that the leadership should belong to the one which had led crossing. Patroclus took up the challenge, on account of which silver pendants, in which these animals particularly delight, and all other signs of leadership were given [to him]. The elephant that had been downgraded preferred death by starvation to ignominy. For their sense of shame is amazing ...

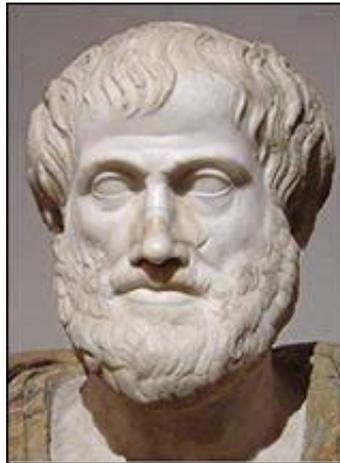
12 *Antiocho vadum fluminis experienti renuit Ajax, alioqui dux agminis semper. tum pronuntiatum eius fore principatum qui transisset, ausumque Patroclum ob id phaleris argenteis, quo maxime gaudent, et reliquo omni primatu donavit. ille, qui notabatur, inedia mortem ignominiae praetulit. mirus namque pudor est ...*

### Falling in love

13 Out of modesty they never couple except in secret, the male in its fifth year, the female at ten. ... they do not know of adultery or any of those combats over females so deadly among the other animals, nor is this because they are uninfluenced by the passion of love; for in Egypt, we are told, one fell in love with a woman selling garlands; and in case anyone supposes he made a low choice, she was wonderfully admired by Aristophanes, who was a top grammarian.

13 *pudore numquam nisi in abdito coeunt, mas quinquennis, femina decennis...nec adulteria nouere nullaue propter feminas inter se proelia ceteris animalibus pernicialia, nec quia desit illis amoris uis; namque traditur unus amasse quandam in Aegypto corollas uendentem ac, ne quis uulgariter electam putet, mire gratam Aristophani celeberrimo in arte grammatica.*

## 8.44 Aristotle



**44** Alexander the Great, burning with desire to understand the natures of animals, entrusted the research to Aristotle, the top man in every branch of learning field. Some thousands of men in every region of Asia and Greece were ordered to come on board, comprising all those whom hunting, fowling, or fishing supported, or for whom parks, herds of cattle, the breeding of bees, fish-ponds and aviaries were in their care, so that no creature known to exist should be ignored. By interrogating them, Aristotle composed some fifty famous volumes On Animals. All this gathered into a summary, with other facts of which Aristotle was unaware, I ask my readers to think well of, as over all the works of nature—the central interest of the most famous of all kings—with my help they briefly range.

*44 Alexandro Magno, rege inflammato cupidine animalium naturas noscendi, delegataque hac commentatione Aristoteli, summo in omni doctrina uiro, aliquot milia hominum in totius Asiae Graeciaeque tractu parere iussa, omnium quos uenatus, aucupia piscatusque alebant quibusque uiuaria, armenta, aluaria, pisciniae, auiaria in cura erant, ne quid usque genitum ignoraretur ab eo. quos percunctando quinquaginta ferme uolumina illa praeclara de animalibus condidit. quae a me collecta in artum cum iis, quae ignorauerat, quaeso ut legentes boni consulant, in uniuersis rerum naturae operibus medioque clarissimi regum omnium desiderio cura nostra breuiter peregrinantes.*

## 9.16-17 Whales

**16** Whales have the mouth in the forehead; and so, as they swim on the surface of the water, they discharge vast showers of water in the air. However, they breathe, as everyone agrees, as do those very few animals in the sea that have lungs among the internal organs; for without lungs it is thought that no animal can breathe. That no fish with gills are able to inhale and exhale alternately, is the opinion of such people, nor also many other kinds of animals that entirely lack gills. This, I see, was the opinion of Aristotle who, by his learned researches on the subject, has persuaded many others. **17** But, straight away, that I do not subscribe to this view of theirs I do not conceal, since in the place of lungs other organs designed for breathing may possibly exist, if Nature willed it, just as in many animals a different liquid is a substitute for blood.

*16 ora ballaenae habent in frontibus, ideoque, summa aqua natantes, in sublime nimbos efflant. spirant autem confessione omnium et paucissima alia in mari, quae internorum uiscerum pulmonem habent, quoniam sine eo spirare animal nullum putatur. nec piscium branchias habentes anhelitum reddere ac per uices recipere existimant quorum haec opinio est, nec multa alia genera etiam branchiis carentia, in qua sententia fuisse Aristotelem uideo et multis persuasisse doctrinae indaginibus. 17 nec me protinus huic opinioni eorum accedere haut dissimulo, quoniam et pulmonum uice alia possint spirabilia inesse uiscera ita uolente natura, sicut et pro sanguine est multis alius umor.*

At which point Pliny points out that bubbles rising from the sea help to prove that other sea creatures also breathe. After all, he was general of the fleet.



Mosaic from Hippolytus House, Spain

### 9.104-5 Morals and the sea

**104** But why do I mention such trifles as these, when moral corruption and luxury spring from no other source more abundantly than from types of shell-fish? Out of all the elements that exist, the sea is the most detrimental to the stomach in so many ways, with so many dishes, so many flavours of fish, whose profits are so dangerous to those who catch them. **105** But how significant is this proportion to those who value our purple dye, our purple fish and our pearls! It hardly enough that the spoils of the sea are buried down our gullets—except that they [these spoils] must be employed on the hands, the ears, the head, the whole body, in fact, and of men nearly as much as women.

What has the sea to do with our clothes, what the waves and waters with sheep's fleece? This element of nature does not properly receive us unless naked. Let there be however strong an alliance between the sea and the stomach, what does it have to do with our backs? Is it not enough to feed on dangerous things without being clothed by them? To such an extent, across all the wants of the body, that pleases most which is sought at [the cost of] a human life.

*104 sed quid haec tam parua commemoro, cum populatio morum atque luxuria non aliunde maior quam e concharum genere proueniat? iam quidem ex tota rerum natura, damnosissimum uentri mare est tot modis, tot mensis, tot piscium saporibus, quis pretia capientium periculo fiunt. 105 sed quota haec portio est*

*reputantibus purpuras, conchylia, margaritas! parum scilicet fuerat in gulas condi maria—nisi manibus, auribus, capite totoque corpore a feminis iuxta uirisque gestarentur.*

*quid mari cum uestibus, quid undis fontibusque cum uellere? non recte recipit haec nos rerum natura nisi nudos? esto, sit tanta uentri cum eo societas: quid tergori? parum est, nisi qui uescimur periculis etiam uestiamur? adeo per totum corpus, anima hominis quaesita maxime placent.*



Dusky grouper swallowing a corrupted Roman (Bardo Musuem)

## 10.171 Sex

**171** The only one among the bipeds that is viviparous [i.e. produces developed young, not eggs] is man. For man alone are his first acts of intercourse a matter of regret; sad augury, indeed, of life derived from a regrettable origin! For other animals there are fixed times of the year for coupling; but for man, as has been observed, all hours both of day and night; other animals become satiated with sexual pleasure, man hardly at all.

**171** *bipedum solus homo animal gignit. homini tantum primi coitus paenitentia, augurium scilicet uitae a paenitenda origine! ceteris animalibus statim per tempora anni concubitus, homini, ut dictum est, omni horis dierum noctiumque; ceteris satias in coitu, homini prope nulla.*

Note: Was there not a solicitors called Mann, Rogers and Greaves?



Sated satyr

## 13.74, 79-80 Paper



1st C AD, Medinet el-Faiyum, Egypt

74 Paper is made from papyrus, it being split with a needle into very thin strips, but as long [?broad?] as possible. Top quality papyrus from the centre of the plant, and from there [quality] by the order of its splitting. 'Hieratica' was the name anciently given to it, it being entirely reserved for religious books which, in adulation of Augustus, received the name ['Augusta'], just as that of second quality was called 'Liviana,' from his wife, Livia; as a result, 'hieratica' was relegated to the third quality.

*74 praeparatur ex eo charta, diuiso acu in praetenuas, sed quam latissimas philyras. principatus medio, atque inde scissurae ordine. hieratica appellabatur antiquitus, religiosis tantum uoluminibus dicata, quae adulatione Augusti nomen accepit, sicut secunda Liuiae a coniuge eius: ita descendit hieratica in tertium nomen.*

79 Moreover, other qualities looked for in papyrus are its fineness, thickness, whiteness, and smoothness. Claudius Cæsar made a change to the first quality, because the fineness of Augustan paper could not withstand the pressure of the pen; in addition, allowing the writing to pass through [the papyrus], it created a fear of blurring on the reverse side; in others ways, it was completely translucent, too, with a very unsightly appearance. So the bottom layer [of the paper] was made with second quality material, and the top layer from the first.

*79 praetera spectantur in chartis tenuitas, densitas, candor, leuor. primatum mutauit Claudius Caesar, nimia quippe Augustae tenuitas tolerandis non sufficiebat calamis; ad hoc, tramittens litteras liturae metum adferebat ex auersis, et alias indecoro uisu pertraluca. igitur e secundo corio statumina facta sunt, e primo subtemina.*

## 14.137, 142 Drink



Drinking competition, c. AD 100 (Antioch)

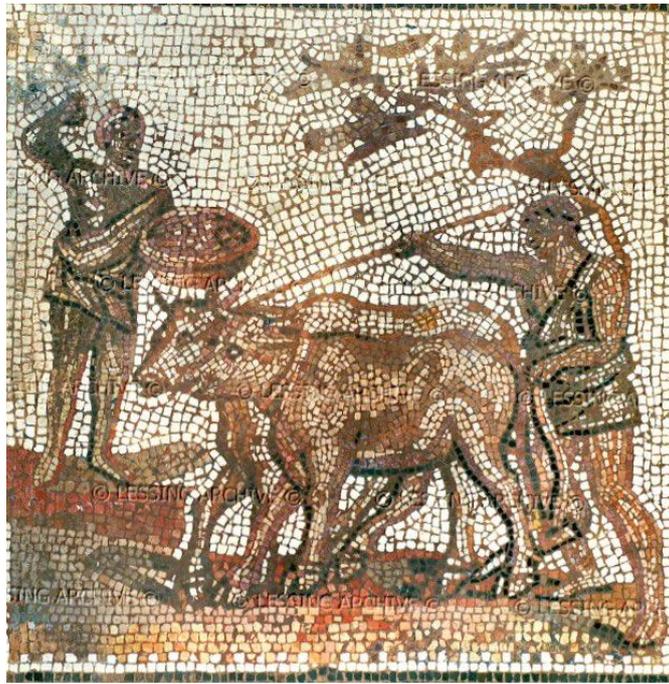
**137** If anyone considers the matter more thoroughly, in no area of life is more work expended [than on alcohol], as if Nature had not given us water, a very healthy drink, which all other animals use. But we even compel our beasts of burden to drink wine—and with such effort, such labour, and such cost does man provide that which change men’s minds and engenders rage, with thousands of crimes thus committed, and with such attraction that most of mankind understands there is nothing else in life worth living for.

*137 ac si quis diligentius reputet, in nulla parte operosior uita est—ceu non saluberrimum ad potus aquae liquorem natura dedit, quo cetera omnia animalia utuntur; at nos uinum bibere et iumenta cogimus—tantoque opere, tanto labore et impendio praestat quod hominis mentem mutet ac furorem gignat, milibus scelerum ob id editis, tanta dulcedine, ut magna pars non aliud uitae praemium intellegat...*

**142** From wine, too, comes that pallid hue, those drooping eyelids, those sore eyes, those tremulous hands, spilling the contents of full cups—let it be swift recompense: in sleep agitated by Furies, a restless night, and—the supreme reward of inebriety—[those dreams of] monstrous lustfulness and of delight in iniquity. On the next day, from the mouth [comes] breath reeking of the wine-cask, obliviousness of everything, death of the memory. They call this ‘seizing life!’ when men every day lose the day that has gone before, but they [drinkers] truly the one that is to come.

*142 hinc pallor et genae pendulae, oculorum ulcera, tremulae manus effundentes plena uasa—quae sit poena praesens: furiales somni et inquietas nocturna—praemiumque summum ebrietatis—libido portentosa ac iucundum nefas. postero die ex ore halitus cadi ac rerum omnium obliuio morsque memoriae. rapere se ita uitam praedicant, cum priorem diem cotidie perdant, illi uero et uenientem.*

## 18.41-3 Farming: the story of Gaius Furius Chresimus



Roman farmer ploughing and sowing, 3rd C AD, Saint Romain-en-Gal, Vienne (France)

41 I cannot refrain from quoting one illustration from ancient times, from which it can be understood that it was the custom to bring [to trial] before people even the methods employed in agriculture, and how those men were accustomed to defend themselves. C. Furius Chresimus, a freedman, when on a rather small holding he raised far more abundant harvests than his neighbours from the largest farms, became the object of great jealousy, as if he had enticed away the crops of others by sorcery.

41 *nequeo mihi temperare, quo minus unum exemplum antiquitatis adferam, ex quo intellegi possit, apud populum etiam de culturis agendi morem fuisse qualiterque defendi soliti sint illi uiri. C. Furius Cresimus e seruitute liberatus, cum in paruo admodum agello largiores multo fructus perciperet, quam ex amplissimis uicinitas, in inuidia erat magna, ceu fruges alienas perliceret ueneficiis.*

42 As a result, a day [for the trial] having been named by the curule aedile Spurius Calvinus, [Chresimus], fearful of being condemned when the question had to be put to the vote among the tribes, brought all his agricultural implements into the Forum, and led in his farm servants, robust, as Piso said, well-looked after and well-clothed, and iron tools of first-rate quality, heavy mattocks, weighty plough-shares and well-fed oxen.

42 *quamobrem ab Spurio Albino curuli aedile die dicta, metuens damnationem, cum in suffragium tribus oporteret ire, instrumentum rusticum omne in forum attulit et adduxit familiam suam ualidam atque, ut ait Piso, bene curatam ac uestitam, ferramenta egregie facta, graues ligones, uomeres ponderosos, boues saturos.*

43 After all that he said, 'These, Roman citizens are my implements of sorcery; but I cannot show you, or bring into the Forum, my midnight labours, my early risings and the sweat of my brow'. At this he was unanimously acquitted.

43 *postea dixit 'ueneficia mea, Quirites, haec sunt, nec possum uobis ostendere aut in forum adducere lucubrationes meas uigiliasque et sudores'. omnium sententiis absolutus itaque est.*

## 21.70, 73 Honey



Hives (pottery canisters) secured in the apiary.  
Beekeepers entered the apiary to remove the honey from the inside

70 Certainly bees and beehives are closely associated with gardens and flowers, and a source of considerable profit and saving, when conditions are favourable. So for the sake of bees you should plant thyme, wild parsley, the rose, the various violets, lilacs, tree-medick, the bean, vetch, cunila, the poppy, conyza, cassia, the melilote, melissophyllum, and the cerintha. This last is a plant with a white leaf, bent inwards, the stem of it being a cubit in height, with a concave flower at the top full of honey juice...

70 *uerum hortis coronamentis maxime aluaria et apes conueniunt, res praecipui quaestus conpendiique, cum fauet. harum ergo causa oportet serere thymum, apiastrum, rosam, uiolas, liliu[m], cytisum, fabam, eruiliam, cunilam, papauer, conyzam, casiam, melilotum, melissophyllum, cerinthen. ea est autem folio candido, incuruo, cubitalis, capite concauo mellis sucum habente...*

73 It is wonderful and well worth recording what I have found out about [bees'] food. There is a village, called Hostilia, on the banks of the Padus: its inhabitants, when food fails the bees in their vicinity, place the hives in boats and by night convey them some five miles up the river. In the morning the bees go out and, having fed, return to the boats every day, changing their location, until with the boats sunk deeper and deeper in the water by their own weight, the hives are understood to be full and, taken back home, the honey is withdrawn.

73 *mirum est dignumque memoratu de alimentis quod conperi. Hostilia uicus adluitur Pado. huius inquilini pabulo circa deficient, inponunt nauibus aluos noctibusque ad quina milia passuum contrario amne subuehunt. egressae luce apes pastaeque ad naues cotidie remeant mutantem locum, donec pondere ipso pressis nauibus, plenae alui intellegantur reuectisque eximantur mella.*

## 25.5-7 Mithradates: monarch, scientific researcher and human benefactor



Mithradates, gold stater, 89-88 BC

5 For Mithradates, the most powerful monarch of that period, whom Pompey finally conquered, of all those before him is thought to have been the most zealous researcher in life [discoveries about life, biology?], by proofs and also universal report.

5 *namque Mithradates, maximus sua aetate regum, quem debellauit Pompeius, omnium ante se genitorum diligentissimus uita fuisse argumentis, praeterquam fama, intellegitur.*

6 By him alone was it conceived to drink poison every day, the proper precautions being duly taken, so that, by the very fact of habituation, it would become harmless. Various types of antidote were first invented by him from which one retains his name; his discovery was to mix the blood of the ducks of Pontus with his antidotes, since they lived on poisons. It was to Mithradates that that the works of the famous doctor Asclepiades, still extant, were dedicated, and when he was urged to come from Rome [to Mithradates], he sent treatises in place of himself. It is a well-known fact that Mithradates alone of men could speak in twenty-two languages, and that from his subject nations no man was called by him to interpret during the whole fifty-six years of his reign.

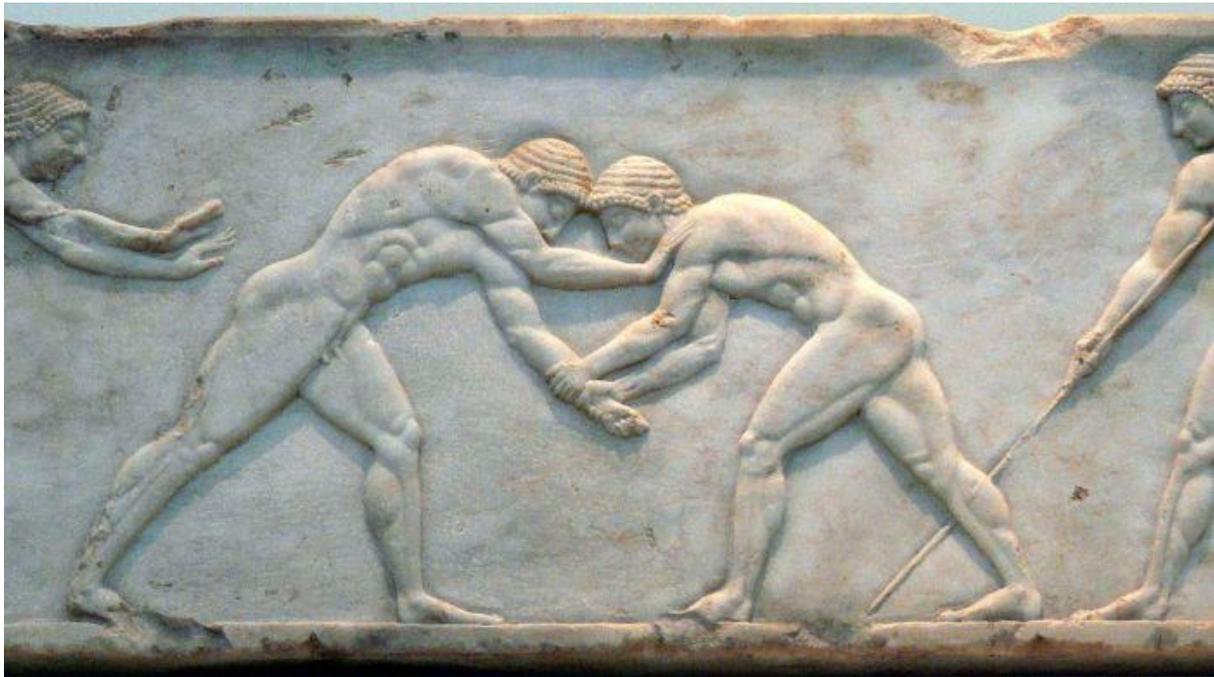
6 *uni ei excogitatum cotidie uenenum bibere, praesumptis remediis, ut consuetudine ipsa innoxium fieret; primo inuenta genera antidoti, ex quibus unum etiam nomen eius retinet; illius inuentum, sanguinem anatum Ponticarum miscere antidotis, quoniam ueneno uiuerent; ad illum Asclepiadis medendi arte clari uolumina composita extant, cum sollicitatus ex urbe Roma praecepta pro se mitteret; illum solum mortalium certum est XXII linguis locutum, nec e subiectis gentibus ullum hominem per interpretem appellatum ab eo annis LVI, quibus regnauit.*

7 That man, among his other great gifts of genius, was especially interested in the medical arts; and from all his subject peoples, who covered a large proportion of the world, looking in detail at each, he left a bookcase of these treatises, with specimens and descriptions among his own private collections. Pompey, having taken possession of the royal treasures, ordered his freedman, Lenæus the

grammarians, to translate them into the Latin language: as a result his victory was of no less benefit to the republic than to everyday life.

*7 is ergo, in reliqua ingeni magnitudine, medicinae peculiariter curiosus et ab omnibus subiectis, qui fuere magna pars terrarum, singula exquirens scrinium commentationum harum et exemplaria effectusque in arcanis suis reliquit, Pompeius, autem omni praeda regia potitus, transferre ea sermone nostro libertum suum Lenaeum grammaticae artis iussit uitaeque ita profuit non minus quam reipublicae uictoria illa.*

## 28.53-5 Remedies dependent on will-power



Funerary relief depicting wrestlers, c. 500 BC

**53** It is all the less proper to omit remedies that depend on man's will-power. Total abstinence from all food or drink, or from wine only, from meat, or from baths, when in these respects health demands it, is held to be among the most effective remedies. To these are added physical exertion, voice, exercises, anointing, and massage done skilfully: for violent massage hardens the body, while gentle massage softens it; so too, repeated massage reduces the body, while used in moderation it builds it up.

*53 eo minus omitti conuenit ab animo hominis pendentibus medicinas. abstinere se cibo omni aut potu, alias uino tantum aut carne, alias balneis, cum quid eorum postulet ualetudo, in praestantissimis remediis habetur. his adnumeratur exercitatio, intentio uocis, ungui, fricari cum ratione; uehemens enim fricatio spissat, lenis mollit, multa adimit corpus, auget modica.*

**54** Most beneficial of all are walking, or carriage rides and those of various sorts, riding is good for stomach and hips, a sea voyage for tuberculosis, a change of locality for chronic illness, self-treatment by sleep, or bed rest or occasional emetics. To lie upon the back is good for the eyes, face downwards for a cough, and to lie on the sides for catarrh ...

54 *in primis uero prodest ambulatio, gestatio et ea pluribus modis, equitatio stomacho et coxis utilissima, phthisi nauigatio, longis morbis locorum mutatio, item somno sibi mederi aut lectulo et rara uomitione. supini cubitus oculis conducunt, at proni tussibus, in latera aduersus destillationes.*

55 The sun is the most powerful of all remedies, and one which can be brought to bear at our own command: just as is the vigorous use of towels and strigils.

55 *sol quoque, remediorum maximum, ab ipso sibi praestari potest, sicuti linteorum strigiliumque uehementia.*

## 29.26-28 An attack on Greek medical fads



That's more like it...

26 All these [errors] concern only the health of individuals; but the practices which Cato foresaw and dreaded, much less dangerous and little regarded, as the leading men in the art agree, those have corrupted the moral fibre of our empire. Those practices which we submit to in good health, wrestlers' ointments, as though invented in the cause of health; the use of hot baths, by which they have persuaded us that food in the body is digested, so that no one ever leaves without being all the weaker, and from which the most susceptible patients are actually carried to the tomb; potions taken during fast; vomiting, again more potions; unmanliness [removal] of [pubic] hair produced by resins for such use; and likewise the pubic bones of women put on public display.

26 *uerum haec ad singulorum salutem pertinent; illa autem, quae timuit Cato atque prouidit, innocentiora multo et parua opinatu, quae proceres artis eius de semet ipsi fateantur, illa perdidere imperii mores, illa, quae sani patimur, luctatus, ceromata ceu ualitudinis causa instituta, balineae ardentis, quibus persuasere in corporibus cibos coqui, ut nemo non minus ualidus exiret, oboedientissimi uero efferrentur, potus deinde ieiunorum ac uomitiones et rursus perpotationes ac pilorum euiratio instituta resinis eorum, itemque pectines in feminis quidem publicati.*

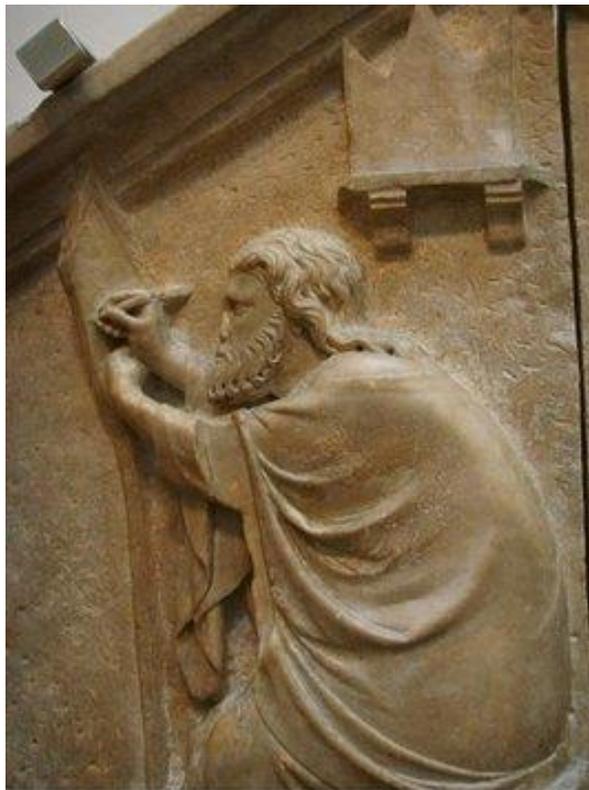
27 Assuredly, the contagion of public morals, for which there is no better explanation than medicine, daily makes Cato a prophet and oracle: that it is quite enough to skim the records of Greek genius rather than make a detailed study.

*27 ita est profecto: lues morum, nec aliunde maior quam e medicina, uatem prorsus cottidie facit Catonem et oraculum: satis esse ingenia Graecorum inspicere, non perdiscere.*

28 I must say this, in defence of the senate and of six hundred years of the Roman people, against the profession of medicine: in the most hazardous times, good men do hand their authority over to the very worst, and at the same time reckon that nothing can be of benefit unless it costs the earth.

*28 haec fuerint dicenda pro senatu illo sescentisque p. R. annis aduersus artem, in qua condicione insidiosissima auctoritatem pessimis boni faciunt, simul contra attonitas quorundam persuasiones, qui prodesse nisi pretiosa non putant.*

### 35.81-3 Apelles and Protogenes: a (very) fine line



Apelles, by Nino Pisano 1348-50 from Giotto's Campanile, Florence

81 Protogenes was living at Rhodes where Apelles, when he had disembarked there, keen to see the works of a man known to him only by reputation, at once looked up his studio. Protogenes was not at home, but there happened to be a panel of some size upon the easel there, which an old woman was guarding. She said that Protogenes was not at home, and asked by whom she should say he was being sought. 'By this person,' said Apelles, and taking a brush he painted on the panel an extremely fine line.

*81 Protogenes ... Rhodi uiuebat, quo cum Apelles adnauigasset, auidus cognoscendi opera eius fama tantum sibi cogniti, continuo officinam petiit. aberat ipse, sed*

*tabulam amplae magnitudinis in machina aptatam una custodiebat anus. haec foris esse Protogenen respondit interrogauitque, a quo quaesitum diceret. ab hoc, inquit Apelles adreptoque penicillo lineam ex colore duxit summae tenuitatis per tabulam.*

**82** When Protogenes returned, the old woman told him what had happened. They say that the artist, remarking the delicacy of the touch, instantly exclaimed that Apelles was the visitor, and that so exquisite a piece of work was not compatible with anyone else; and that he superimposed with another colour a yet finer line on that one and, as he left, told the woman to show it to the stranger, if he returned, and to add that this was the person whom he had come to see. And so it happened. Apelles returned and, mortified at being surpassed, with a third colour divided the lines [i.e. drew a yet further line on top], leaving no more space available for delicate workmanship.

*82 et reuerso Protogeni quae gesta erant anus indicauit. ferunt artificem protinus contemplatum subtilitatem dixisse Apellen uenisse, non cadere in alium tam absolutum opus; ipsumque alio colore tenuiorem lineam in ipsa illa duxisse abeuntemque praecepisse, si redisset ille, ostenderet adiceretque hunc esse quem quaereret. atque ita euenit. reuertit enim Apelles et uinci erubescens, tertio colore lineas secuit, nullum relinquens amplius subtilitati locum.*

**83** But Protogenes, admitting that he was defeated, rushed to the harbour to look for his guest, and thought it right for that panel to be handed down to posterity, as a subject of admiration for everyone, but especially artists, just as it was. I hear that it was destroyed in the first fire which took place at Cæsar's palace on the Palatine Hill; it had been admired in Rhodes, on its vast surface containing nothing but lines, barely visible to sight, among the most outstanding works of numerous other artists resembling an empty space, and for that reason attracting notice, and more celebrated than any other painting there.

*83 at Protogenes, uictum se confessus, in portum deuolauit hospitem quaerens, placuitque sic eam tabulam posteris tradi omnium quidem, sed artificum praecipuo miraculo. consumptam eam priore incendio Caesaris domus in Palatio audio, spectatam Rhodi ante, spatiose nihil aliud continentem quam lineas uisum effugientes, inter egregia multorum opera inani similem et eo ipso allicientem omnique opere nobiliorem.*

## 35.147-148 Women painters



laia of Cyzicus Versailles, 1672 (Michel Corneille the Younger)

**147** There have been some female painters also. Timarete, the daughter of Micon, painted a Diana at Ephesus, one of the very oldest panel-paintings known. Irene, daughter and pupil of the artist Cratinus, painted a figure of a girl, now at Eleusis, a Calypso, an Aged Man, the juggler Theodorus, and Alcisthenes the dancer. Aristarete, daughter and pupil of Nearchus, painted an Æsculapius. Iaia of Cyzicus, who always remained single, painted at Rome, when M. Varro was a young man, both with the brush, and drew with the graver upon ivory, her subjects, being female portraits mostly. At Naples, there is a large picture by her, the portrait of an Old Woman; as also a self-portrait, done by the help of a mirror.

**147** *pinxere et mulieres: Timarete, Miconis filia, Dianam, quae in tabula Ephesi est antiquissimae picturae; Irene, Cratini pictoris filia et discipula, puellam, quae est Eleusine, Calypso, senem et praestigiatores Theodorum, Alcisthenen saltatorem; Aristarete, Nearchi filia et discipula, Aesculapium. Iaia Cyzicena, perpetua uirgo, M. Varronis iuuenta, Romae et penicillo pinxit et cestro in ebore imagines mulierum maxime et Neapolitanum in grandi tabula, suam quoque imaginem ad speculum.*

**148** No painter produced a picture faster than she; her artistic skill was such, that her works sold at much higher prices than those of the most celebrated portrait-painters of her day, Sopolis namely, and Dionysius, with whose pictures our galleries are filled. A certain Olympias also painted, of whom it is recorded only that she was a pupil of Autobulus.

**148** *nec ullius uelocior in pictura manus fuit, artis uero tantum, ut multum manipretis antecederet celeberrimos eadem aetate imaginum pictores Sopolim et Dionysium, quorum tabulae pinacothecas inplent. pinxit et quaedam Olympias, de qua hoc solum memoratur, discipulum eius fuisse Autobulum.*

Next week: Lucian, the ancient Greek satirist