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WRITING THE HISTORY OF FATNESS AND
THINNESS IN GRAECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY

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SUMMARY

*WRITING THE HISTORY OF FATNESS AND
THINNESS IN GRAECO-ROMAN ANTIQUITY*

Fatness and thinness has been a much underexploited topic in the study of classical Antiquity. After carefully analyzing the Greek and Roman vocabulary to denote the matter, I catalogue information on concrete instances of persons who were considered to have suffered from overweight, or emaciation. On a second level, I deal with popular mentality regarding overweight or thinness. Thirdly, medical and/or philosophical theory regarding weight problems are studied. In this, the moral discourse linking obesity with gluttony or weakness and avarice with underweight will be studied. I will also ask whether changed Christian attitudes towards the body and bodily functions lead to new concepts regarding the matter. For these different levels of questions, I take into account concepts of disability history, asking whether the obviously impairing factors of excess weight or the opposite of it lead to social dysfunctionality, hindering people from important social functions and subjecting them to social stigma.

1. Introduction: fatness, disabilities and the ancient world

For some years, the introduction of a 'fat tax' for overweight fliers has come under consideration. The controversial measure was not proposed by budget airlines only. Charging obese passengers for one

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extra seat was supported by a considerable majority of the population in surveys, and also larger airlines and tour companies considered the matter. In such a context, the obviously impairing factors of excess weight lead to social dysfunctionality, hindering the obese from important social functions such as easy air travel and moving around. At least from the historian's point of view, obesity in contemporary western society might be considered a disability.

But the mention of the term disability is also intriguing from another point of view. Obviously, no airline would consider extra charges for people using a wheelchair, and the visually impaired are regularly provided with free assistance when they want to travel on their own. Surely, the key to understanding this different approach is the concept of guilt. "If you're fat, it's your own fault". Associations for overweight people have often argued that this stigmatising attitude makes the lives of the obese in western society uncomfortable to say the least. It seems to be the culmination of the modern western rejection of obesity as unhealthy, disgusting, and connected to the poor¹. Tellingly, the very same western obsession for the healthy and even perfect body has led to excesses on the opposite side, namely extreme thinness. While such a condition obviously causes disabling effects for the people affected, developing countries face the problem of underweight caused by undernourishment, which removes people from the workforce, a necessary condition for survival.

Far from being in the position to judge in these sociological debates, classicists and ancient historians can and must grasp the opportunity of both researching ancient society with present day questions in mind and of questioning present day attitudes with reference to Graeco-Roman ones.

This article deals with fatness and thinness, an underexploited topic in the study of classical Antiquity. After a careful analysis of the vocabulary (and the problems involved in studying this), I aim at cataloguing instances from Greek and Latin literature from the fifth cen-

ture B.C.E to the sixth century C.E. that mention fatness and thinness of actual people. As such, I gather information on concrete instances of persons who were considered to have suffered from overweight, or from the opposite, emaciation. Here, issues as social class, age and gender of the persons involved will be studied. Also, practical issues which hindered their everyday lives and the ways they coped with circumstances are highlighted. On a second level, I deal with popular mentality regarding overweight or thinness: mockery, pity, fascination, or disgust are contradictory attitudes which show up in various contexts. Thirdly, medical and/or philosophical theory regarding weight problems are studied. In this, the moral discourse linking obesity with gluttony or weakness and avarice with underweight will be studied. I will also ask whether changed Christian attitudes towards the body and bodily functions lead to new concepts regarding the matter². Needless to say, it is not always possible to discern between the different levels. Descriptions of gods or mythology are a good example of this, but also other literary constructions of bodies may be much more than actual instantiations. Even then, it is likely that mythological or literary descriptions say a lot about how ancient people viewed the fat/thin body. For these different levels of questions, I take into account concepts of disability history, asking whether the impairing factors of excess weight or the opposite of it lead to social disfunctionality, hindering people from important social functions and subjecting them to social stigma³. Only in the last five years, fatness seems to have become a worthy subject of study to ancient historians. In an engagingly written monograph, Hill has extensively dealt with philosophical authors (Plato and Aristotle are prominently present in her work) and their views on abstinence, self-restraint and gluttony. Hill's study is deeply influenced by Foucauldian approaches on self-control and bodily functions. She is eager to stress the relative absence of fat bodies and explicit condemnations of fat people in the texts she has studied. However, this

absence may well be explained by the focus of attention of the authors she chose to study. These philosophers stressed the negative consequences of lack of self-control and excesses like gluttony for the human soul. It may well have been the case that they thought of overweight as a consequence of this excessive behaviour - bodily fat however was not the thing they chose to emphasise in their moral discourse⁴. Mark Bradley took up the task of studying obesity and emaciation in Roman art: his lengthy and well-documented article also contains lots of revealing information on ancient attitudes towards the matter found with literary authors⁵. Finally, Forth has chosen for an anthropological approach, thereby taking away the suspicion of a somewhat parochial scope when dealing with the subject of bodily fat. Indeed, the topic does not seem to be restricted to the present-day western concepts of the ideal slender body and the importance of fit and healthy looks. Forth's approach has been successful by departing from the material properties of the substance of fat. He has aptly demonstrated how the unctuousness, softness and insensitivity of fat have played an important role for the way fat people were registered and perceived throughout many cultures⁶.

By surveying the full sway of Greek and Latin literature (including the Christian sources) this paper may appear to bite off more than it can chew. However, given the fact that much of the ancient evidence on the matter is dispersed and patchy, it is precisely this approach which is needed to protect against generalising statements. Indeed, the somewhat one-sided focus on philosophical texts has led Hill to conclusions which are only partly true; and the same goes to a lesser extent for the study by Forth, who at the same time dealt with cross-cultural anthropology in an exemplary way. Obviously, the fragmented character of the source evidence does not take away the task of carefully taking into consideration literary genre, the ancient author's agenda, the difference between stereotype and reality, and so on. As such, I will avoid a purely 'anthologising approach', though

the many vivid anecdotes could surely lend themselves to deal with the subject in this way.

A final introductory remark is needed for historians who study more recent periods of the human past. In this paper, I freely draw on sources which go from the sixth century B.C.E. (in rare cases even earlier) to late ancient Christian texts of the fifth century C.E. To the Graeco-Roman cultural elites, such texts and stories belonged to a shared cultural tradition. As such, the body of medical writings ascribed to Hippocrates are actually a collection of texts from the fifth through the first century B.C.E., but they still were very much a living tradition for second century C.E. physician Galen or the late ancient doctors. All this is not to say that the history of fatness and thinness in the ancient world was a flat line, from Hippocrates to the Middle Ages, and without differences between Greece and Rome. But the fact remains that possible divergences or regional variations are hardly traceable in the available source material. Moreover, in the conclusion I will try to make a point for a history of the *longue durée* of fatness and thinness upto the eighteenth century⁷.

2. 'Practical' questions: seldom asked or answered

The average weight of the population in the Graeco-Roman world, and people's access to food are obviously vital to understanding the issue of weight problems in this period. Regrettably, ancient historians have often refrained from such 'material' questions.

There is a fair consensus among osteologists to put the average length of the Graeco-Roman population at 1.67 m. Many osteoarchaeological publications refer to 'stature', which usually means overall size - height, breadth etc. - of the skeletal remains. From this we can infer something about the 'bulk' of a person and whether they are petite or large framed. It may also be possible to think about muscle mass in instances where there is evidence for the over-development of muscles used in strenuous activities. Weight, however, is another

matter. Indeed, 'fat' is something that leaves no trace on the skeleton and a person with very small, petite bones could actually, in reality, have carried a lot of weight that we would not know about. Equally, a large-boned person might have not have carried much excess weight at all, but been very thin. Recently, osteoarchaeologists have pointed to indicators or pathologies that can reveal something about body mass, such as degenerative changes of the articulations of the spine, hip, knee and foot. Also, the width of the distal femur metaphysis is a useful indicator for individuals between one and twelve years of age, while the femoral head is useful for older subadults. Obesity-related joint disease can also offer useful clues⁸. So far, no estimations for Antiquity have been made - contrary to studies concerning the Middle Ages, not least skeletal remains of 'stereotypical' fat monks⁹.

Surely, obesity is a complex phenomenon. While it would be exaggerated to state that ancient sculptors approached their 'models' with medical knowledge in mind, it is not impossible to recognise pathologies in statuettes and terracottas: anemic and gynoid obesity, plethoric and android obesity, corpulence connected to nanism (achondroplastic dwarfism), hydropsy, myxoedema, endocrine obesity. In general, such retrospective diagnosis of ancient artefacts is a methodologically risky undertaking, and the biological fact that such pathologies already existed in Antiquity does not help historians much in their approach of the phenomenon¹⁰. The same goes for the mainly Hellenistic representations of extremely thin bodies¹¹.

As for the dossier of thinness, various studies on undernourishment point to the possibility of lean and even emaciated bodies in Antiquity. Osteological research has indicated the presence of severe mobility impairment caused by the insufficiency of food, surely during early childhood years¹². Most researchers posit a lack of calories and proteins for a majority of Roman adults too, again a factor which would have increased the presence of thin individuals in society¹³. Some have even suggested that a considerable part of the male adult

population would have been insufficiently equipped to perform labour during the whole day - a suggestion which is corroborated by comparative evidence from France in the decades before the French Revolution¹⁴. There is, however, debate about these issues. While we may reject Geoffrey Kron's views on the ancient population as being the most well-nourished of all pre-modern societies as too optimistic, the historic truth probably lies somewhere between the two extremes. In particular Kristina Killgrove has offered a more balanced view and warned against the methodological shortcomings that distort the outcome of part of earlier research¹⁵. Still, the circumstances causing at least a part of the male adult population and the ever impending danger of shortage of food are basic facts to be taken into account when dealing with the ancient world.

Obviously, it will never be possible to fit Graeco-Roman Antiquity into the Body Mass Index Database. But even when brushing with very broad strokes, one can safely assume that the ancient world came closer to countries such as India, Pakistan and Ethiopia (with over 30 % of underweight males, that is ≤ 18.5 BMI; and about 15 % of moderate and severe thinness, namely ≤ 17 BM for females and 13 % for males for the former two countries). In comparison, the underweight category for the United States only amounts to 2.4 % (no moderate and severe thinness numbers are recorded), while the adult overweight category ($\Rightarrow 25$ BMI) rises up to 66.9 % and the adult obese category ($\Rightarrow 30$ BMI) to 33.9 %. Tellingly, the obese adult category only reaches 0.7 % for India and 3.4 % for Pakistan¹⁶. It is thus safe to assume that, with present-day western standards in mind, seeing a corpulent male or female was a rather rare occurrence in Antiquity, while most people would almost daily be faced with thin or extremely thin bodies.

3. The anthropological dossier: fat kings and fat goddesses

In the humanities today, fat bodies are often constructed by a series of oppositions: western contempt versus non-western admiration, or

the celebration of fat in traditional societies and developing countries versus the obsession with being slender in the present-day West. Such oppositions have found their way into popular discourse, with people assuming that ideals such as the fat, fertile and opulent king must have existed throughout the centuries of pre-modern civilisation. For the Mediterranean world, thoughts immediately go to the Fat Lady figurines in Neolithic Malta, with parallels such as the famous Venus of Willendorf (25th millennium B.C.E.) or Egyptian representations of the god Hapy with sagging breasts and large belly. Such statuettes have been interpreted as symbols of fertility, opulence and prestige, or the hope for an ideal afterlife; while for the female images fertility, motherhood, femininity and sexual appeal have been suggested - though some of these interpretations have met criticism by feminist scholars. It has to be noted that the claimed admiration for fat was far from equivocal, with many tribes distinguishing in vocabulary between a 'comfortable' presence of bodily fat and extreme overweight which makes social functioning barely possible¹⁷. Quite surprisingly, instances of deliberately fat tribal kings in the ancient sources are few. There is no reference at all to the phenomenon in the twelve volumes of the third edition of James Georges Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1905-1912), a massive landmark study which still is a goldmine of facts of studies on comparative religion and folklore in Antiquity.

In fact, the ancient authors seem to consider fatness a feature of 'strange and exotic' people. The Pontic Mossynoecians have been described as the 'most barbarious nation' Xenophon's soldiers ever passed through. Men had intercourse with women in the sight of all, like pigs on the ground, children were tattooed in various colours on their back and breast, the king was sitting in the highest tower to render judgments to the multitude, as savage mountain people the Mossynoecians were living on wild animals, dolphin fat or nuts, and they all lived in trees or turrets. Though various references to their

customs exist, Xenophon is the only author to mention the fattening of the children of the wealthy, while Diodorus Siculus states that these children were nourished on boiled nuts¹⁸.

And when the Greeks, as they proceeded, were among the friendly Mossynoecians, they would exhibit to them fattened children of the wealthy inhabitants (παῖδας τῶν εὐδαιμόνων σιτευτούς), who had been nourished on boiled nuts and were soft and white to an extraordinary degree, and pretty nearly equal in length and breadth, with their backs adorned with many colours and their fore parts all tattooed with flower patterns.

(Xenophon, An. 5.4.32; transl. C. Brownson)

“Each region has its own habits” is one of the proverbs treated in the pseudo-Plutarchan treatise *On the Proverbs of the Alexandrians*. Under this heading, we find exotic customs such as the Persians discussing serious matters while drunk, the Staphyli honouring female polygamy, the Massagetai having intercourse in public, the Essydones eating their deceased parents but gilding their heads, the Bacheirioi delivering themselves to the dogs when they are struck by an incurable illness.

One finds different customs among different people - customs which are particular to one people. The inhabitants of Gordium elect the fattest among them (τὸν παχύτατον αὐτῶν) as king.

(ps.-Plutarchus, De proverbiis Alexandrinorum 10 (ed. O. Crusius))

To the best of my knowledge, these are the only two texts about fatness intended at kings or aristocrats, to achieve or maintain prestige. True, it is possible to find examples in which access to abundant food is regarded as a sign of social welfare¹⁹. And iconographical representations of Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors show large and somewhat opulent royal bodies, symbolising prosperity and wealth²⁰. However, deliberately fattening yourself or your offspring

is quite another matter. To the ancient authors, such examples obviously belonged to the sphere of the strange and the exotic. As I will demonstrate further on, these testimonies may be linked with quotes on fat and weak ‘barbarian’ people, with whom obesity was not restricted to the ruling class.

4. The ancients had some words (and concepts) for it

Over 200 years of classical lexicography have facilitated the establishment of a list of Greek and Latin words denoting fatness or thinness. And digital research tools have made the search quite easy. For the present article, some 1,000 passages of ancient texts containing one or more of the search terms have been scrutinised²¹. However, things are not as simple as they may appear at first sight. Modern vocabulary on the subject is often medicalised, with words such as ‘overweight’ or ‘obese’ referring to more or less clear-cut medical definitions (though changeable, as the redefinition of overweight by two National Institutes in September 1998 caused 30 million people to be considered overweight overnight). On the contrary, adjectives such as ‘fat’ or ‘slender’ are descriptors, suggesting a complex and multilayered understanding of which bodies are supposed to be standard, and which more or less deviating, from the point of view of whoever makes the statement. Obviously, ancient doctors did not know the Body Mass Index, and clear-cut definitions of overweight or thinness did not exist among them. The Greek and Latin vocabulary does belong to the descriptive sphere²².

About a dozen of Greek words refer to fatness or corpulence: γαστροώδης or γαστροειδής, μεγαλόκοιλος, παχύς/παχύτης, πείρα/πίων, πιμελώδης, πολύσαρκος/πολυσαρκία, προγάστωρ, σάρκινος, and ὑπέρσαρκος/ὑπερσάρκωμα while for thinness ἄσαρκος/άσαρκία, ισχνός/ισχνότης, λεπτός/λεπτότης, ὀλιγόσαρκος/ὀλιγοσαρκία and σκληφρός come to the mind. Latin words include *adeps*, *crassus/crassitudo*, *obesus*, (*prae*)*pinguis*, *subcrassulus* and *ventriosus* for

fat bodies; *macer/macritudo*, *macilentus*, *strigosus* for the opposite²³. Contrary to what one would expect at first sight, words such as βαρύς or *gravis* hardly ever connote persons of heavy weight. Needless to say, many occurrences of the listed words do not refer to the human body at all: fertile soil may be called fat or greasy, animals and cattle are referred to as fat, and the pronunciation of a sound or even the human voice can be described as fat or thin. Abundance of flesh also connotes other bodily conditions. Hence ὑπέρσαρκος (“covered with flesh”) often appears in a medical context to refer to treatment of supernumerous parts of the bodies, scars, or even ulcers²⁴.

Now and then, ancient writers themselves discuss definitions of terms in passages which are revealing for the subject of the present study:

Such a body is precisely in the middle of all excesses, so that the other types of bodies are understood and named in correlation with it. The body which is fat (τὸ παχὺ σῶμα) in comparison with this, is called fat (παχὺ), and in the same way the thin body (τὸ λεπτόν) is named, the fleshy one and the one with little flesh (πολύσαρκόν τε καὶ ὀλιγόσαρκον), the fatty and the unyielding (καὶ πιμελωδές, καὶ σκληρόν) the weak, the hairy and the bare. None of these bodily types is in due proportion. But the body which equals the canon of Polycleites reaches the summit of complete symmetry. People who touch it do not sense experience anything weak nor harsh, neither hot nor cold; those who watch do not sense it as hairy or bare, fat or skinny (μήτε παχὺ, μήτε ἰσχνόν), or with any other sort of asymmetry.

(Galen, Ars Medica 14 (I.342-343 K.))

Such as there exists both a proper disposition of the flesh in the human body (εὐσαρκία) and an excess of flesh (πολύσαρκία), there is a goodness of blood and fullness of blood.

(Galen, De Plenitudine 10 (7.563-564 K.))

These and similar passages are obviously referring to the ideal of the *aurea mediocritas*. While ancient physicians lacked precise pa-

rameters to denote underweight or obesity, they obviously knew that some corporal dispositions were preferable to others. Though they did not know words such as ‘normal/normality’ (a modern concept which implies measurability and standards), the preferable condition seems to have been described by εὐσαρκία, “fullness of flesh” or “good condition”. This device runs from Galenic medicine, over paedagogical devices in Libanius to the late ancient physician Aëtius, while some passages explicitly show that the usage was not restricted to the medical sources²⁵. Indeed, *eusarkia* was the norm for expressing wellness²⁶. Instead of normality, doctors in Antiquity refer to conformity (ἔμμετρος or προσήκον) - it can even be expressed by verbs like *debere*²⁷.

Latin authors also reflected on terms to denote fatness in their own language. Gellius quite rightly remarks that the term *obesus* etymologically means “wasted away, lean, thin”: he was able to quote a passage from the archaic poet Laevius where this meaning was still in use²⁸. The statement that *pinguetudo* is not a correct Latin word is also made by a grammarian with an interest in the origin of words. And Suetonius speculated whether the name *Galba* could originally have meant “enormously fat” (*praepinguis*) in the Gaulish language²⁹.

5. Searching for fat and thin people

5.1 Examples from Athenaeus’ *Deipnosophistae*

A unique collection of instances of remarkably fat and thin people is found in the late ancient *Deipnosophistae* or *The Learned Banqueters* by Athenaeus. Indeed, many of the anecdotes which are dished up are so vivid and rich in detail that the temptation of full quotation and literary flower-picking is never far away. It is however crucial to understand each single story which appears in the *Deipnosophistae* in the literary context of the whole work. It is revealing that Athenaeus’ stories about fat people do not appear in books 3 or 10, in which the socially disintegrating effects of gluttony are depicted with vivid

strokes³⁰. The obese only turn up in book 12, which is dedicated to the subject of *truphè*, luxury and the incapacity of some rulers to refrain from it. Also, readers should keep in mind that Athenaeus was a typical antiquarian collecteur of ancient wisdom, stories and anecdotes, not an observer of his own society³¹.

The example of *Dionysius of Heraclea*, who ruled his city from 337/6 to 306/5 B.C.E. and who firmly resisted Alexander the Great as well as attempts by citizens to expel him from the throne, is worth quoting in full, so as to give an idea of Athenaeus' vivid portraiture.

And many other men have destroyed their bodily strength entirely by their unreasonable indulgence; and some have become inordinately fat (εἰς πάχος σώματος ἐπέδωξαν); and others have become stupid and insensible by reason of their inordinate luxury. Accordingly, Nymphis of Heraclea, in the second book of his History of Heraclea, says: "Dionysius the son of Clearchus, who was the first tyrant of Heraclea, and who was himself afterwards tyrant of his country, grew enormously fat without perceiving it (ἔλαθεν ὑπερσαρκήσας), owing to his luxury and to his daily gluttony; so on account of his obesity (διὰ τὸ πάχος) he was constantly oppressed by difficulty of breathing and a feeling of suffocation. On which account his physicians ordered thin needles of an exceedingly great length to be made, to be run into his sides and chest whenever he fell into a deeper sleep than usual. And up to a certain point his flesh was so callous by reason of the fat, that it never felt the needles; but if ever they touched a part that was not so overloaded, then he felt them, and was awakened by them. And he used to give answers to people who came to him, holding a chest in front of his body so as to conceal all the rest of his person, and leave only his face visible; and in this condition he conversed with these who came to him". And Menander also, who was a person as little given to evil-speaking as possible, mentions him in his Fishermen, introducing some exiles from Heraclea as saying:

*For a fat pig (παχὺς γὰρ ὄς) was lying on his face;
and in another place he says:*

He gave himself to luxury so wholly,

That he could not last long to practise it;

and again he says: Forming desires for myself, this death

*Does seem the only happy one, - to grow
Fat in my heart and stomach, and so lie (ἔχοντα πολλὰς χολλάδας
κεῖσθαι
παχὺν ὕπιον)*

*Flat on my back, and never say a word,
Drawing my breath high up, eating my fill,
and saying, "Here I waste away with pleasure".*

*And he died when he was fifty-five years of age, of which he had been tyrant
thirty-three, being superior to all the tyrants who had preceded him in gen-
tleness and humanity.*

*(Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.549a-d; FGrH 432 F 10
(Nymphis of Heracleia); transl. G. Bohne)³²*

Obviously, this text is full of intriguing evidence. Both the causes and the consequences of Dionysius' obesity are indicated (respectively luxury and gluttony, and shortness of breath). The treatment with needles by physicians seems like a crude form of liposuction, which is also attested in Byzantine medicine and in rabbinic literature³³. A lack of sensation is a feature of fat, and here of the callous flesh. Shame, and embarrassment in cases of public appearance as well as the somewhat clumsy effort to find a solution are vividly described³⁴. Dionysius is even criticized in the plays of Menander, who usually is not a malicious poet (though obviously Menander has Dionysius' political opponents saying this). Pigs have often been used as symbols of stupidity³⁵. In all, Dionysius lived for 55 years, and was a gentle and excellent tyrant, showing mild temper and decent conduct for 33 years. Is this explicitly mentioned to contradict the suspicion of the opposite, which would fit the expectations towards the obese?

Even more remarkable for vividness of pictorial detail is the immediately following anecdote on *Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II Physcon*, who reigned from 145 to 116 B.C.E.³⁶ Athenaeus names him Ptolemy the Seventh³⁷. Again, much emphasis is put on the practicalities of embarrassment, with Ptolemy wearing a long tunic which reached the feet and with sleeves reaching to the wrists - having long sleeves was

considered a sign of effeminate decadence³⁸. This anecdote is full of puns: the king proclaimed himself Euergetes (Benefactor), but received the name Cacergetes (Malefactor) from the Alexandrians. The nickname Physcon refers to his pot belly³⁹. Also the visit by Scipio Africanus, who made a diplomatic journey to Egypt somewhere in the years 144/3 or 140/9 B.C.E., is commented upon in a jocularly way. It is said that Ptolemy “never went abroad on foot except on Scipio’s account (διὰ Σκιπίωνα)” (transl. C. B. Gulick). Indeed, διὰ Σκιπίωνα also means “with the aid of a staff or a crutch”. Moreover, the physical deterioration of the king who was just over forty must have stood in sharp contrast with Scipio, who was nearly of the same age and himself an example of virtue⁴⁰. Athenaeus makes a strange mistake by stating that Scipio was accompanied by Posidonius. In fact, Panaetius, the teacher of Posidonius, was with him. Also in Plutarch one reads a funny anecdote on Ptolemy’s inability to walk, during the visit paid by Scipio and Panaetius. According to Scipio, the only advantage of their visit was that they had at least seen the king walking⁴¹! In the following part (12.549f-550a) Athenaeus proceeds with an account of Ptolemy VIII’s taste for luxury: he elaborated the festivities and dinner at the Artemitia festival in Cyrene, replacing e.g. earthenware for silver.

Athenaeus then proceeds with *Ptolemy X Alexander I*, younger son of Euergetes II, who ruled jointly with his mother Cleopatra III till her death in 101 B.C.E., and then with Cleopatra Berenice till his death in battle in 88 B.C.E. Again, we get a description of a bad and much hated monarch, surrounded by flatterers, living in luxury, who was rumoured to have murdered his mother. In the same way as for his father, the practicalities of not being able to walk, except leaning on two persons, are described. However, when it came to dancing bare-foot at drinking parties, the tyrant apparently had a good time and performed more energetically than experienced dancers⁴². Here

ends Athenaeus' degenerative picture of the Egyptian rulers, which could have eventually included other names⁴³.

The following name on the list is *Magas, ruler of Cyrene*, Ptolemy VIII's great-great-grandfather, who reigned from 276 to 250 B.C.E. While Athenaeus claims that he reigned for fifty years, he only did so for about 25 years. Fatness occurred just in his last years: he never had any wars and spent his life in luxury, indulging in large quantities of food. Again, not being able to work, shortness of breath and being choked by his own fat are mentioned. Nothing is said about the quality of his rule, though he was known as a very 'good' and peaceful king, who is also mentioned in the famous edict of Indian king Asoka⁴⁴.

The mention of Magas' burdensome body leads Athenaeus to another story mentioned by Agatharchides: by his voluptuousness, the *Spartan Naucledes* became enormously fat (παντελῶς ὑπερσαρκούντα τῷ σώματι καὶ παχὺν διὰ τρυφὴν γενόμενον) and was reproached by Lysander as being useless in war. As we will see, this anecdote fits into the tradition of the incompatibility of obesity with military virtue⁴⁵. In this context, Spartan Agesilaus' war against the barbarians near the Hellespont is mentioned. Agesilaus used to order to take of the expensive and luxurious clothes of the captured Asiatics, so that his men would understand that they were fighting for large stakes but against worthless men. The mention of the Hellespont leads almost associatively to the funniest anecdote, on *Python*, the orator of Byzantium, who was said to be enormously fat, but who also had an obese wife (notice that this is one of the only literary instances where a fat woman is mentioned, as it is also unique for mentioning two fat people being married):

You see, my friends, what a size my body is; but I have a wife who is much fatter than I am (ἀλλὰ καὶ γυναῖκα ἔχω πολλῶ ἔμοῦ παχυτέραν); now, when we are both agreed, one small bed is large enough for both of us; but when we quarrel, the whole house is not big enough for us.

(Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 12.550f; *FGrH* 132 F 1(Leon); transl. G. Bohne)⁴⁶

Athenaeus continues his digression on fat people by saying that it is better to be poor and thin (πενόμενον εἶναι λεπτότερον) than to be excessively rich and look like the sea-monster of Tanagra. He may be referring to the enormous triton who terrorised the population of Tanagra; eventually the animal was caught because it was attracted by the smell of wine and consequently mummified (notice again the beastly nature of fatness, and the lack of self control)⁴⁷. Again, one should not mistakenly understand this story out of its context. This is not a general claim for the preferability of thinness to fatness - which would come as a surprise to anthropologists. Rather, Athenaeus is an intellectual and *connoisseur* of ancient literature, who wants to give extra dimension to his statements on the ethical problem of obesity and lack of self control - he is not a medical doctor, nor an observer of the *communis opinio* of his own society.

Athenaeus then proceeds with a digression on thin and skinny people. *Leotrophides* and *Thumantis* are said to have become proverbial names or bywords for thinness. Hence a comic fragment says: “the poor, indeed, are already sacrificing to thee small maimed cattle, skinnier than *Leotrophides* or *Thumantis* (Λεωτροφίδου λεπτότερα καὶ Θουμάντιδος)⁴⁸.” Possibly, the name of thin and pale *Leotrophides* was comically mentioned in connection with *Leontius*, who famously was caught by desire to watch corpses from public executions, while the *Thumantis* is a homeless wanderer in a play by *Aristophanes*⁴⁹.

Aristophanes is mentioned as having listed the names of skinny people (Λεπτοῦς) dispatched as envoys to Hades to visit the poets down there: *Sannyrion*, *Meletus* and *Cinesias*. These are three contemporary play writers, and so the reader is immediately aware of the possibility of literary jokes. Indeed, Hades visitants could be viewed as lean and thin, with one foot in the grave themselves. In Hades one finds the “river of diarrhoea” (emended reading) – possibly diarrhoea was mentioned as a symbol for their poor poetry⁵⁰.

The comic writer Strattis mocks *Sannyrion's* “leathern enforcement” - a sort of paddling under his clothes to hide his thinness? Here, a connection with the *κάναβος* (block figure, wooden framework around which artists moulded clay or wax) and ‘poor or meagre’ poetry seems to be at the origing of the joke⁵¹. Sannyrion in turn made fun of the tragedian *Meletus*, who for his thinness and unhealthy looks is described as a “corpse of Lenaeum” (τὸν ἀπὸ Ληναίου νεκρόν), Dionysus Lenaeus being god of the wine-press. This personal attack on Meletos could be a comment on his tragic compositions and their rigid or unimaginative style, as on a failed performance at the Lenaea festival⁵².

The dithyrambic poet *Cinesias*, who is said to have been “very thin and very tall” (ὄντως λεπτότατος καὶ μακρότατος) is another case of literary puns. Strattis mockingly calls him “Phthian Achilles” because he constantly used the word Phthian in his poetry. Aristophanes named him “linden Cinesias” (φιλύρινον Κινησίαν) because he got a board of linden-wood which he fastened around himself by straps in order not to bend in two by his height and thinness. This explanation, however, might very well be a peculiar invention by Athenaeus, since scholia on this passage in Aristophanes explain φιλύρινον as “having the colour of linden-wood”, that is a greenish-yellow and unhealthy complexion, while the scholiast also refers to the poor quality of Cinesias’ verse. With Lysias, Cinesias is described as a sickly but clever sycophant, who was punished by the gods by a slow death for his blasphemous deeds. Again, modern commentators have pointed to allusions on poor poetry, possibly enhanced by Cinesias’ “consumptive appearance”⁵³.

The poet *Philetas of Cos* was rather thin (λεπτότερος); because of the thinness of his body (διὰ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἰσχνότητα), balls made of lead were put onto his feet, in order to keep him from being upset by the wind⁵⁴. Already in Aristophanes, the dryness and minute detail (λεπτότης) of his poetry was mocked. Moreover, he had

become the stereotype of the “dried out” scholar, whose body was withered (ἰσχύς) by his constant focus on study and research. A literary joke is again the origin of a whole tradition on Philetas’ thinness, which persisted into the late ancient epigrammatic tradition⁵⁵.

The travel-writer Polemon reports on two otherwise unknown persons; the context of the anecdotes is not clear to us anymore. *Archestratos* the soothsayer was captured by enemies and placed on the scales: he was so lean (ἰσχνός) that he had the weight of one obol! Note that this is the only example involving weighing a person, but again this is not a story which can be taken at face value. The not so realistic association with weighing a coin is the element which introduces the scale. *Panaretus*, a philosopher and well paid scholar at the court of Ptolemy III Euergetes I (246-221 B.C.E), was very thin (ἰσχνότατος), but it is explicitly stated that he was free of illnesses throughout his life - clearly exceptional in view of the often made connection made between leanness and bad health⁵⁶.

Also the poet *Hipponax* is mentioned as exceptional. Being small of body and thin (οὐ μόνον μικρὸν γενέσθαι τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλὰ καὶ λεπτόν), he was at the same time exceptionally strong and muscular, and could throw an empty jug a great distance. This anecdote is probably based on a poem of Hipponax which illustrated the unreliability of physical appearance as a judge of reality. The model for it was the Euryalus-Odysseus scene in *Od.* 8.158-90⁵⁷.

The politician *Philippides* became proverbial for a thin and lean person. Hence, *Hyperides* called him “insignificant in bodily appearance” (εὐτελής τὸ σῶμα διὰ λεπτότητα). In the comic tradition, he is connected to *Hermes*, escorter of the dead, to corpses, to bodies skinny due to famine. The curious verb *πεφιλιπιδῶσθαι* (perfect infinitive) was used for “to be very thin” - it surely designated a miserable condition, being turned into a plucked chicken, or being nearly dead (στρουθὶς ἀκαρῆς νῆ Δί’ ἐγένου (...) ὅσον οὐ τέθνηκα)⁵⁸.

However, despite all these gruesome quotes, Athenaeus continues by saying that it is much better to be thin in appearance than like the man of whom it is said: “This fellow, then, because of his drunken habits and his fat body (δι’ οἰνοφλυγίαν καὶ πάχος τοῦ σώματος) is called ‘Wineskin’ by all the natives⁵⁹.” Needless to say, also this statement needs to be understood in the context of the typical discourse on luxury and the avoidance of overindulgence.

In all, the study of these various instances of fatness and thinness with Athenaeus time and again points to the importance of carefully taking into account the agenda of the ancient authors concerned. Not only the associations as they are made by Athenaeus, but also the intentions of the authors from whom he quotes the anecdotes are of crucial importance. Tellingly, the background of the jokes is often the literary, moral or social insignificance of the person involved. In other words: irrelevance or worthlessness from the one side, or lack of self-restraint from the other side are reflected by bodily dispositions as respectively thinness or fatness.

5.2 Another collection of thin persons

A curious collection of epigrams on ‘weight problems’ can be found in the eleventh book of the *Anthologia Palatina*. Belonging to the tradition of “Motiv- und Typengeschichte”, the Byzantine composers of the Anthology in the tenth century have brought together epigrams on thin people and dwarfs, in a section on “defects of stature”. Due to the anthologising character of the collection, it may seem even more difficult to reconstruct the original context of the intended puns. But even in its present state, the Anthology offers intriguing information on the subjects under study in this paper. In fact, AP 11.90-111 - a series of skoptic epigrams from the first cent. C.E. - connects the literary epigrammatic discourse to medical and dietetic writings of the first century and after on the syndrome of *λεπτοσύνη*. The syndrome was contracted by men as a consequence of a particular lifestyle.

Celsus had already spelled out the connection between book-based study and physical debility. Excessive intellectual pursuit prevented members of the male elite from maintaining the ideal of muscular physical health. In the same way, Athenaeus had characterised the λεπτός by inadequate diet and lack of strength. The attenuation of the body of the λεπτός makes it less than masculine, that is feminine; and the inevitable consequence is an effeminate character⁶⁰.

As such, we may suspect stereotypical ‘worn-out intellectuals’ at the background of the following jokes. Thin Stratonicus (λεπτός) fixed on a reed a spike of grain, attached himself to it by a hair and thus hanged himself (AP 11.91). As he was not heavy, his dead body flies in the air, even when there was no wind. Lean Gaius (λεπτός) died in Hades. He was the thinnest of the skeletons; his bier was almost empty, there was nothing to carry (AP 11.92). Lean Marcus (λεπτός) made a hole with his head in one of Epicurus’ atoms and went through the middle of it (AP 11.93). Lean Marcus (λεπτός) when sounding a trumpet just blew into it and went straight forward down it (AP 11.94). Thin little Proclus (λεπτός) was taken up through the window by the smoke when he blew the fire. He swam to a cloud and came down wounded by the atoms (AP 11.99). Gaius (κουφότατος) was so light that he used to dive with a stone or lead hung from his foot (AP 11.100). Demetrius fanned light Artemidora (λεπτήν) in her sleep and fanned her off the roof (AP 11.101). Thin little Diodorus (λεπτακινός) made a hole in a needle with his foot, while he took a thorn out (AP 11.102). Diophantus was much more minute (λεπτότερός) than the atoms (AP 11.103). Chaeremon, lighter than a straw (ἀχύρου ἐλαφρότερος), was caught by a little breeze, floated in the air and eventually hung in a spider’s web for five days (AP 11.106). Chaeremon fell on his back, struck by a leaf, stretching on the ground his skeleton body (καννάβινον) (AP 11.107). Three thin men (λεπτοί) are competing about thinness: Hermon showed the skill of going through the eye of a needle; Demas came out of

a hole and stopped at a spider's web but was hung by the spinning spider; Sosipater claims the prize, as he wanted to have it without a performance: "for I lose it if I am seen, since I am nothing but air" (AP 11.110). Lean Diophantes (λεπτός) hanged himself by taking a thread from a spider's web (AP 11.111).

All together, these epigrams reflect the fascination for the extraordinary and the bizarre, which is also reflected in literary epitaphs (either real or written just for the sake of art)⁶¹. As such, lean people are included in a sort of cabinet of curiosities. Apparently, laughing with fatness belonged less to the epigrammatic tradition, in the same way as Martial hardly ever mentions fat people in his epigrams. The forementioned link between thinness and effeminacy might be a reason for this⁶².

5.3 Instances of fat people

Rather than trying to compile a prosopographical list of persons who are mentioned as being obese, it might be more useful to group the attested instances. In this way, it is possible to find out how the accusation of fatness was used as a strategy to categorise and possibly stigmatise others. Potentially, the corpus of papyri might be an interesting source. It is well known that bodily markers were often used to identify a person - here, people did not shy away from mentioning physical deficiencies⁶³. However, the papyri only offer one example of a person described as fat (and not even a single one on remarkably thin persons). In a list of names of persons who were apparently accused of stealing seed from a wheat field, probably from the Oxyrhynchite village of Syron, we read the names of the farmers Patereous, and Apollonios called Valens, and find the mention of "the shoemaker the fat one (τὸν παχύνοντα) (we have arrested) since he has been staying with those mentioned earlier"⁶⁴.

Overweight is mentioned as a characteristic of several tribes. This is significant, since the kings and the ruling class of 'barbarians' was not regularly associated with fatness (cf. supra section 3). A humid bodily

condition combined with fatness is cited as a cause of the sterility of Scythian women. Taste for good food and excellent wine, combined with excessive sleeping through the day, makes the Albanians incompetent warriors. Asians are characterised as effeminate and overindulgent in luxury. In the case of Albanians, fleshiness and weakness are explicitly mentioned (πολυσαρκίαν τε καὶ ἀπαλότητα). Given the context, the “worthless bodies” (τοῖς σώμασιν δ’ οὕτως ἀχρεῖους ὄντας) of the Asians as mentioned by Athenaeus in all likelihood also refer to fatness. African women were famous for their big breasts. On the contrary, Celts living beyond the Alps were said to take good care not to become big-bellied. Any young man exceeding the limit was punished. Etruscans (and inhabitants of Umbria) were proverbially fat. According to the grammarian Servius Honoratus, this was the case because Etruscan priests regularly ate the meat of sacrificed victims⁶⁵. In all likelihood, such ‘ethnic’ connotations contain a mixture of concrete observations and stereotypical generalisation, though for Antiquity there does not exist a statement as that by Ibn-Battoeta (1304-1369) who claims that the women from the berber Bardama tribe are the most beautiful in the universe - in fact he had nowhere seen more corpulent women during his travels all over the world⁶⁶. Fatness is considered utterly incompatible with military virtue. Hence the already mentioned anecdote on Spartan Naucledes who was put on display by Lysander in the assembly and threatened with exile, unless he would change his way of living (cf. supra p. 598). The saying by the Theban commander Epaminondas is very much along the same line:

He said, to die in war was the most honourable death, and the bodies of armed men ought to be exercised, not as wrestlers, but in a warlike manner. Therefore he hated fat men (πολυσάρκοις), and dismissed one of them, saying, that three or four shields would scarcely serve to secure his belly, which would not allow him to see his own membrum virile.

(Ps. Plutarch, Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata 192c)

Another ps-Plutarchan treatise summarises the matter by stating that war has no place for a bodily condition produced by an indoor life. A slenderly built soldier (ἰσχνὸς δὲ στρατιώτης) accustomed to military exercises is far better off than the masses of fleshy athletes⁶⁷. These remarks go back to a passage in Plato's Republic, where it is explicitly mentioned that poor, lean and sunburnt paupers are in actual battle better than rich men bred in the shade, and burdened with superfluous flesh⁶⁸. In his treatise on physical training, Lucian states that something may surely be expected from those in arms who even without them would be considered as awesome, without masses of flesh. Roman knights who were very fat (*equitibus corpulentis et praepinguibus*) were exempted from riding a horse – in his typical antiquarian way, Gellius wondered whether this measure was taken for a practical reason or whether it meant an insult to the *equites* involved. Diodorus Siculus mentions Aemilius Lepidus, consul in 137 B.C.E., who was so obese and covered with fat rolls that he was utterly unfit for military activity. Clearly, he had made it to the consulship and never had to resign his duties – the removal of the dignity of riding a horse was not used against him⁶⁹.

Curiously enough, athletes also are incidentally marked as a group prone to overweight. In all likelihood, wrestlers and boxers were meant. Philostratus remarks that a big belly impedes a boxer's opponent in punching the face, while a small belly allows for moving more quickly and breathing more easily. Already the Hippocratic writings warned of the dangers of excessive food in athletic training. Galen states that many sports exercises provoke lethargy. Wrestlers put on weight and develop breathing difficulties; they are surely useless for being leaders. Playing ball is thus the best exercise. Lucian describes the overweight athlete Damasias (ὁ παχύς, ὁ πολύσαρκος) as not being able to enter Hermes' boat in the underworld. Since Damasias was often seen in the *palaestra*, we can safely assume that he was a wrestler. Damasias claims that it should not be too difficult to get on

the boat, since he arrived naked – at which Hermes replies that in order to enter he should first take off the huge amounts of flesh as well as the crowns and signs of victory he is carrying with him. Celsus describes how the bodies of athletes are particularly endangered when they retire and interrupt their daily exercises: they get older soon and grow steadily fat. How strong the connection between athletes and being well fed was, is clear from a remark by the Church Father Basil, who claims that contrary to the well fed and smoothly skinned (ἡ πολυσαρκία καὶ ἡ εὐχροία) athletes, the Christians as true athletes of Christ must be noticeable by their well trained and thin bodies (τὸ κατεσκληρὸς τοῦ σώματος)⁷⁰. Thanks to Galen, we are particularly well informed on the diet of gladiators. They were fed on excessive amounts of barley and beans, and consumed large quantities of wine to tolerate this tedious diet. Hence, their bodies got fat and swollen. In such a context, Seneca's moralistic warning against excessive training to gain weight and muscles almost reads as a present-day account of the dangers of body building⁷¹.

Overweight sometimes served as a means of political invective. Demades, an Athenian demagogue of the fourth century B.C.E., is described as a debauchee, drunk every day, and a potbellied fellow. Cato the Censor is known to have used fatness to reproach his political opponent Lucius Veturius. During the Catilinarian conspiracy, Cicero denounced Cassius for being fat; Montanus, a councillor of the emperor Domitian is satirised for his fatness by Juvenal⁷². Cicero's scourging attack against Anthony, reproaching his drunkenness and public vomiting, also mentions his robust gladiator-like body⁷³. But in general, the actual reproaches against political opponents for fatness are scarce, while accusations of drunkenness, debauchery, luxury and gluttony abound. In the discourse of self control, excess was emphasised, and overweight mentioned only as one of the side effects⁷⁴. Some Roman emperors are described as fat by their biographers. Some belong to those who are commonly known as 'bad emper-

ors'. Emperor Nero is the example *par excellence* of the debauched corpulent ruler (*cervice obesa, ventre proiecto*), only to be outdone by Vitellius, who was renowned for incredible and profound gourmandise, and said to have had a red face due to overconsumption of wine as well as a pot belly (*venter obesus*). Domitian became bald, fat (*obesitate ventris*), and with skinny legs in old age⁷⁵. There are other examples of infamously gluttonous emperors such as Clodius Albinus and Maximinus Thrax. They seem to have been champions in eating contests, swallowing incredible portions of food, but their obesity is never explicitly mentioned. These examples stand next to Greek gluttons, among whom the athlete Milon of Croton is undoubtedly the best known⁷⁶. For other emperors, who are usually depicted as "good ones", fatness is not necessarily mentioned as a bad thing. Gordian was only a little fat (*corporis qualitate subcrassulus*) but extremely well behaved and moderate. So was the well behaved Emperor Pertinax in his old age (*ventre prominulo*) Also the very moderate Emperor Pescennius Niger was a little fat (*cetera corporis parte candidus et magis pinguis*)⁷⁷. The issue of fat emperors raises the question of whether such descriptions mainly served a moralistic purpose in cases of 'bad emperors' – by emphasising the negative physiognomical connotations of overweight – or whether they also refer to a reality of the actual physical appearance of these rulers. Ample iconographical evidence, surely from realistic Roman portraiture, proves that the one does not need to exclude the other. It is not always easy nor necessary to draw the line when defamation stops and reality starts⁷⁸.

Quite unsurprisingly, the protruding belly appears as a stock phrase in satire and comedy to describe old age. This makes a complex association, since old age is typically characterised by emaciation. With emaciated and pot-bellied Geras, fat and thin merge to characterise the distorted bodies of the aged in comedy. Thus Poverty in one of Aristophanes' famous plays:

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That's it! Jest, jeer, and never talk seriously! But what you don't know is this, that men with me are worth more, both in mind and body, than with Plutus. With him they are gouty, big-bellied (γαστροώδεις), heavy of limb and scandalously stout; with me they are thin (ἰσχυοί), wasp-waisted, and terrible to the foe.

(Aristophanes, Plut. 559-56, transl. F. W. Hall and W. M. Geldart)⁷⁹

Lucian describes Geras, the god of old age, as a potbellied old man, covering his intimate parts with his left hand and trying to suffocate himself with his right. Also the comedies by Plautus have a sufficient amount of characters mocked as potbellied⁸⁰.

Finally, some mythological and historical personages have been described as suffering from overweight. Late ancient traditions describe Aeneas and Aristotle as pot-bellied or fat. The same counts for the proverbially ugly Aesop⁸¹. The successful scholar and librarian Euphorion (third century B.C.E.) is described as “honey-pale in appearance, fleshy (πολύσαρκος) and weak-limbed”⁸². Based on the report by Pliny the Younger, Pliny the Elder’s condition has been diagnosticised as being asthmatic and somewhat obese.⁸³ Horace’s mention of his own fatness is well known, as well as the association he made of himself with a little pig and a happy go lucky Epicurean way of life⁸⁴. It is interesting to confront this information with the biographical account by Suetonius:

In person he was short and fat (obesus), as he is described with his own pen in his satires and by Augustus in the following letter: “Onysius has brought me your little volume, and I accept it, small as it is, in good part, as an apology. But you seem to me to be afraid that your books may be bigger than you are yourself; but it is only stature that you lack, not girth. So you may write on a pint pot, that the circumference of your volume may be well rounded out, like that of your own belly”. It is said that he was immoderately lustful.

(Suetonius, De poetis fr. 40; transl. J. C. Rolfe)

5.4 Instances of thin persons

So far, our search has not yet yielded female examples. While from a present-day western point of view one might expect some instances in the case of slender women, it is hard to come across such example. Mostly, instances again refer to an unhealthy or infirm bodily condition in the case of thinness. As for the remarks on the preference for “skinny girls” (*osseae*) who just cost two obols, or the mothers who deliberately keep their daughters with hanging shoulders and restrained breasts (*demissis umeris ... vincto pectore*) they should be understood in a comic context, while other fragments point to the preference of the right middle way, that is neither too fat nor too slender⁸⁵. There might be, however, one curious reference to the ideal of slenderness for women in a rather particular joke in Euripides’ *Women of Troy*. When it is said that Helen should not board on the same ship with Menelaus, he cunningly replies: “Why not, has she put on weight since she has sailed the last time?”⁸⁶.

Generally speaking, persons mentioned as thin are associated with poverty, sickness and emaciation in old age.

Thinness is a very undesirable condition for military men⁸⁷.

It also serves as a symbol of lovesickness or sadness. Again, the evidence of a grammarian is revealing:

Maerere (‘to mourn’) is derived from *marcere* (‘to wither, to shrink’), because the body withers (when one is sad) also. That is also the reason why thin persons are called *macri*.

(Varro, *LL* 6.50)

Hence, the thin and exhausted sad lover became a topos of ancient literature⁸⁸.

In section 5.2, I explained how the link between book-based study, physical weakness and the possible consequences of it was at the heart of the epigrams on skinny people. In line with the jokes on the

dried out scholar, strenuous students are sometimes mentioned as suffering from thinness. In the Athenian tradition, both Socrates' student Chaerephon and the orator Demosthenes are said to have been thin (ἰσχνός). For Chaerephon, his pale complexion is added, while for Demosthenes it is mentioned that he had a sickly disposition and was laughed at by children because of his bodily appearance. Chaerephon and Demosthenes are also linked with having a weak voice⁸⁹. The philosopher Zeno was said to have been lean and delicate (ἰσχνός ... καὶ ἀσθενής), while the already mentioned Philetas, by his strenuous efforts in studying and scholarship, became as thin that he died (ἰσχνὸς γὰρ πάνυ τὸ σῶμα διὰ τὰς ζητήσεις γενόμενος ἀπέθανεν)⁹⁰. Plutarch links two important Roman figures with thinness and – again – an unfavourable bodily constitution. Soldiers admired Julius Caesar for his powers and endurance, “because he was of a spare habit (τὴν ἕξιμ ὦν ἰσχνός), had a soft and white skin, suffered from distemper in the head, and was subject to epileptic fits”. In the field of oratory, Cicero's performance came as a surprise to many: “For in fact he was spare and lean (τὴν ἕξιμ ἰσχνὸς καὶ ἄσαρκος), and owing to a weakness of the stomach could only with difficulty take a little light food late in the day; his voice, however, was full and strong, but harsh and unmodulated”⁹¹.

6. In search of popular mentality

Collecting general statements on fatness and thinness and trying to extract popular mentality out of these testimonies is for several reasons more difficult than compiling instances of persons or groups of persons who have been said to experience these conditions. First, the two cannot be easily separated, so that some information on popular attitudes has already been disclosed in the foregoing paragraphs. Second, the exercise obliges us to paint with very broad strokes, and we should always take into account the authors' particular agenda and the specific context of the fragment under study. As such, one has to resist

to take such statements at face value, and acknowledge the fact that according to the different contexts, some might even be contradictory.

6.1 *Effeminate, soft and dumb*

In many cultures, softness has been connotated with luxury, overindulgence, effeminacy and lack of virility. It is exactly this attitude which forms the background of Athenaeus' account of fat kings and rulers (cf. supra section 5.1), as well as the remarks on effeminate people and worthless obese soldiers (cf. supra p. 605-606). Also, I have already pointed out how anthropological research on the materiality of fat - its unctuousness, softness or insensitivity - have played an important role for the way fat people were perceived (cf. supra p. 588).

As for insensitivity, a whole ancient tradition can be traced, linking corpulence with stupidity - fatness as a 'beastly thing', deprived of reason. In fact, the late ancient grammarian Honoratus offers exactly this definition, while commenting on a passage in Virgil's Aeneid:

Laeta pingua ('happy fat'). Because in animals, in which one cannot find sensitivity, it is the fat body (pingue corpus) which expresses joy, not the mind, as with human beings.

(*Servius Honoratus, In Aen. 3.220*)

Compare the Horace commentator Porphyrio:

Illi tardo cognomen, pingui damus. The way to understand this is: "to this fat man, we give the cognomen 'slow'". And this means people who turn their nature into something bad, we call them slow of mind instead of fat.

(*Porphyrio, Comm. in Hor. Serm. 1.3.57-58*)

Or in another passage:

If you would have invited this king, who considered himself having a subtle taste, to examine the works of some poets, you would find out that he was

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in fact so stupid that you would say that he was born in Beoetia, in a region which creates fat and stupid men (crassos et hebetes).

(Porphyrio, Comm. in Hor. Epist. 2.1.241)

Tellingly, “a fat belly cannot produce a subtle mind” was a Greek proverb which was translated into Latin. It can also be found in the Christian sources⁹². Also proverbial was the phrase *pinguis Minerva*, a popular means of denoting dim-wittedness⁹³. Such an attitude surely throws new light on anecdotes as the one on Lucius Apronius’ son:

Greasy fat has no sensation, because it does not possess arteries or veins. For most animals fatness is insensate. Therefore pigs have been gnawed by mice when still alive. And the son of the consular Lucius Apronius had his fat (adipes) removed by an operation and relieved his body of unmanageable weight.

(Plinius Maior, Nat. Hist. 11.85; transl. H. Rackham)

We have already encountered liposuction and the mention of pigs in the case of Dionysius of Heraclea (cf. supra). Leaving aside the possible historical background to such anecdotes, it is the mentality which merits our attention here. Pliny seems to suggest an unbridgeable gulf between corpulence and wisdom. After all, animals with very large bellies also happen to be less clever than those with smaller ones⁹⁴.

Between fascination, shame, mockery and pity

Recent studies on disabilities in Antiquity have tried to identify basic attitudes which characterised the way the disabled were approached by their contemporaries. Such attitudes are often situated on a pre-reflective level - initial reactions of human beings when confronted with what is felt as strange or unusual⁹⁵.

Some excess in weight or the opposite of it seems to have been a subject for humour in many cultures. Surely, this does not always have to be offensive - here one may think of the still very appeal-

ing humour of the Laurel and Hardy movies, or clowns whose large bellies made children (and adults) laugh throughout many centuries. Quite unsurprisingly, the ancients too made fun about the fat and the thin. For iconographical evidence, “the marginal and the ridiculous” have been commented upon extensively by Mark Bradley. The dossier includes Greek vases and Hellenistic statues of athletes who developed unusual or grotesque body shapes, padded dancers, satyrs or Sileni, or Dionysus himself exhibiting the corporeal effects of his excessive life style. Eastern and Egyptian traditions include the comic dwarf god Bes or overweight pygmies. In the Hellenistic and Roman tradition, Heracles is represented as an uber-macho figure, with wide hips, extreme musculature and a big belly. On the opposite side, old and infirm Geras is often depicted bent over and severely emaciated. Lean or extremely thin bodies often identify workmen and tradesmen, with pronounced bodily defects, such as a hunchback, rickets or oversize phalluses. As for Hellenistic and Roman terracotta figurines, Alexandre Mitchell has explained the multiple functions of such forms of caricature. Visual humour and comic relief are surely important factors in understanding such artefacts, together with the titillating of morbid curiosity⁹⁶. Already Plutarch had well observed such psychological mechanisms:

When we see emaciated people (φθισιζοὺς) we are distressed, but we look upon statues and paintings of them with pleasure because our minds are captivated by imitations which we find endearing.

(Plutarch, Quaest. Conv. 5.1; transl. M. Bradley)

Instances of the mocking attitude are found throughout ancient literature. We already encountered them in Epaminondas’ and Cato’s crude remarks on the uselessness of fat soldiers, in political invective, and quite often in the stories in Athenaeus, where the shame of fat kings implies that they could have served as laughing stocks. Other exam-

ples come to mind. During the future Emperor Claudius' first performance, some of the chairs broke due to the obesity (*obesitate*) of one of the members of the audience. Laughter broke out, and even when silence returned, young Claudius was not able to perform well, since he was constantly reminded of the fact and burst out in laughter over and over again. The Emperor Claudius' inability to control himself is one of the recurring themes in Suetonius' biography⁹⁷. Overweight was a subject for humour in Atellan farce and in satire. "It is a pig, whom I fell in love with, a fat boy, not a handsome one" reads a fragment by Pomponius; "you old baldpate, with your bloated stomach projecting half a yard before you" is the way Persius Flaccus addresses a bad poet, the bloated stomach referring to the stomach of a ruminant or a pig - again referring to bestial stupidity⁹⁸.

In the same way, humour about extremely thin persons was already treated in section 5.2 on the Anthologia Palatina. The topos of thinness from lovesickness could turn into humour about being thin because of sexual exhaustion. Catullus refers to the thin and skinny nature of a certain Gellius (*tenuis/ macer*), who apparently was surrounded by a good mother, a beautiful sister and a worldfull of girl cousins - the accusation of incest is implicit in the mention of his thinness. Maecenas got leaner than a certain Ninnius (*Ninnio ... strigosiore*) from his love and passion for Horace. And a skinny and pale Priapus (*confectus macerque pallidusque*) mentions himself as "worn out by fucking" (*effututus*)⁹⁹. Quintilian finds it both an elegant and performative sort of humour to compare a person to an inanimate object. Hence, a certain Julius who was black, thin and bent (*hominem nigrum et macrum et pandum*) was called "an iron brace" (*fibulam ferream*)¹⁰⁰.

A strange mixture of sadistic humour combined with morbid fascination for the extraordinary lurks in two anecdotes about the perverted behaviour of two proverbially 'bad' emperors in the notoriously unreliable *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*. Even when we do not have

to take their stories at face value, there is something informative to be found in them. Indeed, the obese are placed at the level of human monsters. Emperor Commodus's predilection for such *monstra* was well known, and his collection included men with white hair in between their dark hair, the one-eyed or one-footed (after he himself had plucked out one of their eyes or cut off one of their feet), a *delicium* Onos with an disproportionately big *membrum virile*, minions named after the private parts of both sexes, two hunchbacks as well as a fat man (*pinguem hominem*), whose belly he cut open down the middle, so that his intestines gushed forth. Was Commodus imitating a liposuction surgery here? Along the same lines, Emperor Heliogabalus used to invite to dinner either eight bald men, or eight one-eyed, eight men who suffered from gout, eight deaf men, eight men of dark complexion, eight tall men, or, again, eight fat men. In the case of these last, they were meant to provoke even more laughter, since each one could not be accommodated on a single couch¹⁰¹. Apparently, the causes and effects of too much or too little weight were not such that they appealed to empathy or pity from the ancient by-stander¹⁰². What is remarkable, though, is that we find at least two instances of persons making humour of or taking somehow pride in their own overweight. The example of the fat orator Python or Leon of Byzantium and his wife has parallels in rabbinic literature, where the 'fat rabbis' became stock figures of a considerable series of (farcical) jokes - rabbinic tales of carnivalesque exuberance, as they have been justly called. A story from the Babylonian Talmud throws more light on the Python anecdote: the obesity of rabbis Ishmael and Elazar made people doubt their virility ("your children are not yours"). Both rabbis counter the joke by stating that "as the man, so is the virility". Python mentioning the bridal bed may be understood in the same way (cf. supra p. 598)¹⁰³. A most curious anecdote mentions a fat young man (νεανίαν ... πίονα) who prided himself upon eating more than anybody else. He is called "a

glutton” (ὁ γαστριζόμενος) by Apollonius. He explicitly mentions the pleasure he gets by gorging himself: everyone admires him and stares at him, at he is compared to Heracles. Apollonius is not so sure about future success: “There is nothing left for you but to burst, if you want to be stared at”. The story reminds us of the contests in voracity ascribed to some Roman emperors - here the effect of fatness is explicitly mentioned as well as the young man’s desire to show off. Does Apollonius depict him as taking pride in becoming a ‘freak’ or a monster? Demonstrations of swallowing incredible amounts and regurgitating on demand appear in a list of *mirabilia* compiled by Saint Augustine¹⁰⁴.

6.3 Physiognomics, astrology and popular morality

The relationship between physiognomics and astrology, two sciences which were very popular in the time of the Roman Empire, and popular morality has been much discussed. It is an issue too vast for the present study. However, since traces of ‘physiognomical and astrological consciousness’ have been found scattered throughout ancient texts, it may be safe to assume that there was at least interaction between the two levels, so that both physiognomists and astrologers sometimes reflected attitudes and concepts as they were encountered in everyday life of their time¹⁰⁵. It may thus be worth the effort to look at the way fatness and thinness were presented in these treatises, especially since such a study has never been carried out¹⁰⁶. It may partly be true that “the belly and neighboring parts are of least service” in physiognomical treatises, but the overall impression must be that negative connotations about fatness abound. The following list makes convincing evidence. Fatness or a big belly is considered one of the features of dumbness and awkwardness (ἄμαθία); of people living in the North who are also described as bad tempered and difficult to teach; of the insensible or indifferent (ἀναίσθητοι); the stupidly wicked (μωροπόνηροι)¹⁰⁷. Leanness is

very sparsely mentioned in physiognomical treatises. When it turns up, it refers to the angry or embittered (πικρός), or to the mean spirited (μικρόψυχος)¹⁰⁸.

Negative connotations are even stronger in astrological treatises. The zodiac sign of the Archer is said to produce potbellied persons (προγάστρος): being prone to anger and prodigal is cited among their characteristics. προγάστρος is one of the features of those born under the Third Sign: among them are murderers of their own parents, those who hate that which belongs to their homes and fatherlands, misogynists, and bad soldiers. The Archer is again linked with προγάστρος, who ends up as effeminate *cinaedi* who sell their asses. Aquarius is said to produce people with sound bodies, well-bearded and of good reputation (εὐσώμους, εὐγενείους, εὐυπολήπτους), but at the same time they are now and then pot-bellied (προγάστρος) and have one leg which is longer than the other. Again, the Archer is said to produce easily impressionable persons (εὐπλάστους). They are attributed with various physical features, among them pot bellies (προγάστρος). Again prodigality and proneness to anger are mentioned¹⁰⁹.

This evidence strongly point to the general conclusion that fatness or the opposite of it are hardly ever mentioned in a positive way in the physiognomical and astrological treatises. Susan Hill may well be right that the belly is not systematically nor extensively treated by the physiognomists. She goes to great lengths to prove the relative unimportance of obesity and even sometimes its positive connotations in these treatises, but her reading of the physiognomical sources is unfortunately very partial and leaves out the fragments which do not sustain her case. It is true that in one passage “a loose build (or fat parts) of the belly” are connected with “strength of character” (εὐρωστοί). Another fragment is dealing with “big men” (ὄσοι δὲ τῶν μεγάλων) who are said to be “keen of sense” -- no certain connection with obesity can be established here. Courage is linked to “a belly broad and flat”¹¹⁰. Surely, it is an overstatement to use the

physiognomical treatises to make the point that “being fat in the ancient world is not a certain sign of an inner moral flaw that reveals a proclivity for excessive behavior”. Quite the opposite, I would say, if one takes the opportunity to look a bit deeper in the sources¹¹¹.

One of the strongest arguments to strengthen this point is the anti-physiognomist tradition that existed about the figure of Socrates. Didn't the philosopher's ugly appearance immediately clash with his moral uprightness? When he was submitted to a physiognomical inquiry by Zopyrus, the latter stated that Socrates was in fact stupid, debauched and with many moral mistakes. While the bystanders laughed at such a conclusion, Socrates admitted the validity of the judgement. Indeed, these faults were innate to him, and only the study of philosophy and human reason had expelled them¹¹².

Who does not know that Socrates does not mean the same as snub-nosed? The name Socrates does indeed include the whole underlying essence, while the other names do not reveal anything about the essence of his whole body. He is neither snub-nosed (σιμός), nor pot-bellied (προγάστωρ) nor bald (φαλακρός). The first one is the name which relates to the shape of his nose, the other refers to the scarcity of hair on his head, the other to the size of his belly.

(Galen, De meth. med. 2.49 (10.145 K.))

Socrates' not too handsome appearance triggered the physiognomically minds till far into Byzantine times ... and again in Nazi Germany, where it was unabashedly stated such a figure could not possibly have been a true Greek. Again, the pot belly was one of the signs by which one negative judgement was made about Socrates' inward constitution¹¹³.

7. The physician's approach

Any inquiry on ancient medical views concerning obesity and/or underweight must start with some observations on physicians' views on

alimantation and diet. The tradition is extensive and goes from the Hippocratic school in the fifth century B.C.E. to late ancient writers such as Caelius Aurelianus in the fifth century C.E.¹¹⁴ Obviously, their views were not inspired by concepts like proteins or calories, even the weighing of persons was not part of their practice (Celsus in one passage distinguishes between rich, mediocre and poor nutrition)¹¹⁵. To them, alimantation was digested and as so divided into the different parts of the body. An elaborate system of dietetics took into consideration the quality and the temperament of individual bodies, which were constituted by the bodily humours. The corpus of ancient medical texts on the treatment of fatness is extensive. Thinness, on the other hand, is rather seldom treated by these physicians. Only some of the medical texts on weight problems have been studied profoundly, and quite a few would merit a study of their own. In the context of the present article, I will focus only on some key texts, thereby asking questions which are directly relevant to socio-cultural history and, whenever possible, to the life stories of patients. Needless to say, only the better-off could afford to see a doctor for such matters.

7.1 Aetiology: why and how one gets fat or thin? Should the doctor care?

Given the observations on *eusarkia* as expressed in section 4, it should not come as a surprise that ancient physicians indeed distinguished a kind of preferable condition of the body, in between too fat and too thin. In line with the Hippocratic tradition, Galen states as follows:

When we compare those who are fat from an early age on with those who are lean (Τὸς ἐκ τῆς πρώτης ἡλικίας παχεῖς καὶ ἰσχνοὺς ἀλλήλοις παραβάλλον), the comparison is not favourable to the fat, since they are prone to die sooner than the lean. It is best to be born in good condition, that is in the right symmetric way, not too fat and not too thin. In this way, it will be possible to reach old age. If one deviates from the right middle

Fatness and thinness in Graeco-Roman Antiquity

way, it is better to be thin. Excessive weight causes more damage. Indeed, the veins and arteries of the fat are tight, and therefore on the whole they contain little blood and spirit, so that, when such persons get older, there innate warmth disappears on the slightest occasion. Thin persons do not run this risk. However, since their bodily parts are constituted such that they do not have significant defense, they get easily hurt by external causes. Those who are in the right shape and get fatter later by their life style, keep their wide veins and arteries, although they accumulate flesh and bodily fat. Therefore, they have a greater innate warmth and are less prone to fade away.

(Galen, In Hipp. Aph. 2.44 (17.2.547-548 K.))

Other physicians also acknowledged the possibility of innate obesity and the risks of being fat from an early age¹¹⁶; they also understood that some people get fatter or thinner during their lives (here the discussion of nature or habit comes in)¹¹⁷. The observation that it is better to be thin than excessively overweight, reminds us of Athenaeus' remarks (cf. supra section 5.1), but should again be understood in its proper context¹¹⁸. There is indeed a whole range of ancient medical statements linking thinness or sudden loss of weight with illness, bad health or impending death¹¹⁹.

But was overweight or the opposite a matter for doctors? Again, a Galenic passage reminds us strongly of Athenaeus' and Aelian's descriptions of Dionysius of Heracleia, at least so far as the consequences of fatness are concerned:

This is one of the tasks of a doctor, and surely not the least one: if a patient reaches such a degree of obesity that he cannot walk any more without pain, or that he cannot sit down because of the size of his belly, and that he cannot even breathe without difficulties, then it is necessary to relieve him from his fatness and to take it away. In the same way, if somebody finds himself in a kind of atrophía as is the case with those who suffer from phthoe, then the doctor should think of feeding the patient.

(Galenus, De meth. med. 14.15 (10.993 K.))¹²⁰

Again, Celsus is of the same view by stating that both the obese and the thin should be cured¹²¹.

The Galenic corpus indeed offers concrete and sometimes very elaborate case histories of patients who were treated for overweight or the opposite¹²². But apart from casual remarks on the possible innate nature of overweight, there seems to have been hardly any medical concern about its causes. I have yet to come across one text treating various diseases which can lead to disturbance of the weight equilibrium. In the case of hydropsy, the swollen body is mentioned just as a symptom; no endocrinal remarks in the case of diabetes seem to have been made¹²³.

Was the disturbance of weight really considered a disease? Here, we have valuable evidence from Caelius Aurelianus, which again testifies to crude aetiology. To put it simply: patients get fat because they eat too much.

(on polysarcia/ de superflua carne). This is a disease contrary to the suspension of food. Since the suspension of food makes bodies weak, the supplying of food exceeding the natural measure causes an overproduction of flesh, out of which bodies get charged and encumbered. Therefore, we consider this a sort of bad condition, since an uncomfortable situation affects the patients. The consequences are an excessive and redundant amount of flesh, which accumulates in a curvature of fat (nimia ac superflua multitudo carnis, quae in pinguem prominentiam erigatur) – all this combined with slowness of movement, encumbrance, weakness, wheezing and sweating after moving only short distances. The patients feel suffocated by their own bodies, so that they cannot even bear light clothes.

(Caelius Aurelianus, Tard. pass. 5.129-130)

Later on, Caelius Aurelianus is even more explicit. The only good condition is a moderate amount of flesh (*cum modica carne fortitudo*), while trainers of athletes have often only thought about increasing body mass (again the reference to athletes comes in). To Caelius Aurelianus,

polysarcia is a thing to be avoided, and compared to the condition of animals held in captivity or for fattening – they have swollen, extended and prominent bodies (*flato et extento et prominenti corpore*)¹²⁴.

As for the opposite, emaciation is referred to in the context of *atrophia* (dislike and abomination of food) - a disease which is explained by a disorder of the stomach, when much pus is poured forth by the belly through the stomach. Other causes that are adduced include emptying or weakness of the veins, thickness of the humours, drying or heating of the inborn pneuma. Here also the aetiology is often crude, while the texts again emphasise the importance of care and cure by a doctor, since it is an unfavourable condition leading to melancholy or patients drying out¹²⁵.

7.2 Symptoms and consequences

It would be difficult to deny the overall negative connotations which ancient physicians linked with fatness.

In the Hippocratic tradition, constitutionally fat people are more apt to die quickly than those who are thin – a fact which, as we saw, Galen agrees and comments, and which is also mentioned by Celsus, though the latter omits the mention of being fat by nature¹²⁶. Another tradition links fat women with being sterile, or at least experiencing difficulties in pregnancy and childbirth: the excess of flesh and fat suffocates the mouth of the uterus. Sometimes, the cervix is closed by the fat, so that menses appear only hesitatingly or sometimes not at all. Typically, this is linked with environmental conditions, as in the case of the infertility of Scythian women. For women with obese constitutions medication which reduces weight is cited as necessary to secure safe pregnancy¹²⁷. Another tradition links fat men with sterility or being less prone to sex (also the semen of drunkards is said to be less productive). As most nutrition is already used to provide energy for their whole body, little is left to procure sufficient sperm or seed – both Aristotle and Plutarch draw the parallel with large

trees which are said to have little fruit¹²⁸. Difficulties of breathing are ascribed to people with a humid condition, gluttons who stuff themselves with food or drink, women in pregnancy and the obese¹²⁹. Fat people (ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν πιμελωδῶν καὶ πολυσάρκων) anyway have a weaker pulse than lean ones (ἐπὶ γὰρ τῶν ἰσχνῶν). A particular instance of prejudice linked with popular belief is found in the late ancient *Problemata* ascribed to Alexander of Aphrodisias. Like pigs, fat people are particularly sensitive to cold: the fatter they become, the further they are away from their internal source of heat¹³⁰. There are many fewer medical observations on the effects of thinness, though it is also mentioned as an unfavourable medical condition:

In addition thin people (graciles) are fatigued by consumption, diarrhoea, running from the nose, pain in the lung and side.

(transl. W. G. Spencer)¹³¹.

It is again to Susan Hill's merit to have warned against straightforward and overly simplistic conclusions about ancient doctors' approaches to fatness¹³². A certain vagueness of the terms does not always guarantee that these doctors are really mentioning patients whom we might label as obese or underweight. In the case of the pregnant women, fat in the parts surrounding the uterus seems to have constituted the main problem – not necessarily implying a body which was fat throughout. The medical statements on “constitutionally fat people” point at a certain medical understanding that being fat could be part of one's natural and inborn constitution. But again, Hill takes a somewhat apologetic stand, and her selection of the sources is restricted to those fragments which suit her point best. I see no way how one could disagree with the observation that fatness was mostly regarded negatively by the ancient doctors. Their judgements are sometimes linked to popular beliefs (and prejudices) and they view fatness as an unfavourable medical condition, that could in some cases be treated by therapy.

7.3 *Treatment and therapy*

Starting from the Hippocratic tradition, there is a whole series of recommendations for the fat who want to lose weight. Advices include physical exercise like walking and jogging (running in a cloak to ensure excessive sweating), vomiting, and a special diet. Tellingly, there also is a regime for the slender who want to gain weight: they have to act in the opposite way¹³³. Dry food will suits the needs of the fat, the effeminate, and persons of cold and humid constitution¹³⁴. Galen often relies on the combination of intellectual efforts and exercises in the gymnasium. The ball game contributes to a healthy body in a perfect shape, not too fat, neither too thin¹³⁵. Other, more exotic remedies stem from the popular belief in the naturally erosive ('biting') property of dew, so that it makes overweight people thinner. In any case, so Plutarch says, fat women imagine that by soaking up dew on cloths or soft pieces of wool they can dissolve their excess fat¹³⁶.

The Anonymous Parisinus, to be dated somewhere in the first centuries of the Roman Empire, has a separate section on therapy for *atrophía*. Here, restorative ways by means of walks are mentioned, as well as passive exercises like warm baths, massage and extensive anointing, vocal exercises and holding the breath¹³⁷.

But the most extensive account on therapy for both emaciation and obesity undoubtedly is to be found in the fifth century C. E. medical writer Caelius Aurelianus. While virtually nothing is known about the social class or background of his audience or patients, he surely draws on his manifold experiences as a practitioner. While the scholarly world is still waiting for an extensive commentary on his work, the following summaries of his *Chronic Diseases* or *Tardarum passionum* 3.90-95 (on *atrophía*) and 5.129-141 (on *polysarcía*) give a good impression of his thoughts on weight problems, and above all on how to treat them¹³⁸. Moreover, it will be clear how Aurelianus included the whole ancient tradition on weight treatment, including for overweight the exotic belief in the qualities of dew.

Atrophia (Tard. pass. 3):

1. Firstly, the physican has to assess whether it is not related to any special disease of a particular part of the body (91).

2. If not, firstly the patient's strength needs to be built up:

a) by appropriate means and restorative measures (*fortificari rationabiliter atque resumi gestatione pro virium quantitate*). (91)

b) by anointing with copious suffusion of olive oil. (91)

c) massage by soft, fleshy attendants. (92)

d) bathing in moderation. (92)

e) carefully administering of food of the middle class, one food at a time. (92-93)

f) change of locale and climate. (93)

g) acrid diet and vomiting by the use of radishes. (93)

h) application of various local remedies to various parts of the body: all sorts of plasters of sharp dusting powders. (93)

i) boat trip or swimming in the sea or in natural springs. (94)

j) relaxation of the mind. (94)

h) clasping of the limbs by attendants with soft hands. (94)

3. Prescriptions by Themison are disapproved of, since they exhaust patients. (95)

too long walks, too heavy sweating in steamrooms, baking in the sun, massage and bathing after a meal, vomiting after the meal causing inflammation and agitation of the viscera.

Polysarcia (Tard. Pass. 5)

1. Preventive treatment (opposed to drastic therapy which really changes the body mass: *atque operosa recorporatione formetur demutandi corporis causa*) (132)

a) bodily exercise or bodily treatment. (132)

b) being often moved stenuously (*gestatione plurima*): by horse and cart, by cart, by driving a horse or being in a boat. (132)

c) by reading aloud, intense vocal exercise, playing an instrument as for the agonistic games. (133)

d) fast walking, various forms of massage, various exercises in the wrestling school like sparring with the sandbag, sham fighting, wrestling with rings or towing equipment, ball games, wrestling and again forms of massage. (133-134)

e) sun bathing, hot baths, sweating after being exposed to heat by coals or vapours, sun bathing at the beach after immersing the body in salt, using of pulverised bicarbonate. (134-135)

f) diet delay the taking of food after having a bath. (135)

always drink before taking food, and drink much. (135-136)

list of food which goes well. (136 and 138)

not to go asleep after taking food, but staying awake for quite a while. (137)

2. Curing treatment (all disapproved of by Caelius Aurelianus) (138-141)

a) venesection

b) purgatives

c) clyster

d) sex after bathing, before taking only light food

e) vomiting after taking dinner

f) stretching the body after coitus

g) drinking some dew in the morning, just before sunrise.

(approved of by Caelius Aurelianus) (141)

being busy with official matters and science.

It is well known that students are lean because of their

involvement with scholarhip, while those who live a slow and lazy life get fat

(*qui segni ac pigro ductu vitam trahunt, solidiora atque pleniora fieri corpora*).

7.4 Eating disorders? The role of psychology

It may come as a surprise to many readers (though not as much to those who are well acquainted with ancient medicine) that in addition to the somewhat crude and poor aetiology, psychological factors

are not cited at all to explain why a person gets fat or thin. Indeed, the key texts on *atrophia* and *polysarcia* (cf. notes 125) only give attention to mental states which are the consequence of such conditions; the conditions themselves are always explained starting from the material and corporeal level, so that the very notion of ‘mental disease’ becomes highly problematic¹³⁹. In fact, there is just one passage in Soranus which comes somehow close to what we would consider psychological factors. Soranus mentions girls at puberty who get fatter because they are kept apart and lead a reclusive and contemplative life, with no place for physical exercise or moving around freely¹⁴⁰. One might imagine here the emotional shock of the coming of age and the way this impacted on the body, but again Soranus himself does not explicitly say so¹⁴¹.

In the same way, bulimia and anorexia never became ancient concepts or topics of discussion. The Anonymus Parinus has a discussion on bulimia: this intense appetite was named after an ox (*bous*) and famine (*limos*): again only physiological factors are adduced as causes, and the therapy does not include anything which we might consider psychological¹⁴². In the medical texts, we do encounter terms like *gastrimargia* (gluttony) or *licheia* (an almost compulsive desire for sweets)¹⁴³, but again these phenomena are hardly medicalised, let alone subjected to psychological enquiry. Persons with eating disorders must have existed though, as readers of the *Breviarum Romanum* who are acquainted with the life of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux are well aware¹⁴⁴. In a methodologically careful way, Béatrice Caseau has pointed to the possibility of anorectic disorder caused by a traumatic event -- the sudden loss of the father by accidental death in the case of Simeon the Stylite. At the same time, she stresses that monastical asceticism (and the possible excesses of it) was always related to God and mostly social and collective (since it involved fasting in a community), whilst anorexia is primarily to be understood as autocentric and individual. Ascetic

practice might have attracted and even encouraged people with a constitution present-day psychiatrists might label as anorectic. But the main point is again that in the ancient discourse such behaviour never became an issue so as to be named and labelled separately¹⁴⁵.

8. The role of Christianity

Fat always had an ambivalent meaning in the Old Testament tradition. One could think of the seven fat years of prosperity and abundance, as opposed to the seven lean years of poverty (Gen. 41:25-31). The “fat of the land” stood for abundant crop and livestock (Gen. 45:18). In the Psalms, “fat hearts” are connected to arrogance, lack of pity, being mentally slow or thick (Ps. 17:10 and 119:70). In the Hebrew tradition up to the Talmudic fat rabbis, corpulence could be a source of humour and self-parody¹⁴⁶.

Also from the Old Testament on, becoming fat is viewed as a sign of disobedience or brutality towards God and tradition. At least Eglon was said to be very obese. Gluttony, also named as “belly worship”, was severely condemned in the Pauline letters¹⁴⁷.

A thorough study on fat bodies in patristic discourse still needs to be written. Susan Hill analysed the thoughts on gluttony expressed by Philo of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria and John Chrysostom. Again, she comes to the conclusion that it is nearly always the lack of self-control and the subsequent disobedience towards God which are emphasised, not body weight or the size of the body¹⁴⁸. Once more, there is the danger of the circular argument and biased selection of the sources. Obviously, in these fragments the authors stressed gluttony only for the sake of their argument, while they might have understood that most of the audience could imagine protuding bellies as the logical consequence of it.

Moreover, a word search for *polysarkia* shows that it was a concept much in use with Basil the Great and John Chrysostom. At least, they did not refrain from painting the reality of being fat with very vivid

strokes and colourful images. Fat bodies are compared to overloaded ships which run the danger of shipwreck; in their unwillingness to accept the yoke of Christ, the Jews are likened to overfed horses which cannot be adjusted any more to the yoke or the jockey; the efforts of Christ as a doctor of the soul to lead us away from temptation are compared to that of the excellent physician who brings his patients who got fat by their lust for sweets to new health by teaching them self-control (ἀπὸ πολλῆς λαιμαργίας εἰς πολυσαρκίαν ἐξιόντας, διὰ τῆς ἐγκρατείας πρὸς ὑγίειαν ἐπανάγει)¹⁴⁹. Commenting on the Pauline letters, John Chrysostom even offers a vivid description of the effects of overindulgence in wine on the female body: flabby flesh, puffy eyes - in sum more fat than is convenient - huge corpulence, which leads to utter shame¹⁵⁰.

The following quote on the correlation of mind and body could as well have been written by an ancient physiognomist. It surely suggests that in the Christian mindset, not much had changed.

If the body is getting sick and encumbered by overweight, the mind necessarily is inactive and not well tuned for its appropriate activities. But if the soul is in good shape, and grown towards its own greatness because it takes care of what is good, then the logical consequence is that the body will flourish together with the soul.

Basilios, Sermo de moribus 22 (PG 32.1367)

As mentioned above, classical Antiquity knew the image of the intellectual who was so preoccupied with the world of the mind that a well-fed and well-attended body would seem like a paradox. Christian views on asceticism and fasting obviously were more involved with thoughts on the body as an instrument to achieve perfection before the eyes of God. Surely, the worn-out desert father or monk mind appear as a new athlete of God; and so could also be nuns and holy women, for whom fasting could mean transgressing the boundaries of being female in the ancient world¹⁵¹.

9. Conclusions

Starting from a careful word search for Greek and Latin terms, this paper has brought together the most extensive collection so far of references on fatness and thinness in the Graeco-Roman world. There is of course no need for exhaustivity just for its own sake. But I do believe that this collection of texts offered vivid glimpses on how individuals dealt with the practicalities and the impairing aspects of their under - or overweight. This is surely the case for the stories dished up by Athenaeus, which should be regarded as a goldmine for anyone wishing to study this subject. The fact that quite a lot of the stories might well have been made up and thus not reflect 'reality', does not diminish their value as possible scenarios of ancient life. Most of the evidence is restricted to the male well-to-do. References to obese or emaciated females are very rare. There are only three instances in which women were involved: slim girl prostitutes, fat women overindulging in wine, and the wife of the funny rhetor Python or Leon of Byzantium. References to lower class people are restricted to those who act like freaks because of their unusual capacities in devouring large quantities of food, or to the one papyrus reference to a shoemaker who was nicknamed as a fat man. In many practical details, the medical texts on the matter reveal similarities with the anecdotal evidence. Ancient physicians hardly ever went into details on why people get fat or thin. They did however make explicit statements on the preferability of a proper body form and shape, and regarded excesses in both directions as a medical problem, for which therapy was described in great detail. Life stories are also revealing for the study of (popular) mentalities. In all, negative depiction of fatness and thinness stands out. People are depicted as being ashamed about their condition, as being laughed at and sometimes making fun of themselves. Fatness and thinness appear as apt instruments for stereotypical depiction: farcical comic figures, foreigners and more or less exotic tribes, old people, certain

professions (athletes and gladiators), debauched rulers and political opponents, strenuous students and dried-out scholars, those suffering from lovesickness or the sexually exhausted. Also proverbs and sayings almost invariably point to the more negative sides of fatness or thinness - the same holds for the physiognomical and the astrological tradition. Effeminacy, softness and dumbness are often connected to overweight persons. The iconographical material largely confirms the multifarious humorous ways in which obesity and emaciation were represented. The overall negative depiction continues with the Christians authors, and was already there in the Hebrew tradition, though the Christian ascetic discourse of fasting made have caused admiration for almost skeleton-like athletes of God.

Using the iconographical evidence to write what I consider the best socio-cultural study on fatness and emaciation so far, Mark Bradley has rightly pointed out that any “study of obesity, corpulence and emaciation in the Roman world needs to acknowledge this complex and organic nexus of overlapping, but sometimes oppositional, discourses”. Indeed, it is not a very fruitful approach to jump to conclusions as “fat was beautiful” or the opposite in the Roman world. On the contrary, fatness and thinness were components of a very old and multilayered iconographical tradition¹⁵². The same is eminently true for the present study of the literary evidence. Indeed, fatness was connected to pigs and stupidity, but at the same time and in quite a different context intellectuals and smart people as Demades, Aeneas, Aesop, Euphorion or Pliny the Elder were depicted as fat. In the case of some people or tribes, corpulence gave rise to the suspicion of luxury, effeminacy and decadence, while for obese Etruscans it rather symbolised the aspirations of a disenfranchised elite to adopt an Hellenistic way of life. Fleshiness and consequent bodily strength might be considered a positive feature for soldiers and warriors; in the case of defeat, it could be used as a reproach for a too relaxed attitude. An emaciated intellectual might be admired for his devotion

to study, or ridiculised for his strange ways, his lack of virility or for the suspicion of him having too much sex. In the Christian world, the thin body could be a sign for being an athlete of God. Contradictions seem to lie at the heart of any study on fatness or thinness in the ancient; and it is of great importance to properly study the context of statements on corporeal appearances.

Compared to previous studies, this article stressed much more the “negative” side of being fat or thin in Antiquity. Countering extreme constructionist positions, it confirms anthropological studies stressing the fact that throughout cultures people discern between a ‘comfortable’ presence or absence of body fat and extreme conditions which make life difficult to live. Cultural historians have argued that a history of beauty and ugliness can indeed be written over many centuries. Evolutionary psychologists have made the same point¹⁵³. But does this imply a return to a sort of ‘basic essentialism’, claiming a BMI of 21.5 as the ideal standard all over the world - with people being recognised as ‘beautiful’ everywhere in the world? Surely, it would be odd to write an lengthy article only to ‘prove’ such claim. As historians, we should have an open eye for differences, and the way such differences can be explained. Indeed, the ancient world was different. For demographic and material reasons, there was not anything like an ‘epidemic’ of overweight persons. And the relatively large part of the population who were thin never forced doctors to propose measures, since there was no state medicine whatsoever, and such people most probably never went to a doctor. Also, there were no media nor photographs, let alone sophisticated mirrors which daily and constantly confronted the public with ‘ideal’ bodies or their own possible lack of them, though admittedly official and religious art that could be seen by everybody could somehow function like this in the cities.

This article started with a reference to disability history. Was it a disability to be fat or thin in Antiquity? According to recent stud-

ies, the absence of an ancient term, concept or juridic category for disability is a key issue in understanding differences with the modern western attitude towards the matter¹⁵⁴. Ancient categorisations were much more fluid and, above all, used ad hoc. As such, you could make use of a remarkably fat or thin appearance to blame your opponent, and implicitly or explicitly make the point that his bodily shape was mostly his own fault. At other times, the matter was just considered irrelevant, and surely never reduced to measurable categories which evoke the illusion of ‘objectivity’. Ancient physiognomics surely functioned in this way. Indeed, being remarkably fat or thin sometimes had a disabling effect, for a person’s social functioning and/or the way he was esteemed. And other times it went virtually unnoticed, as no more than a remarkable or curious detail.

Surely, the ancient world was different from ours. For matters of health, such difference can be explained by factors such as the modern states which from the eighteenth century focused on the ‘hygiene’ of their population, and the moral duty of citizens also to keep themselves healthy. In fact, state-organised medicine involves rights and duties, as the question of costs comes in. Doesn’t the modern western condemnation of obese people largely stem from the idea that “they cost us a lot”, while with some self-restraint from their part much of these costs could be lowered? Thus, the social impact of being fat became an important factor. Consequently, the concept of guilt came in, in a much more pronounced way¹⁵⁵.

We cannot describe the past as paradise, a world far better than our society. Travelling to the past is very much like going abroad - getting to know other people enriches our views and forces us to ask questions about ourselves and our values. But such travels do not provide us with recipes for changing our world: “ce qui est, pourrait ne pas être. Le réel est entouré d’une zone indéfinie de possibles non réalisés”¹⁵⁶.

Postscriptum

Just after finishing this article, I was informed about a forthcoming publication by Katz 2014. In her paper, Katz deals with an account by the Mamluk-era scholar Ibn al-Hāǧǧ (d. 1336) on the cultivation of women's ample bodies. She concerns herself with legal discourses about fatness, which were typically gendered. Fatness/obesity was an Islamic legal issue, because some people were found to be too large to perform thorough ritual cleanses. Specifically, they could not reach around and wipe their anuses. Both Katz's text and the extensive bibliography show how early Islam understood fatness in quite different ways than the Graeco-Roman authors. A comparative study of different cultures from the ancient Mediterranean is just in its beginning phase.

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(*) Abbreviations of journals according to http://www.annee-philologique.com/files/sigles_fr.pdf

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ZEVI F., *Catone e i cavalieri grassi: il culto di Vulcano ad Ostia: una proposta di lettura storica*. MEFRA 2009; 121: 502-13.

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1. Needless to say, countless websites by associations of overweight people or about the problem of the fat tax can be gleaned from the internet. For the historian point of view concerning the western modern rejection of obesity, as opposed to the premodern acceptance of fat, see e.g. FARRELL A. E., *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture*. New York, NYU Press, 2011; or LEVY-NAVARRO E., *The Culture of Obesity in Early and Late Modernity*. Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008. FORTH Chr. E., *The Qualities of Fat: Bodies, History, and Materiality*. *Journal of Material Culture* 2013; 18(2): 135-6, offers an excellent summary.
2. This three-leveled approach is inspired by the model to of the 'house of the history of mentalities', as it was conceived by the French historian Michel Vovelle. See LAES Chr., *How Does one Do the History of Disability in Antiquity? One Thousand Years of Case Studies*. *Medicina nei Secoli* 2011; 23(3): 915-46, on the application of this model for disability history of Antiquity.

3. The distinction between 'impairment' (a biological and material fact) and 'disability' (a social construct) has been generally accepted in surveys as ROSE M. L., *The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece*. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2003; METZLER I., *Disability in Medieval Europe. Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100-1400*. London - New York, Routledge, 2006; LAES Chr., *Beperkt? Gehandicapt en in het Romeinse rijk*. Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2014.
4. HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011. Note the almost complete absence of scholarship outside the Anglo-Saxon world in Hill's book. No mention is made for instance of the fundamental studies by Gourevitch. In general, both Susan Hill and Christopher Forth have overlooked valuable previous French scholarship on the subject.
5. As such, BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, is undoubtedly the best socio-cultural study on the matter.
6. FORTH Chr. E., *The Qualities of Fat: Bodies, History, and Materiality*. Journal of Material Culture 2013; 18(2): 135-54.
7. The continuity or change issue and the divergences between Greece and Rome are difficult matters from almost any study on the human life course in Antiquity. See e.g. LAES Chr., *Beperkt? Gehandicapt en in het Romeinse rijk*. Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2014, for disability history and the Roman Empire.
8. MOORE M. K., *Body Mass Estimation from the Human Skeleton*. Knoxville, Unpublished PhD., 2008; ROBBINS G., SCIULLI P. W., BLATT S. H., *Estimating Body Mass in Subadult Human Skeletons*. American Journal of Physical Anthropology 2010; 143: 146-50.
9. ROBERTS C., *Did They Take Sugar? The Use of Skeletal Evidence in the Study of Disability in Past Populations*. In: HUBERT J. (ed), *Madness, Disability and Social Exclusion: The Archaeology and Anthropology of 'Difference'*. London - New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 46-60, about the use of sugar; MAYS S., *The Osteology of Monasticism in Mediaeval England*. In: GOWLAND R., KNUSEL C. (eds), *The Social Archaeology of Funerary Remains*. Oxford, Oxbow, 2009, pp. 179-89; PATRICK P., *The 'Obese Medieval Monk'. A Multidisciplinary Study of a Stereotype*. Oxford, BAR, 2014, for obesity with monks, including literary, archaeological and osteological evidence.
10. GOUREVITCH D., GRMEK M., *L'obésité et ses représentations figurées dans l'Antiquité*. In: Archéologie et médecine. VIIèmes Rencontres

- Internationales d'Archéologie et d'Histoire, Antibes, Octobre, 1986, Musée archéologique, Antibes, 1987, pp. 355-67, as an *accident de parcours* by scholars who otherwise treat their material most carefully. It is surely a remarkable instance of an *argumentum e silentio*.
11. BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 11.
 12. See e.g. GRAHAM E. J., *Disparate Lives or Disparate Deaths? Post-Mortem Treatment of the Body and the Articulation of Difference*. In: LAES Chr., GOODEY C. F., ROSE M. L., *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity. Disparate Bodies A Capite ad Calcem*. Leiden, Brill, pp. 249–274, for the dossier of the suburbia of Rome, with p. 255 for further specialised literature.
 13. For the thesis of considerable undernourishment for large parts of the population, see SIPPEL D. V., *Dietary Deficiency among the Lower Classes of Late Republican and Early Imperial Rome*. *AncW* 1987; 16: 47-54; GARNSEY P., *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; ERDKAMP P. (ed), *A Cultural History of Food in Antiquity*. New York - Oxford, Bloomsbury, 2012; SCHEIDEL W., *Physical Well Being*. In: SCHEIDEL W. (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 324-9.
 14. SALLER R., *Human capital in the Roman imperial economy*. In: SCHEIDEL W. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Economy*. 2012, pp. 71-86, in part. p. 72 (upto 20 % of the adult population was not able to work for whole days).
 15. KRON G., *Anthropometry, Physical Anthropology and the Reconstruction of Ancient Health, Nutrition, and Living Standards*. *Historia* 2005; 54: 68-83; KILLGROVE K., *Migration and Mobility in Imperial Rome*. Chapel Hill, Unpublished PhD., University of North Carolina, 2010.
 16. World Health Organisation, Global Database on Body Mass Index [<http://apps.who.int/bmi/index.jsp>] (seen 9th of September 2014)
 17. Literature on the subject is vast. See HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp. 4-9; FORTH Chr. E., *The Qualities of Fat: Bodies, History, and Materiality*. *Journal of Material Culture* 2013; 18(2): 135-54, for further orientation. BROWN P. J., KONNER M., *An Anthropological Perspective on Obesity*. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1987: 499(1): 29-46, is an excellent study on cross-cultural aspects of obesity, while VELLA H. C. R., *Juno and Fertility at the Sanctuary of Tas-Silg, Malta*. In: BONANNO A.

- (ed), *Archaeology and Fertility Cult in the Ancient Mediterranean*. Amsterdam, B.R. Grüner Publishing Company, 1986, pp. 315-22, and VELLA H. C. R., *Fertility Aspects in Ancient North Africa*. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 1993; 3: 215-24, reflects the research of a Maltese classicist.
18. Standard descriptions with Xenophon, An. 5.4.30-34; Strabo, Geogr. 12.3.18; Ap. Rhod., Arg. 2.1012-1029; Diod. Sic., Bibl. 14.30.6-7; Pomponius Mela, Chorogr. 1.19.106. See SCHACHERMEYER F., *Mossynoikoi, pontische Völkerschaft*. RE 1933;16(1):c. 378-9, for a comprehensive account on the Mossynoecians. GOUREVITCH D., *L'obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 195-215 in part. p. 195, refers to the fattening of children in Turkey in the nineteenth and twentieth century.
 19. NADEAU R., *L'obésité chez Athénée et la représentation du pouvoir royal à l'époque hellénistique*. In: GRANDJEAN C., HELLER A., PEIGNEY J. (eds), *A la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l'oeuvre d'Athénée*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, p. 80, referring to Herod., Hist. 9.82 and Plut., Sept. Sap. Conv. 150c-d.
 20. AGER S. A., *Incest and the Ptolemaic Dynasty*. JHS 2005; 125: 23; BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 23-5 and NADEAU R., *L'obésité chez Athénée et la représentation du pouvoir royal à l'époque hellénistique*. In: GRANDJEAN C., HELLER A., PEIGNEY J. (eds), *A la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l'oeuvre d'Athénée*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, p. 82.
 21. KARILA COHEN K., *Les gourmands grecs sont-ils bien en chair?* In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp.120-1, cites over 500 occurrences in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* for the words related to εὐσαρκος, πολύσαρκος, and ὑπερσαρκος.
 22. HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp. 3 and 9-11.
 23. See BRADLEY M., BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 6-11, for an extensive analysis of both the Greek and the Latin vocabulary of fatness.
 24. The use was known in Christian Greek too, as in the remarkable comparison on amputation of superfluous flesh (ὑπερσαρκώματα) or in cases of polydactyly in Const. Apost. 2.43. Such excesses are taken away surgically. In the same way, the body of the Church can and must amputate evil or unworthy members!
 25. Galenus, De temp. 2.4 (1.608 K.): "Fleshiness is due to an excess of blood, while fullness of flesh is a sign of a well tempered nature" (πολυσαρκία δὲ

- πλήθους αϊματος ἔκγονος, εὐσαρκία δὲ φύσεως εὐκράτου γνώρισμα). See also Libanius, Or. 64.103 (πολυσαρκία is not good for a child). See Aetius, Iatr. 1.1: εὐσαρκον σῶμα “between thin and too fleshy” (ὁ μέσον ἐστὶν ἰσχνοῦ τε καὶ πολυσάρκου). Cf. also Lucian, De Saltat. 75 (ideal bodily size, so neither πολύσαρκος nor λεπτός ἐς ὑπερβολήν). The same ideal appears with Church Father Basil, Sermon. 13 (PG 31.876).
26. KARILA COHEN K., *Les gourmands grecs sont-ils bien en chair?* In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds), *Le corps du gourmand. D’Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 121-127, cites about twenty Galenic passages concerning the matter (e.g. De temp. 1.6 (1.541 K.); 2.2 (1.592 K.) and 2.4 (1.607-609 K.); De san. tuenda 1.6 (6.30 K.); De meth. med. 14.15 (10.994 K.)). Exhaustive studies on medical esthetics in Galen include GOUREVITCH D., *L’esthétique médicale de Galien*. LEC 1987; 55: 267-90; BOUDON MILLOT V., *Médecine et esthétique: nature de la beauté et beauté de la nature chez Galien*. BAGB 2003; 2: 77-91; BOUDON MILLOT V., *Galien de Pergame face au mirage de la beauté parfaite*. BAGB 2006; 1: 127-41.
 27. Celsus, Med. 1.3.13-14 *Tenuis vero homo implere se debet, plenus extenuare*. See GOUREVITCH D., *L’obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 212-13.
 28. Gellius 19.7.3. On the same passage in Laevius, see Non. Marc. 361.17.
 29. Servius Honoratus, In Georg. 3.124; Suetonius, Galba 3.
 30. HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp. 96-102 for examples and analysis. True, these gluttons are often labeled “pot-belly” (*gastron*), but Athenaeus’ discussion of gluttony does not include specific references to fatness.
 31. See NADEAU R., *L’obésité chez Athénée et la représentation du pouvoir royal à l’époque hellénistique*. In: GRANDJEAN C., HELLER A., PEIGNÉY J. (eds), *A la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l’oeuvre d’Athénée*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, pp. 67-85, for a sophisticated in-depth analysis of the Athenaeus examples, as well as to the scholarship on Athenaeus.
 32. Aelianus, VH 9.13 is somewhat briefer, omitting the details of the Menander quotes.
 33. JEANSELME E., *Comment on traitait les obèses à Byzance*. Bull. Société franç. Hist. Med. 1926; 20: 388-90 (Byzantine); BURRUS V., *Carnal Excess: Flesh at the Limits of Imagination*. JECS 2009; 17(2), 262-3 on El’azar who had his belly cut open. Several basketful of fat were removed from it and

placed in the sun, but the fat did not rot. This proved that, although he was unfortunately collaborating with Rome, he was still a righteous man (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metsia 83b-84b).

34. See JOUANNO C., *Le corps du prince dans la Chronographie de Michel Psellos*. Kentron 2003; 19(1-2): 214-15 for remarkable parallels on Byzantine emperors trying to keep up appearances by hiding their infirmities when present in public ceremonies. E.g. Psellus, Chron. 3.24 (Romanus' III fragile body), Chron. 3.22 (Michael IV suffering from severe attacks of epilepsy); Chron. 6.1.128-130 (Constantine Monomachus suffering from gout). The state in corruption is compared to fat and swollen bodies, suffering from hydroscopy in Psellus, Chron. 7.1.51-58.
35. NADEAU R., *L'obésité chez Athénée et la représentation du pouvoir royal à l'époque hellénistique*. In: GRANDJEAN C., HELLER A., PEIGNEY J. (eds), *A la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l'oeuvre d'Athénée*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, pp. 67-85, in part. p. 70 note 15, offers parallels.
36. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.549d-e; FGrH 87 T 10a and FGrH 87 F 6 (Posidonius). See BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. pp 25-6, on fleshy portraiture of this king.
37. Modern scholarship reserves this name for Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator, who only reigned very briefly in 145 B.C.E. and whose identity is unclear.
38. OLSON K., *Masculinity, Appearance, and Sexuality: Dandies in Roman Antiquity*. JHSex 2014; 23(2): 182-205.
39. Justinus, Hist. 38.8.9 is even more crude on the pot belly, which made him look like an animal: *Erat enim et vultu deformis et statura brevis et sagina ventris non homini sed beluae similis*.
40. Athenaeus, Deipn. 273a and Gellius 4.20.
41. Plutarchus, Regum et imperatorum apophth. 200f (mentioning the laziness and the luxury of Ptolemy's body: δι' ἀργίαν καὶ τρυφήν τοῦ σώματος).
42. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.550a-b; FGrH 87 F 26 (Posidonius). For the king's inability to walk unless supported by two persons, the phrase οὐδὲ περιπατεῖν οἶός τε ἦν, εἰ μὴ δυοῖν ἐπαπερειδόμενος [ἐπορεύετο] is used. Tellingly, the *lectio difficilior* for περιπατεῖν is ἀποπατεῖν, which would add to the scathing vividness, claiming that the fat king was not able to relieve himself. See EDELSTEIN L., KIDD I. G., *Posidonius I. The Fragments II. The Commentary*. 3 vol. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 329.
43. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-247 B.C.E.) is depicted as overweight on coin portraits. Though literary sources describe him as suffering from bad health,

- in particular gout, and indulging in luxury, they do not describe him as obese. See: TUNNY J. A., *The Health of Ptolemy II Philadelphus*. BASP 2001; 38: 119-34. See AGER S. A., *Incest and the Ptolemaic Dynasty*. JHS 2005; 125: 1-34, in part. pp. 13-14; 23 for further references on Ptolemy VIII and Ptolemy X. She views their obesity as a life style disease, while ASHRAFIAN H., *Familial Proptosis and Obesity in the Ptolemies*. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine 2005; 98: 85-6, speculates on medical conditions of the Ptolemaic dynasty brought on by consanguinity.
44. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.550b-c; FGrH 86 F 7 (Agatharchides). See NADEAU R., *L'obésité chez Athénée et la représentation du pouvoir royal à l'époque hellénistique*. In: GRANDJEAN C., HELLER A., PEIGNEY J. (eds), *A la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l'oeuvre d'Athénée*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, pp. 67-85, in part. 72 on his reign.
 45. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.550c-d; Aelianus, Var. 14.7; FGrH 86 F 10 and 11 (Agatharchides).
 46. Python was known as d disciple of Isocrates (Demosthenes, De Cor. 136 and Philostratus, Vit. Apoll. 7.37). The same funny story is told about Leon in Suidas, s.v. Leon. Python and Leon are sometimes confused with each other (Philostratus, Vit. Soph. 514). The mention of the bed might be a sexual innuendo, taking into account the suspicion of impotence of fat people. Cf. infra note 102.
 47. Aelianus, VH 13.21 and Pausanias 9.20.4-5. See NADEAU R., *L'obésité chez Athénée et la représentation du pouvoir royal à l'époque hellénistique*. In: GRANDJEAN C., HELLER A., PEIGNEY J. (eds), *A la table des rois. Luxe et pouvoir dans l'oeuvre d'Athénée*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013, in part. p. 74.
 48. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.551a. See also Aristophanes, Av. 1406; and Lucian, Hist. Conscr. 34. The comic fragment in Theopompus Comicus, fr. 25 Kassel-Austin.
 49. Plato, Resp. 439e. See Von REDEN S., GOLDHILL S., *Plato and the Performance of Dialogue*. In: GOLDHILL S., OSBORNE R., *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 257-89, in part. p. 257. On Thymantis, see Aristophanes, Eq. 1266.
 50. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.551b-c. Aristophanes, Gerytades (Kock 1.428) = Aristophanes, fr. 156 Kassel-Austin. See Aristophanes, Ran. 156 on the Hades, mire and dung.
 51. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.551c. Strattis, fr. 21 Kassel-Austin. For extensive commentary, see ORTH Chr., *Strattis. Die Fragmente: ein Kommentar*. Berlin,

- Verlag Antike, 2009, in part. pp. 125-128, who also refers to *κάνναβος* meaning a sketch or auxiliary drawing by painters (Aristotle, GA 743a2; HA 515b). See in this context Nonius Marcellus, De compend. doct. p. 37, 9-11 (Müller): *monogrammi dicti sunt homines macie pertenues ac decolores; tractum a pictura, quae priusquam coloribus corporatur umbra fingitur.*
52. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.551c. Sannyrion, fr. 2 Kassel-Austin. See MILES 2009: 87.
53. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.551d-552b. Strattis, fr. 17 Kassel-Austin; Aristophanes, Av. 1377 (linden Cinesias). Plato, Gorg. 501e (poor quality of verse); Lysias, fr. 53 Thalheim (chronic disease due to revenge of the gods). See STEINHART M., *Phthian Achilles*. CQ 2007: 57(1): 283-4; ORTH Chr., *Strattis. Die Fragmente: ein Kommentar*. Berlin, Verlag Antike, 2009, in part. pp. 115-7.
54. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.552b.
55. The whole tradition is traced down in great philological detail by CAMERON A., *How Thin Was Philitas?* CQ 1991; 41(2): 534-8. See Aristophanes, Gerytades (Kock 1.156) and Aelianus, VH 10.6 (Philetas' poetry), Athenaeus, Deipn. 11.401d and Suidas, s.v. Philitas (withered body by research: He died withered as a result of his quest for the so-called 'Falsified discourse'); Anth. Graec. 9.14.
56. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.552c; Polemon Periegetes, fr. 84 Preller; Aelianus, VH 10.6.
57. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.552d; Hipponax, test. 19 (Degani) = FGh 184 F 6 (Metrodorus of Scepsis). See Rosen 1990 and MARASTONI S., *Metrodoro di Scepsi. Rettore, filosofo, storico e mago*. Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2007, pp. 43 and 87.
58. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.552d-f, Hyperides, fr. 172 and perhaps implied in Hypereides, Or. 2.7; Alexis, fr. 93 Kassel-Austin; Aristophon, fr. 8 Kassel-Austin (corpses), Menander, fr. 266 Kassel-Austin (famine); Alexis, fr. 148 Kassel-Austin; Aelianus, VH 10.6; Photius, Lex. phi p. 648 line 11 (πεφιλιπιδῶσθαι).
59. Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.552f; Antiphanes in Kock 2.17.
60. NISBET G., *A Sickness of Discourse: the Vanishing Syndrome of λεπτοσύνη*. G&R 2003; 50(2): 191-205. See Celsus, De med., prooem. 6-7 on excessive study.
61. LATTIMORE R., *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs*. Baltimore, The University of Illinois Press, 1942.
62. AP 11.250 is a rare epigram on a fat person. See GEVAERT B., *Parcere personis, dicere de vitiiis? Deformitas in de epigrammen van Marcus Valerius Martialis*. Brussels, Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2013, in part. p.183.

Fatness and thinness in Graeco-Roman Antiquity

63. CERNUSCHI G., *Nuovi contributi per lo studio dei connotati personali nei documenti dell' Egitto greco-romano*. Padova, CLEUP, 2010, is a most useful catalogue.
64. P. Princ. 2.63 (between 200 and 399 C.E.).
65. Hippocrates, Aer. 21 (2.76 L.) on Scythian women; Dionysus Halicarnasensis, Ant. Rom. 14.8 (Albanians), Athenaeus, Deipn. 12.550e (Asians); Juvenal, Sat. 13.161-162 (Meroe as stereotypical black woman - note that ISAAC B., *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004 does not mention obesity as an example of proto-racist stereotyping); Strabo, Geogr. 4.4.6 (Celts); Catullus, Carm. 39, 10-14 (*aut pinguis Umber aut obesus Etruscus*); Servius Honoratus, in Georg. 2.182 (*pinguis Tyrrhenus*). Also in the Sumerian tradition, priests are often described as fat. See GELLER M., *Forerunners to Uduĝ-Hul. Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations*. Stuttgart, F. Steiner Verlag, 1985, p. 146. See BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. pp. 25-6 on obese Etruscans.
66. DÉFRÉMERY C., SANGUINETTI B. R., YERASIMOS S., *Ibn Battuta. Voyages*. Librairie François Maspero, Paris, 1994, vol. 3, p. 368.
67. Ps. Plutarchus, De lib. educ. 8d.
68. Plato, Resp. 556d. See also Aristophanes, Ran. 1086-1098; Plato, Gorg. 518c; Xenophon, Mem. 3.5.15; Aristoteles, Pol. 1310 a24-25 on the uselessness of fat men for battle or gymnastics. Ammian Marcellinus, Hist. 16.12.59 mentions the Allamanic king Chondomarius who despite his fatness (*licet obeso corpore gravior*) managed to escape. Tellingly, Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunom. 2.1 mentions that the huge and corpulent Goliath (ὁ πολύσαρκος Γολιάθ) was not in the position to scare off the shepherd David, who was not acquainted with the habits of warfare.
69. Lucian, Anachar. 25; Gellius, NA 6.22.1-4 (fat knights). A remarkable reversal of the fat knight theme in Gellius, NA 4.20 (withered horse and well fed knight). On Aemilius Lepidus, see Diodorus Siculus, Bibl. 33.27 Note that he was nicknamed Porcina ("Piggy"). Eutecnius, Paraphrasis in Oppiani Cyn. (p. 10 Tüsselmann) states that good hunters should not be too lean, neither too fat.
70. For extensive literature on athletes as depicted with fat bellies, see KARILA COHEN K., *Les gourmands grecs sont-ils bien en chair?* In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp.109-32, in part. pp. 114-20. Philostratus, Gymnast. 34; Hippocrates,

- Aphor. 1.3; Galenus, De parvae pilae exercitio 3 (5.905 K.); Lucian, Dial. Mort. 20.5; Celsus, De medic. 1.1.3; Basilius, Quaestiones (PG 31.964).
71. Galenus, De aliment. facult. 1.19 (6.529 K.); Utrum medicinae sit an gymnasticae hyg. 1 (5.806 K.); Seneca, Epist. Mor. 15.2. On the diet of gladiators, see SCARBOROUGH J., *Galen and the Gladiators*. Episteme 1971; 5: 98-111; GOUREVITCH D., *L'obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 195-215, in pp. 207-8.
72. Athenaeus, Deipn. 2.22 (Demades); Plutarchus, Cat. M. 9.6 (Cato reproaching Veturius for only having a belly between his neck and testicles – a reminder of the joke by Epaminondas). See also Cato in ORF 72 and 79-81, on which see ZEVI F., *Catone e i cavalieri grassi: il culto di Vulcano ad Ostia. Una proposta di lettura storica*. MEFRA 2009; 121: 502-13. Cicero, In Cat. 3.16 (*L. Cassi adipēs*); Juvenal, Sat. 4.107 (*Montani quoque uenter adest abdomine tardus*).
73. Cicero, Phil. 2.63 (*ista gladiatoria totius corporis firmitate*). On vomiting, see also BADEL Chr., *Vomir pour le plaisir à Rome*. In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds.), *Le corps du gourmand d'Héraclès à Alexandre le bienheureux*. Rennes-Tours, PUR-Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2012, pp. 179-189. See Plutarchus, Ant. 11: Caesar stated not to be afraid of the fat and long-haired Mark Antony and Dolabella (τοὺς παχεῖς τούτους καὶ κομήτας), but rather of the pale and thin Brutus and Cassius (τοὺς ὠχροὺς καὶ λεπτοὺς).
74. Abundant evidence in: DALBY A., *Empire of Pleasures. Luxury and Indulgence in the Roman World*. London - New York, Routledge, 2000; GARCÍA SOLER M. J., *Grands mangeurs et grands buveurs dans la Grèce ancienne*. Food&History 2016; 4(2): 37-57; BADEL Chr., *Vomir pour le plaisir à Rome*. In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds.), *Le corps du gourmand d'Héraclès à Alexandre le bienheureux*. Rennes - Tours, PUR-Presses Universitaires François Rabelais, 2012, pp. 179-189; PASSET L., *Oublier la politique pour la gourmandise. Les lettres de Cicéron à Papirius Paetus (46 av. J.-C.)*. In: KARILA-COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 255-70.
75. Suetonius, Nero 51; Suetonius, Vit. 17; Suetonius, Dom. 18.
76. Scriptores Historiae Augustae, Clod. Alb. 11 and Duo Max. 4.6 (Maximinus Thrax). See GODDARD J., *The Tyrant at Table*. In: ELSNER J., MASTERS J. (eds), *Reflections on Nero. Culture, History and Representation*. Chapel Hill - London, The University of North Carolina Press, 1994, pp. 67-82, on

- imperial voracity. For Greek counterparts, see Athenaeus, Deipn. 412f and 413e (Milon), Aelianus, Var. Hist. 12.24 (Smindydes of Sybaris); Machon, Anec. 10 (Philoxenus of Cythera).
77. Scriptores Hist. Aug., Gord. tres 6; Scriptores Hist. Aug., Pesc. Niger 6. See BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. pp. 33-4.
78. BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. pp. 2-3 on the 'fleshy' portraits of Vitellius.
79. These lines have been extensively commented upon by ancient scholiasts, stressing the connection between overeating, fatness and wealth. See Scholia in Aristophanem, Comm. in Plut. (scholia recentiora Tzetzae) 559; Scholia in Aristophanem, Scholia in Plut. (scholia vetera et fortasse recentiora sub auctore Moschopulo) 563.
80. Lucian, De Merc. Cond. 42 (γυμνὸς προγύστωρ ὠχρὸς γέρον, τῆ ἑτέρα μὲν τὴν αἰδῶ σκέπων, τῆ δεξιᾷ δὲ αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν ἄγγχων). See BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. pp. 20-22. Plautus, Pseud. 1218-1220. See WILKINS J., *Le corps gourmand dans la comédie antique*. In: KARILA-COHEN K., QUELLIER F. *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 247-54 on comedy.
81. Malalas, Chron. 106 (Aeneas); Planudes, Anthol. 11 (Aristotle); Vita Aesop. 1. See also, LAES Chr., *Silent History? Speech Impairment in Roman Antiquity*. In: LAES Chr., GOODEY C. F., ROSE M. L. (eds), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity. Disparate Bodies a Capite ad Calcem*. Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 145-80, p. 178 on the particular late ancient fashion of depicting heroes as Hector as suffering from lisp or stuttering.
82. Sudas, s.v. Euphorion.
83. Plinius Minor, Epist. 6.6.13 and 19-20. See GOUREVITCH D., *L'obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 195-215, in part. p. 205.
84. Horatius, Epist. 1.4.15 and 1.20.4.
85. Plautus, Cist. 406; Terentius, Eun. 314. Of courses, such comic fragments might refer to a certain reality with a part of the male population. On the predilection for the right way in between in the case of women, see AP 5.37.3-4; 5.102.1 and Martial, Epigr. 11.100. See GOUREVITCH D., *L'obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 195-215, in part. p. 213.
86. Euripides, Troi. 1049-1050.
87. Poverty: Plato, Resp. 556d; Aesop, Fabl. 137. Soldiers: Procopius, De bellis 4.13. Old age: Pollux, Onomast. 4.142.

88. E.g.: Plautus, Capt. 133-137 and 928-929; Cist. 71-72; Afranius (Scaenicae Romanorum poesis fragmenta) 350-352.
89. Students and scholars: Plutarchus, De curios. 516c (Aristippus becoming thin and pale while engaging in Socratic philosophy); Juvenal, Sat. 7.27-29 (strenuous and hard work just for the sake of obtaining a thin statue). For the Athenian tradition, see Scholia In Aristophanem, Commentarium in nubes (scholia recentiora Tzetzae) 502a line 7 and Scholia In Platonem, Scholia in Platonem (scholia recentiora Arethae) 20e line 2 on Chaerephon; Plutarchus, Demosth. 4 on Demosthenes. On their weak voices, see LAES Chr., *Silent History? Speech Impairment in Roman Antiquity*. In: LAES Chr., GOODEY C. F., ROSE M. L. (eds), *Disabilities in Roman antiquity: Disparate Bodies A Capite Ad Calcem*. Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 172-3 (Chaerephon) and 173-174 (Demosthenes), also on Demosthenes' bodily disposition which may refer to ... his anus. In the medical discourse, next to Celsus (cf. supra note 60) also Aretaeus, Caus. chr. 2.6 5 and Caelius Aurelianus, Chron. 5.141 link strenuous studying and scholarship with thinness.
90. Diogenes Laërtius, Vita Philos. 7.1 (Zenon); Athenaeus, Deipn. 9.64 (Philetas)
91. Plutarchus, Caes. 17; Cic. 3 (transl.: B. Perrin).
92. Galenus, Ad Thrasybulum. Utrum medicinae sit an gymnasticae hygieine 37 (5.878 K.) *παχεῖα γαστήρ λεπτόν οὐ τίκτει νόον*; Schol. Pers. 1.56: *tractus sensus ex Graeco versus quo significatur ex ventre crasso tenuem sensum non nasci*; Hieron, Ep. 52.11: *Pulchre dicitur apud Graecos et nescio an apud nos aequae resonet: Pinguis venter non gignit sensum tenuem*; Apostol. 5.22a: *γαστήρ παχεῖα λεπτόν οὐ τίκτει νόον*. See also Athenaeus, Deipn. 11.102 on the deranged judgment of gluttons and fat men: *τοὺς κάδους μὲν οὖν καλοῦσι γαυλοὺς πάντες οἱ προγαστορες*. ("Gluttons/potbellied persons compare certain ships with drinking vessels").
93. OTTO A., *Die Sprichwörter und sprichwörtlichen Redensarten der Römer*. Leipzig, Teubner, 1890, in part. pp. 224-225 refers to Cicero, de amicit. 5.19 and Columella, RR 1 praef. 33. Quite surprisingly, *crassa Minerva* seems to point to sound judgment, *pace* FORTH Chr. E., *The Qualities of Fat: Bodies, History, and Materiality*. Journal of Material Culture 2013; 18(2): 135-54, in part. pp.147. See also ADKIN N., *Jerome*, Epist. 22, 28, 5: ("A Fat Old Man"). Boll Class 1994; 14: 142-9.
94. Plinius Maior, Nat. Hist. 11.79. See FORTH Chr. E., *The Qualities of Fat: Bodies, History, and Materiality*. Journal of Material Culture 2013; 18(2): 135-54, in part. p.147.

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95. LAES Chr., *Beperkt? Gehandicapt en het Romeinse rijk*. Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2014, in part. pp. 197-201.
96. BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. pp. 14-20; MITCHELL A., *Disparate Bodies in Ancient Artefacts: the Function of Caricature and Pathological Grotesque among Roman Terracotta Figurines*. In: LAES Chr., GOODEY C. F., ROSE M. L. (eds), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity. Disparate Bodies A Capite ad Calcem*. Leiden, Brill, 2013, pp. 275-97; DASEN V., *Le sourire d'Omphale. Maternité et petite enfance dans l'Antiquité*. Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015, in part. pp. 94-7.
97. Suetonius, Claud. 4.
98. Pomponius Atellanae (*Scaenicae Romanorum Poesis Fragmenta*. Vol. 2, ed. Ribbeck) v. 174-175 (= Nonius Marcellus 112 Müller); Persius, Sat. 1.56-57: *qui pote? uis dicam? nugaris, cum tibi, calue,/ pinguis aqualiculus propenso sesquipede extet*. On the reference to the animal stomach, see GOUREVITCH D., *Les noms Latins de l'estomac*. RPh 1976; 50(1): 84-110, in part. p. 86 and GOUREVITCH D., *L'obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 195-215, in part. p. 197.
99. Catullus, Carm. 89; Suetonius, De poetis, fr. 40; Priap. 26.7-10
100. Quintilian, Inst. Or. 6.3.55.
101. Scriptores Hist. Aug., Comm. 10 and Heliogab. 29. See GEVAERT B., LAES Chr., *What's in a Monster? Pliny the Elder, Teratology and Bodily Disability*. In: LAES Chr., GOODEY C. F., ROSE M. L. (eds), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity: Disparate Bodies A Capite Ad Calcem*. Leiden, Brill, 2013, p. 211-230, on Roman emperors and their *monstra*.
102. LAES Chr., *Beperkt? Gehandicapt en het Romeinse rijk*. Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2014, in part. p. 201, on pity and disabilities.
103. Bab. Talmud, Baba Metsia 84a on Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Elazar. When they met, an ox could walk between them (i.e. under the arch formed by their bellies) and not touch them. See BURRUS V., *Carnal Excess: Flesh at the Limits of Imagination*. JECs 2009; 17(2): 247-65, in part. pp. 260-5; Boyarin 2009: 178-82, both also referring to Leon of Byzantium.
104. Philostratus, Vita Ap. 5.23. NADEAU R., *Héraclès, ce gourmand*. In: KARILA-COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 93-108, on the gulosity of Heracles, though he stresses the fact that Heracles is often not described as fat (see however note 95 on

- iconography). On emperors and eating contests, see note 75. On similar contests of showing off gulosity, see Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 14.24.
105. EVANS E. C., *Physiognomics in the Ancient World*. Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1969 and BARTON T., *Ancient Astrology*. London - New York, Routledge, 1994, are two important studies, but literature is vast.
106. Due to their exclusive focus on gluttony, both HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp. 75-80 and WILGAUX J., *Gourmands et gloutons dans les sources physiognomiques antiques*. In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds.), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 23-36, have missed significant fragments.
107. See respectively Adamantius, *Physiogn.* 2.15 and Ps. Polemon, *Physiogn.* 42; Adamantius, *Physiogn.* 2.31 and Ps. Polemon, *Physiogn.* 5; Adamantius, *Physiogn.* 2.47, Adamantius, *Physiognom.* 33.2 (*Epitome Matritensis*) and Ps. Polemon, *Physiogn.* 58; Adamantius, *Physiognom.* 2.60 and Ps. Polemon, *Physiogn.* 69.
108. Aristotle, *Physiogn.* 808a17-19 and Ps-Polemon, *Physiognom.* 64 (πικρός); Aristoteles, *Physiognom.* 808a29-31 (μικρόψυχος)
109. See respectively Dorotheus, *Fragm. Graeca* (p. 431 line 14 ed. Pingree); Hephaestion, *Apotelesm.* (p. 12 ed. Pingree); Hephaestion, *Apotelesm.* (p. 93 ed. Pingree); Hephaestion, *Apotelesm.* (p. 94 ed. Pingree); Hephaestion, *Apotelesm.* (p. 75 ed. Pingree).
110. HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp.77-80. See Aristoteles, *Physiogn.* 810b6-8 (strength of character); 813b.23-27; 807a33-34 (courage for the broad and flat belly). But see Aristoteles, *Physiogn.* 810b16-22 for the link between a big belly, gluttony and dulness of sense.
111. KARILA COHEN K., *Les gourmands grecs sont-ils bien en chair?* In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds.), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 126-7 is much more nuanced by stating that *eusarkia*, not *polysarkia*, is appreciated in the physiognomical treatises. She cites Polemon, *Physiogn.* B54. WILGAUX J., *Gourmands et gloutons dans les sources physiognomiques antiques*. In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds.), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, pp. 28-33 convincingly sketches the throughout negative portrait of gluttons in ancient physiognomics – again their animal like nature is mentioned.

112. Cicero, De fato 10 and Tusc. Disput. 4.80. WILGAUX J., *Gourmands et gloutons dans les sources physiognomiques antiques*. In: KARILA COHEN K., QUELLIER F. (eds.), *Le corps du gourmand. D'Héraclès à Alexandre le Bienheureux*. Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, p. 36 traces down the anecdote till Arabic times.
113. On Socrates' paradoxal appearance, see BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. 22-3. Similar statements in Galenus, Quod qualitates incorporeae sint 8 (19.482 K.); Lucianus, Philopseud. 24; Maximus, Dialex. 1.9 and 39.5. The exceptional case of Socrates makes for most beautiful passages relativating physiognomics, namely Adamantius, De ventis (ed. Rose, Anecdota Graeca et Graecolatina p. 35). Many scholars and commentators of Aristotle have repeated the statements on essence and accidents. Johannes Philoponus, In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria (p. 211 line 25 ed. Hayduck); Alexander Aphrodisiensis, In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria (p. 284 line 21 and p. 421 line 30; ed. Hayduck); Simplicius, In Aristotelis categorias commentarium (p. 156 line 18 ed. Klabfleisch); Joannes Philoponus, In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria (p. 772 line 28 ed. Diels), In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria (p. 488 ed. Hayduck), In Aristotelis physicorum libros commentaria (p. 42 ed. Vitelli); Ammonius, In Porphyrii isagogen sive quinque voces (p. 58 and 90 ed. Busse). The comment even appears in Byzantine times: Michael Psellus, Opusc. (6 line 46 and 124 ed. Duffy). It should be admitted that Cicero's statements (note 111) do not explicitly mention Socrates' belly, though the mention of the inspection of his bodily appearance (*forma*) does not exclude so. On Nazi interpretations of Socrates, see VAN HOUDT T., *Nieuwe tijden, nieuwe monsters: de genese van de rassensfysiognomiek*. Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde 2011; 15(2): 118-27.
114. Excellent surveys for first guidance and bibliography include STAMATU M., *Ernährung*. In: LEVEN K.H. (ed), *Antike Medizin. Ein Lexikon*. München, C. H. Beck, 2005, c. 269-71, and WÖHRLE G., *Diätetik*. In: LEVEN K. H. (ed), *Antike Medizin. Ein Lexikon*. München, C. H. Beck, 2005, c. 217-19. JOUANNA J., *Le régime dans la médecine hippocratique: définition, grands problèmes, prolongements*. In: LECLANT J., VAUCHEZ A., SARTRE M. (eds), *Pratiques et discours alimentaires en Méditerranée de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*. Paris, De Boccard, 2008, 53-72, offers an in-depth study.
115. Celsus, Med. 2.18 discerns between *genus valentissimum*, *media materia*, *imbecillissima materia*.

116. On innate fatness, see Hippocrates, Aph. 2.44 (4.482 L.); Galenus, De pulsibus 1 (19.631 K.); Celsus, Med. 1.3.13-14.
117. Galenus, De causis pulsuum 3.11 (9.142 K.); Galenus, De temperamentis (1.605 K.); Galenus, De causis pulsuum 3.11 (9.142 K.).
118. Possibly also implied in Plinius, Nat. Hist. 11.284 (on qualities of food): "In every aspect of life, that which is too much is destructive, surely for the body. In all cases, it is more useful to deminish the amount of that which is too much".
119. Celsus, De med. 2.4.4; cf. also Celsus, De med. 2.7.2. Seneca, Dial. 6.10. In Plutarchus, De vitando aere alieno 831c we read about an (hydropic) person complaining to the doctor about his getting thin. Plinius, Nat. Hist 9.156 states that getting thin can be a bad sign for fishes.
120. This fragment is actually one of the key texts on therapy for the fat and the thin, while the mention of *phthoe* and the fact that some limbs can get thin, needs to remind us that we cannot ever go to simple retrospective diagnosis.
121. Celsus, Med. 1.3.13-14.
122. Galenus, Meth. med. 14.15 (10.995-996 K.): a forty-years-old *neaniskos* became enormously fat (*παχὺν ἰκανῶς γεγονότα*) and was treated with theriacum. A long and vivid story of a therapy which took two weeks in Galenus, Meth. med. 10.3 (10.671-678 K.): a 25-year-old *neaniskos* with his body so thin and dry as a dry dog (*ἰσχνὸς καὶ μυώδης τὸ σῶμα, καθάπερ κύων ξηρὸς*). See GOUREVITCH D., *I giovani pazienti di Galeno. Per una patocenosi dell'impero romano*. Roma - Bari, Editori Laterza, 2001; MATTERN S., *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2008, p. 187 and p. 189. Galen states that a bad mixture of bodily humours had caused the young man to become dry and hot-tempered. MATTERN S., *Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2008, pp. 126-32 on diet and regimen in Galen.
123. On hydropsy (for which also crude liposuction is proposed by Caelius Aurelianus, Tard. pass. 3.122-135), on diabetes, see GRMEK M., *Les maladies à l'aube de la civilisation occidentale*. Paris, Payot, 1983, in part. pp. 29-30.
124. Caelius Aurelianus, Tard. pass. 5.131.
125. Aretaeus, Caus. chr. 2.6.; Anonymus Parisinus, De morb. acutis et chroniis 30 (p. 162-166 ed. Garofalo) are the most extensive texts on *atrophia*.
126. Hippocrates, Aph. 2.44 (4.482 L.): "Those who are fat by nature die sooner than thin persons" (*Οἱ παχέες σφόδρα κατὰ φύσιν, ταχυθάνατοι γίνονται μᾶλλον τῶν ἰσχνῶν*); Celsus, Med. 2.1.23.
127. Hippocrates, Aph. 5.46 (4.548 L.); Hippocrates, Aer. 21 (2.76 L.) (on irregular menses, an linked with Scythian women), Hippocrates, Nat. mul. 20

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- (7.340 L.) (on medication). Galen agrees on the difficulty on the matter of the uterus and difficult child birth: Galen, In Hipp. Aph. 7 (17.2.839 K.).
128. Plutarchus, Quaest. conv. 641a; Aristoteles, De gen. an. 725 b25-32. See also Aristoteles, Hist. an. 583a4-10: both for men and women, fatness is not good for fertility or sexual appetite. See Ps-Aristoteles, Probl. 871a on the semen of drunkards.
129. Galenus, De difficult. respir. 2.7 (7.853 K.).
130. Ps. Alexander, Probl. 4.138.
131. Celsus, Med. 2.1.23. Cf. supra note 121.
132. HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp. 64-75.
133. Hippocrates, Vict. 2.63 (6.578 L.); Vict. 3.70 (6.606-608 L.); De diaet. 63.10; Salubr. 4 (6.76 L.).
134. Galenus, De affectuum renibus insidentium dignotione et curatione liber 6 (19.683 K.).
135. Cf. supra note 69 on ball games. Explicit in Galenus, De parvae pilae exercitio 3 (5.904-906 K.).
136. Plutarchus, Aet. Phys. 913f. See MEEUSEN M., *Plutarch's Science of Natural Problems: a Study with Commentary of Quaestiones Naturales*. Leuven, Leuven University Press, forthcoming.
137. Anonymus Parisinus, De morb. acutis et chroniis 30.3 (p. 165-166 ed. Garofalo).
138. An extensive Greek account on treatment is Oribasius, *Synopsis ad Eustathium et libri ad Eunapium* (ed. Raeder; CMG 6.3) 5.40 = Paulus Medicus, Epitom. 1.57.
139. See THUMIGER C., *Food and Mental Disorder*. In: THUMIGER C., VAN DER EIJK P., *Mental Diseases in Ancient Medicine*. Leiden, Brill, forthcoming.
140. Soranus, Gyn. 1.32.
141. See GOUREVITCH D., *L'obésité et son traitement dans le monde romain*. HPLS 1985; 7: 195-215, in part. pp. 211.
142. Anonymus Parisinus, De morb. acutis et chroniis 11 (p. 80-84 ed. Garofalo).
143. Galenus, De propriorum animi cuiuslibet affectuum dignotione et curatione 6 (5.30 K.): here connected with lust for wine, all of which are condemned as outrageous passions of the soul. Needless to say, the terms often occur in the general discourse on gluttony.
144. Brev. Roman. (20 Aug.): "every time he had to take food, he thought he was suffering from torment" (*quotiens sumendus ei cibus erat, toties tormentum se subire putabat*).
145. CASEAU B., *Syméon Stylite le jeune (521-592): un cas de sainte anorexie?* Kentron 2003; 19(1-2): 179-203, esp. 193-7.

146. FORTH Chr. E., *The Qualities of Fat: Bodies, History, and Materiality*. Journal of Material Culture 2013; 18(2): 135-54, in part. 141 (prosperity) e 148 (dullness). BOYARIN D., *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*. Chicago - London, The University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 178-81 (fat rabbis). Cf. supra section 5.1, 6.2 and 8.
147. Nemeš 9.25-26; Deut. 21: 18-2; Deut. 32.15; Iud. 3.17; Rom. 18; Phil. 3.19 See HILL S.E., *Eating to Excess. The meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, pp. 21-42 for a detailed account on these and other passages.
148. HILL S. E., *Eating to Excess. The Meaning of Gluttony and the Fat Body in the Ancient World*. Santa Barbara, Praeger, 2011, in part. pp. 103-19, with explicit statement on p. 114.
149. Basilius, Sermo de moribus (PG 32.1328), John Chrysostom, Adversus Iudaeos (PG 48.846); John Chrysostom, in Genesim (PG 53.372).
150. John Chrysostom, In epist. 1 ad Corinthios (PG 61.346).
151. GRIMM V., *Fasting Women in Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*. In: WILKINS J., HARVEY D., DOBSON M. (eds), *Food in Antiquity*. Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1995, pp. 230-35; GARNSEY P., *Food and Society in Classical Antiquity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, in part. pp. 95-7; BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 1-41, in part. 22-3.
152. BRADLEY M., *Obesity, Corpulence and Emaciation in Roman art*. PBSR 2011; 79: 33-5 (quote on p. 35).
153. PINKER S., *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. New York, Penguin, 2002, p. 58; ECO U., *Storia della bellezza*. Milano, Bompiani, 2004; ECO U., *Storia della bruttezza*. Milano, Bompiani, 2007.
154. LAES Chr., *Beperkt? Gehandicapt en in het Romeinse rijk*. Leuven, Davidsfonds, 2014, pp. 183-204.
155. All these issues have been dealt with in the major surveys on obesity. The reader might also benefit much from LEVEN K. H., *Geschichte der Medizin. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*. München, C H. Beck, 2008, pp. 48-52 for a nice overview on “Medizinische Polizey” from the eighteenth century on.
156. VEYNE P., *L'inventaire des différences*. Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1976, in part. p. 62.

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